

CONTACT: Nicole Chism Griffin, PR – The Contemporary Austin

ncgriffin@thecontemporaryaustin.org / 512 453 5312 x 119 (P) / 206 947 2312 (C)

THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN'S FALL EXHIBITION ENCOURAGES VIEWERS TO EXPERIENCE ART IN PERSON, THROUGH THREE THEMATIC LENSES AT THREE VENUES



Strange Pilgrims September 27, 2015 – January 24, 2016

On view at three venues: The Contemporary Austin – Jones Center, 700 Congress Avenue, Austin, Texas; The Contemporary Austin – Laguna Gloria, 3809 West 35th Street, Austin, Texas; Visual Arts Center, Department of Art and Art History at The University of Texas at Austin, 2301 San Jacinto Blvd, Austin, Texas

JUNE 30, 2015, AUSTIN, TEXAS — The Contemporary Austin is pleased to present *Strange Pilgrims*—the museum's first large-scale, thematic group exhibition, on view September 27, 2015, through January 24, 2016. Organized by Senior Curator Heather Pesanti, *Strange Pilgrims* explores experiential art through a presentation of works that are immersive, participatory, collaborative, performative, and kinetic in nature. Taking its title from a collection of twelve short stories of the same name by the author Gabriel García Márquez, the exhibition threads together a set of ideas and projects loosely linked by the metaphorical notion of a "pilgrimage" through time and space. Featuring works by fourteen artists, this ambitious exhibition activates the entirety of The Contemporary Austin's two sites—the Jones Center in downtown Austin and the fourteen-acre grounds, Driscoll Villa, and Gatehouse Gallery at the museum's Betty and Edward Marcus Sculpture Park at Laguna Gloria—plus a third venue, the Visual

Arts Center (VAC) in the Department of Art and Art History at The University of Texas at Austin. With this expansive reach through the city, the exhibition advances the museum's commitment to serve as a "museum without walls." Hours will vary between venues. Updated hours for each will be posted on The Contemporary Austin website at thecontemporaryaustin.org.

Organized around three thematic sections—Environment & Place, Performance & Process, and Technology & Information—*Strange Pilgrims* leads visitors through overlapping and intersecting aspects of art that can be walked in, around, and through. The exhibition is primarily contemporary in focus, with each of the three thematic sections featuring a combination of newly commissioned works, site-specific refabrications, and existing works by a range of artists, including **Charles Atlas** (based in New York, New York), **Trisha Baga** (American, born 1985 in Venice, Florida; lives in New York City), **Millie Chen** (Canadian, born 1962 in Taipei, Taiwan; lives in Buffalo, New York, and Ridgeway, Ontario), **Phil Collins** (British, born 1970 in Runcorn, England; lives in Berlin and Cologne), **Andy Coolquitt** (American, born 1964 in Mesquite, Texas; lives in Austin), **Ayşe Erkmen** (Turkish, born 1949 in Istanbul, Turkey; lives in Istanbul and Berlin), **Roger Hiorns** (British, born 1975 in Birmingham, England; lives in London), the collective **Lakes Were Rivers** (formed in Austin, Texas), **Angelbert Metoyer** (American, born 1977 in Houston, Texas; lives in Houston, Texas, and Rotterdam, Netherlands), and **Sofía Táboas** (Mexican, born 1968 in Mexico City, Mexico; lives in Mexico City). As a historical component to the exhibition, key works by pioneers in the field—**Nancy Holt** (American, born 1938 in Worcester, Massachusetts; died 2014 in New York City), **Bruce Nauman** (American, born 1941 in Fort Wayne, Indiana; lives near Galisteo, New Mexico), **Yoko Ono** (Japanese, born 1933 in Tokyo, Japan), and **Paul Sharits** (American, born 1943 in Denver, Colorado; died 1993 in Buffalo, New York)—serve as anchors and points of resonance for each section. And in a unique partnership on the occasion of this exhibition, artist on view Trisha Baga was hosted by The Contemporary Austin and the VAC as the first joint artist-in-residence.



