

Six Scenes From Our Future

**Contemporary
Arts Museum
Houston**

In celebration of Contemporary Arts Museum Houston's (CAMH) 75th anniversary, *Six Scenes From Our Future* features six artists responding to CAMH's inaugural exhibition. This first show staged in 1948, *This Is Contemporary Art*, proposed a radical approach to presenting art within a museum. Displaying over 150 functional household objects alongside artworks—like an Alexander Calder *Mobile* and a cheese slicer—the exhibition challenged hierarchies between fine art and everyday design while merging museum and domestic contexts. So, too, did the inaugural exhibition position artists as uniquely capable of addressing and reflecting upon a constantly changing world, asserting art and life as inseparable. *This Is Contemporary Art* set the stage for CAMH's ever-unfolding ethos as a place for experimentation and play.

Six Scenes From Our Future extends CAMH's longstanding trust in the visions and voices of living artists. Working across sculpture, photography, video, installation, and painting, the six artists in this exhibition mined CAMH's history to inspire their work. Several artists use abstraction to grapple with history—abstraction of the body in the case of Leslie Martinez's light fixtures and rethinking architecture in the case of Leslie Hewitt's leaning wall fragment. Meditations between screens and physical spaces are explored in Jill Magid's multipart exploration of artistic legacy and Mel Chin's interactive television set, offering contemporary reconsiderations of the inaugural show's merging of disparate spaces. Innovative and layered displays, a critical component of *This Is Contemporary Art*, are central to JooYoung Choi's multi-tiered puppet presentation and Lisa Lapinski's iconic department store scene. *Six Scenes From Our Future* highlights CAMH's revolutionary origins while emphasizing artists' central role in envisioning its future.

Six Scenes From Our Future is organized by Contemporary Arts Museum Houston and curated by Rebecca Matalon, Senior Curator, and Patricia Restrepo, Curator, with Ginevra Bria, 2022–23 Rice University Curatorial Fellow.

Mel Chin

Convo Pool, 2016/2023

Wood, upholstery fabric, hardware, vinyl, lights,
and artificial plants

Courtesy the artist

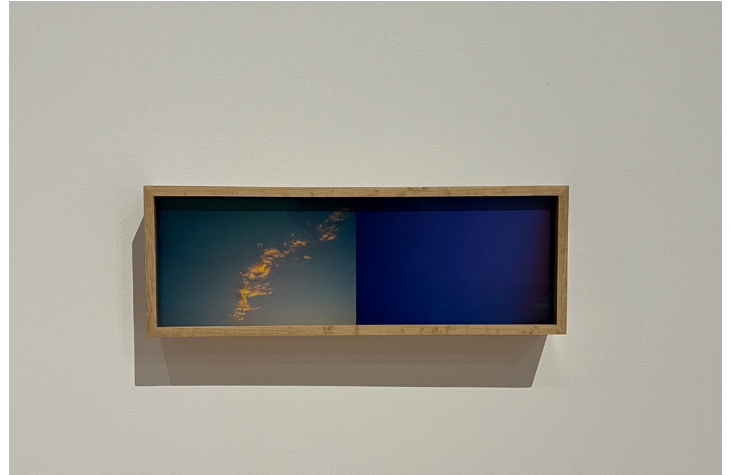
**You are invited to enter this installation
and move the interior cushions. Please wear
booties into the pool.**

This sunken seating might look familiar—it is a replica of the apartment pool featured in the 1990s primetime television show *Melrose Place*. The pool's patterned tile has been faithfully reproduced on quilted fabric by artist Mel Chin (b. 1951 in Houston, Texas and based in Burnsville, North Carolina), who also created the iconic 50 foot palm tree *Manila Palm: An Oasis Secret* on view on CAMH's lawn on Bayard Street. You are welcome to rearrange the pool's moveable cushions, which are stand-ins for water. *Convo Pool* blurs domestic and formal museum spaces, extending the ethos of CAMH's inaugural exhibition that art and life are inseparable.

