

**POSITION SPECIFICATION  
DIRECTOR OF CONSERVATION**

**THE MENIL COLLECTION**

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The Menil Collection is a museum and neighborhood of art spanning 30 acres in the heart of Houston, Texas. The main building, which opened in 1987, anchors the campus and is located in close proximity to four additional Menil Collection art buildings: the Menil Drawing Institute; Cy Twombly Gallery; Richmond Hall, with site-specific artwork by artist Dan Flavin; and the Byzantine Fresco Chapel.

The Menil Collection is committed to its founders' belief that art is essential to human experience. The Menil fosters direct personal encounters with works of art and welcomes all visitors free of charge to its museum buildings and surrounding green spaces. The museum's institutional culture and actions are guided by core values that promote inclusivity, integrity, empathy, excellence, intellectual curiosity, and community.

The Menil is deeply marked by the activism and spiritual pursuits of its founders, John and Dominique de Menil. The Menil and its campus aim to be a retreat from daily life that offers each viewer a moment to pause, reflect, and reinvigorate.

The artworks from the permanent collection displayed in two-thirds of the main building are frequently rotated. Strengths include Arts of Africa, the Americas and Pacific Northwest, Ancient World, the Pacific Islands, Medieval and Byzantine, works on paper, Modern and Contemporary, and Surrealism. The Menil Drawing Institute is a space devoted to study, teaching, research, conservation, storage, and

exhibition. The program of that building includes an annual wall drawing commission and frequently rotated displays in the public gallery.

The Menil's core collection was assembled by the museum's founders, and the museum continues to actively collect in distinct areas that were established by Mr. and Mrs. de Menil as well as successive curators and directors. Since its founding, the Menil has supported substantial collaborations with contemporary artists, who are encouraged to use the collection and buildings as a springboard for new work.

## **THE CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT**

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Architect Renzo Piano and Mrs. de Menil believed that it was important to demystify and call attention to the critical work done by museum staff. A window wall adjacent to the portico on the east side of the building provides a glimpse into the Conservation Department's largest studio. Here, and through the bamboo-screened windows of the framing studio to the south, visitors can get a sense of the meticulous work carried out by the conservation staff who are charged with caring for and preserving the Menil's works of art.

Cleaning and repairing artworks, matting and framing them, photographing them, and preparing them for exhibition or loan are essential parts of the Conservation Department's job. So too is preemptively minimizing risks of damage. To best inform conservation decisions, the department researches materials and techniques and performs scientific media analyses to understand the material properties of an artwork and how light, temperature, humidity, pollutants, pests, and conservation treatments may affect it over time. Members of the department are engaged in fully documenting works in the collection and their treatments, providing training for disaster preparedness, and much more.

The Artists Documentation Program (ADP) was founded at the Menil in 1990 to address challenges posed by conserving contemporary artworks. Now a shared project of the Menil and the Whitney Museum of American Art, artists are interviewed to gain insight into their work, techniques, and materials. The conversations are archived, edited, and shared online to inform conservation decisions around the world and protect the integrity of the artist's intent.

## **THE ROLE**

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The Director of Conservation is responsible for the care and treatment of the Menil's collection with advanced knowledge of profession-wide ethics, principles, and methods used in the conservation, preservation, and restoration of cultural heritage. The Director of Conservation occupies a vital role in institutional initiatives and research projects and provides strategic and administrative leadership for the department.

The Director of Conservation supervises a staff of trained conservators and related professionals for a broad range of activities, including conservation assessment and treatment of the collection, support for ambitious exhibition and loan programs, collections research projects, disaster planning and response, and environmental monitoring.

As a senior leader within the museum's administration, the Director of Conservation works cooperatively with the Director and members of the Menil's Executive Team on institutional planning, policy development, and special initiatives. The Director of Conservation actively represents the Menil to a broad range of external constituencies, including the conservation profession.



## PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

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1. Manages the day-to-day operation of the Conservation Department.
  - Directs and monitors conservation treatments on objects in the Menil's collection performed by the museum's staff and, whenever appropriate, by contract conservators, to ensure compliance with accepted professional standards, including the AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice and the Museum's Collections Management policy.
  - Ensures conservation treatments adhere to the highest safety and sustainability standards for both the artwork and personnel.
  - Updates and ensures department compliance with protocols regarding documentation related to the examination and treatment of works of art in the collection.
  - Works with department conservators and the Collections Management Department to update artwork handling guidelines and ensures regular training and refresher courses for appropriate staff.
  - Updates and monitors protocols for utilization of materials, chemicals, and equipment to protect the health and safety of Menil employees.
  - Hires, retains, and effectively supervises conservation staff, including interns, fellows, and contract conservators.
  - Performs job functions of a Senior Conservator in their area of expertise.
  - Travels (domestically and internationally) as a Menil courier.
  
