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**THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN AND GRAYDUCK GALLERY PRESENT NINE
AUSTIN ARTISTS IN THE CULMINATING EXHIBITION OF THE
CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN'S CRIT GROUP 2016**

The Honesty of Rocks

August 26 – September 25, 2016

Opening Reception: Friday, August 26, 7–10P

grayDUCK Gallery, 2213 E. Cesar Chavez Street

JULY, 2016, Austin, Texas—The Contemporary Austin and grayDUCK Gallery are pleased to present the exhibition *The Honesty of Rocks*, featuring work by nine artists who participated in the museum's 2016 Crit Group—a program that combines group critique with professional development to advance the complete artistic practice of established and emerging local artists. This eight-month-long program gives local artists the chance to strengthen their practices with input from internationally recognized professionals in the field. Crit Group is organized by The Contemporary Austin's Director of Public Programs and Community Engagement, Andrea Mellard, and co-facilitated by art historian and curator Sarah Bancroft (previously of the Guggenheim Museum, now Director of the Rosenquist Foundation and Associate Director of Curatorial Affairs at Fluent-Collaborative/testsite) and curator, critic, and instructor Dr. Andy Campbell (USC Roski School of Art and Design and former Core Fellow Critic-in-Residence).

The opening reception will take place Friday, August 26, from 7–10P at grayDUCK Gallery, is free and open to the public, and will include a live performance of improv record grinding by Ted Carey, a participating Crit Group artist. The exhibition is on view through September 25, 2016.

The culmination of the eight-month Crit Group program, *The Honesty of Rocks* spans the disparate work of these nine compelling Austin-based artists, each connected by their intense desire to hone their practices and their rigorous investigations of the subtleties of contemporary life. The exhibition includes video, sculpture, photography, painting, installation, and performance by participants of The Contemporary Austin's 2016 Crit Group: [Emma Hadzi Antich](#), [Amy Bench](#), [Ted Carey](#), [Christina Coleman](#), [Lauren Klotzman](#), [Josef Kristofolletti](#), [Betelhem Makonnen](#), [Rebecca Marino](#), and [Amber Shields](#). The exhibition's title is taken from Ted Carey's artist statement, and is reflective of an interest, shared by many Crit Group participants, in the politics and poetics of materiality. Synthetic hair, for example, is put into dialogue with science (and science fiction) in Christina Coleman's antennae-like sculptures, while the compressing and layering of information in Lauren Klotzman's video installation addresses the seeming immateriality of digital media. Rebecca Marino's recent work puts gendered representation into relationship with a low-tech use of soft materials in photography and sculpture that explore Dr. Anna Lee Fisher, the NASA astronaut dubbed the "first

mother in space.” Underlying each of these material explorations is an interest in vulnerability and futility. These themes take shape in Carey’s poetic combinations of detritus and high-key color, which are celebrations of impermanence. Both Amy Bench and Amber Shields picture loss—whether depicting the unpeopled, aged interiors of churches and social halls, or Shields’s relationship with her grandmother at the end of her life, respectively. Mural painter Josef Kristofolletti consistently pushes his own practice towards new and imaginative states, and will execute a new work on a wall of the gallery. Two others examine the vulnerability of history itself: Betelhem Makonnen’s photo- and video-based work presents “the archive” as a mirror-house of representation questioning the notion of history and its relationship to the present, and Emma Hadzi Antich redeploys the aesthetics of Greek Orthodoxy and ancient philosophy to examine the role of myth in today’s social interactions.

Rather than an interest in the legacies of the past per se, she is fundamentally interested in their presence and relationship to the present.

More information can be found at thecontemporaryaustin.org and at grayduckgallery.com.

CRIT GROUP AT THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN

Launched in January 2014 under the direction of Andrea Mellard, Crit Group at The Contemporary Austin brings together emerging and established Austin artists to support the work they do when they are not making art and to facilitate the growth of their complete artistic practice. Participating artists attend monthly professional development sessions on topics including writing effective artist statements, bios, and proposals; successfully documenting art; applying for grants and residencies; and what to expect from curators and art dealers. Studio visits, group critique, and a culminating, off-site summer exhibition round out the program. Crit Group 2016 is co-facilitated and co-curated by Dr. Andy Campbell and Sarah Bancroft in coordination with Andrea Mellard, Director of Public Programs and Community Engagement at The Contemporary Austin. Applications for Crit Group 2017 will open late fall 2016 with a deadline of December 1, 2016.

Offered free to selected applicants, Crit Group extends the reach of The Contemporary Austin’s vibrant educational initiatives, providing valuable continuing education experiences for professional artists and strengthening the contemporary art community as a whole.

More information at thecontemporaryaustin.org/explore/for-artists.

GRAYDUCK GALLERY

Now in the third year of its partnership with The Contemporary Austin’s Crit Group, grayDUCK is a celebrated exhibition space founded in 2010 in South Austin and based in its current home in East Austin since 2014. In this art-energized neighborhood, the gallery strives to exhibit the work of exceptional artists while creating a welcoming place for everyone: visitors, artists, and neighbors. Monthly exhibitions highlight work from artists with a broad range of experience, both locally and nationally. The refurbished hundred-year-old house is a hybrid of new and old, clean lines and comfortable wood. The inviting space with a modern sensibility is a beautiful setting for artwork, poetry readings, film, music, and performances—a place where art is integral to everyday life.

THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN

The Contemporary Austin reflects the spectrum of contemporary art through exhibitions, commissions, education, and the collection. The museum has two distinct yet complementary locations, the Jones Center in downtown Austin at 700 Congress Avenue (currently undergoing a major renovation and expansion with the reopening scheduled for Fall 2016), and Laguna Gloria, a fourteen-acre site on Lake Austin at 3809 W. 35th Street, which is home to the Driscoll Villa, the Art School, the Gatehouse Gallery, and the Betty and Edward Marcus Sculpture Park at Laguna Gloria.

CRIT GROUP CO-FACILITATORS AND EXHIBITION CURATORS

Sarah C. Bancroft is Executive Director of the James Rosenquist Foundation and Associate Director of Curatorial Affairs at Fluent-Collaborative/testsite. An art historian and curator, Bancroft has held curatorial positions at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and the Orange County Museum of Art. Her major exhibitions include *Richard Diebenkorn*; *LOVE: George Herms*; *Richard Diebenkorn: The Ocean Park Series*; *2010 California Biennial*, *Two Schools of Cool*; *James Rosenquist: A Retrospective*; and other projects. She specializes in modern and contemporary art.

Andy Campbell, PhD, is Assistant Professor of Critical Studies at USC Roski School of Art and Design, as well as an independent curator and critic. His writings have appeared in *Artforum*, *Terremoto*, *Art Lies*, *Aperture*, and *The Austin Chronicle*.

Andrea Mellard is Director of Public Programs and Community Engagement at The Contemporary Austin. Drawing from fourteen years of museum experience, Mellard presents cultural opportunities for people of all ages that reflect the eclectic and collaborative spirit of the city. At The Contemporary, programs including the Sound Series, Visiting Lectures, and Rooftop Architecture & Design Film Series provide platforms for audiences to come together, investigate art, and create new experiences. Recent curatorial projects include Nick Cave, Sam Green and Yo La Tengo, Lucky Dragons, Sanford Biggers, and Janine Antoni and Stephen Petronio.

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High-resolution images available upon request.