

PRESS RELEASE

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

#ABetterYesterday
#atCAMH

EXHIBITION OPENING
A BETTER YESTERDAY

May 20–September 3, 2017

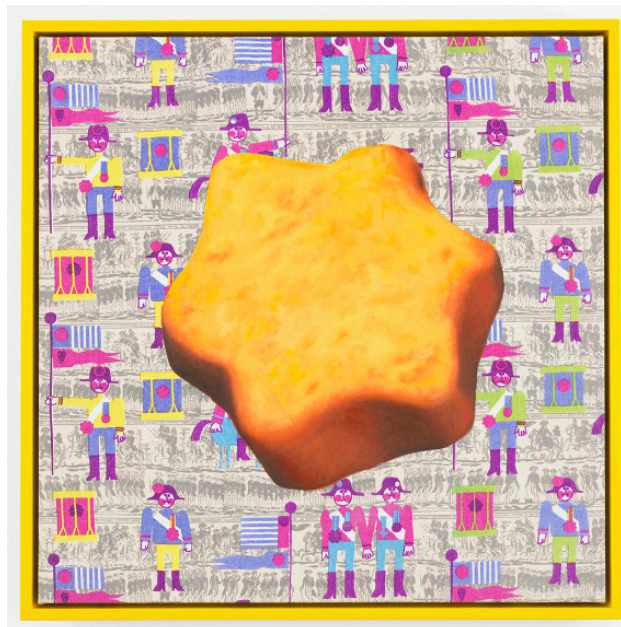
OPENING RECEPTION:

A Better Yesterday
Friday, May 19, 2017
6:30–9PM

IN CONVERSATION:

JooYoung Choi and Jack Early
with Bill Arning
Saturday, May 20, 2017
2–3PM

Learn more about the
exhibition *A Better Yesterday*
with two of the featured artists
during a discussion with the
CAMH Director and organizing
curator.



Jack Early
Magical Surprises (detail), 2015
Oil on silkscreened canvas (4 parts)
24 x 24 inches (each)
Courtesy the artist and Fergus McCaffrey, New York

HOUSTON, TX (March 10, 2017)—“Forgiveness means giving up all hope of a better past” is a truism today, originally from the lips of our great, philosophically-minded comedienne and actress Lily Tomlin. It means simply that we need to accept that whatever traumas we have lived through are part of the life experience that created us, and we must build from there. *A Better Yesterday*, curated by CAMH Director Bill Arning, showcases three artists who bring their unique vision of childhood accomplishments, imaginary worlds, and traumas into a dialogue with their present lives. Featuring JooYoung Choi, Jack Early, and Lily van der Stokker, this exhibition contains works that are both playful and incisive. The yesterdays of each artist are informed not only by their personal lived-experiences but also by the period in which they came of age and the different, global cities from which they hail: Houston, New York, and Amsterdam.

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JooYoung Choi
The Daily Veritas – Stepping on the face of madness, 2015
 Acrylic, paper, and painted canvas on unstretched canvas
 70 × 45 inches
 Private collection, Houston

Why should the joy of imaginary playmates be denied to us as adults? Houston-based artist JooYoung Choi has lived between two worlds and now creates her own in her art. Born in Korea and raised by adoptive parents in the US, Choi has explored the construction of identity throughout her career but has turned her focus to the alternate realities we build for ourselves. This has yielded her creation of an epic mythology for a land she calls the “Cosmic Womb”. Her multi-disciplinary approach to art-making has given rise to a colorful cast of characters, including Queen Kiok, the Tuplets, Spacia, Noiro, and C.S. Watson. Choi explores their lives and interactions through video, installation, and two-dimensional works on paper. Her presentation at CAMH will conclude the story arc that began with an installation at Houston’s Project Row Houses and Lawndale Art Center.

