

5216 Montrose Blvd Houston, TX 77006-6547
t (713) 284-8250 f (713) 284-8275 www.camh.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 2, 2009

MEDIA CONTACT
Connie McAllister
Communications and Marketing Manager
t (713) 284-8255 cmcallister@camh.org

**The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston presents
*Matthew Day Jackson: The Immeasurable Distance***

Opening Reception: Friday, October 16, 2009, 7:00-10:00 p.m.
On view October 17, 2009 – January 17, 2010



Matthew Day Jackson, *Chariot II—I like America and America Likes Me*, 2008.
Courtesy the artist and Peter Blum Gallery, New York. Installation view courtesy
MIT List Visual Arts Center

Houston, TX—The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is pleased to present *Matthew Day Jackson: The Immeasurable Distance*, a solo exhibition that includes works based on Jackson's artist's residency at the MIT List Visual Arts Center (LVAC) in Cambridge, MA. Jackson's complex research, histories, and hagiographies are manifested in sculptures, constructed paintings, objects, books, and videos. In this exhibition, curated by Bill Arning, director of CAMH, and co-organized by MIT LVAC, Jackson continues his investigations into human consciousness and explores how positive evolutionary developments in human thought and culture occur under physical or mental stress. Other works explore how constructive and destructive technological developments often stem from a similar impetus: to expand human experience despite all odds, proving that progress is possible, whatever the risk. Drag racing, the Apollo space missions, test-pilot culture, the nuclear legacy in terms of both science and culture, commingle with iconic twentieth-century figures like visionary Buckminster Fuller, Big Daddy Don Garlits, Eleanor Roosevelt, and even the artist's mother. Jackson relates these modern myths using his iconic players as mischievous tricksters to question what it means to live at a time when technology has rewritten philosophy and religion.

Jackson grapples with such big themes as technology, nature, and God. In his most recent works, the artist considers how scientific discoveries granting mankind seemingly godlike powers can be applied for constructive, destructive, or morally ambiguous ends. Even the most seemingly pure progressive thinking can contain the seeds of its own nemesis, while weapons also can be repurposed for peaceful ends.

One aspect of the exhibition focuses on Jackson's intense interest in the 1969 Apollo 11 space voyage, the first mission to land a human on the surface of the moon. MIT developed the computer codes that brought the astronauts safely to the moon's surface, a 1400-page document called *Luminary 1A* that is in the collection of the MIT Museum. Within the codes are quotations from Shakespeare and the radical politics of the 1960s ("Burn Baby Burn") and strange asides to future readers ("Look around and see where you are"). In collaboration with the MIT Museum, the artist created a facsimile edition of the document, which is a digitally scanned and bound series of antique-style books that will be available for viewers to peruse.

Jackson's *Study Collection* (2009) is an enormous stainless steel shelf-unit (inspired by the artist's visits to the technological artifacts in MIT Museum's basement storeroom). It features models of all of the missile systems including the V1, V2, Thor, Titan, and Cruise missiles, as well as models of Fat Man and Little Boy along with other thought-artifacts created in the artist's studio.

Study Collection also features a series of models that show the artist's skull morphing into the skull of Phineas Gage, a railroad construction foreman who miraculously survived a horrific accident in which an explosive charge drove a large iron rod through his skull, destroying a portion of his brain's frontal lobes. Gage suffered major personality changes after the accident thereby profoundly influencing 19th-century thinking about the brain and its localized functions as they relate to personality and behavior. Harvard University Medical School's Warren Museum contains Gage's actual skull in its collection of historical artifacts. *Study Collection* features a 3-D digital scan of the 3-foot damping rod that shot through Gage's skull making him a living oddity and example of the mind/body split.

In *The Lower 48*, (2006) Jackson created a series of photographs that make up an expansive wall-size grid. Taken over the course of approximately four months while driving through the Continental U.S. in the summer and fall of 2006, each of Jackson's 48 photographs depicts an anthropomorphic land formation. Jackson's photographic compositions reveal the decidedly human characteristics contained in the rock formations. A fantastic look at the familiar, these "land portraits" capture fleeting glimpses of nature personified.

Chariot II-I like America and America Likes Me (2008) was first shown in *The Violet Hour* at the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle. The work starts as a meditation on Jackson's family background and his decision to pursue a life and career as a fine artist. Conceptually, the work can also be experienced as a monument to the unlimited power of the human spirit to grow and to remake itself and the world. (The subtitle is derived from a work by the German artist Joseph Beuys whose work and materials were also frequently employed in homage to the power of positive transformation.)