The artist created this installation as an ode to his role in forming the GALA Committee, a collective of scholars, artists, students, and faculty at the University of Georgia and California Institute of the Arts (GA for Georgia and LA for Los Angeles). From 1995-1997, the GALA Committee created conceptual "product placements" for *Melrose Place* without public announcement. They produced over 200 pieces of art as props for more than 60 episodes. Yet these interventions were not in service to commercial interests; they tested the possibility to use the medium of TV in the transmission of both social and political ideas. Could network television prove a more powerful site for public art consumption than the museum? This covert public art project is regarded as one of the most elaborate and orchestrated collaborations in contemporary art and television history.



Leslie Hewitt
Daylight/Daylong 017, 2022
Digital chromogenic print



Daylight/Daylong 010, 2022
Digital chromogenic print



Daylight/Daylong 013, 2022
Digital chromogenic print



Daylight/Daylong 019, 2022

Digital chromogenic print

All works courtesy the artist and Perrotin

On view are four photographic diptychs from Leslie Hewitt's *Daylight/Daylong* series, which developed from research she conducted at The Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas. On the left side of each composition, Hewitt captures the sunrise streaking across the West Texas horizon in response to the right side, where she abstractly frames her sensory experience of Dan Flavin's light installation *untitled (Marfa Project)* (1996), a central work at The Chinati Foundation. Photography formed a core section of CAMH's inaugural 1948 exhibition. Hewitt's photographic work offers an innovative extension of this historic medium. Housed in artist-designed wooden boxes, Hewitt's photographs are set at a parallax with varying depths, giving each work a unique angle. A parallax refers to the apparent movement of objects when viewed from different positions. The work's three-dimensional quality invites you to engage the works from different sides and angles, while also questioning their use of optics.



Jill Magid

The Proposal, 2016

2.02 carat, blue, uncut diamond with the micro-laser inscription "I am whole heartedly yours," silver ring setting, ring box, and documents
Courtesy the artist and Labor, Mexico City

New York-based artist Jill Magid (b. 1973 in Bridgeport, Connecticut) explores systems of power such as the law, embedding herself within these frameworks to challenge the dynamics of access and control. In Magid's contributions to this exhibition, she directly confronts the structures of copyright and the circulation of images. Her works on view are drawn from *The Barragán Archives* (2013-2018), a series of sculptures and interventions that examine the contested legacy of preeminent modernist architect Luis Barragán, whose work remains largely inaccessible; since 1995 the rights to Barragán's work and professional archive have been owned and controlled by a corporation located in Switzerland.

This chapter of *The Barragán Archives* questions the status of Barragán's archive in Switzerland, and whether this can be changed. Magid poses this question with *The Proposal*, an engagement ring mounted with a diamond grown from Barragán's cremated remains. With permission of the Barragán family and the Mexican government, Magid transformed a portion of Barragán's remains into a diamond, set in a custom band. This ring was offered to the owner of Barragán's professional archive in exchange for its return to public access in Mexico. CAMH's 1948 exhibition presented a case of fine jewelry, including a stone ring. Magid's ring is both a sculpture, a performance, and a tool of negotiation. Her video inside the screening room, *The Exhumation* was filmed during the exhumation of Barragán's remains.



Jill Magid
The Exhumation, 2016
HD video: sound, color (6:07 minutes)
Courtesy the artist and Labor, Mexico City



Jill Magid
Study for The Living Room,
<https://esotericsurvey.blogspot.com/2016/01/luis-barragan-la-casa.html>, 2023
JPEG on flat panel display, media player,
and aluminum frame



Study for The Living Room,**[www.pinterest.com/](https://www.pinterest.com/pin/482588916303855185/R/)****[pin/482588916303855185/R/](https://www.pinterest.com/pin/482588916303855185/R/), 2023**