Jack Early’s childhood in the South is fundamental to the explorations of identity, sexuality, and masculinity in his work. His pop-influenced visuals offer bursts of color, illuminating a stylized version of his journey from boyhood to manhood. In particular, his biography will be presented in an installation titled *Jack Early’s Life Story in Just Under 20 Minutes* (2014). The recorded telling of his life story resounds from the horn of a bright-yellow Victrola phonograph on a red, white, and blue bandstand. Told against the backdrop of a band playing an upbeat melody composed by Early, his life story unfolds as brash and bright as the yellow record from which it unfolds. Also on display will be life-sized, soft sculpture versions of the artist’s family. Reminiscent of beanbag chairs, they evoke the familial space in the late 1960s and invite us all to imagine our families tamed and made into cute, lovable stuffed creations.

Doodles, bubble-handwriting, and garish pastels often evoke memories of a childhood bedroom or passing notes in school. Lily van der Stokker, a Dutch artist best-known for her large-scale wall paintings and environs, utilizes these treacly tools and makes them central to her practice. Her wall paintings—defined by outlines with flat areas of color—reveal their origin in small-scaled drawings and often resemble childlike illustrations replete with cloyingly sweet flowers and loop-de-loops. Despite their seeming sweetness and delicacy, the psychological effects they create are complicated and contradictory. She will be represented by a suite of drawings based on her longest romantic relationship that ended with her partner’s death. The culminating wall painting is a marvelous monument to the sense of the past, once all consuming, now merely *Useless Movement* (2008).

In the era of scripted “reality” TV with its carefully orchestrated therapy and catharsis, it is refreshing to celebrate three artists

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Lily van der Stokker
Jack and Lily Live together 5 years, design for wall painting and couch, 1998
Color pencil and pen on paper
8 1/4 x 11 1/2 inches
Courtesy the artist and Koenig & Clinton, New York

who transform the cold, grey facts of their personal histories into a mutable material for joy. The past is a neutral building block that should engender no emotion from us other than gratitude for who we are today. Still, creative people cannot help but muse over alternate realities that might have been and, through the telling, make sense of the actual narratives. And while such musings can veer toward the pathological in the cases of JooYoung Choi, Jack Early, and Lily van der Stokker, these artists remake aspects of their pasts with glee. *A Better Yesterday's* three personal histories and stories are re-envisioned as ambiguously fictional situations that encourage the museum visitors to consider their own histories and stories.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

JooYoung Choi was born in 1982 in Seoul, South Korea. She was adopted in 1983 by an American family in Concord, New Hampshire. In 2007, she was reunited with her birth family in Ansan, South Korea. She received her BFA from Massachusetts College of Art and Design in Boston in 2010, and her MFA from the Art Institute of Boston in 2012. She currently lives in Houston.

Jack Early graduated from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. Recent exhibitions have included *Pop Life: Art in a Material World*, Tate Modern, London, (2009–10); *Mapping the Studio: Artists from the François Pinault Collection*, Palazzo Grassi, Venice, (2009–11); *Jack Early: WWJD*, Southfirst, Brooklyn, (2012); and *Jack Early: Gallery Peace*, McCaffrey Fine Art, New York, (2012). He lives and works in Brooklyn.

Lily van der Stokker was born in 1954 in Den Bosch, The Netherlands. She earned a degree in drawing and textiles from R.K. Scholengemeenschap St. Dionysus, Tilburg, and a degree in monumental design and painting from the Academy of Art and Design St. Joost, Breda. She currently lives and works in Amsterdam and New York City.

PUBLICATION

A Better Yesterday is accompanied by a publication with essays by CAMH Director and organizing curator Bill Arning.

OPENING RECEPTION

A Better Yesterday

Friday, May 19, 2017 | 6:30–9PM

Celebrate the opening of *A Better Yesterday*, featuring presentations by JooYoung Choi, Jack Early, and Lily van der Stokker as each remakes his or her personal histories and stories as ambiguously fictional situations. Beverages will be available for purchase at our cash bar.

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PUBLIC PROGRAMS

OPEN STUDIO:

Soft Sculptures

Saturday, June 3, 2017

2–4PM

Transform a family member, imaginary friend, or a character from an alternative universe into your own soft sculpture inspired by the exhibition *A Better Yesterday*.