In creating *Chariot II*, Jackson rescued a crashed car frame from the front lawn of his cousin, racecar driver Skip Nichols. Jackson painstakingly restored and rebuilt the car as a material metaphor for transformation. The car appears to float on a spectrum of electronic lights arranged in a circular red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet sequence. *Chariot II* uses state of the art solar panels to collect enough sunlight to light the piece, reminding viewers that solar energy is rapidly emerging as an important renewable energy source.

Another theme Jackson explores is the Promethean implication for the use of scientific knowledge. In his painting series *August 6, 1945* (2009), Jackson creates aerial views of two city grids. Created with burnt wood and melted lead, the paintings make an obvious reference to the atomic bombings in Japan. The images showing Hiroshima and Washington, DC, reveal both cities forever linked to each other in the history and legacy of the development of nuclear weapons.

For *Heart of Prometheus* (2009), Jackson commissioned the father of drag racing Big Daddy Don Garlits to build a display version of his Chrysler Hemi Drag racing motor from *Swamp Rat VI* out of previously raced parts. Sitting on an artist-designed motor stand, the sheer mass of the machine only hints at what it could do were it fired up. In *John Stapp/Matt Jackson* (2009), the artist's face is filmed while drag racing, recreating the G-force stress that test pilot John Stapp endured in one of many iconic images documenting pilots training. In preparation for the piece Jackson formally took drag racing lessons at Frank Hawley's Drag Racing School in Gainesville, Florida. He earned a license from the NHRA (National Hot Rod Association) to drive in the Super-comp dragster division.

About the Artist:

Born in 1974 in Panorama City, CA, Matthew Day Jackson lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. Jackson first grabbed art world attention through his entry in the 2005 exhibition *Greater New York* at P.S.1 in New York City. His work, *Sepulcher* (2004), was a Viking burial ship with sails made from the artist's punk rock T-shirts stitched into a giant, Mondrian-like painting. For the 2005 Whitney Biennial of American Art, Jackson contributed *Chariot, The Day After the End of Days* (2005-2006), a pioneer covered wagon floating above a bed of fluorescent tubes.

Jackson's solo exhibitions include *Drawings from Tlön*, Nicole Klagsbrun, New York, NY (2008); *Terranaut*, Peter Blum Gallery, New York, NY (2008); *Diptych*, Mario Diacono at Ars Libri, Boston, MA (2007); *The Lower 48*, Perry Rubenstein Gallery, New York, NY (2007); *Paradise Now!*, Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, OR (2006); and *By No Means Necessary*, The Locker Plant, Chinati Foundation, Marfa, TX (2004).

Selected group exhibitions include *Art Focus 5*, Jerusalem, Israel (2008); *Heartland*, Vanabbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands, (2008); *Martian Museum of Terrestrial Art, Mission: to interpret and understand contemporary art*, Barbican Gallery, London, UK (2008); *Matthew Day Jackson, Jen Liu, David Maljkovic: The Violet Hour*, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, WA (2008); *The Old, Weird America*, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, TX (2008); *1st Athens Biennale*, Greece (2007); *2nd Moscow Biennale*, Russia (2007); *3rd Beijing Biennale*, China (2007); *Huma Bhabha and Matthew Day Jackson: Sculptures and New Print Editions*, Peter Blum Gallery, New York, NY; Perry Rubenstein Gallery, New York, NY (2007); *To Build a Fire*, Rivington Arms, New York, NY (2007); *Uncertain States of America—American Art in the 3rd Millennium*, Herning Kunstmuseum, Denmark, and Centre for Contemporary Art, Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw, Poland (2007); Whitney Biennial, *Day for Night*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2006); and *Greater New York*, P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, NY (2005).

PUBLICATION

Matthew Day Jackson: The Immeasurable Distance is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue featuring comprehensive information on the featured artist and works. The exhibition catalogue includes essays by exhibition curator Bill Arning, director of the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston; Deborah Douglas, science and technology curator of the MIT Museum; author and MIT professor David A. Mindell; systems administrator for the MIT Lincoln Laboratory Tom Morton; and a comic strip by illustrator David Tompkins. \$20. ISBN: 978-1933619217. 99 pages, color

This catalogue is made possible by a grant from The Brown Foundation, Inc.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

All the following events are free and open to the public, and take place at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston unless otherwise noted. Please check www.camh.org for additional programming and information.

Opening reception: *Matthew Day Jackson: The Immeasurable Distance*

Friday, October 16, 7:00 – 10:00 p.m.

Join us in celebrating work by this exciting artist. We'll have a taco truck onsite to help us celebrate in true Texas fashion.

Artist/Scholar Talk: Matthew Day Jackson and Bill Arning

Saturday, October 17, 2:00 p.m.

Matthew Day Jackson, exhibiting artist, joins Bill Arning, Director, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, and curator of the exhibition, in conversation.

Family Day

Sunday, November 8, 1:00–4:00 p.m

Join us for family tours, hands-on activities, racecars, and space fun. Arts supplies provided.

