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THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN TRANSFERS LEGACY ART COLLECTION TO THE BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART, SOLIDIFYING FOCUS OF ITS COLLECTING PROGRAM ON OUTDOOR SCULPTURE

MAY 31, 2017, Austin, Texas – The Contemporary Austin and the Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas at Austin (UT) announce the historic transfer of a collection of more than 700 artworks from The Contemporary to the care of the Blanton.

Comprised largely of works on paper from the late nineteenth century to 2010, the collection to be transferred was originally built by the Texas Fine Arts Association (TFAA), Laguna Gloria Art Museum (LGAM), and the Austin Museum of Art (AMOA). The Contemporary Austin’s predecessors initiated the collection including works in all media, but with a special focus on works on paper by Texas-based and regional artists. Artists from or based in Texas, such as UT faculty member Sarah Canright, Jeffrey Dell, Lance Letscher, David McGee, and Dario Robleto, are well represented in the collection. Over the decades, the collection evolved to include more than 700 objects by artists from the around the world and includes prints, photographs, paintings, indoor and outdoor sculpture, drawings, installations, glass, and textiles. All works of outdoor sculpture from the legacy collection will remain in the collection of The Contemporary Austin.

The Blanton will incorporate a great number of the works from the transfer into its permanent collection—filling strategic gaps and further enhancing its own holdings. Within the collection to be transferred are strong examples of modern and contemporary photography—an area where the Blanton is actively building—including work by Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Keith Carter, Lee Friedlander, Graciela Iturbide, Joel Sternfeld, and Mariana Yampolsky, among others. Prints by Enrique Chagoya, Alex Katz, Jacob Lawrence, Ed Ruscha, and Richard Serra will further deepen the Blanton’s renowned holdings of works on paper. A number of sculptures, intended to be displayed indoors, will augment the Blanton’s collection in this area, including important pieces by David Bates, Polly Apfelbaum, and UT faculty member Margo Sawyer.

“The Contemporary is grateful to have the opportunity to transfer the collection to such a prominent, Texas-based institution, dedicated to education through exposure to visual art,” said Louis Grachos,

Ernest and Sarah Butler Executive Director and CEO of The Contemporary Austin. “After consultation with numerous Texas artists represented in the collection, collectors who would be affected by the transfer, and past museum leadership, I feel confident that this transfer reflects the best, most ethically sound manner in which to secure the future of this rich collection. With its dedicated staff and facilities, the Blanton is equipped to properly store, preserve, and present these works in a traditional museum setting, ensuring that residents and visitors from across the state will have the opportunity to learn from the collection for generations to come.”

Since its inception in 2013, The Contemporary has been committed to representing the spectrum of contemporary art through exhibitions, commissions, education, and the collection. The Contemporary’s downtown exhibition space, the Jones Center, hosts temporary exhibitions featuring primarily new work by living artists, while its west Austin location, Laguna Gloria, serves the community as a unique art-in-nature site including a contemporary sculpture park, a historic villa, and an art school. In 2013, a \$9 million grant from the Edward and Betty Marcus Foundation formalized The Contemporary’s acquisitions program, which is now solely committed to growing a collection of outdoor sculpture at the Betty and Edward Marcus Sculpture Park at Laguna Gloria. The transfer of this legacy collection—those works intended to be displayed indoors—into the care of the Blanton, the principal art collection in the region, allows this artwork to be seen, enjoyed, and studied for many years to come.

The Blanton’s collection of almost 18,000 objects serves as a resource for over 12,000 K–12 public schoolchildren each year, 20,000 UT students, and many other visitors from Austin and beyond. The Blanton features highlights from its permanent collection in its second-floor galleries, which comprise 27,000 square feet of exhibition space. The museum also operates one of the most active print study rooms in the country, within the Julia Matthews Wilkinson Center for Prints and Drawings, providing access to works of art that are not on display.

