

The Menil Collection Unveils New Artwork by Swiss Artist Marc Bauer

Site-specific installation at the Menil Drawing Institute creates a meeting point for reflection and invites the viewer to be part of the work that will change over the course of the exhibition



HOUSTON—*September 27, 2023*—The Menil Collection is pleased to present the fifth installment of the Menil Drawing Institute’s ephemeral wall drawing series with a remarkable work by Swiss artist Marc Bauer (b. 1975). The 36-foot-wide charcoal and pastel mural, titled *RESILIENCE, Drawing the Line, 2023*, combines powerful imagery from art history with contemporary references to create a thought-provoking narrative. The work will evolve over the course of its yearlong display, with Bauer returning twice to Houston in 2024 to alter his drawing. The final effect will be similar to a palimpsest, a page that bears traces of all changes made on its surface. As part of his process, the artist welcomes visitor feedback in a book located at the building’s entrance. ***Wall Drawing Series: Marc Bauer will be on view at the Menil Drawing Institute through summer 2024.***

In speaking about the work, Marc Bauer said, “I see the drawing as a meeting point between the viewer and myself; the drawing is there to activate memories in the viewer’s mind, like a trigger. It’s the viewer who fill in the gaps in the narrative, who reconstruct the story; I only give a few elements.”

Fascinated by how images circulate through society, Bauer uses sources ranging from personal family albums to cable news streams, which he reconfigures to shape a prismatic view of history, culture, and politics. He likens this process to a kind of witnessing, a deliberate and deeply personal way of seeing and understanding the world. *RESILIENCE, Drawing the Line* represents Bauer's interest in "image survival," a theory devised by the German art historian Aby Warburg (1866-1929) in which certain icons, motifs, and symbols persist in history, linking past and present and shaping our understanding of ourselves and our culture. Here, Bauer's fragmented narrative traces iconographies of domination and resistance, bringing together a wide range of examples including a relief sculpture made in ancient Rome, 15th-century religious scenes, 18th- and 19th-century representations of enslaved Africans, and present-day photojournalism.

For *RESILIENCE, Drawing the Line*, Bauer layers images of manmade disaster and patriarchal violence alongside depictions of resistance, aid, and affection. His images, sourced from art history and present-day, evoke political battles over climate justice, humane migration policy, and the rights of marginalized communities. In one passage, a pair of climate refugees are adrift, sitting alongside ghostly figures; visitors may recognize the reference to John Singleton Copley's painting, *Watson and the Shark*, 1778. Emerging from the flooded landscape are figures in vogue postures (a stylized dance named for its resemblance to models posing in fashion magazines), embracing and caressing each other, and prominently displaying symbols associated with queer identity. In centering this scene, Bauer considers how queerness and the queer encounter—in its joy, celebration, and fluidity—might present pathways to reinvent how to care for one another and disrupt violent power systems that seek to exploit and control the natural world. The artist's own memories float across the drawing in individual panels, punctuating the narrative.

Wall Drawing Series: Marc Bauer is curated by Kelly Montana, Assistant Curator, Menil Drawing Institute. The Menil's Wall Drawing Series began in 2018 as part of the Drawing Institute's commitment to seeking new approaches to the form and language of drawing. An interview with the artist will be available at menil.org/marcbauer.

About the Artist

Marc Bauer has been creating socially and politically engaging art for more than twenty years. Based in Zurich, Switzerland, and Berlin, Germany, Bauer's art practice is grounded in reconfiguring existing images—from sources ranging from personal family albums to different news streams—with the goal of ultimately shaping a prismatic view of history, culture, and politics.

About the Menil Collection

Philanthropists and art patrons John and Dominique de Menil established the Menil Foundation in 1954 to cultivate greater public understanding and appreciation of art, architecture, culture, religion, and philosophy. In 1987, the Menil Collection's main museum building opened to the public. Today, the Menil Collection consists of a group of five art buildings and green spaces located within a residential neighborhood in central Houston. The Menil remains committed to its founders' belief that art is essential to human experience and fosters direct personal encounters with works of art. The museum welcomes all visitors free of charge to its buildings and surrounding green spaces. menil.org

About the Menil Drawing Institute

The Menil Drawing Institute was established in 2008 in recognition of drawing's centrality in the lives of artists and its crucial role in modern and contemporary artistic culture. The Drawing Institute has since developed an international profile for exhibitions, scholarship, and collaboration. In 2018, a dedicated building for the Menil Drawing Institute, designed by

Johnston Marklee, was inaugurated. It is now the site of regular drawings exhibitions, an annual monumental wall drawing commission, public programs, and study. menil.org/drawing-institute

Funding

This wall drawing is generously supported by John R. Eckel, Jr. Foundation; Cindy and David Fitch; Caroline Huber; Dillon Kyle and Sam Lasseter; Scott and Judy Nyquist; Leslie and Shannon Sasser; Elizabeth and Barry Young/UBS Private Wealth; and Nina and Michael Zilkha.

Image Caption

Artist Marc Bauer in front of *RESILIENCE, Drawing the Line, 2023*, at the Menil Drawing Institute, Houston. Photo: Sarah Hobson

Press Contacts

The Menil Collection
Jennifer Greene, Communications Manager
(713) 525-9477 / jgreene@menil.org

Polskin Arts
Tommy Napier, Senior Account Supervisor
(212) 715-1694 / tommy.napier@finnpartners.com