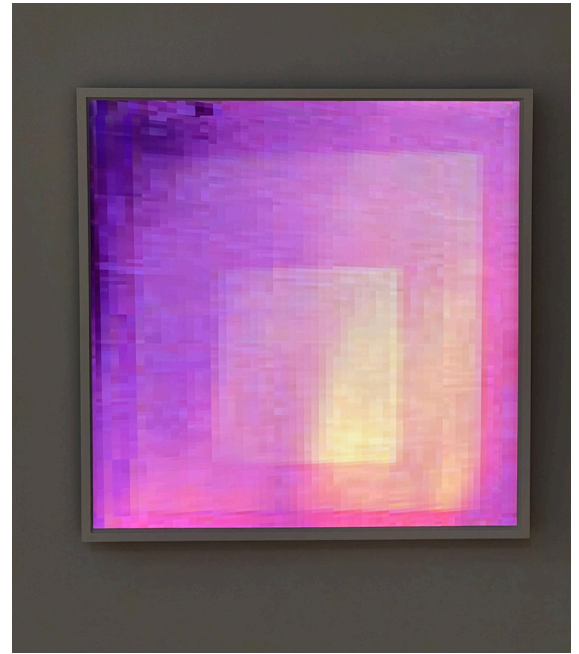
JPEG on flat panel display, media player, and aluminum frame

Study for The Living Room, <https://m.revistaad.es/decoracion/iconos/articulos/luis-barragan-icno-ad/21536>, 2023

JPEG on flat panel display, media player, and aluminum frame

All works courtesy the artist

Jill Magid created this new series of work titled *Homage RGB* after being invited to participate in this exhibition. In these works, Magid questions the boundaries between private and public images, authorship, and production processes. *Homage RGB* explores Mexican architect Luis Barragán's dialogue with Bauhaus modernist Josef Albers. This set of images is sourced from reproductions of Albers's *Homage to the Square* that (with Albers's blessing) Barragán had hung in his home. Like Magid's prior suite, *Homage CMYK*, which sourced its images from printed catalogues documenting Barragán's living room where the Albers print hangs, these works are culled from amateur photographs taken by visitors to Barragán's home and studio (now a museum) and posted online. To make *Homage RGB*, Magid scours the internet for publicly shared photos that contain Barragán's Albers, then alters the skewed perspective of the images (i.e. taken at angles, through a window, cropped at edges) to restore them back into squares. These new images contain the time and space of the "original" photographs, as well as the artifacts and pixelation of their online publication. The earlier reference to CMYK refers to the colors used in printing (cyan, magenta, yellow, black), while RGB refers to the color model exclusive to digital space, in which red, green, and blue colors of light are added together.



Leslie Hewitt
Untitled, 2023

Sheetrock, wood, and paint
Courtesy the artist and Perrotin

Houston-based artist Leslie Hewitt (b. 1977 in St. Albans, New York) is best known for her post-conceptual works employing sculpture, photography, and architecture that explore how memory and material can be linked. For this exhibition, Hewitt created three intersecting bodies of work that respond to disciplines explored in CAMH's first exhibition in 1948: architecture, graphic design, and photography. Her research includes CAMH's architectural history and the life of architect John S. Chase (1925–2012), the first licensed African American architect in the state of Texas, exploring the significance of how aesthetics and progressive ideas align.

Included in the exhibition are three bodies of work in dialogue. The first is this architectural intervention in which a sculptural fragment leans against the Museum's existing architecture. This work's proportion and size were derived from architectural drawings of CAMH's prior galleries and buildings, thereby creating a fragment of the institution's past. Hewitt's second body of work is the series of photographs *Daylight/Daylong*, which can be seen across the gallery. Lastly, in response to the CAMH's inaugural exhibition catalogue, Hewitt produced a series of double-sided posters that visitors may take with them, thus distributing the work beyond the museum's walls.



Leslie Martinez

Accretion Disk, 2023

Wooden dowel rods, plaster cloth, tea towels, metal chain, programmable colored LED light bulb, canvas, pumice, and acrylic

Bone Array, 2023

Wooden dowel rods, plaster cloth, tea towels, metal chain, programmable colored LED light bulb, canvas, pumice, and acrylic

Intra-Cloud, 2023

Wooden dowel rods, plaster cloth, tea towels, metal chain, programmable colored LED light bulb, canvas, pumice, and acrylic

All works courtesy the artist and Commonwealth and Council

Leslie Martinez (b. 1985 in McAllen, Texas) is best known for large-scale abstract paintings that explore tactility and perception through material investigations with pigment, textures, and the byproducts of the painting process, such as used rags, dirty paint water, and dried paint chips. Born on the Texas-Mexico border, though currently residing in Dallas, Martinez creates paintings that investigate forms of borderlands, be they geographic, ideological, or psychic.

