

# Menil<sup>25</sup>

## **THE NEW YORKER'S CALVIN TOMKINS IN CONVERSATION WITH MENIL DIRECTOR JOSEF HELFENSTEIN – OCTOBER 17**

### **Special program in a series celebrating the museum's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

HOUSTON, TX, September 27, 2012 — As the veteran art writer for *The New Yorker*, Calvin Tomkins is one of the pioneers of the magazine's famed profiles — long-form journalism at its best. Prominent among his subjects over the years have been many of the artists, architects and curators who were involved in creating the Menil Collection — including Dominique de Menil, whom Tomkins profiled in 1998, a few months after her death, in a glowing article titled "The Benefactor", and the museum's founding director Walter Hopps.

As part of this fall's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, Calvin Tomkins will make an exceptional visit to Houston on October 17 to engage in a public conversation with Menil Director Josef Helfenstein. The event, which is free of charge, starts at 7:00 pm in the museum foyer. Seating is limited.

The conversation, titled *Making a Museum*, promises to shed light on Tomkins's vivid and highly personal view of John and Dominique de Menil, as well as events in the art world since the Menil's opening in 1987. The audience will also have the opportunity to ask questions of Mr. Tomkins and Mr. Helfenstein.

Over the years, Tomkins has given his readers a behind-the-scenes chronicle of the cultural life of their times, as seen through the personalities and achievements of people including Philip Johnson, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Pontus Hultén, Renzo Piano, and Robert Rauschenberg – all of whom have been associated with the Menil Collection. In "A Touch for the Now," his profile of Walter Hopps, Tomkins wrote of the newly opened Menil, "I can think of no other museum where the sheer pleasure of looking at works of art is so subtly and consistently enhanced by the setting." In his profile of Dominique de Menil, Tomkins praised her for having given Houston "one of the greatest private art collections in the United States."

Among Tomkins many books are *Living Well Is the Best Revenge*, his brilliant profile of Gerald and Sara Murphy. Other volumes *Off the Wall*, and *Lives of the Artists*, will be available in the Menil Bookstore.

Other silver-anniversary celebrations scheduled for the fall include a poetry reading organized by acclaimed poet Sasha West; a free concert of new music written and performed by composer Philip Glass; a Menil Contemporaries night, *Bleu Electrique*; and *Celebration in Blue*, the third Menil gala since the museum opened in 1987.

More information on all Menil anniversary events can be found online at [www.menil.org](http://www.menil.org).

### **About The Menil Collection**

Considered one of the most important privately assembled collections of the twentieth century, the Menil Collection opened officially on June 4, 1987, and is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. The Menil's holdings, ranging from the prehistoric to art of the present day, are housed in a modern landmark designed by the renowned architect Renzo Piano. In the quarter-century since it opened to the public, the Menil has established an international reputation for presenting acclaimed exhibitions and producing many highly respected scholarly publications; pioneering partnerships with other cultural and education institutions across Houston, Texas and the United States; and conducting groundbreaking research into the conservation of modern and contemporary art. The Menil charges no admission fees.

#### **Contact:**

Vance Muse or Gretchen Sammons  
Menil Press Office  
713 535 3170  
[press@menil.org](mailto:press@menil.org)  
[www.menil.org](http://www.menil.org)