Artist/Scholar Talk: David A. Mindell

Thursday, November 12, 6:30 p.m.

David A. Mindell, Director of Science, Technology, and Society department, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, author of *Digital Apollo: Human and Machine in Spaceflight*, and catalogue essayist, discusses human spaceflight.

Loft Concert: Musiqqa

Thursday, November 19, 6:30 p.m.

Musiqqa continues its Loft Concert series with a selection of music inspired by the exhibition.

Moon Movies: *For All Mankind*

Thursday, December 3, 6:30 p.m.

Bring a blanket and enjoy an outdoor screening on the museum lawn. Space snacks provided. ***For All Mankind***, 1989, soundtrack by Brian Eno, 1989 (93 minutes).

In July 1969, the space race ended when Apollo 11 fulfilled President Kennedy's challenge of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to the Earth. No one who witnessed the lunar landing will ever forget it. Al Reinert's documentary, *For All Mankind*, is the story of the twenty-four men who traveled to the Moon, told in their words, in their voices, using the images of their experiences. Forty years later, it remains the most radical, visually dazzling work of cinema yet made about this earth-shaking event.

Moon Movies: *In the Shadow of the Moon*

Thursday, December 10, 6:30 p.m.

Bring a blanket and enjoy an outdoor screening on the museum lawn. Space snacks provided. ***In the Shadow of the Moon***, 2007 (100 minutes)

Between 1968 and 1972, the world watched in awe each time an American spacecraft voyaged to the Moon. This intimate epic vividly communicates the daring and the danger, the pride and the passion, of this extraordinary era in American history. Only 12 American men walked upon its surface and they remain the only human beings to have stood on another world. Now for the first, and very possibly the last, *In the Shadow of the Moon* combines archival material from the original NASA film footage, much of it never before seen, with interviews with the surviving astronauts.

Artist/Scholar Talk: Daniel S. Goldberg

Thursday, January 14, 6:30 p.m.

Daniel S. Goldberg, J.D., Ph.D, Health Policy and Ethics Fellow, Chronic Disease Prevention

and Control Research Center, and Research Faculty, Initiative on Neuroscience and Law, Baylor College of Medicine, gives a presentation on Phineas Gage.

EXHIBITION FUNDING AND SUPPORT

Matthew Day Jackson: The Immeasurable Distance has been made possible by the Council for the Arts at MIT and the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Special thanks to the Peter Blum Gallery, New York, NY, and Phoenix Media/Communications Group and to the patrons, benefactors, and donors of the Museum's Major Exhibition Fund: Major Patrons—Chinhui Juhn and Eddie Allen, Fayez Sarofim, Michael Zilkha; Patrons—Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Ballard, Mr. and Mrs. I. H. Kempner III, Ms. Louisa Stude Sarofim, Leigh and Reggie Smith; Benefactors—Marita and J.B. Fairbanks, George and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation, Jackson Hicks / Jackson and Company, Elizabeth Howard, Marley Lott, Elisa and Cris Pye, Beverly and Howard Robinson, Swift + Company, The Susan Vaughan Foundation, Inc., Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Wilson; Donors—Baker Botts, LLP, Bergner and Johnson Design, Susie and Sanford Criner, Julia and Russell Frankel, Jo and Jim Furr, Mr. and Mrs. William Goldberg / Bernstein Global Wealth Management, Louise D. Jamail, King & Spalding L.L.P., KPMG, LLP, Judy and Scott Nyquist, Lauren Rottet, David I. Saperstein, Karen and Harry Susman, John and Becca Cason Thrash, Martha Claire Tompkins, Mark Wawro and Melanie Gray.

EDUCATION SUPPORT

The Museum receives support for its education programs from M.D. Anderson Foundation, Baker Hughes Foundation, Chevron U.S.A. Inc., Louise D. Jamail, Kinder Morgan Foundation, Marian and Speros Martel Foundation Endowment, and Nordstrom, Inc. Teen Council is supported by The Baker Hughes Foundation and Baker Botts L.L.P.

GENERAL SUPPORT

The Museum'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, Inc., the City of Houston through the Houston Museum District Association, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Texas Commission on the Arts.

Continental airlines is the official airline of the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

CAMH MISSION

The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is an idea and a place shaped by the present moment. The Museum exemplifies the dynamic relationship between contemporary art and contemporary society through its exhibitions, public and educational programs, and publications. The CAMH provides the physical and intellectual framework essential to the presentation, interpretation, and advancement of contemporary art; it is a vibrant forum for artists and all audiences, and for critical, scholarly, and public discourse.

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 to Saturday, 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Thursdays to 9:00 PM, and Sundays noon to 5:00 PM. Admission is always free. For more information, visit www.camh.org or call (713) 284-8250.