"At ground level, the exhibition is a response to its direct environment, including the unique sites of The Contemporary Austin as well as the city's love of music, film, and festivals," said Heather Pesanti, Senior Curator of The Contemporary Austin. "But *Strange Pilgrims* is also in dialogue with global tendencies, particularly contemporary art's renewed attention toward ephemeral and performative formats, as well as the increasing turn in society-at-large toward activities and actions that are mediated through social media. This exhibition encourages old-school bodily experience, presenting works that make a strong case for in-person interaction and that, in one way or another, must be seen, heard, smelled, walked through, and otherwise physically engaged with in order to be understood."

THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN – JONES CENTER: ENVIRONMENT & PLACE

Visitors to the Jones Center will encounter works by Millie Chen, Andy Coolquitt, Roger Hiorns, and Angelbert Metoyer, unified under the theme Environment & Place. These works employ environmental, architectural, landscape, and installation-based formats to shift viewers' perception or experience of their surroundings. Bruce Nauman's seminal work *Green Light Corridor* (1970) provides a point of historical resonance, encouraging a

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perception-altering experience for the willing viewer. Combining light and architectural elements, Nauman's long, uncomfortably narrow corridor transforms the Jones Center's entire second-floor gallery, inviting the viewer to pass through its confining space while bathed in disturbing green light. Perception is further manipulated once visitors have stepped out from within the installation, via the afterimage created by the green light as well as a sense of residual, claustrophobic unease. On the first floor of the Jones Center, visitors encounter a range of works by artists who, like Nauman, complicate the viewer's experience of place—both the museum setting and various contexts created by the works of art on view. Chen's *Tour* (2014) draws viewers into an audio-video environment featuring first-person footage of the locations of past genocides. These beautiful, overgrown pastoral landscapes, paired with a score of soothing lullabies, are imbued with shocking context, confusing the viewer's sense of how these landscapes should be absorbed. Other works include Coolquitt's mixed-media sculptural installation *i didn't go to any museums here i hate museums museums are just stores that charge you to come in there are lots of free museums here but they have names like real stores* (2012), which, situated in the museum's glass-front lobby, meshes found and constructed objects referencing the artist's studio, a museum, and a store and blurs the boundaries between the functional lobby space and a "work of art." In addition, a shrine-like, immersive installation by Metoyer combines totemic objects, household furnishings, and mysterious, cosmic imagery through a rich juxtaposition of materials including etched glass, gold dust, and indigo pigment; and a wall-sized rendering of a "failed" project by Hiorns details a proposition in which the artist would bury the intact fuselage of a passenger aircraft somewhere in the city of Austin.



VISUAL ARTS CENTER, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN: TECHNOLOGY & INFORMATION, PERFORMANCE & PROCESS

At the VAC, visitors encounter the *Strange Pilgrims* themes Technology & Information and Performance & Process. Technology & Information, which investigates immersive, moving-image formats in film, video, and other technology, is represented on the first floor through works by Paul Sharits, Charles Atlas, and Phil Collins, and, on the second floor, via an installation by Trisha Baga. Providing a historical reference point for this section, Sharits's *Dream Displacement* (1976) envelops viewers in moving images from four overlapping film projections combined with quadrophonic sounds of crashing glass. Making its Texas debut in *Strange Pilgrims*, the pivotal film installation disorients viewers as they maneuver an environment in which their own bodies become screens for abstract images while surrounded by cacophonous sound and the mechanics and sculptural qualities of the 16 mm film projectors on pedestals. Similarly engulfing museum guests in light, sound, and imagery, Atlas's two-room, multichannel video installation *Tornado Warning* (2008) simulates the anxiety created by the devastating weather events experienced by the artist growing up in St. Louis, Missouri. In *Institute for Turbulence Research*, multiple video projections—including a swirling black and white spiral, spinning household objects, and violent imagery—span the walls, ceiling, and floor of the room, bending and warping as



they cross over corners and around edges. In the adjacent gallery, *Plato's Alley* maps moving numbers and geometric forms across the walls to create an equally disorienting environment. More playful on its surface, Collins's *This Unfortunate Thing Between Us* (2011) invites viewers into intimate domestic spaces created inside two vintage English caravans. Here, viewers may sit back, eat "crisps," drink beverages, and watch television monitors that broadcast videos from a past project by the artist (originally a two-night live performance): TUTBU TV, a fabricated home shopping channel in which callers were invited to purchase a role in one of three fantasy scenarios. With one version of the video using actors and the other using real-life participants chosen by Collins, these constructed situations have elements of satire, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and, perhaps most of all, humanism, provoking feelings of sympathy and vulnerability. The exploration of Technology & Information continues on the VAC's second floor, with new work by Baga featuring a strange and visually stunning projection, sound, and ceramics-based installation created while in residency at The Contemporary Austin and the VAC in early 2015.