“I was pleased to collaborate with Louis Grachos and his team to achieve this outcome” remarked Simone Wicha, director of the Blanton Museum of Art. “As this collection was built to serve the city of Austin, we are happy that many of these works will continue to benefit the community through the Blanton Museum of Art. This historic transfer will enable the Blanton and The Contemporary—two important and complementary arts organizations within our city—to continue to build our distinctive missions. This transfer will enhance the Blanton’s contemporary collection, allowing us to better serve our visitors, while also ensuring proper long-term stewardship of the works and enjoyment by future generations.”

The process to ascertain the future of the collection has been ongoing since the 2011 merger of the Austin Museum of Art and Arthouse at the Jones Center, with redoubled efforts since the creation of The Contemporary Austin in 2013. During this time, the museum has remained committed to the care and research of the collection. Following standard museum best-practices, The Contemporary Austin staff evaluated numerous options, conducted careful research of works in the collection, and consulted

closely with donors to the collection, artists represented, and the museum's Board of Trustees and Art Committee. A selection of works from the collection will be offered by The Contemporary and The Blanton to other collecting institutions throughout Texas with similar educational missions, so each work will find greater opportunity to be shared with the public, find a home in which it will resonate, be properly cared for, and enrich communities throughout the state.

"As a collector myself and donor of works to the collection built by these historic Austin museums, I was honored to have been consulted by Louis as he explored the best way to care for the collection as a whole," offered Michael Chesser, long-time Austin Collector and The Contemporary Austin Board Member. "I have confidence that, through the thoughtful stewardship of both Louis and Simone, the works donated by my family will be given a new life in the best and most respectful manner possible."

THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN LEGACY COLLECTION

Built by several institutions beginning in the 1960s, the collection held by The Contemporary includes an expansive range of artworks by diverse artists both national and international in scope. The Contemporary Austin's predecessors initiated the collection including works in all media, but with a special focus on works on paper by Texas-based and regional artists. Over the decades, however, it has evolved to include more than 700 objects, including prints, photographs, paintings, indoor and outdoor sculpture, drawings, installations, glass, and textiles. All works of outdoor sculpture from the legacy collection will remain in the collection of The Contemporary Austin.

The bulk of the collection includes works by nationally and internationally renowned artists from or based in Texas, including Terry Allen, Tré Arenz, Sarah Canright, Michael Ray Charles, Jeffrey Dell, Dorothy Hood, Luis Jiménez, Donald Judd, Catherine Lee, Lance Letscher, David McGee, Robert Rauschenberg, Dario Robleto, Margo Sawyer, Julie Speed, and Charles Umlauf. (A full artist list is available upon request.)

Works by internationally renowned artists based outside of Texas are also part of the collection, including pieces by Uta Barth, Georges Braque, Alexander Calder, Judy Chicago, John Steuart Curry, Sol LeWitt, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Longo, Nam June Paik, Larry Rivers, Richard Serra, Kunie Sugiura, and Andy Warhol.

While the majority of the collection dates from 1975 onward, it includes a number of works from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including works by Albert Bierstadt, Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Michael Frary, Robert Henri, Grace Spaulding John, William Lester, Louis Sullivan, J. Alden Weir, and a modest study collection which includes a significant group of historic panoramic photographs by Eugene Omar Goldbeck.

"It has always been an honor to be part of this collection, which holds some of my important sculptural and installation works," said Margo Sawyer, artist and University of Texas at Austin faculty

member. “Finding the right home for our work means continuing—even deepening—the dialogue between each of us as artists, our creative output, and new audiences who may now continue to view, study, and interact with our work. This collection transfer is a great service to artists and the art-loving public.”

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, 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. Since its inception in 2013, the museum has also been building its Museum Without Walls program—an initiative that brings outdoor sculpture to visitors in new ways and in diverse venues. More information about the museum, its exhibitions, and related programming can be found at thecontemporaryaustin.org.

THE BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART

Founded in 1963, the Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin has the largest and most comprehensive collection of art in Central Texas. The Blanton’s permanent collection holdings of nearly 18,000 objects is recognized for its modern and contemporary American and Latin American art, Italian Renaissance and Baroque paintings, and encyclopedic collection of prints and drawings. The Blanton offers thought provoking, visually arresting, and personally moving encounters with art. For additional information call (512) 471-7324 or visit www.blantonmuseum.org.

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