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**ALWAYS FRESH  
ALWAYS FREE**

**The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is pleased to present the survey exhibition *The Deconstructive Impulse: Women Artists Reconfigure the Signs of Power, 1973-1991*.**

*The Deconstructive Impulse:  
Women Artists Reconfigure  
the Signs of Power, 1973-1991*  
January 21 - April 15, 2012

Opening Reception

Friday, January 20

6-7PM: Members' Preview

7-9PM: Public Reception

Artists/Scholars Talk: Helanie Posner

Saturday, January 21, 2PM

HOUSTON, TX (December 15, 2011)—The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is pleased to present *The Deconstructive Impulse: Women Artists Reconfigure the Signs of Power, 1973-1991*, a survey of leading women artists that examines the crucial feminist contribution to the development of deconstructivism in the 1970s and '80s. As the term suggests, deconstructivism involved taking apart and examining source material, generally borrowed from the mass media, to expose the ways commercial images reveal the mechanisms of power. Women had a particularly high stake in this kind of examination and were disproportionately represented among artists who practiced it. This exhibition is organized by Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase College, State University of New York.

The exhibition includes 68 photographs, prints, paintings, videos, and installations by 22 artists and one artists' collaborative. The artists include: Judith Barry, Dara Birnbaum, Barbara Bloom, Sarah Charlesworth, the Guerrilla Girls, Lynn Hershman



Laurie Simmons, *Walking House*, 1989. Gelatin silver print. 84 x 48 inches. Courtesy the artist. © Laurie Simmons

**CAMH**



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Leeson, Susan Hiller, Jenny Holzer, Deborah Kass, Mary Kelly, Silvia Kolbowski, Barbara Kruger, Louise Lawler, Sherrie Levine, Adrian Piper, Martha Rosler, Cindy Sherman, Laurie Simmons, Lorna Simpson, Sturtevant, Carrie Mae Weems, and Hannah Wilke.

The mid-1970s saw the emergence of a potent artistic impulse to deconstruct the operations of cultural power, an impulse that is often understood, erroneously, to have been gender blind. The prevailing belief has been that following the identity-based, essentialist work of the late 1960s and early 1970s, progressive women artists put aside their differences with men to help them reveal how the mass media and global capitalism control visual culture. Their work was understood to suggest that authenticity and individuality were obsolete fictions, unsustainable in a media-saturated culture in which advertising, television, and the movies shape visual expression far more powerfully than individual agency. Sexual politics were seen to have submitted to a gender-free critique.

Hindsight helps reveal that this scenario is deeply flawed. Not only was the deconstructive impulse propelled in significant measure by women, but it reflected specifically female and highly individualized experiences of power—and constraint. The blatant misogyny of the movie and advertising industries, and the sexism of other cultural institutions and social structures, were significant motivators for launching attacks against them through such strategies as appropriation, simulation, masquerade, and pastiche. A chorus of varied voices—of decidedly plural feminisms—rose up from a wide variety of racial, economic, and cultural communities. In fact the deconstructive impulse helped reveal that gender identity and its representation were more complicated than generally had been recognized.

The exhibition is co-curated by Helaine Posner, Chief Curator and Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs at the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, New York and Nancy Princenthal, art critic and former Senior Editor at *Art in America*. The exhibition was presented at the Neuberger Museum of Art from January 14 - April 3rd, 2011 and the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University from September 15 through December 31, 2011.

#### **PUBLICATION**

*The Deconstructive Impulse* is accompanied by a fully illustrated, 176-page, hardcover book that surveys the work of the artists included, and places them in cultural and historical context. Essays by the

exhibition's curators, Helaine Posner and Nancy Princenthal, are followed by texts by art historians Tom McDonough, Griselda Pollock, and Kristine Stiles discussing such topics as the importance of critical theory and sexual politics in the art world of the 1980s; how domesticity is represented in commercial media and the art that addresses it; the importance of psychoanalytic theory as a critical framework; and the sexualization of inanimate objects. The catalogue is co-published by the Neuberger Museum of Art and DelMonico Books•Prestel.

#### **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](http://www.camh.org).**

#### **Opening Reception: *The Deconstructive Impulse: Women Artists Reconfigure the Signs of Power, 1973-1991***

**Friday, January 20**

#### **6-7PM: Members' Preview**

CAMH Members get a first look at the exhibition with the show's co-curator **Helaine Posner**, Chief Curator and Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs at the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, New York.

#### **7-9PM: Public Reception**

Help us celebrate the opening of this survey of leading women artists that examines the crucial feminist contribution to the development of deconstructivism in the 1970s and '80s. Reception with bar and food truck; cash only please.