2. Develops policies and oversees practices related to the care and safety of the collection and works on loan to meet or exceed recognized and accepted professional standards.
  - Develops and monitors the implementation of annual and multi-year assessment and treatment plans in accordance with the Menil's strategic plan.
  - Works with department heads to develop and implement plans to increase the efficient operations of the Menil while ensuring and promoting the safety and integrity of the collections.
  - Works closely with the Menil staff to develop strategies for special exhibitions (both those organized by the Menil and other institutions) to ensure the safety and proper care of the collection and works of art on loan from other institutions and individuals.
  - Works closely and proactively on collection installations to ensure the safety and proper care of works of art displayed at the Menil or on loan to other institutions.
  - Develops plans for monitoring the condition of works of art in storage and on display.
  - Participates in emergency and disaster planning and serves as one of the Menil's Emergency Team Directors.
  
3. Directs and participates in research related to the collection.
  - Plans and coordinates the scientific analysis of works of art in the collection or on loan.
  - Plans and directs research on individual works of art, larger technical art history projects, and treatment protocol development.
  - Participates, as needed, in the analysis and review of works of art being considered for acquisition, including the technical examinations and artist interviews.
  - Co-directs the Artists Documentation Program (ADP) in collaboration with the Associate Director for Conservation and Research at the Whitney Museum of American Art, including oversight of the program's interviewing, publishing and archival aspects as well as securing regular funding for the project.

4. Develops and manages departmental operating, project, and program budgets.
  - Defines appropriate budget items and maintains expenses within budgets allotted to the position.
  - Seeks funding opportunities to support conservation activities; writes and manages grants. Collaborates with members of the Menil's Advancement Department to educate donors regarding conservation priorities and needs.

## **DIRECT REPORTS**

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Conservator of Works of Art on Paper (Conservation Studio Technician, MDI and Mellon Fellow in Paper Conservation report to this position)

Objects Conservator (Conservation Records Administrator reports to this position)

Assistant Objects Conservator

Assistant Paintings Conservator

Matter/Framer

Conservation Imaging Specialist

Conservation Coordinator

Andrew W. Mellon Research Scientist shared with Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

## **REQUIREMENTS**

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1. M.A. from a recognized conservation training program, or the equivalent, with a minimum of ten years of experience as a practicing conservator.
2. Demonstrated leadership experience at a senior level with high responsibility and accountability.
3. Comprehensive knowledge of conservation methodologies and the resources needed to support the care and treatment of the collection.
4. Experience motivating and leading experienced conservators and mentoring entry- and mid-level professionals in the field.
5. A demonstrated history of publishing in conservation literature.
6. A sustained interest in working with and interviewing artists.
7. Advanced knowledge and demonstrated experience with conservation treatments of painting, paper, photographs, textiles, and/or three-dimensional objects.
8. Advanced knowledge of chemical and physical properties of conservation materials and deterioration processes
9. Excellent written and oral communication skills in English; knowledge of a foreign language is a plus
10. Ability to work with collection management databases; TMS is preferred.
11. Ability to read, analyze and interpret scientific and technical journals, construction documents, financial reports, and legal documents.
12. Ability to write reports and business correspondence, effectively present information, and respond to inquiries and requests from museum staff, outside organizations, and the general public.
13. Ability to generate and manage project and operational budgets.

## **BENEFITS**

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The position comes with a comprehensive benefits package that includes paid vacation and sick time, medical and dental insurance, life insurance, AD&D, and LTD coverage. Employees may also participate in the Menil's 401(k) plan and receive an employer contribution equivalent to 5% of wages earned after one year on the job.



## **HOW TO APPLY**

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Interested applicants are encouraged to submit a cover letter, resume, and two writing samples either by post or electronically to:

Director of Human Resources  
The Menil Collection  
1511 Branard Street  
Houston, Texas 77006  
[hr@menil.org](mailto:hr@menil.org)

*To ensure full consideration, please apply by September 15, 2022; applications will be received until the position is filled.*

The Menil Collection is an Equal Opportunity Employer and seeks diversity in its workforce. The Menil is committed to attracting, retaining, developing, and promoting the most qualified employees without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability status, genetics, protected veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local laws.