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**ALWAYS FRESH
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**The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is pleased to present work
by Mexico City-based artist Melanie Smith.**



Melanie Smith with Rafael Ortega, *Bulto – Highway/Dune Pac Sequence* (still), 2011. Video: color, sound, 2:57 minutes. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich.

Melanie Smith

March 22 – June 15, 2014

Opening Reception

Friday, March 21 | 6:30-9PM

Artist Talk

Saturday, March 22 | 2PM

HOUSTON, TX (March 5, 2014)—The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is pleased to present video and sculpture by Mexico City-based artist Melanie Smith. CAMH's exhibition focuses on three video-based installation works: *Xilitla: Dismantled 1*; *Bulto: Fragments*; and *Elevator* (2010, 2011, and 2012,

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respectively). Working in cinematic installations since the late 1990s, Smith, as an English-born artist living in Mexico, initially took an almost ethnographic approach to the eccentricities of the sprawling, chaotic mass of her adopted home city, considering as worthy of critical examination the markets full of plastic and the sheer physical expanse of the massive metropolis. Since 2010 her works have grown less analytical and increasingly poetic, sensual, and surreal.

Xilitla is named after the town in Northern Mexico where the eccentric English artist, poet, and patron of the surrealist art movement, Edward James, built the architectural folly called Las Pozas. Now half returned to the jungle, its sculptures recall an expatriate Englishman's response to the indigenous culture of the Americas through the lens of the surrealist's subconscious interpretations of it. A tall, vertical projection filmed by the artist shows a magical world and simultaneously its more quotidian underbelly—workers maintaining this rapidly decaying artwork. Yet even in that, Smith locates a deconstructed magic. Manipulating large mirrors that appear throughout the film, Smith doubles and dissects what is left of James' life's work creating a mesmerizing effect.

Bulto: Fragments was filmed in Lima, Peru, and in it we see a large, ungainly mass being carried, dragged, abandoned, and reclaimed throughout the urban center of the city as well as nearby archaeological sites, without anyone questioning what is hidden inside the bundled object. At CAMH, the video will be presented in its dissected form in which fragments appear on multiple small monitors throughout the public areas of the Museum, including the bathrooms and elevator. The short and darkly humorous *Elevator* presents episodic tableaux that appear and vanish as an elevator opens on different floors, becoming increasingly comic and surreal. This work is presented with associated objects that are derived from the increasingly wild scenes.

Although considered one of the best known Mexican artists working today—her standing among her fellow artists made clear by her representation of her adopted country with a solo pavilion exhibition at the 2011 Venice Biennale—Smith enjoys the ex-patriot's ability to perceive the culture that fuels her work through her critical, bifurcated gaze. Through her finely tuned aesthetic choices, she seduces viewers visually, letting those of us for whom Mexican culture is less familiar gain a respect and appreciation of its mysteries. This exhibition will speak directly to both the reality and dream of Mexico and showcase an artist of rare analytic, aesthetic, and poetic sensibility.

Melanie Smith is presented in CAMH's Zilkha Gallery and is curated by Bill Arning, Director. In Houston, an exhibition of new work by Smith, including paintings and a video, is also on view at Sicardi Gallery, February 27-April 19, 2014.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Melanie Smith was born in Poole, England in 1965. She received her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Reading in 1984. Since 1989 she has lived and worked in Mexico City, an experience that has enormously influenced her works ever since. Her work has been exhibited at numerous institutions, both nationally and internationally, including: P. S. 1, New York; MoMA, New York; UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; ICA, Boston; Tate Liverpool; Tate Modern, London; South London Gallery, London; Lima Art Museum; Tamayo Museum, Contemporary Art University Museum and El Eco Experimental Museum, Mexico City; and Monterrey Museum, among others. Her individual exhibitions include: *Art Now Lightbox: Melanie Smith and Rafael Ortega*, Tate Britain (2012); *Red Square Impossible Pink*, Mexican Pavilion, 54th International Venice Biennale (2011); *Parres Trilogy*, in collaboration with Rafael Ortega, Miami Art Museum (2008); and *Cerca Series - Melanie Smith*, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (2004). Smith's retrospective exhibition, *Spiral City and Other Vicarious Pleasures*, traveled from the University Museum of Science and the Arts (MUCA) in

Mexico City (2006) to The Lab in Denver (2008) and MIT List in Boston (2009). She holds a grant from the National System of Art Creators of the FONCA (Mexico).