WORDS + ART:

Writing Workshop

Saturday, July 22, 2017

1–2PM

MUSEUM EXPERIENCE DAY

Saturday, July 29, 2017

11AM–3PM

WORDS + ART: Reading

Thursday, August 24, 2017

6:30–7:30PM

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

These events are free, open to the public, and take place at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. Seating is limited. Please check CAMH.ORG for the most current information.

EXHIBITION SUPPORT

A Better Yesterday is generously supported by Fergus McCaffrey, New York. The exhibition is also made possible in part by a generous grant from Mondriaan Fund.



This exhibition is made possible by the patrons, benefactors, and donors to the Museum's Friends of Steel Exhibitions: Director's Circle—Chinhui Juhn and Eddie Allen, Fayez Sarofim, and Ms. Louisa Stude Sarofim. Curator's Circle—Mr. and Mrs. I.H. Kempner III. Major Exhibition Circle—A Fare Extraordinaire, Bergner and Johnson Design, Jereann Chaney, Barbara and Michael Gamson, George and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation, Blakely and Trey Griggs, Leslie and Mark Hull, Jackson and Company, KPMG, LLP, Beverly and Howard Robinson, and Michael Zilkha. Perspectives Exhibitions Circle - Ruth Dreessen and Thomas Van Laan, Glen Gonzalez and Steve Summers, Leigh and Reggie Smith, Mr. Wallace Wilson, and The Susan Vaughan Foundation, Inc.

The catalogue accompanying this exhibition is made possible by a grant from The Brown Foundation, Inc. of Houston.

GENERAL SUPPORT

Funding for the Museum's operations is generously provided by Melissa Kepke Grobmyer, Louise Jamail, Dillon A. Kyle, Catherine and George Masterson, Elisabeth McCabe, Fayez Sarofim, and Robin and Andrew C. Schirrmeister III. The Museum receives partial operating support from The Brown Foundation, Inc. of Houston, the Houston Endowment, the City of Houston through the Houston Museum District Association, the Texas Commission on the Arts, The Wortham Foundation, Inc., and Art Market Productions.

CAMH also thanks its artist benefactors for their support, including Chris Beckman, Michael Bise, Bruce High Quality Foundation, Mel Chin, Julia Dault, Jules de Balincourt, James Drake, Keltie Ferris, Mark Flood, Barnaby Furnas, Theaster Gates, Jeffrey Gibson, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Camille Henrot, Jim Hodges, Joan Jonas, Jennie C. Jones, Maya Lin, Julian Lorber, Robert Mangold, Beatriz Milhazes, Melissa Miller, Marilyn Minter, Nic Nicosia,

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United is the Official Airline of the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

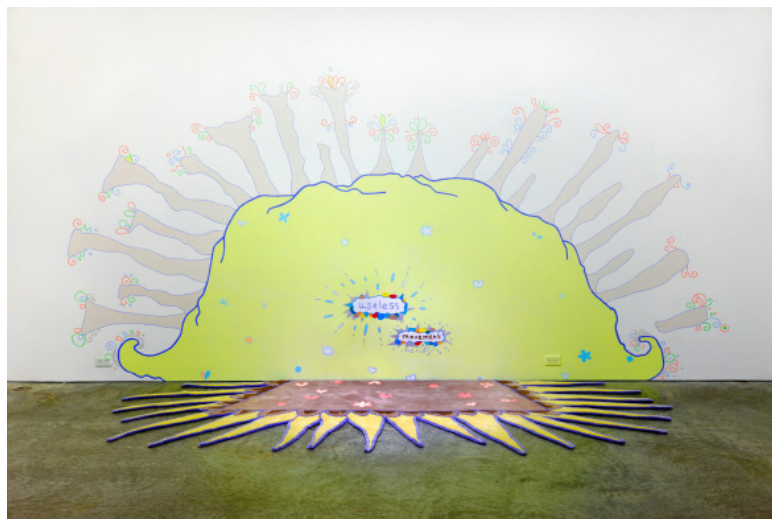
CAMH MISSION

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 CAMH.ORG or call 713 284 8250.



Lily van der Stokker
Useless Movement, 2010
Acrylic wall paint and mixed media
87 2/5 × 187 × 62 1/5 inches
Courtesy the artist and Koenig & Clinton, New York