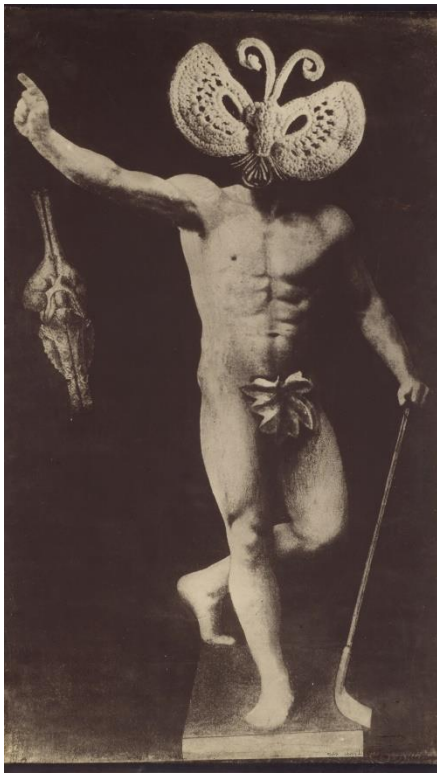


THE MENIL COLLECTION PRESENTS  
*PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE SURREAL IMAGINATION*  
ON VIEW NOW THROUGH JUNE 14

Events During Houston's FotoFest Biennial 2020 Include Talks by Artist Allison Janae Hamilton and Curator Natalie Dupêcher, a Lecture by Author David Company, and a Special Musical Performance



HOUSTON, TEXAS, February 24, 2020 – Drawn from the Menil Collection's renowned holdings of Surrealist art and from extraordinary loans from Houston collections, the exhibition *Photography and the Surreal Imagination* is on view at the Menil Collection now through June 14, 2020. Presenting 62 works that span the years from Surrealism's eruption in the 1920s to the present day, the exhibition reveals how photographers during and after the Surrealist movement have explored and distorted the human form, manipulated the photographic surface, and used the camera to transform the familiar into the uncanny. Photography's inherent tension between documentation and invention emerges in the exhibition as the generative force that has made this medium so productive for artists working in the wake of Surrealism.

A series of free public events, many scheduled to coincide with Houston's FotoFest Biennial 2020, will accompany the exhibition. These include an artist talk by Allison Janae Hamilton about her works in the exhibition, a talk by exhibition curator Natalie Dupêcher, a lecture by noted author and photography curator David Company, and a musical performance by the Da Camera Young Artists in response to the artworks. The Menil Collection will also present a free outdoor screening of short films inspired by Surrealism in May, after Fotofest Biennial 2020 has ended.

Menil Director Rebecca Rabinow said, "As a seemingly objective, mechanical medium, once known as 'the pencil of nature,' photography would seem to be ill-suited to the project of André Breton, author of *The Surrealist Manifesto*, in his desire to reveal the 'real functioning of the mind' through 'pure psychic automatism.' And yet, while many artists affiliated with the

movement cultivated drawing and painting techniques that they believed to be outside their conscious control, photographers created many of Surrealism's most iconic images. We are thrilled to present an extraordinary selection of these photographs as an expansion of our existing display of Surrealist art, which transform our familiar world by illuminating its eroticism, menace, and mystery."

Assistant Curator of Modern Art Natalie Dupêcher said, "The Surrealists seized on the camera's potential to be a tool not merely for reproducing the visible but for reshaping, questioning, and disturbing our perception of reality. This understanding of photography's potential continues in our own time, when themes such as the exploration of the body, the manipulation of the image, and the transformation of the everyday remain fruitful avenues for contemporary artists. We look forward to sharing these ideas through the works themselves and through the rich series of public programs we are offering in conjunction with the exhibition."

*Photography and the Surreal Imagination* begins with an examination of the transformation of the everyday through the lens in a tradition that recasts the world as an enigmatic theater, from Eugène Atget's views of Old Paris to Allison Janae Hamilton's haunted, folkloric evocations of the American South. Photographs that foreground the exploration of the body include Hans Bellmer's images of deconstructed dolls and Cindy Sherman's cinematographic self-staging, among other depictions of costumed, distorted, or fragmented figures. Photographs that foreground image manipulation include works by artists from Man Ray to Lorna Simpson who have turned the surface of the image into a collision of pictorial fragments that question the nature of representation.

*Photography and the Surreal Imagination* is curated by Natalie Dupêcher, Assistant Curator of Modern Art. It is installed adjacent to the Menil's Surrealism galleries.

This exhibition is generously supported by the City of Houston.

### **Public Programs**

#### **Public Reception**

Wednesday, March 11, 7 p.m.

#### **Artist Talk**

Allison Janae Hamilton

Friday, March 13, 7 p.m.

#### **Musical Performance**

Stop, Look, and Listen!

Da Camera Young Artists Respond to the Exhibition

Saturday, March 28, 3 p.m.

**Curator Talk**

Assistant Curator of Modern Art Natalie Dupêcher

The Body in and After Surrealism

Sunday, April 5, 3 p.m.

**Lecture**

David Company

What is the Surrealist Photograph?

Thursday, April 9, 7 p.m.

**Outdoor Film Screening**

Exquisite Cinema of the Surreal

A program of short films copresented with Aurora Picture Show

Saturday, May 2, 8:30 p.m.

West Main Green

All programs are free and open to the public. For additional information and programs, visit [menil.org](http://menil.org).

**About the Menil Collection**

Houston philanthropists and art patrons John and Dominique de Menil established the Menil Foundation in 1954 to foster greater public understanding and appreciation of art, architecture, culture, religion, and philosophy. In 1987, the Menil Collection's main building opened to the public. Today, thirty-three years later, the Menil Collection consists of a group of five art buildings and greenspaces located within a residential neighborhood. The Menil embodies the ideals and values of its founders, in particular, that art is vital to human life and should be readily accessible to all persons. Access to all museum galleries, greenspaces, and parking is free of charge.

**On view at the Menil**

*Collection Close-Up: Of Heaven and Earth* – on view through March 15, 2020

*Think of Them as Spaces: Brice Marden's Drawings* – on view through June 14, 2020

*Wall Drawing Series: Jorinde Voigt* – on view through Summer 2020

*Si Lewen: The Parade* – opening April 24, 2020

*Allora & Calzadilla: Specters of Noon* – opening May 15, 2020

**Find the Menil Online**

[www.menil.org](http://www.menil.org)

[www.facebook.com/menilcollection](https://www.facebook.com/menilcollection)

[www.twitter.com/menilcollection](https://www.twitter.com/menilcollection)

[www.instagram.com/menilcollection](https://www.instagram.com/menilcollection)

[www.youtube.com/themenilcollection](https://www.youtube.com/themenilcollection)

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Image: Max Ernst, *Health through Sport (La santé par le sport)*, ca. 1920. Gelatin silver print mounted on board, 39 3/8 × 23 5/8 in. (100 × 60 cm). The Menil Collection, Houston. © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

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