

THE MENIL COLLECTION TO RECEIVE MAJOR GIFTS OF DRAWINGS FROM TRUSTEES JANIE C. LEE AND LOUISA STUDE SAROFIM

**Gifts of 110 Masterwork Drawings by 41 Modern and Contemporary Artists
Help Lead the Way Toward the 2017 Opening of the Menil Drawing Institute**



HOUSTON, TX, June 9, 2016 — The Menil Collection today announced one of the largest and most significant donations of artworks in the museum's history, with the promised gifts of 110 important modern and contemporary drawings from the collections of trustees Janie C. Lee and Louisa Stude Sarofim.

The promised gifts—55 works apiece from the trustees' outstanding collections—support and honor the Menil's commitment to drawing as an independent artistic practice. In 2008, the museum established the Menil Drawing Institute (MDI) as a program for exhibitions and publications dedicated to drawing. The museum is currently adding a new building to its 30-acre campus to house the MDI, creating the only freestanding facility designed expressly for the exhibition and study of modern and contemporary drawings.

Among the promised gifts from the Lee and Sarofim collections are 15 drawings by Jasper Johns, dating from 1954 to 2012 and representing every decade of his career. When added to the museum's existing holdings—one drawing acquired by John and Dominique de Menil, and 17 bequeathed by David Hay Whitney in 2005—these donations will make the Menil arguably the single most important public collection of the artist's drawings. The Menil Drawing Institute is also preparing the catalogue raisonné of the drawings of Jasper Johns, which will be published in 2017.

Other notable donations include seminal drawings by Helen Frankenthaler, Arshile Gorky, Philip Guston, Franz Kline, Lee Krasner, Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, and Jackson Pollock that complement the Menil's deep holdings of works by New York School artists. Important drawings by Ellsworth Kelly, Brice Marden, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg, and Cy Twombly add to the Menil's robust representation of these artists. Other promised gifts—including the first works by Frank Auerbach, Magdalena Abakanowicz, Joseph Beuys, Georg Baselitz, Anselm Kiefer, and Rachel Whiteread to enter the Menil—bring the museum into new territory with regard to the history of drawing in post-World War II Europe.

David Breslin, the John R. Eckel, Jr. Foundation Chief Curator of the Menil Drawing Institute, said, "The word 'transformative' is not adequate to convey the impact of these promised gifts. These are formative gifts, which make the Menil, and the Menil Drawing Institute, one of the most important venues in the world for studying drawing in the United States in the postwar period. The legacies of Janie C. Lee and Louisa Stude Sarofim will guide the endeavors of the Menil Drawing Institute and shape its future."

Louisa Stude Sarofim, Board Chair and Life Trustee of the Menil Collection, said, "Art is as essential as breathing, and drawing is the medium that gives life to art. The Menil singularly privileges the experience one has with a work of art. There is no better home than the Menil and the Menil Drawing Institute for the modern and contemporary drawings I have had the good fortune to assemble. I am delighted that visitors, scholars, and artists will have access to these drawings for the joy they give and the scholarship they might animate."

Janie C. Lee, a Trustee of the Menil Collection, said, "As a curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, I worked with the drawings of Brice Marden, Claes Oldenburg, and Arshile Gorky. These artists and others, especially Jasper Johns, helped me understand that drawing is crucial to the creative process. But until recent decades, drawing has been seen as preparatory, rather than as an important and independent medium. Dominique and John de Menil always believed in artists and trusted what was important to artists. The Menil Drawing Institute is an extension of their belief. It is a pleasure, honor, and joy for me to be able to make this gift of drawings to the Menil Drawing Institute."

Among the other highlights of the promised gifts are

- 4 drawings by Willem de Kooning from the crucial period between 1945 and 1953, when the *Woman* series of paintings was being developed
- 9 Jackson Pollock drawings (the earliest from 1939 and the latest from 1951) that trace his development from Surrealism into what would become Abstract Expressionism
- 8 drawings by Brice Marden, representing every decade in the production of an artist who cites his 1972 visit to the Rothko Chapel—an initiative of John and Dominique de Menil—as formative to his development

- 3 important drawings by Richard Serra (from 1971, 1980, and 1993) that demonstrate how integral the medium has been to his practice, and that build on major acquisitions of Serra drawings made by the Menil in 2011 and 2012
- 4 drawings by Eva Hesse (from 1964, 1966, and 1967) that complement a 1960 Hesse given in 2011 by Sally and Wynn Kramarsky in honor of Bernice Rose
- a suite of 24 drawings by Bruce Nauman made in or around 1965, at the beginning of his mature artistic practice, which would generate some of his most consequential sculptures
- 5 major unique works on paper by Robert Rauschenberg, including a collage and a *Black Painting* on paper from 1952, which add to a stellar collection of early Rauschenberg
- and 4 Agnes Martin drawings, which will join another two (both from 1977) already in the Menil's holdings.

