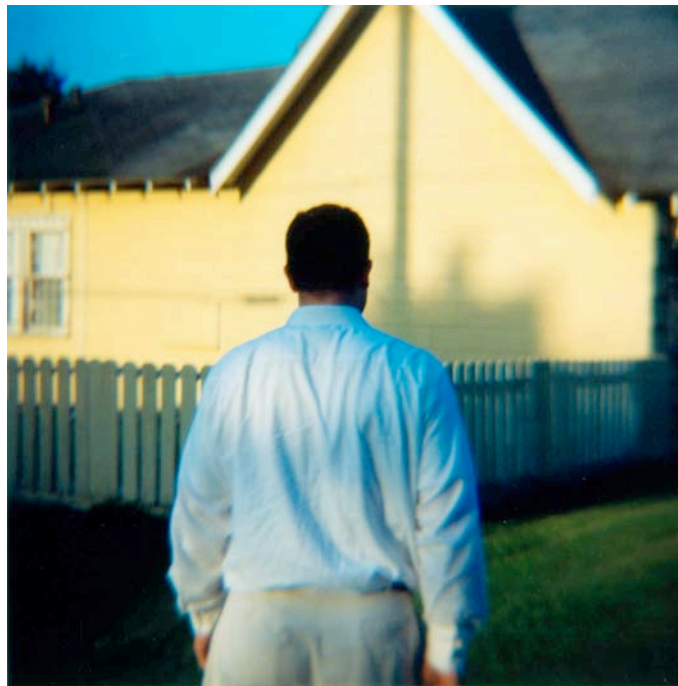




**CONTEMPORARY ARTS MUSEUM HOUSTON PRESENTS
A CONCATENATION OF TEXAS ART TODAY**

***Nexus Texas* Features 16 Artists
From All Corners of the State**



Amy Blakemore, *JK*, 2007, Chromogenic print, 19 x 19 inches, Courtesy the artist and Inman Gallery, Houston

HOUSTON, Texas – Monday, July 23, 2007 – This summer, from August 18 to October 21, the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston will present *Nexus Texas*, a look at the multiple layers of creativity at work in the state today.

Second largest in the union, the “nation state” of Texas is an exciting nexus of maverick pride, go-go entrepreneurship, and cultural blending. These factors, combined with the strong museums and university art programs of its cities, make Texas fertile territory for distinct and thriving visual art scenes. Organized by the Museum’s three curators—Valerie Cassel Oliver, Toby Kamps, and Paola Morsiani—*Nexus Texas* spans generations, subjects, and media to present new work by a group of artists living and working in the state.

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“*Nexus Texas* builds upon the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston’s nearly 60-year history of showcasing Texas artists,” said Senior Curator Paola Morsiani. “From *Texas Contemporary Artists*, which included the likes of John Biggers and Joseph Glasco, in 1952, to *Out of the Ordinary: New Art from Texas*, in 2000, not to mention more than 100 other exhibitions featuring Texas-based artists, the Museum has always been committed to presenting extraordinary art of the time, whether it originates across the ocean or in our own backyard.”

The 16 artists featured in *Nexus Texas* are: **Sterling Allen** (based in Austin), **Roberto Bellini** (San Antonio), **Amy Blakemore** (Houston), **Justin Boyd** (San Antonio), **Margarita Cabrera** (El Paso), **Augusto Di Stefano** (Houston), **Leslie Hewitt** (Houston), **Lauren Kelley** (Houston), **El Franco Lee II** (Houston), **Richard Patterson** (Dallas), **Paul Slocum** (Dallas), **Cauleen Smith** (Austin), **George Smith** (Houston), **Michael Smith** (Austin), **Gary Sweeney** (San Antonio), and **Jeff Zilm** (Dallas).

“There’s an artistic energy that’s unique to Texas,” said Senior Curator Toby Kamps. “The ‘nexus’ in the title refers to the way this state serves as a national and international crossroads, bringing together disparate people and ideas. The end product is this dynamic art scene that could never exist anywhere else.”

Whether they are longtime Texans, like Blakemore or Di Stefano, among many others, or temporary residents brought here by career or academic opportunities, such as Bellini from Brazil, Cabrera from Mexico, or Patterson from England, the work in *Nexus Texas* is informed by life in the Lone Star State.

“While there isn’t necessarily a common sensibility among these artists, you can see that none of them exist or work in a vacuum,” Curator Valerie Cassel Oliver said. “The strength of the arts infrastructure in this state raises the bar for everyone, and collectively you can see a distinct attitude and spirit emerge.”

The exhibition is also a reflection of the collaborative effort between the Museum’s three curators, with each one offering a distinctive take on the Texas art landscape. Morsiani, a native of Italy, has curated more than 20 exhibitions at the CAMH over nine years in Texas. Kamps, a native of Wisconsin, is a new arrival in Texas after 15 years in museums throughout the country. Meanwhile, Cassel Oliver was born and raised in Houston and has been at the CAMH since 2000. The blending of curatorial perspectives helped to set the tone for an exhibition that celebrates variety and innovation.

