



DAILY ARTS

Now Showing: The Contemporary Austin

Museum bids adios to AMOA-Arthouse, unveils new identity

BY ROBERT FAIRES, 8:00AM, THU. JUL. 18, 2013



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COURTESY OF THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN

As of today, the visual arts institution born of the merger between **Arthouse** and the **Austin Museum of Art** will no longer operate under the ungainly name that reminded everyone it used to be two organizations. After a lengthy effort to redefine its mission and direction, AMOA-Arthouse has rebranded itself **The Contemporary Austin**.

The name cuts to the chase with regard to the kind of art that is the museum's focus. This is an entity concerned with current work – something that was true of both Arthouse and AMOA before they came together but not readily apparent from either of their names. Now, even people unfamiliar with the museum will grasp instantly what this museum is all about.

And the new identity points a way forward without the burden of the past. While both institutions had long and rich histories, it would have been problematic to try to acknowledge them. "You couldn't use one name or the other," says **DJ Stout**, who led the team at **Pentagram** in designing the new identity. "You couldn't just call it the Austin Museum of Art. You couldn't just call it Arthouse. You needed to make a clean break. You say, 'This is a brand-new entity.'"

In the process of developing the new identity, Stout says the Pentagram team "looked at every single museum name that we could find. What were the patterns? Which names were being used a lot? Which names were being used as acronyms?" They knew how often names get abbreviated over time as the public applies its colloquial shorthand to them. The Museum of Modern Art becomes MOMA. The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth becomes the Modern. The latter was preferable to the former, so the name search was steered in that direction. At one point, Stout asked the museum's executive director, **Louis Grachos**, what he'd like the museum to be known as in five years, and Grachos replied, "The Contemporary." Appending the city's name to that term gives it a definite location, but it also provides the link to the museum's predecessor institutions. The Contemporary Austin consists of two sites: the historic Laguna Gloria estate on the shores of Lake Austin and the recently revamped Jones Center for Contemporary Art in the heart of Downtown. One represents AMOA's past and the other Arthouse's. One acknowledges Austin's history and the outdoors, the other

Austin's urban present. Locals may well drop the name of their city in referring to the museum, but the full name embraces what Austin was and what Austin is.

Stout's type-based logo for The Contemporary Austin actually allows for the dropping of the city name. In the midst of the lower-case letters that form the word "contemporary" is an upper-case "A" that Stout says stands for Austin and for Art. The design incorporates black, white, and a beautiful shade of aqua that very nearly matches the color of the glass bricks sticking out of the walls of the Jones Center. (The color also suggests water, calling to mind Laguna Gloria.) Whatever color combination is sued for the type and background – black on aqua, black on white, white on black, that capital "A" is rendered in the third color, making it still more distinctive. You're never not aware of the Austin in The Contemporary.

The rebranding, though, is about more than fonts and colors, important though they are. The Contemporary Austin points a new way forward in the museum's direction. It aims to commission and exhibit work from the world's leading contemporary artists, having them develop works for both the Jones Center and Laguna Gloria. The first artists to show work under the new identity are British multidisciplinary artist **Liam Gillick** and New York sculptor **Marianne Vitale**. Both will create large-scale outdoor works for Laguna Gloria, and Gillick is also making a film in Austin that will be shown at the Jones Center. Their works will be exhibited Sept. 21-Jan. 5.

So let's all practice now: Where will you be going to see these exhibits of on-the-vanguard art? That's right, the Contemporary Austin.

For more information, visit www.thecontemporaryaustin.org.



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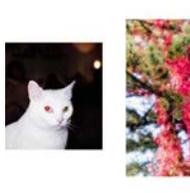
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The Contemporary Austin, Austin visual art, AMOA-Arthouse, Austin Museum of Art, Arthouse, Louis Grachos, DJ Stout, Pentagram, Liam Gillick, Marianne Vitale

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