

**THE MENIL DRAWING INSTITUTE TO OPEN ON NOVEMBER 3  
AT THE MENIL COLLECTION IN HOUSTON, INAUGURATING A NEW ERA FOR  
THE APPRECIATION OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY DRAWINGS**

**First Facility of its Kind at Any Museum Will Open with the Exclusive Exhibition  
*The Condition of Being Here: Drawings by Jasper Johns***



**HOUSTON, TEXAS, November 1, 2018** — Rebecca Rabinow, Director of the Menil Collection in Houston, will welcome civic officials, cultural leaders, community representatives, artists, supporters, and Menil leadership on Saturday, November 3 for the dedication and public opening of the Menil Drawing Institute. The new home for the Institute is the first freestanding museum facility built expressly for the acquisition, study, exhibition, conservation, and storage of modern and contemporary drawings. The 30,000-square-foot, \$40 million building—designed by Johnston Marklee in collaboration with landscape architects Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates—will open with the inaugural exhibition *The Condition of Being Here: Drawings by Jasper Johns*, spanning the artist's career.

A special community day will follow the ceremony to welcome all of Houston to the fifth art building on the Menil's renowned 30-acre campus, and the first art building to be added in more than 20 years. Admission to the Menil Collection is always free.

Rebecca Rabinow, Director of the Menil Collection, said, “As we prepare to cut the ribbon to welcome visitors into this beautiful new building, we reflect on the Menil Collection’s commitment to its founders’ belief that art is essential to human experience. From its inception thirty-one years ago, this museum has fostered direct personal encounters with works of art, and welcomes all visitors free of charge to its art buildings and surrounding greenspaces. This quietly innovative architecture of the Menil Drawing Institute allows us to make drawing, the most personal of all artistic practices, accessible as never before, to artists, to scholars, to students, and to the public. The Menil Drawing Institute will engage with our community, with the entire world of arts, in an exciting new way—and we are immensely proud to welcome everyone to visit, explore, and enjoy.”

Douglas Lawing, Chair of the Board of Trustees, said, “Like almost everything that seems simple and natural, the Menil Drawing Institute is in fact the product of infinite care and dedication by a great many people. Our profound gratitude goes to the entire Board of the Menil Collection, including Chair Emerita Louisa Stude Sarofim and Menil Trustee Janie C. Lee, who have been longstanding champions of this project. We thank our former Director Josef Helfenstein, our generous donors and members for their support, and of course the brilliant Sharon Johnston and Mark Lee and Michael van Valkenburgh and his team. Together, they have created a work of lasting beauty.”

The Menil Drawing Institute has been a program of the Menil since 2008, organizing major traveling exhibitions and undertaking scholarly projects, including the *Jasper Johns Catalogue Raisonné of Drawings, 1954-2014*. This landmark six-volume catalogue, published by the Menil Collection, will be released later this month in conjunction with the opening of the building.

The Menil Drawing Institute now joins the four other art buildings in the Menil neighborhood: the celebrated Renzo Piano-designed main museum building, the Cy Twombly Gallery (also designed by Piano), the site-specific Dan Flavin installation at Richmond Hall, and the Byzantine Fresco Chapel designed by François de Menil (now a venue for long-term installations of contemporary art). Along with Bistro Menil, the Menil Bookstore, and a new Energy House (designed by Johnston Marklee), these buildings are situated amid park-like greenspaces and residential bungalows in the heart of the city.

### **The Menil Drawing Institute and Jasper Johns**

To inaugurate the Menil Drawing Institute building, the Menil has organized *The Condition of Being Here: Drawings by Jasper Johns*. John and Dominique de Menil purchased their first Johns drawing in 1969. Thanks to a bequest from former Menil trustee David Whitney and gifts and promised gifts from current Menil trustees Janie C. Lee and Louisa Stude Sarofim, the Menil is one of the world’s largest repositories of drawings by Johns. In *The Condition of Being Here* (a title taken from a notebook entry circa 1968 by Johns), the Menil Drawing Institute traces both the chronology of the artist’s career and his method of working in motifs, rather than in series, with images such as the target and the flag reappearing in his art over decades.

The exhibition includes 41 drawings made in graphite, ink, charcoal, watercolor, colored pencil, acrylic, water-soluble encaustic, pastel, powdered graphite, gouache, and oil stick, on surfaces ranging from paper to plastic. This will be the third exhibition of works by Jasper Johns presented at the Menil Collection, following *Jasper Johns: The Sculptures* (1996) and *Jasper Johns: Drawings* (2003).