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The seventy-plus works slated for the exhibition include Allen's graphite drawings and assemblages of found objects; Bellini's four-minute video, *Landscape Theory*; a dozen of Blakemore's photographic landscapes and portraits; Boyd's sound installations; Cabrera's stitched-vinyl, toy-sized SUVs and actual scale bicycles; Di Stefano's installation comprising abstract paintings and drawings; Hewitt's remake of an awning that evokes Houston Third Ward landmarks; Kelley's drawings of imagined undergarments for "Hottentot Venus" Saartjie Baartman; Lee's paintings of urban narratives; Patterson's paintings of fine art and pop-culture touchstones; Slocum's music and videos from vintage dot matrix printers and Atari game systems; Cauleen Smith's films and installations; George Smith's formidable steel sculptures; the premiere of Michael Smith's most recent video, *Portal Excursion*, as well as his long-running series of class portraits; Sweeney's mixed-media messages spelled out in varsity letters; and Zilm's abstractions painted with the emulsions of old film negatives.

"All but one of the artists are represented by multiple works," Morsiani said. "It was important to us to show more than a sampling; we wanted to give viewers the opportunity to understand the essence of each artist and what they're currently exploring."

The exhibition will be accompanied by a 96-page catalogue with color and black-and-white reproductions, essays on the exhibition concept and featured artists, and biographical and bibliographical information on each artist.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Friday, August 17, 7-11 p.m.

Preview reception open to the public

Saturday, August 18, 2 p.m.

Artists Talk with **Sterling Allen**, **Amy Blakemore**, **Justin Boyd**, **Margarita Cabrera**, **Augusto Di Stefano**, **Leslie Hewitt**, **El Franco Lee II**, **Richard Patterson**, **Paul Slocum**, **Cauleen Smith**, **George Smith**, **Gary Sweeney**, and **Jeff Zilm**, exhibiting artists

Saturday, October 13, 2 p.m.

Panel Discussion: "Texas Art From the Front Lines" with **Diane Barber**, Co-Executive Director and Visual Arts Curator, DiverseWorks, Houston; **Chris Cowden**, Executive Director, Women & Their Work, Austin; **Fairfax Dorn**, Executive Director and Co-Founder, The Ballroom, Marfa; and **Hills Snyder**, Director and Curator, Sala Diaz, San Antonio

Sunday, September 9, 1-4 p.m.

Family Day with family tours and hands-on art activities

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Thursday, September 27, 6:30 p.m.

Loft Concert with **Musiqa**, playing selections inspired by the exhibition

Friday, August 31, 8-11 p.m.

Nexus Texas Hold 'Em poker tournament with prizes during Steel Lounge Underground

Thursdays, September 6, September 27, October 11, 7:30 p.m.

Dallas on the Lawn, with episodes of the classic television series projected outdoors, on the Museum's front lawn at Montrose and Bissonnet

For further information on programs or to inquire about group tours, please call (713) 284-8257.

EXHIBITION FUNDING AND SUPPORT

Exhibitions presented in The Brown Foundation Gallery are supported by the patrons, benefactors, and donors to the Museum's Major Exhibition Fund: Major Patrons—Chinhui Juhn and Eddie Allen; and Faye Sarofim. Patrons—Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Ballard; George and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation; Mr. and Mrs. I.H. Kempner III/Harris and Eliza Kempner Fund; Ms. Louisa Stude Sarofim; and Michael Zilkha. Benefactors—Jackson Hicks/Jackson and Company; Elizabeth Howard; King & Spalding L.L.P.; Leigh and Reggie Smith; Susan Vaughan Foundation; Vitol Inc.; and Mr. and Mrs. Wallace S. Wilson. Donors—Baker Botts, L.L.P.; Karol Kreymer and Robert J. Card, M.D.; Judy and Scott Nyquist; KPMG LLP; Karen and Eric Pulaski; David I. Saperstein; Elisa J. Stude; Karen and Harry Susman; and Joan Holt and J. Roger Wich Foundation.

The catalogue accompanying this exhibition is made possible by a grant from The Brown Foundation, Inc.

GENERAL SUPPORT

The Museum's operations and programs are made possible through the generosity of the Museum's trustees, patrons, members, and donors. The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston receives partial operating support from the Houston Endowment, Inc., the City of Houston through the Houston Museum District Association, and the Texas Commission on the Arts.

Continental is the official airline of the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

The Artphone features commentary by exhibiting artists and is supported in part by Will Golden.

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MISSION

The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is a non-collecting institution dedicated to presenting the best and most exciting international, national, and regional art of the last 40 years, and to providing a forum for the discussion and understanding of the art of our time. Through dynamic exhibitions accompanied by scholarly publications and accessible educational programs, the Museum reaches out to local, regional, national, and international audiences of all ages. Recent exhibitions include *Andrea Zittel: Critical Space*, the first comprehensive solo exhibition of Zittel's work in North America, named "Best Architecture or Design Show of 2006" by the International Association of Art Critics; *Sam Gilliam: a retrospective*, the first full-career survey for the important abstract artist; and *Black Light/White Noise: Sound and Light in Contemporary Art*, the first comprehensive review of black artists working with sound and light.

Upcoming major exhibitions at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston include *Mary Heilmann: To Be Someone* (Nov. 3, 2007-Jan. 6, 2008), the first retrospective for the influential abstract painter; *Design Life Now: National Design Triennial* (Jan. 26-April 20, 2008), presenting the experimental projects, emerging ideas, major buildings, new products, and media at the center of contemporary culture; and *The Old, Weird America* (May 3-July 20, 2008), the first museum exhibition to explore the widespread resurgence of folk imagery and history in American contemporary art.

GENERAL INFO

The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is located at 5216 Montrose Boulevard, at the corner of Montrose and Bissonnet, in the heart of Houston's Museum District. Hours are Tuesday to Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Thursdays to 9 p.m.), and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. Admission is always free. For more information visit www.camh.org or call (713) 284-8250.

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