

**The Menil Collection to Present
*The Curatorial Imagination of Walter Hopps***

Exhibition features recent and promised gifts that spotlight the Houston museum's history of deep relationships with artists, highlighting the career of the Menil's Founding Director Walter Hopps



HOUSTON—October 25, 2022—The Menil Collection is pleased to announce *The Curatorial Imagination of Walter Hopps*, an exhibition featuring approximately sixty artists and more than 130 artworks, many of which are recent or promised gifts to the museum from Caroline Huber and the Estate of Walter Hopps. The show will explore the influential curatorial vision of the Menil Collection's Founding Director Walter Hopps (1932–2005), as well as his distinctive approach to exhibition making, and appreciation for a variety of 20th-century art movements, featuring drawings, paintings, photography, and sculpture, ranging from the 1930s to the early 2000s. *The Curatorial Imagination of Walter Hopps* will be **on view at the Menil from March 24–August 13, 2023**, and coincides with the publication of *Artists We've Known: Selected Works from the Walter Hopps and Caroline Huber Collection*, which highlights works by 50 artists with whom the couple was close.

Once dubbed “the marvelous mad maven of modern art in America,” Hopps estimated that he had curated some 250 exhibitions in his fifty-plus year-long career. He started out in Los Angeles where, in 1952, he organized his first shows while still in college, and a few years later opened the



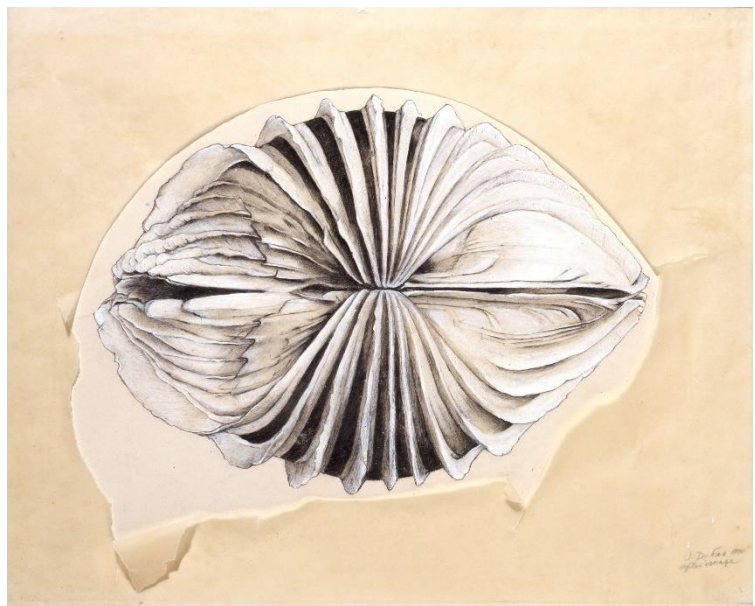
Ferus Gallery with artist Edward Kienholz. He was appointed director of the Pasadena Art Museum (now the Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena) in 1964 and went on to serve as the director of the Corcoran Gallery of Art and as the curator of modern art at the National Collection of Fine Arts (now the Smithsonian American Art Museum), both in Washington, D.C. Hopps met John de Menil while curating an exhibition on Jasper Johns for the Pasadena Art Museum in the late 1960s and met Dominique de Menil in 1971 at an opening for a Barnett Newman exhibition in New York City. In 1980, she invited Hopps to direct the museum she and John had built at Rice University and join the board of the Menil Foundation. The following year, Hopps was appointed Founding Director of the Menil Collection, a museum that opened to public in 1987.

Rebecca Rabinow, Director, The Menil Collection, said, “*The Curatorial Imagination of Walter Hopps* and the Menil Collection’s new publication *Artists We’ve Known* celebrate a promised gift of more than 500 works to the museum from Menil Foundation trustee Caroline Huber and the Estate of Walter Hopps. While Director of the Menil, Hopps

worked with Dominique de Menil to curate landmark exhibitions of artists Joseph Cornell, Marcel Duchamp, Edward Kienholz, Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, and Andy Warhol. We are delighted to exhibit these new and recent gifts to the Menil in our galleries as we highlight this important part of the museum’s history.”

