The exhibition is generously supported by Suzanne Deal Booth; John R. Eckel, Jr. Foundation; Linda and George Kelly; Susan Frances de Menil; Marilyn Oshman; and the City of Houston.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

The Story of City Lights Saturday, January 7, 7:00 p.m.

Paul Yamasaki, head book buyer at City Lights, discusses the early days of the renowned San Francisco bookstore with Associate Curator Clare Elliott.

Alice As Identity in Cold War Hollywood Tuesday, January 12, 7:00 p.m.

Art historian Monica Soneberg considers how Los Angeles-based artists explored the potential of working pseudonymously in an era when avant-garde art was linked with subversive politics.

Bruce Conner: An Assemblage of Films Saturday, February 11, 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 12, 3:30 p.m.

Aurora Picture Show, 2422 Bardwell Street

The Menil Collection and Aurora Picture Show bring together a selection of short films by California artist Bruce Conner. Free admission; tickets required; see aurorapicsociety.org.

ticket

Sunday, March 12, 4:00 p.m.

Byantine Franciscan Chapel, 4011 Yupon Street

The Menil Collection and Houston-based artist collective Alabama Song present an afternoon of poetry and sound that delves into the lasting legacy of the Beat generation.

Alison’s Beat Generation

All public programs are free and open to the public. Menil members enjoy access to additional events, such as a midday gallery talk with exhibition curator Clare Elliott on Friday, December 16. Visit the museum or menil.org for more information.

from George Herms, Greet the Circus with a Smile, 1961. Offset print on paper, 11¼ × 19⅞ inches (28.7 × 50.4 cm). The Menil Collection, Houston, Gift of Caroline Huber and the estate of Walter Hopps. © The Estate of Wallace Berman

Artist, poet, and jazz aficionado Wallace Berman (1926–1976) achieved near-mythic standing among the artists practicing in California in the 1950s and 60s. While living in Los Angeles, he developed a distinct artistic voice that combined his interest in Surrealist art and film, his intense study of the Kabbalah, and the possibilities he discovered in the assemblage art of Robert Rauschenberg. Both Factum Fine, cur. 1957, and Untitled, 1955–56, were included in the first and only solo gallery exhibition of Berman’s work during his lifetime: Sculpture and Paintings by Wallace Berman, 1957. Held at the groundbreaking Ferus Gallery, established by fellow artist Ed Kienholz and budding curator Walter Hopps earlier that year, the exhibition was investigated by the city’s vice squad and they arrested Berman on obscenity charges. The artist found the experience so traumatic that he declined subsequent opportunities to exhibit his work for years.

Berman’s near-absence from public view intensified his reputation as a mysterious, underground figure. His influence declined subsequent opportunities to exhibit his work for years.

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between 1953 and 1964. Distributed via post, most of its volumes consisted of loose-leaf pages of text and image with no suggested order, leaving the sequence up to chance or to the reader. Over the course of its nine-issue run, nearly fifty artists, poets, and photographers, including Walter Hopps and Dennis Hopper, contributed to the publication. Untitled Art is Love is God, 1955, by Robert Alexander (1923–1987) attests to the iconic status Berman and Semina achieved. The small woodcut portrait depicts a noble medieval nobleman and woman, when open, a photographic portrait of Berman is visible alongside his motto “Art is Love is God”—a precise encapsulation the artist’s faith in the creative process. When George Herms (b. 1935) met Berman in 1955, he discovered a kindred spirit. Berman introduced him to the possibilities of assemblage, which soon became Herms’s preferred technique, and at that time, formed his creations from all manner of objects and at that time, his work often shrouded them in nylon stockings. The weblike material, with its uncanny ability to simultaneously conceal and reveal and its association with the female body, became almost a signature of the artist’s assemblages. A highly theatrical, almost macabre quality pervades these works, which he mostly abandoned making after 1964.

A close friend of Berman, Conner, and Hopp, Jay DeFeo (1929–1989) was a dynamic presence in San Francisco’s artistic community. She worked in a variety of media, mixing the tensions between abstraction and representation and exploring both geometric and gestural forms. Like Berman, the artist spent much of her career as something of an underground figure, mythologized for the eight years she labored on a single monumental painting!}

**Edward Kienholz, George Washington in Drag, 1957. Oil on wood, 36 x 41 inches (91.4 x 104.1 cm). The Menil Collection, Houston, Gift of Caroline Huber and the estate of Ed Kienholz. Courtesy of L.A. Louver, Venice, CA.**

**George Warshington in Drag, 1962, a serene composition of detritus into works of lasting beauty.** A different sensibility, 1961, illustrates the delight that Herms took in assembling a Smile worn found objects and personal mementos, Greet the Circus with a Smile, 1961, leaving the sequence up to chance or to the reader. Over the course of its nine-issue run, nearly fifty artists, poets, and photographers, including Walter Hopps and Dennis Hopper, contributed to the publication. Untitled Art is Love is God, 1955, by Robert Alexander (1923–1987) attests to the iconic status Berman and Semina achieved. The small woodcut portrait depicts a noble medieval nobleman and woman, when open, a photographic portrait of Berman is visible alongside his motto “Art is Love is God”—a precise encapsulation the artist’s faith in the creative process. When George Herms (b. 1935) met Berman in 1955, he discovered a kindred spirit. Berman introduced him to the possibilities of assemblage, which soon became Herms’s preferred technique, and at that time, formed his creations from all manner of objects and at that time, his work often shrouded them in nylon stockings. The weblike material, with its uncanny ability to simultaneously conceal and reveal and its association with the female body, became almost a signature of the artist’s assemblages. A highly theatrical, almost macabre quality pervades these works, which he mostly abandoned making after 1964.

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**Robert Alexander, Untitled Art is Love is God, 1955.**