Hovering between the VAC's two floors, Ayşe Erkmen's site-specific fabric installation *3DN* (2015)—comprising ribbons imprinted with abstracted forms evocative of the bats that make their home under the bridges in the city of Austin—provides the entry point for Performance & Process, a theme featuring work with performative, collaborative, and participatory impulses. Erkmen's work is a subtle architectural intervention using an irregular grid of strips of fabric to divide a large, open space, operating both above the heads of visitors on the first floor and below the viewers peering out from the second-floor balcony. As a whole, the piece encompasses and questions the experience of looking, as viewers walk among the shadows created on the floor and witness the interaction among fabric, shadows, walls, floor, and people. The viewer is an integral element of the installation, which leads the transition to the upstairs galleries at the VAC, where works by Yoko Ono, Charles Atlas, and Sofía Táboas similarly create integrated experiences between works of art and their audience. These projects within Performance & Process are anchored by video documentation of Ono's iconic early performance work *Cut Piece* (1964; also featured here is an iteration performed by the artist in 2003), in which the audience is invited one by one to approach Ono, seated on a stage, and cut away a piece of her clothing, thus becoming part of the performance itself. As with Erkmen's installation, *Cut Piece* is not complete without the interaction of the viewers, although this interaction manifests differently in each work. Finally, projects by Atlas and Táboas present varied topographies within which museum guests are able to experience, maneuver, and become a part of the work. Atlas presents a reconfigured installation of historical film, video, and dance-oriented works created in conjunction with the choreographer Douglas Dunn from 1974–2003, combining them with several newly conceived elements to form a contemporary assemblage for *Strange Pilgrims*. Táboas's site-specific installation is composed of cylindrical sculptures of varying heights, inspired by cake flower patterns and constructed from a wide array of materials including aluminum, stone, concrete, and clay, each fabricated using at least six to eight different methods. Collectively, these sculptures invite viewers to meander among an otherworldly landscape of physical elements—a hybridization of media and process that creates a performative, dimensional experience for the viewer.

THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN – BETTY AND EDWARD MARCUS SCULPTURE PARK AT LAGUNA GLORIA: ENVIRONMENT & PLACE, PERFORMANCE & PROCESS, TECHNOLOGY & INFORMATION

All three exhibition themes converge at The Contemporary Austin's Laguna Gloria location, which will exhibit a range of large-scale indoor and outdoor installations. On view at the site's intimate Gatehouse Gallery is a second

immersive, three-dimensional video installation by Trisha Baga. Incorporating film, ceramics made at The Contemporary Austin's Art School ceramics studio, and other objects, this work was also newly created during the artist's residency at The Contemporary Austin and the VAC and premieres in *Strange Pilgrims*.

The Betty and Edward Marcus Sculpture Park at Laguna Gloria's lush, lakeside acreage lends itself to explorations of experiential art through the theme of Environment & Place. Nancy Holt's *Time Span* (1981), from The Contemporary Austin's permanent collection, is a concrete and stucco form that cradles a steel wheel balanced on an axis. As with other, larger works by Holt, a pioneer of Land art in the 1970s and 1980s, the sculpture manipulates experiences of place and time by offering a frame through which viewers may encounter the surrounding landscape, in addition to tracing the passage of time by using the movement of the sun to compose a specific, annual view. Where Holt's sculpture harnesses nature to construct an experience, Roger Hiorns embraces chance and improvisation in *A retrospective view of the pathway* (2008), a polyester tank poised in the museum's landscape that produces billows of pseudo-pharmaceutical bubbles that spill from the top of the tank and tumble unpredictably across the grounds to create an interactive, bubble-bath environment of unexpected sights, sounds, and smells.