Clare Elliott, Associate Research Curator, The Menil Collection, said, “This exhibition explores the achievements of one of the most talented and influential curators of the 20th century. The wide scope of Hopps’s interests and his embrace of artworks across forms and styles are demonstrated in the range of movements and media on display. Represented are artists like Jay DeFeo, Sam Gilliam, and William Eggleston, as well as figures who remain underrecognized today like Gretchen Bender, Louis Faurer, and Carroll Sockwell.”

The Curatorial Imagination of Walter Hopps opens with a room dedicated to artwork showcased in the early years of the Los Angeles-based Ferus Gallery, which became a gathering spot for young Californian artists like Wallace Berman, Bruce Conner, and Jay DeFeo. Ferus also brought artists active in New York, such as Jasper Johns and Barnett Newman, to the West Coast and was the first gallery to show Andy Warhol’s *Campbell’s Soup Can* paintings. While still active at Ferus, Hopps began curating exhibitions at the Pasadena Art Museum,



including the first museum survey of Pop Art, *New Paintings of Common Objects*, in 1962, and the first museum exhibition of Frank Stella in 1966.



The exhibition celebrates Hopps's interest in photography, a hobby since childhood, which was reignited when he met William Christenberry, who in turn introduced him to two foundational figures in American photography, William Eggleston and Walker Evans. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Hopps continued to showcase emerging artists such as Gretchen Bender, Robert Longo, and Haim Steinbach. Subsequent sections of the show highlight the retrospectives he organized at the Pasadena Museum of Art focused on three pioneering figures of Dada and Surrealism: Joseph Cornell, Marcel Duchamp, and Kurt Schwitters. It concludes with a selection of work by Robert Rauschenberg, a friend for

nearly fifty years whose wide-ranging interests and varied approaches mirrored those of Hopps.

The Curatorial Imagination of Walter Hopps is organized by Clare Elliott, Associate Research Curator.

A related publication, *Artists We've Known: Selected Works from the Walter Hopps and Caroline Huber Collection*, highlights 50 works from the couple's personal collection that have been gifted to the Menil, many of which will be on view in this exhibition. The book will be available for purchase at the Menil Collection Bookstore and online at menil.org/bookstore.

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

Funding

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Image Captions

1. Joe Goode, *Untitled*, ca. 1962. Oil paint on canvas, wood, and glass milk bottle, 27 x 25 1/2 x 6 1/4 in. (68.6 x 64.8 x 15.9 cm). The Menil Collection, Houston, Gift of Caroline Huber and the estate of Walter Hopps. © Joe Goode. Photo: Caroline Philippone
2. Edward Kienholz, *Walter Hopps Hopps Hopps*, detail, 1959. Oil paint and resin on hardboard and wood with metal, plastic, animal vertebrae, candy, plaster, leather, pills, glass, printed paper, graphite, colored pencil and ink on paper, mat board, and adhesive tape, 87 x 42 x 21 in. (221 x 106.7 x 53.3 cm). The Menil Collection, Houston, Gift of Lannan Foundation. © Kienholz. Courtesy of L.A. Louver, Venice, CA. Photo: Paul Hester
3. Jay DeFeo, *After Image*, 1970. Graphite, gouache, and transparent acrylic on paper with cut and torn tracing paper, overlay: 10-7/8 x 13-3/4 in. (27.6 x 34.9 cm), primary support: 14 x 19 1/2 in. (35.6 x 49.5 cm). The Menil Collection, Houston, Gift of Glenn Fukushima in honor of the artist. © The Jay DeFeo Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Paul Hester
4. Jerry McMillan, *Walter Hopps, Jerry McMillan Wants to See You*, 1965. Photograph, 16 x 19 1/4 in. (40.6 x 48.9 cm). The Menil Collection, Houston, Promised gift of Caroline Huber and the estate of Walter Hopps. © Jerry McMillan. Courtesy of Craig Krull Gallery

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