An exhibition catalogue produced for *The Condition of Being Here* inaugurates a new book series designed to accompany Menil Drawing Institute exhibitions.

### **An Unprecedented Home for Drawing**

The Menil Drawing Institute privileges drawing, the largest and fastest-growing body of work in the Menil's holdings. The building is located on West Main Street, just south of the main museum and the Cy Twombly Gallery, and north of the Dan Flavin Installation, which fronts onto Richmond Avenue. It functions as a hub among the Menil's art buildings, landscaped greenspaces, and pedestrian paths.

Constructed on a footprint of 17,000 square feet and rising to a height of 16 feet, the building is midway in size between the domestic architecture of the bungalows that ring the Menil campus and the institutional architecture of the main museum building.

The design by Johnston Marklee shields light-sensitive works on paper from harmful natural light, yet allows the common areas of the building to benefit from carefully modulated sunshine. A square, open-roofed, landscaped courtyard on the west serves as the building's entrance. There are two other courtyards of identical size: an interior space adjacent to the curatorial offices known as the "Scholars' Cloister" and a second exterior courtyard on the east. A "Living Room"—which functions as both a circulation spine and a gathering place—links the east and west courtyards. The 3,000 square feet of galleries are located on the south side of the building, while the north side consists of administrative offices, study rooms, and the conservation lab.

As visitors approach the building, the sharp Texas sunlight is reduced by the external roof canopy. By the time visitors walk through the entrance, the intensity of the light is once again diminished, even as the courtyards enable a view of the outdoors and allow a modest level of baffled light to spill into the building. When visitors pass from the "Living Room" into the exhibition galleries, this mild wash of sunlight fades away.

In addition to designing the Menil Drawing Institute, Johnston Marklee also designed the nearby Energy House to provide a new central source of heating and cooling for the campus. The new parklike greenspace between the Energy House and the Menil Drawing Institute has been designed by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, which also designed the landscaping of the Menil Drawing Institute courtyards and a new entry sequence to the campus.

The Menil Drawing Institute building is named in honor of Menil Foundation Chair Emerita and Life Trustee Louisa Stude Sarofim. Additionally, the Menil is grateful for the support it has received and is pleased to announce other named spaces in and around

the new building: McGovern Green, John P. and Katherine McGovern located east of the Cy Twombly Gallery; Brown Foundation Inc. Galleries; Barbara and Michael Gamson Cloister (Scholars' Cloister); E. Rudge Allen Family Courtyard (Scholars' Courtyard); Janie C. Lee Drawing Room; and Suzanne Deal Booth Conservation Lab.

### **Menil Campus Expansion**

The Menil Drawing Institute is the centerpiece of the southern side of the Menil neighborhood. The park designed by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates features hundreds of plants and trees, as well as a 30-foot-by-30-foot deck that can serve as a platform for performances and video projections. The extension of West Main Street immediately south of the Menil Drawing Institute building eases the passage of cars and pedestrians through the neighborhood. The Energy House has been operating since February 2017, providing a central source of heating and cooling for the existing campus and future buildings.

### ***The Campaign for the Menil***

Development of the Menil Drawing Institute was funded through the institution-wide *Campaign for the Menil*, which raised more than \$121 million, surpassing its original goal by more than \$6 million. The campaign also has supported construction of the Energy House, expansion and enhancement of greenspaces, updates and repairs to the main museum building, and improvement and refurbishment of infrastructure, as well as an increase in the endowment, enabling the Menil Collection to remain free of charge in perpetuity.

### **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 building opened to the public. It was recently renovated and underwent a complete reinstallation of the permanent collection. For the next year, the main building will host rotating displays composed from the permanent collection and promised gifts. A series of exhibitions devoted to recent acquisitions of works by living artists as well as an artist lecture series are highlights of the coming months.

With the opening of the Menil Drawing Institute, the Menil Collection now consists of five art buildings and greenspaces located within a residential neighborhood. The Menil embodies the ideals and values of its founders, in particular that art is vital to human life and should be readily accessible to all persons.

The Menil Collection is located at 1533 Sul Ross Street in Houston, Texas. The Menil Drawing Institute is located at 1412 West Main Street. All Menil art spaces are open Wednesday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Admission to the Menil is always free.

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*Image: Exterior of the Menil Drawing Institute, south elevation. Photo: Richard Barnes.*

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