Connecting the exterior landscape with the history of Laguna Gloria and the Driscoll Villa building, constructed in 1916, the artist collective Lakes Were Rivers, founded in Austin, presents the first-ever singular work representing a cohesive collaboration between all eleven of its members. Fitting within the Performance & Process theme, the group's installation is based on research into the history of the historic villa and its matriarch, Clara Driscoll. On view within the Driscoll Villa is a poignant assemblage of photographs, objects, and models—some original artistic creations and some pulled from archival sources—as well as a new video featuring a melting-ice swan. Exploring the inherently subjective nature of both photography and archival collections, the assemblage draws attention to the process of research and connections between the past and the present, while simultaneously revealing the group's own history as an art-making body. A final piece by Yoko Ono, *Summer Dream (Let your dream come true on a distant wall)* (2012), spans the indoor and outdoor spaces of the site while transforming viewers' innermost thoughts and desires into externalized proclamations. Visitors are invited to type their dreams or wishes into a computer indoors, which transmits these thoughts, one after another, to an electronic billboard exhibited in the landscape outside. Thus, as private wishes are being confessed and broadcast, they are added to countless others in what becomes an affirmative collective of dreams.



EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

Strange Pilgrims is accompanied by a 250-page, full-color, hardbound catalogue with an essay by exhibition curator Heather Pesanti; a scholarly essay by University of Texas at Austin Art History Professor Ann Reynolds; a conversation between philosopher Alva Noë and writer and critic Lawrence Weschler; and original artist's contributions by Trisha Baga and Jessie Stead, Roger Hiorns, and Lakes Were Rivers. The catalogue also includes 500-word texts, short biographies, and full-color plates for each artist on view that provide additional creative and critical context for the exhibition. The exhibition catalogue for *Strange Pilgrims* will be published September 2015 and is packaged and distributed by University of Texas Press.

EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT

Strange Pilgrims is organized by The Contemporary Austin. Exhibition support comes from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Suzanne Deal Booth, Lannan Foundation, The Moody Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Texas Monthly, and Vision Fund Leaders and Contributors. Special venue support and artist-in-residence partnership has been provided through the Visual Arts Center in the Department of Art and Art History at The University of Texas at Austin.

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.

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IMAGE CREDITS:

Roger Hiorns, *A retrospective view of the pathway*, 2008. Foam, compressor, and polyester tanks. Dimensions variable. Artwork © 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / DACS, London. Courtesy the artist; Lühring Augustine, New York; Corvi-Mora, London; and Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam. Image courtesy Atelier Calder, Saché, France. Photograph by Guillaume Blanc, Atelier Calder.

Bruce Nauman, *Green Light Corridor*, 1970. Painted wallboard and fluorescent light fixtures with green lamps. 10 x 40 x 1 feet, dimensions variable. Installation view, *Changing Perceptions: The Panza Collection at the Guggenheim Museum*, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Spain, 2000. Artwork © 2015 Bruce Nauman / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Panza Collection, Gift. Image © the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Photograph by Erika Barahona Ede.

Andy Coolquitt, *no I didn't go to any museums here I hate museums museums are just stores that charge you to come in there are lots of free museums here but they have names like real stores (detail)*, 2012. Plexiglas, carpet, wood, metal, wire, light bulbs, paint, paper, polyester, plastic, and found objects. 96 x 120 x 72 inches. Artwork © Andy Coolquitt. Courtesy the artist and Lisa Cooley, New York. Image courtesy Andy Coolquitt. Photograph by Ben Aqua.

Charles Atlas, *Institute for Turbulence Research (from Tornado Warning)*, 2008. Four-channel synchronized video projection, transparent screen, VMU, sound. Dimensions variable. Running time: 6:00. Installation view, *Nobody Gets to See the Wizard. Not Nobody. Not Nohow*, Anna Kustera Gallery, New York, 2010. Artwork © Charles Atlas. Courtesy the artist; Lühring Augustine, New York; and Vilma Gold, London. Image courtesy the artist; Lühring Augustine, New York; and Vilma Gold, London. Photograph by Glen Fogel.

Phil Collins, *This Unfortunate Thing Between Us* (still, Sharon Smith and Susanne Sachsse), 2011. Live TV broadcast. Running time: 60:00. Artwork © Phil Collins. Courtesy Shady Lane Productions, Berlin, and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York. Image courtesy Phil Collins.

Lakes Were Rivers, *Door and Archway*, Laguna Gloria, Austin, Texas, 2014. Archival inkjet print. Dimensions variable. Artwork and Image © Jessica Mallios. Courtesy Lakes Were Rivers.