

Adam Szymczyk Named New Recipient of the Walter Hopps Award for Curatorial Achievement

Houston, December 14, 2010 – Menil Director Josef Helfenstein has announced the fifth recipient of the Walter Hopps Award for Curatorial Achievement: Adam Szymczyk, director and chief curator of Kunsthalle Basel. Established in 2001 in honor of Menil Founding Director Walter Hopps (1932-2005), the award recognizes curators in early to mid-career who have made significant contributions to the field of contemporary art. The Walter Hopps Award for Curatorial Achievement carries a stipend of \$15,000.

A distinguished panel of three arts professionals made the selection: Iwona Blazwick, director of the Whitechapel Gallery in London; Donna De Salvo, chief curator, the Whitney Museum of American Art and former senior curator at Tate Modern, London; and Hamza Walker, director of education and associate curator for the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago (and the 2005 recipient of the Hopps Award). “In his dedication to the untested,” said the panelists in a joint statement, “Adam Szymczyk has provided a critical framework for a generation of artists and curators.”

Born in Piotrków Trybunalski, Poland, in 1970, Szymczyk studied art history at the University of Warsaw. In 1997 he was among the co-founders of Foksal Gallery Foundation in Warsaw, established with the aim of supporting artists and promoting contemporary art in Poland through exhibitions and publications. He continued working as curator and writer in Warsaw until 2003, when he assumed his current posts at Kunsthalle Basel, where he has organized numerous exhibitions, including *Rosalind Nashashibi: Over In* (2004); *Artur Zmijewski* (2005); *Nairy Baghramian: Es ist ausser Haus* (2006); *Micol Assaël: Chizhevsky Lessons* (2007); *Alexandra Bachzetsis: Show* (2008); *Danh Vo: Where the Lions Are* (2009) and *Moyra Davey: Speaker Receiver* (2010). In 2008 he co-curated with Elena Filipovic the 5th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art under the title *When Things Cast No Shadow*. Szymczyk’s writings have appeared in such publications as *Parkett*, *Frieze*, *Flash Art*, *Fluid*, *Kunstbulletin*, and *Spike*; he has also authored numerous exhibition catalogues.

“To receive the Hopps Award is an honor,” said Szymczyk. “The award is named after a curator who was an inspired, forward-looking and unconventionally thinking individual. The joy of receiving it must be shared with my friends, artists, and professional colleagues whom I was lucky to meet on my way.”

Walter Hopps began his career in Los Angeles, where in 1957 he co-founded the Ferus Gallery and was instrumental in bringing the first postwar generation of the city’s artists to international prominence. Among the seminal exhibitions he organized as curator and director of the

Pasadena Art Museum were the first retrospectives of Marcel Duchamp and Joseph Cornell; he also mounted the first exhibition devoted to Pop Art, 1962's "New Painting of Common Objects." Over the years, as director of the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., the Menil Collection in Houston, and as commissioner and curator of the São Paulo Bienal and Venice Biennale, Hopps presented work by such artists as Barnett Newman, Frank Stella, Robert Irwin, James Rosenquist, and Diane Arbus. In 1997 Hopps organized a Robert Rauschenberg retrospective for the Menil Collection, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York (where he held the title of adjunct senior curator of twentieth-century art).

Said Josef Helfenstein of this year's recipient of the Hopps Award: "It is a pleasure and a privilege to honor Adam Szymczyk in this way. Like the award's namesake, Adam is a great innovator. His intelligence, curiosity, engagement with and generosity to artists honors Walter's memory and furthers the importance of this award for excellence in the curatorial field."

Adam Szymczyk will deliver a public lecture at the Menil on May 17, 2011 at 7:30 p.m.

For further information: press@menil.org
www.menil.org