Prior to working as an artist, Martinez worked in the fashion and design industry. In response to this exhibition's prompt to create work exploring the interrelation between fine art and design, the artist tapped into their previous design experience, in an effort to think beyond the frame and push beyond the stretcher bars of a painting. They created a suite of functioning lamp sculptures; the "skins" of their light fixtures are made from translucent painted kitchen towels. These works draw formal inspiration from kites, organic floral forms, and noted works such as Eva Hesse's *Repetition Nineteen III* (1968) and Joe Overstreet's *Flight Pattern* series of the early 1970s.



Leslie Hewitt in design collaboration with
Iman Raad

Forty Four Fifty Fifty Four Sixty Eight,
2023

Poster

Courtesy the artist and Perrotin

Please take one poster.

Responding to the central role that graphic design played in CAMH's inaugural exhibition catalogue, Leslie Hewitt made this double-sided poster for audiences to take away, thereby moving her work beyond the walls of the Museum. While researching the Museum's first exhibition and its early architectural history, the artist became inspired by legendary local architect John S. Chase (1925-2012), who was the first licensed African-American architect in the state of Texas. Hewitt found Chase to be a key counterpart in her exploration of how aesthetics and progressive ideas align. Her poster combines abstracted graphic design elements that includes a floorplan of Chase's design for his home, which underscored the importance of the courtyard, while also drawing from key court cases significant to U.S. civil rights history surrounding the year 1948. Hewitt has created a visual constellation between the first CAMH exhibition, key legal rulings that have created a more inclusive society, and Chase's progressive architecture.



JooYoung Choi
Nova Trekkers and the Vehicle for Change,
2023

Spaceship stand: wood, fleece, felt, polyfiber, and Poly-Fil. Puppets: fleece, polyfoam, found objects, and felt. Stands: wood, fleece, pvc piping, wire, gaffer tape, water hose, and foam
Courtesy the artist and Inman Gallery, Houston

Houston-based artist JooYoung Choi (b. 1982/1983 in Seoul, South Korea) has birthed a highly-detailed universe through painting, video, sculpture, animation, music, and installations, which was explored in her participation in the exhibition *A Better Yesterday* at CAMH in 2017. Her expansive fictional world is called “The Cosmic Womb,” and it is often brought to life through puppetry and performance for video. Choi merges the autobiographical with the fantastical, using puppetry as a tool to discuss significant issues such as anti-racism, gender inclusivity, and social justice.

In response to this exhibition’s prompt to create work related to CAMH’s inaugural exhibition, which eliminated hierarchies between the visual arts and design objects, Choi created a multi-tier display of her functional puppets in the form of a birthday cake in honor of CAMH’s anniversary. You can see the artist bring these puppets to life in the nearby video. This work playfully marries utilitarian, everyday objects with art objects in order to discuss challenging ideas.

Despite the undeniable joy emanating from JooYoung Choi’s work, this installation contains serious undertones. While researching CAMH’s first show, which was held at the MFAH, Choi was disturbed by the racialized history of the Houston art scene in 1948, when MFAH’s policies prevented racially integrated visitors from visiting the museum on the same days, or even barred exhibiting artist Jacob Lawrence from attending the show’s opening. Her research also revealed that only three out of 57 participating artists were artists of color. Choi identified factors not discussed in CAMH’s



inaugural show that have influenced the development of and interaction between design and art, such as colonization, war, immigration, classism, and racism.

In her effort to dismantle histories of exclusion, the artist created this puppet display as a kind of magical teleporting spaceship fueled by truth, which crushes oppressive gatekeepers and breaks through barriers of systemic oppression. It is designed to carry the diverse voices of all people in the universe, wherever they are needed, thereby opening up wider participation in the future of visual art and design. Nova Trekkers and the Vehicle for Change symbolizes Choi's envisioning of CAMH's future as a catalyst for change and her hope that it will continue to be a welcoming place for all to embrace the power of creativity.

