

The Menil Collection Unveils New Artwork by Marcia Kure at the Menil Drawing Institute

The site-specific commission is the third in an ongoing series of ephemeral wall drawings



HOUSTON—November 11, 2021—The Menil Collection is pleased to announce the exhibition of *NETWORK*, 2021, a monumental site-specific work by artist Marcia Kure. The work is the latest commission for the Menil Drawing Institute, which has featured an ongoing series of ephemeral wall drawings since the building opened in 2018. *Wall Drawing Series: Marcia Kure* will be **on view at the Menil Drawing Institute through August 2022**.

Through her multidisciplinary art practice, Kure examines a wide range of concepts, including colonial legacies and diasporic identities. She is known for compositions that feature the curvilinear Uli line, an abstract design motif associated with Nigeria and best known for its application in temporary circumstances like body painting and murals, as well as her use of natural, plant-based pigments extracted from kola nuts, indigo, and tea. Exploring line as concept, form, and experience, the artist puts pressure on the material properties and possibilities of her drawing media, and their status as commodities for tracing and mapping the African diaspora. Kure's wall drawing uses the line as a metaphor for and map of contemporary and historical trade routes. These largely invisible networks and webs are traced across space and time, making connections that implicate the viewer in a history of migration, labor, and exploitation. The accumulation of lines in the work signifies connections between interlocking networks of socio-political control, mass surveillance, and finance capitalism.

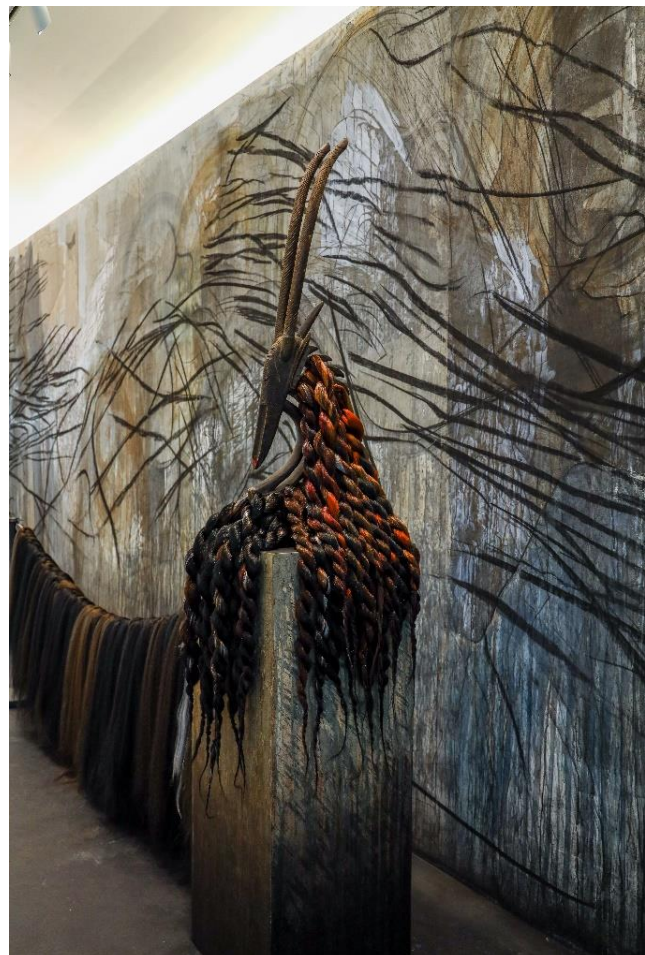
Rebecca Rabinow, director, said: “The Menil Collection is so grateful to Marcia Kure for her participation in the Menil Drawing Institute’s wall drawing series. *NETWORK* is a profoundly beautiful and deeply engaging drawing that rewards careful looking and repeat visits. The temporary nature of this series offers a unique opportunity for artists like Kure to use a wide range of materials as they consider their drawing practice on a monumental scale, giving the Menil Drawing Institute a renewed sense of artistic energy upon the completion of each work.”

Artist Marcia Kure said: “Drawing has been a life-long journey. It’s been a language that I’ve been trying to understand for the longest time—from historic South African cave drawings, to collage, to sewing—trying to find my own way of drawing the line. For me, *NETWORK* is an accumulation of my practice up to this point. I returned to the lines that I began with, which now have more meaning and depth. I asked myself, ‘how do you collapse time and space, merging the past, present, and the future?’ Line, I’ve always understood, is not a mere mark on paper, it’s something that contains memory, purpose, and thought. Line is something that we all engage with daily, our entire body participates in making the mark, implicating us all in a vast interconnected and entangled network that continues beyond the wall.”

Kelly Montana, Assistant Curator, Menil Drawing Institute, said: “Uli designs come from a tradition of mark-making that dates to at least the 9th century. Marcia Kure incorporates this legacy into some of the most vanguard ways in which we think about drawing today: drawing as lines in space, drawing as the expression of multiple temporalities, drawing as a journey—you can see all of these concepts present in this work.”

For this commission, Kure attempts to draw lines, both actual and metaphorical, between subjugation and consumption. Two African sculptures, one in the style of a Mande headdress and the other representing a Dogon female figure, are dressed in synthetic hair extensions and flank the drawing. For the artist, the hair acts as a kind of protection for the objects. “This was my own way of dignifying them, offering them some kind of covering,” said Kure. The artist obtained the two sculptures from marketplaces that sell transported objects from Africa to consumers in the West, another reference to the network. “Here, the sculptures embody bodies—signifying subject and object at the same time—and how bodies and objects were moved from the continent,” added Kure.

Wall Drawing Series: Marcia Kure is curated by Kelly Montana, Assistant Curator, Menil Drawing Institute. The Menil’s *Wall Drawing Series* began in 2018 as part of the Drawing Institute’s commitment to seeking new approaches to the form and language of drawing. Kure’s installation is the third in this ongoing series.



About the Artist

Marcia Kure was born in Nigeria and trained under the founding members of the Nsukka School, a group of artists and faculty members associated with the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Her work is held in the collections of the British Museum, London; the Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington, DC; and the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, among others. She lives and works in Princeton, New Jersey, and Abuja and Kaduna, Nigeria.

About the Menil Collection

Houston philanthropists and art patrons John and Dominique de Menil established the Menil Foundation in 1954 to foster 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. 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

This exhibition is generously supported by Clare Casademont and Michael Metz; Penelope and Lester Marks; Scott and Judy Nyquist; Leslie and Shannon Sasser; and Robin and Andrew Schirrmester.

Image

1. Marcia Kure in front of *NETWORK*, 2021, at the Menil Drawing Institute. Photo: Zainob + Mathew Create
2. Detail view of *NETWORK*, 2021, at the Menil Drawing Institute. Photo: Sarah Hobson

Press Contacts

The Menil Collection
Sarah Hobson, Assistant Director of Communications
shobson@menil.org

Polskin Arts & Communications Counselors
Tommy Napier, Senior Account Supervisor
212.715.1694 / tommy.napier@finnpartners.com