



Director's Note

CAMH reopens to the public today after closing our doors nearly a year ago in response to COVID-19. Today, the simple act of opening our doors, and welcoming guests feels like a revelation. As with our entire city, the last year, and particularly last week's Winter Storm Uri, stressed the Museum in ways no one could have anticipated one year ago. Yet today, our doors are open and the Museum — as always — is ecstatically free for all.

In the past year, we have all experienced and witnessed monumental changes across society — it will take decades to assess the impacts and long-term effects of this tragic and catalytic year. CAMH, as a non-collecting contemporary arts museum, is uniquely freed from other museums' charge to preserve collections and interpret the past. Our mandate is to be present, to connect artists and audiences through the urgent issues of our time, and adventurously lean into the possibilities of contemporary art.

Our exhibitions on view — *Wild Life: Elizabeth Murray & Jessi Reaves*, and *Slowed and Thrown: Records of the City Through Mutated Lenses* both take as their starting point the legacy and influence of the seminal artists Elizabeth Murray and DJ Screw, who passed away in 2007 and 2000 respectively, to celebrate their dynamic influence and dialogue with younger generations of artists, including Jessi Reaves and the fifteen artists included in *Slowed & Thrown*. Through these exhibitions we see directly the importance, even the urgency, of contemporary artists across decades, across generations. Ideas that emerged in Murray's New York studio in the 1980s radiantly express the turmoil and fractures of the last year, most particularly those experienced in our own homes. And DJ Screw's chopped and syrup-slow sound still scores an up-to-the-minute track to the traumas, resilience, and resurgence of Houston.

In the last year, CAMH has prioritized the safety of our team alongside our mission to connect artists and audiences. This has led to exciting changes, both within our Museum grounds, programming, and our planning for the future:

First, let's Trust Artists. CAMH is committed to being in service to artists and allowing artists to lead. Artists work through flux and change with greater facility than any other sector of society. In times of rapid change, artists see the way through. We know that by trusting artists, and working to expand their agency in the public realm, meaning will shine through.

Second, CAMH itself is a Ship of Theseus. Like the myth of the ship in suspended animation, CAMH has spent the last 11 months purposefully remaking ourselves from the inside out. When you visit, much will look the same, but our extensive restoration includes complete replacement

of The Brown Foundation Gallery flooring, walls, electrical, lighting, and air filtration systems. Similarly, our Eleanor and Frank Freed Garden has been remade as a flexible space for public programming and events. In the coming months you'll see new and exciting programs that activate the corner of Montrose and Bissonnet Street.

Internally, our changes are just as sweeping. As we reopen today, we are welcoming back CAMH's long-standing Visitor Services and Engagement and FAQ teams. Our part-time staff provide a core part of the visitor experience at CAMH — they lead tours in multiple languages, answer your questions in the galleries, share where to get the best espresso or tacos in the neighborhood, and protect the art. Beyond striving to re-animate your experience in our galleries, CAMH is proud to work beyond our walls, both in partnership with organizations throughout Houston, and through public art initiatives far beyond Houston. A few examples of these initiatives include our newly announced creative partnership with Houston Freedmen's Town Conservancy and our just launched fiscal sponsorship and strategic support of Screwed Up HQ, which directly grew out of the Slowed & Threwed exhibition. We're excited to announce additional initiatives in the coming months.

We are charting a course for CAMH rooted in an ethic of care, equity, and the joy of the creative process. As always, CAMH will connect artists and audiences through alchemical experiences with contemporary art. Thank you for your support and belief in CAMH. We look forward to welcoming you back, and to seeing you in, around, and beyond the museum.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hesse McGraw', written in a cursive style.

Hesse McGraw
Executive Director