

## THE MENIL COLLECTION APPOINTS DAVID BRESLIN AS CHIEF CURATOR OF THE MENIL DRAWING INSTITUTE

HOUSTON, TX, January 21, 2015 – Following an international search, Josef Helfenstein, director of the Menil Collection, has named David Breslin as chief curator of the Menil Drawing Institute (MDI). Currently occupying dual academic and curatorial posts at the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, MA, Breslin will assume his duties at the Menil in early March.

Said Josef Helfenstein: “I can’t think of a more exciting prospect for a curator than to lead a new institute dedicated to exploring every aspect of a key medium of modern and contemporary art -- and to expanding our very definition of that medium. The trustees and I feel very strongly that David brings with him a curatorial and scholarly energy that will shape, promote, and sustain the philosophy of the MDI, integrating it into the whole of the Menil Collection.”

David Breslin earned a bachelor’s degree in English from Amherst College, a master’s in art history from Williams College, and a Ph.D. in the history of art and architecture from Harvard University. His doctoral dissertation, *I WANT TO GO TO THE FUTURE: Jenny Holzer and the End of a Century*, was informed by time spent working in Holzer’s studio, collaborating with the artist on planning and designing museum and gallery exhibitions and organizing a diverse range of public projects.

He was appointed to serve as an adviser in contemporary art initiatives at the Clark Art Institute while pursuing his doctorate, and in January 2012 was promoted to the dual role of associate director of the research and academic program and associate curator of contemporary projects. As associate director, Breslin partnered with international museum and academic colleagues to create the conference, colloquium, and symposium program for the museum; he also oversaw the Clark’s residential fellowship program. As associate curator, he advised the director and senior curator on exhibitions and programming and helped secure funding to support those initiatives.

This past summer, the Clark presented Breslin’s exhibition *Raw Color: The Circles of David Smith*. He also co-curated another 2014 exhibition, *Make It New: Abstract*

*Painting from the National Gallery of Art, 1950-1975*. Most recently, Breslin worked on the Ellsworth Kelly-curated exhibition *Monet | Kelly* (on view at the Clark through February 15). In addition to curating exhibitions on El Anatsui and Juan Muñoz, among others, Breslin has published on a range of artists including Paul Thek, Cady Noland, and Valentin Carron.

Of his Houston appointment, Breslin said: “I’m thrilled to be joining the Menil Drawing Institute at this most exciting and important time in its history. I also am profoundly grateful to the museum’s leadership for entrusting me with this great opportunity. With its enviable collection, soon-to-be-realized Johnston Marklee-designed home, urban yet meditative setting, scholarly ambitions, and due to the support and work of many, the MDI has been and will continue to be a premier forum to consider the centrality of drawing in modern and contemporary culture.”

The MDI has existed as a program of the Menil Collection since 2008, developing a national reputation for exhibitions such as the 2012 traveling exhibition *Richard Serra Drawing: A Retrospective*, *Lee Bontecou: Drawn Worlds* (2014) and the forthcoming *Becoming Modern: Nineteenth-Century French Drawings from The Morgan Library & Museum and the Menil Collection*. The MDI has also embarked on ambitious scholarly projects, such as the multiple-volume catalogue raisonné of the drawings of Jasper Johns, and has established a collaborative partnership with The Morgan Library & Museum. Designed by the Los Angeles-based architecture firm of Johnston Marklee, the MDI will be the first freestanding facility in the United States created especially for the exhibition, study, storage, and conservation of modern and contemporary drawings.

Allegra Pesenti, who has stepped down as chief curator of the MDI in deference to personal obligations in London, will transition to the position of curator at large. We look forward to the opening of her first exhibition at the Menil, *Apparitions: Frottages and Rubbings from 1860 to Now* in September.

### **About the Menil Collection**

A legacy of the late Houston philanthropists John and Dominique de Menil, the Menil Collection opened in 1987. The main museum building anchors the 30-acre campus, which also includes the Cy Twombly Gallery, a site-specific Dan Flavin installation, and outdoor sculpture. Presenting regular rotations of artworks from the growing permanent collection, the Menil also organizes special exhibitions and programs throughout the year, publishes scholarly books, and conducts research into the

conservation of modern and contemporary art. The museum is open Wednesday through Sunday, 11am to 7pm, and charges no admission fee.

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