

**THE MENIL COLLECTION APPOINTS DISTINGUISHED CURATOR,
SCHOLAR, AND MUSEUM PROFESSIONAL REBECCA RABINOW
TO SERVE AS ITS NEW DIRECTOR**



HOUSTON, TX, May 19, 2016 — The Board of Trustees of the Menil Collection today confirmed the appointment of one of America’s most distinguished and experienced curators and museum professionals, Rebecca Rabinow, to serve as the institution’s new director. Dr. Rabinow has dedicated her career to date to The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, which she joined in 1990 and where she is currently the Leonard A. Lauder Curator of Modern Art and Curator in Charge of the Leonard A. Lauder Research Center for Modern Art.

A committee appointed by the Menil’s Board of Trustees identified Dr. Rabinow through an extensive international search to succeed the previous director, Josef Helfenstein. Dr. Rabinow will assume her duties at the Menil in July 2016.

Janet Hobby, president of the Board of Trustees, said, “The Board and senior staff of the Menil Collection unanimously join me in welcoming Rebecca Rabinow as our new executive leader, and in offering our profound thanks to Mark Wawro and the search committee for this brilliant appointment. They have selected a director who combines the highest level of curatorial and scholarly achievement with a proven record of museum leadership and lifelong ties to Houston and the Menil Collection. We could not have hoped for more.”

A Houstonian by upbringing, Dr. Rabinow was educated at Smith College (B.A., 1988), the Sorbonne, and the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University (M.A. 1990, Ph.D. 1995). She is a Fellow (Class of 2013) of the Center for Curatorial Leadership.

Rebecca Rabinow said, “I spent the summer of 1988 volunteering in the recently opened Menil Collection, where my job was to preserve Dominique and John de Menil’s correspondence by placing it in Mylar sleeves. However cut-and-dried that might sound, their letters radiated such a sense of history, mission, and creativity that I was hooked on the first day. It is abundantly clear to me that the Menil set me on my career path. I am deeply honored now to return to Houston, an exciting, vibrant, and diverse city that will soon be the third largest in the United States, and to advance the distinctive and immeasurably important artistic and social missions of the Menil Collection.”

Mark Wawro, who chaired the search committee for the Menil, said, “In an extremely strong field of candidates, Rebecca stood out and was the unanimous choice of the search committee. She is a superstar in experience and personality, but more than anything else has a genuine connection to the values the Menil holds dear.”

About Rebecca Rabinow

Among the recent notable exhibitions that Dr. Rabinow has organized at The Metropolitan Museum of Art are *Cubism: The Leonard A. Lauder Collection* (2014-15), *Matisse, In Search of True Painting* (2012-13), and *The Steins Collect: Matisse, Picasso, and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (2012). These exhibitions traveled to major American and international venues, including the Grand Palais and Centre Pompidou in Paris, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen. In addition, she co-organized the 2007 renovation and reinstallation of The Met’s Galleries for Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century European Paintings and Sculpture. She has edited, co-edited, and written essays for the catalogues for these and other exhibitions as well as publishing numerous articles and lecturing widely.

In her leadership capacity at the Metropolitan, Dr. Rabinow serves on numerous museum-wide committees and boards and was recently the chair of the institution’s Forum of Curators, Conservators, and Scientists. She led this group of 230 diverse colleagues through their deliberations in 2015 and at the conclusion put forward an agenda for action that was accepted with praise.

About the Menil Collection

As the new executive leader of the Menil Collection, Dr. Rabinow joins a line of directors that began with the legendary Walter Hopps (who was appointed in 1980, seven years before the opening of the museum) and has continued through Josef Helfenstein, who became director in 2004 and initiated the strategic plan, campus master plan, and current ensemble of building and landscaping projects that is both preserving and enhancing the characteristics that make the Menil unique.