In all, the 110 promised gifts represent the work of 41 artists, who range chronologically from Paul Cézanne and Edgar Degas in the late 19th century to Piet Mondrian, Balthus, and Georgia O'Keeffe in the mid-20th century to Robert Gober and Terry Winters in the present.

Among Mrs. Sarofim's earlier donations to the Menil Collection was *Tablet* (1948-73) by Ellsworth Kelly, given in 2003: a suite of 188 framed works on paper, which constitute a monumental record of the artist's work over a quarter of a century.

The promised gifts of Janie C. Lee and Louisa Stude Sarofim are among the works that will be cared for, studied, and displayed in the 30,000-square-foot, \$40 million Menil Drawing Institute, scheduled to open in 2017. Designed by the Los Angeles-based firm of Johnston Marklee, the MDI is rising on the Menil campus just south of the main museum building and the Cy Twombly Gallery and north of the Dan Flavin installation at Richmond Hall. The landscape design, which is integral to the project, is by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates.

As a program, the Menil Drawing Institute has been responsible for important traveling exhibitions including *Serra Drawing: A Retrospective* (2012); *Lee Bontecou: Drawn Worlds* (2014); *Becoming Modern: Nineteenth-Century French Drawings from The Morgan Library & Museum and the Menil Collection* (2015, organized under the MDI's auspices as part of a programmatic collaboration between the MDI and the Morgan); and *Apparitions: Frottages and Rubbings from 1860 to Now* (2015).

The Menil Drawing Institute building is one component of a \$110 million capital and endowment campaign that is expanding and enhancing the Menil's campus and strengthening the institution for the future.

About the Menil Collection

A legacy of the philanthropists John and Dominique de Menil, the Menil Collection opened in 1987. The museum presents regular rotations of artworks from its growing permanent collection, organizes special exhibitions and programs throughout the year, publishes scholarly

books, and conducts research into the conservation of modern and contemporary art. The Menil Collection's main museum building, the first building in the United States designed by Renzo Piano, anchors a parklike 30-acre campus, which also includes the Cy Twombly Gallery, a site-specific Dan Flavin installation, the Byzantine Fresco Chapel—now a venue for long-term installations by contemporary artists—and outdoor sculpture. The museum is open Wednesday through Sunday, 11am to 7pm, and charges no admission fee.

On View at the Menil Collection

The Secret of the Hanging Egg: Salvador Dalí at the Menil – On view through June 19, 2016

William N. Copley: The World According to CPLY – On view through July 24, 2016

Life is Once, Forever: Henri Cartier-Bresson Photographs – On view through July 24, 2016

Francis Alijs: The Fabiola Project – On view through January 28, 2018

As Essential as Dreams – Opening June 10, 2016

Andy Warhol: Sunset – Opening August 19, 2016

Picasso: The Line – Opening September 16, 2016

Holy Barbarians: Beat Culture on the West Coast – Opening November 18, 2016

Find the Menil Online

www.menil.org

www.facebook.com/menilcollection

www.twitter.com/menilcollection

www.instagram.com/menilcollection

www.youtube.com/themenilcollection

#

Images (L to R):

Eva Hesse, *Untitled*, 1966. Wash and graphite on paper, 9 5/8 x 7 15/16 in. (21.2 x 17.5 cm). © The Estate of Eva Hesse, courtesy Hauser & Wirth, Zurich

Jasper Johns, *Flag on Orange Field*, 1957. Watercolor, pastel, and graphite pencil on paper with stamped insignia, 10 1/2 x 7 7/8 in. (23.1 x 17.3 cm). © Jasper Johns / VAGA, New York, NY

Robert Rauschenberg, *Untitled (Mona Lisa)*, ca. 1952. Engravings, printed paper, fabric, pencil, foil, and glue on paper, 9 1/2 x 7 1/2 in. (24.1 x 19.1 cm). © Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

Contact:

Tommy Napier
Menil Press Office
713 309 6439
press@menil.org

Natasha Le Bel
Polkskin Arts & Communications Counselors
212 715 1644
natasha.lebel@finnpartners.com