JooYoung Choi

Pleasure Vision and VFC Intergalactic Presents - Great Moments in Cosmic Womb History, 2023

Video: sound, color (30:31 minutes)

Courtesy the artist and Inman Gallery, Houston



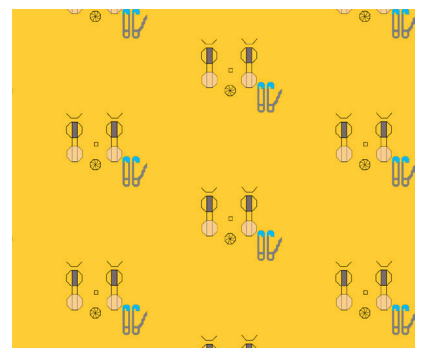
Lisa Lapinski
F, 2023
Screenprint



Second Immediacy 1, 2023
Wood, fabric, paint, and rubber



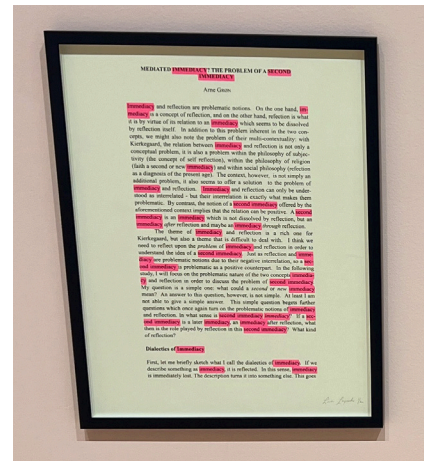
The Younger Set Wallpaper, 2023
Wallpaper



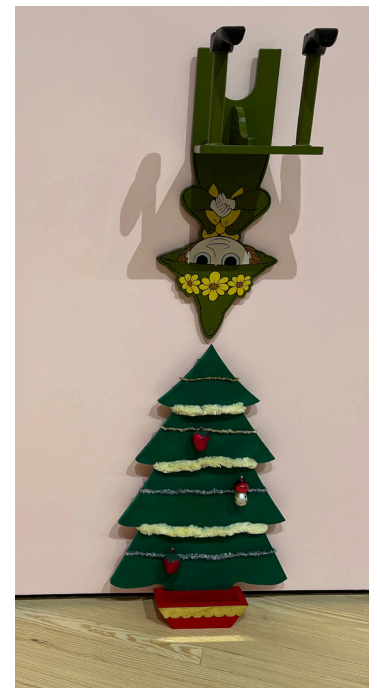
The Cat's Meow, 2023 Screenprint



Second Immediacy 2, 2023 Screenprint



Snufkin Christmas Tree, 2023 Wood, colossal pipe cleaners, tinsel, ornaments, and found chair



The Younger Set Seating, 2023

Wood and paint

The Younger Set Display, 2023

Wood, paint, and shoes

All works courtesy the artist

You are invited to sit on The Younger Set Seating.

Houston-based artist Lisa Lapinski (b. 1967 in Palo Alto, California) mines popular and vernacular cultural forms, as well as decorative arts and crafts traditions, to question and complicate the ways in which such symbols produce meaning. Her approach to sculpture, photography, and collage often results in works that critique distinctions between “high” and “low” cultural objects, mixing familiar symbols such as Snoopy with obscure and absurd characters like Little My and Holly Hobbie. Returning to this cast of characters across individual works and exhibitions, Lapinski crafts a narrative that is both continuously unfolding and always partial or out of view, as we grow distant to their elaborate backstories.

Compelling displays and organization of objects were critical to CAMH’s inaugural exhibition, as the show offered innovative methods of presenting commercialized everyday objects. While researching the Museum’s early history, Lapinski encountered photographs from Houston department stores operating during the mid-twentieth century. The downtown Houston store Sakowitz, which opened in 1951 with intricate millwork design by Houston-based company Brochsteins, inspired this installation modeled on a children’s shoe department. Cheekily conceived of as “The Younger Set,” this department store vignette consists of artist-designed wallpaper, modular sculptures resembling seating, a shoe display, and posters lining the walls. *The Younger Set Seating* is emblematic of the artist’s signature sculptures, resembling both the shape of a bow and the iconic pixelated aliens of Space Invaders.