A legacy of the philanthropists Dominique and John de Menil, the Menil Collection opened in 1987 in the first building in the United States designed by Renzo Piano. (In 2013, the building was honored with the AIA Twenty-five Year Award, recognizing architectural design of enduring significance, for having “brought the world a transcendent space for viewing art that places the collection, and its presentation in perfectly realized natural light, above all else.”)

The main museum building houses one of the most important privately assembled art collections of the twentieth century, which by the bequest of the de Menils was made accessible to all, free of charge. Since the museum’s opening, the collection has doubled in size and now numbers approximately 17,000 objects, often in concentrations of remarkable depth. The main areas are modern and contemporary art; African, Pacific Northwest, and Pacific Islands art; Byzantine artifacts and icon paintings and medieval art; and Mediterranean antiquities from the Paleolithic period through the late Roman era.

The main building is the centerpiece of a parklike 30-acre campus, which the de Menils preserved in the heart of Houston as a gracious neighborhood of bungalows in the belief that art ought to be integrated into daily life. Other buildings added to the campus over the years are the Cy Twombly Gallery (1995), the Dan Flavin installation at Richmond Hall (1996), and the Byzantine Fresco Chapel (1997), which is now a venue for long-term installations by contemporary artists. Outdoor sculptures on the campus include works by Michael Heizer, Jim Love, and Mark di Suvero, as well as a sound installation by Max Neuhaus. The Menil Collection is currently constructing the Menil Drawing Institute, the only freestanding facility designed expressly for the exhibition and study of modern and contemporary drawings, which is scheduled to open in 2017 in a building designed by Johnston Marklee, with landscape design by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates. The Rothko Chapel, founded by John and Dominique de Menil in 1971, also stands on the campus but is an independent institution.

The Menil Collection presents regular rotations of artworks from its growing permanent collection and also organizes special exhibitions and programs throughout the year. Among the notable recent exhibitions organized by the Menil have been *Richard Serra Drawing: A Retrospective*; *Forest Bess: Seeing Things Invisible*; *Nice. Luc Tuymans*; *Lee Bontecou: Drawn Worlds*; *Experiments with Truth: Gandhi and Images of Nonviolence*; *Barnett Newman: The Late Work*; *The Precarious*; and *William N. Copley: The World According to CPLY*. A major exhibition exploring Pablo Picasso’s lifelong commitment to line drawing, *Picasso: The Line*, will be presented exclusively at the Menil beginning in September 2016.

Publications of the Menil include scholarly catalogues of its exhibitions and major projects such as the catalogue raisonné of the drawings of Jasper Johns, which will be published in autumn 2017, concurrent with the opening of the Menil Drawing Institute. The Menil’s full roster of public programs includes concerts, lectures, panel discussions and symposia, film screenings, poetry readings, and events for families and children. As with the museum, admission to all public programs is free.

The Menil Collection will mark its thirtieth anniversary in 2017.

Rebecca Rabinow said, “Over the past twenty-nine years, the Menil has prospered and grown and has now reached a significant crossroads with the imminent opening of the Menil Drawing Institute, as well as its other initiatives. As director, I hope to communicate the Menil’s distinctive mission that at its core respects the primacy of art, celebrates intellectual independence, and values the artist’s intention. I seek to continue to hold the Menil to the highest standards of exhibition and scholarship while embracing the spiritual, unconventional aspects that make the museum and its programs so unique and beloved both within the dynamic city of Houston and the international art world.”

About the Search

The search committee of the Menil’s Board of Trustees was chaired by Mark Wawro and assisted by Naree Viner of Korn Ferry. The committee began its work in September 2015 and completed the international search for the Menil’s new director in approximately nine months. The selection of Rebecca Rabinow was presented to the full Board of Trustees and approved on May 19, 2016.

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On view at the Menil

The Secret of the Hanging Egg: Salvador Dali 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 – Opening May 21, 2016

Andy Warhol: Sunset – Opening August 19, 2016

Picasso: The Line – Opening September 16, 2016

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