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Part 2 of the exhibition will be on view June 7–September 1, 2019.

Curated by Michelle White, Senior Curator

Public Programs

Curator's Talk

Michelle White on Roni Horn

Sunday, March 10

3 p.m.

Menil Drawing Institute

Da Camera of Houston

Stop, Look, and Listen!

A musical reflection on the work of Roni Horn

Saturday, April 13

3 p.m.

Main Building

The above programs are free and open to the public.

Menil members enjoy additional events.

Visit the museum or menil.org to join or for more information.

front Roni Horn, *Or 7*, 2013/2015 (detail). Powdered pigment, graphite, charcoal, colored pencil, and varnish on paper, 109 ½ × 101 ½ in. (278.1 × 257.8 cm). Glenstone Museum, Potomac, Maryland. © Roni Horn

interior Roni Horn, *Else 9*, 2010. Powdered pigment, graphite, charcoal, colored pencil, and varnish on paper, 92 ½ × 96 ½ in. (235 × 244.2 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth. © Roni Horn

Roni Horn

When I Breathe, I Draw



Part 1 February 15–May 5, 2019

THE MENIL COLLECTION

In these large-scale drawings, which Roni Horn has been making since the 1990s, strips and splinters, undulating ribbons of saturated, rich color swell, swirl, crystallize, and dissipate within the frame. The uncertainty of what the dynamic, shifting forms are is matched by the works' elusive and slippery titles: yet, or, through, else. These adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions modify rather than define content and help establish a certain ambiguity mirrored by the experience of viewing the drawings. Abutting paper edges, small notations, dense color, and baroque configurations of intricately assembled fragments of cut paper generate push and pull. Seeing the works requires moving back and forth, seeing both bold scale and whispering details.

The dense and viscous colors in these drawings were created with powdered pigments. Using a brush, Horn applies the pigment to the paper by mixing it with turpentine. The appearance of the color is due to its resulting behavior. It clings, forcefully asserting its elemental materiality by sitting on top of the smooth paper support, and sometimes with charcoal underneath.

After Horn applies the pigment, she slices fragments of paper and reassembles the pieces so that the edges abut. She describes the process of composing the pieces as architectural. The artist also frequently uses the tectonic term “plates” to refer to the paper pieces, and she regards their edges as physical material rather than representations of lines. Through these methods, Horn creates a powerful surface tactility that matches the strong visual presence of

the colors. Meeting rather than overlapping, cut edges—assertive, energy-filled fault lines—sit against each other. The cut assists in the works' remarkable ability to dance around ideas of representation. Horn's cuts and forms may provide hints of associations, but they also simply *are*. In the drawings now on view, the physical encounters of edges and the materiality of the color create a sense of dislocation by flirting with but resisting becoming something recognizable. Artist Tacita



Dean has described the energy of the linear tangles in Horn's work as febrile and the forms as almost brainlike.

The dynamic forms and sliced surfaces are quietly augmented with small handwritten notations in graphite or colored pencil, along with numbers, dash marks, and holes where the artist pinned the sheets to the wall. She calls the notations “registration marks” and “background noise.” They indicate to her how the pieces fit together over the course of building the work. They might seem at first to offer a way to understand the image or perhaps artistic process, but they remain obtuse. A sampling speaks to their random, idiosyncratic derivation: “Philip Seymour Hoffman,” “Hilma af Klint.” Horn enjoys listening to news radio while she works, and events of the day find their way into her drawings. She captures her thoughts, words that surface as she cuts and creates, marking a moment in time.

For Roni Horn, drawing is never static. It is a process: a way of thinking, a way of being, and a way of remembering her experience of place in and through the world. As such, her approach to the discipline is an allegory of discovery and invention. It is intuitive, improvisational, intimate, and so fundamental and necessary to her that she compares it to the life-sustaining act of breathing. Horn's large corpus of drawing, extending over four decades and beginning in the early 1980s, forms, she says, a “kind of breathing vocabulary on a daily level.”

Roni Horn (b. 1955) lives and works in New York and Reykjavik, Iceland. Her work has been the subject of numerous major exhibitions, including Roni Horn at the Fondation Beyeler, Basel (2016); Roni Horn aka Roni Horn, co-organized by Tate Modern, London, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and which also traveled to the Collection Lambert, Avignon, France, and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2009–10); and Some Thames at the Art Institute of Chicago (2004). Horn received her MFA from Yale University in 1978 and her BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1975. Her work is held in numerous public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Kunstmuseum Basel; and Tate Modern, London.