PUBLICATION

Melanie Smith is accompanied by a bound, illustrated catalogue including an essay by the exhibition's curator, Bill Arning, a checklist of works in the exhibition, and biographic and bibliographic citations. Available April 2014.

Perspectives catalogues are made possible by a grant from The Brown Foundation, Inc.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

All events are free and open to the public and take place at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston unless otherwise noted. For complete listings and current information, please check www.camh.org.

Opening Reception: Melanie Smith

Friday, March 21 | 6:30-9PM

Join us for the opening reception of *Melanie Smith*. Reception with cash bar.

Artist Talk: Melanie Smith

Saturday, March 22 | 2PM

Join artist Melanie Smith for a discussion about her work and influences.

Talk: Adriana Zavala

Saturday, May 31 | 2PM

Adriana Zavala, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor at Tufts University where she specializes in Modern and Contemporary Latin American Art, the Art of Mexico, and Gender and Women's Studies. Zavala is one of the leading lights in the reevaluation of Latin American art of the last decade and will be speaking about the history of Latin American film to provide context to Melanie Smith's videos.

EXHIBITION SUPPORT

Melanie Smith is made possible in part by a grant from AMEXCID, MEXICAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, and the CONSULATE GENERAL OF MÉXICO. The *Perspectives* Series is made possible by a major grant from Faye Sarofim and by donors to the Museum's Perspectives Fund: Allison and David Ayers, Bright Star Productions Inc., The Brown Foundation, Inc., Dillon Kyle Architecture, Heidi and David Gerger, Glen Gonzalez and Steve Summers, Kerry Inman and Denby Auble, Mady and Ken Kades, Poppi Massey, Leslie and Shannon Sasser in Honor of Lynn Herbert, Andrew Schirrmeister III, William F. Stern, and 20K Group, LLC.

EDUCATION SUPPORT

The Museum receives support for its education programs from: Anonymous, Dillon Kyle Architecture, Sara Paschall Dodd, Frost Bank, Louise D. Jamail, Mr. and Mrs. I.H. Kempner III, Kinder Morgan Foundation, Robert and Pearl Wallis Knox Foundation, Leticia Loya, Elisabeth McCabe, M.D. Anderson Foundation, Marian and Speros Martel Foundation Endowment, Andrew R. McFarland, Ms. Louisa Stude Sarofim, Texas Commission on the Arts, and Elizabeth Satel Young.

Teen Council is supported by Ms. Louisa Stude Sarofim.

GENERAL SUPPORT

Funding for the Museum's operations through the Fund for the Future is made possible by generous grants from Chinhui Juhn and Eddie Allen, Anonymous, Jereann Chaney, Marita and JB Fairbanks, Jo and Jim Furr, Barbara and Michael Gamson, Brenda and William Goldberg, Leticia Loya, Faye Sarofim, Andrew Schirrmeister III, and David and Marion Young.

CAMH's operations and programs are made possible through the generosity of the Museum's trustees, patrons, members and donors. The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston receives partial operating support from the Houston Endowment, the City of Houston through the Houston Museum District Association, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Texas Commission on the Arts, The Wortham Foundation Inc., and artMRKT. CAMH also thanks its artist benefactors for their support including Ricci Albenda, McArthur Binion, Brendan Cass, Jack Early, Robert Gober, Wayne Gonzales, Sean Landers, Zoe Leonard, Klara Lidén, Donald Moffett, Rob Pruitt, Rusty Scruby, Laurie Simmons, Josh Smith, and Marc Swanson.

United is the official airline of the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

CAMH MISSION

The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is a leading destination to experience innovative art. CAMH actively encourages public engagement with its exhibitions through its educational programs, publications, and online presence. **ALWAYS FRESH, ALWAYS FREE**

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is located at 5216 Montrose Boulevard, at the corner of Montrose and Bissonnet, in the heart of Houston's Museum District. Hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 10AM-7PM, Thursday 10AM-9PM, Saturday 10AM-6PM, and Sunday 12PM-6PM. Admission is always free. For more information, visit www.camh.org or call 713 284 8250.