#### **Artists/Scholars Talk: Helaine Posner**

**Saturday, January 21, 2PM**

Join us for a closer look at the exhibition with **Helaine Posner**, Chief Curator and Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs at the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, New York. Past exhibitions by Posner include *Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism, and Self-Representation* (1998), *Lorna Simpson* (2006-2007), and *Dana Schutz: If the Face Had Wheels* (2011-2012). She is co-author, with Nancy Princenthal, Eleanor Heartney, and Sue Scott, of *After the Revolution: Women Who Transformed Contemporary Art* (2007).

#### **Artists/Scholars Talk: Dr. Jenni Sorkin**

**Thursday, January 26, 6:30PM**

Join us for a gallery walk-through of the exhibition with Dr. **Jenni Sorkin**, Assistant Professor of Contemporary Art and Critical Studies, University of Houston. Dr. Sorkin's work examines the confluence of gender and

material culture within modern and contemporary art history, theory, and criticism. Her writing has appeared in the *New Art Examiner*, *Art Journal*, *Frieze*, *Modern Painters*, among others. She is currently completing a book manuscript entitled *Live Form: Craft as Participation*, which examines the legacy of Black Mountain College, craft pedagogy, and the history of ceramics from 1952 to 1975.

### **Musiqa Loft Concert**

**Thursday, February 9, 6:30PM**

Join us for the popular loft concert held by **Musiq**a, a nationally acclaimed contemporary music ensemble that takes a fresh look at the concert experience. Led by five composers, Musiq

a creates programs that combine dance, poetry, theater, film, and visual arts with the finest modern repertoire. Cited by the *Houston Chronicle* as "five Lone Star classical musicians to make us proud," Musiqa will present a concert inspired by the exhibition *The Deconstructive Impulse*.

### **Film Screening: *Women Art Revolution (W.A.R.)*, 2010 (82 minutes)\***

**Sunday, February 12, 5PM**

\*Special location: Brown Auditorium Theater, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1001 Bissonnet Street  
The CAMH's Teen Council (TC) presents a special screening of the documentary ***Women Art Revolution***, directed by Lynn Hershman Leeson, participating artist in *The Deconstructive Impulse*. The film explores how the feminist art movement fused free speech and politics into an art that radically transformed the art and culture of our times. Members of the TC will lead an informal discussion immediately after the film.

Tickets will be available at [www.mfah.org](http://www.mfah.org); CAMH members receive discounted ticket price at box office with membership card.

*Co-presented by the MFAH Film Department*

### **Artists/Scholars Talk: Deborah Kass**

**Saturday, March 24, 2PM**

**Deborah Kass** is an internationally recognized artist whose painting examines the intersection of art history, popular culture, and the self. She received her BFA in painting at Carnegie-Mellon University. Her work is in the collections of institutions, including The Museum of Modern Art, The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Solomon Guggenheim Museum, among others, and has been written about extensively in the *New York Times*, art press, and academic books. A survey show, *Deborah Kass, The Warhol Project* traveled across the country from 1999-2001. The Andy Warhol Museum is presenting a retrospective of her

work, *Deborah Kass, Before and Happily Ever After*, in 2012. Her work is featured in *The Deconstructive Impulse*.

### **EXHIBITION SUPPORT**

*The Deconstructive Impulse* is funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D.C. and the Friends of the Neuberger Museum of Art.

Exhibitions in the Brown Foundation Gallery at CAMH have been made possible by the patrons, benefactors and donors to the Museum's Major Exhibition Fund: Major Patron - Chinhui Juhn and Eddie Allen, Faye Sarofim, and Michael Zilkha. Patrons - Louise D. Jamail, Mr. and Mrs. I. H. Kempner III, Ms. Louisa Stude Sarofim, and Leigh and Reggie Smith. Benefactors - Baker Botts L.L.P. / Anne and David Kirkland, George and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation, Jackson Hicks / Jackson and Company, Marley Lott, Beverly and Howard Robinson, Andrew Schirrmeister III, Susan Vaughan Foundation, Inc., and Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Wilson. Donors - A Fare Extraordinaire, Anonymous, Bank of Texas, Bergner and Johnson Design, The Brown Foundation, Inc., Jereann Chaney, Susie and Sanford Criner, Elizabeth Howard Crowell, Dillon Kyle Architecture, Sara Dodd-Spickelmier and Keith Spickelmier, Ruth Dreessen and Thomas Van Laan, Marita and J.B. Fairbanks, Jo and Jim Furr, Barbara and Michael Gamson, Brenda and William Goldberg / Bernstein Global Wealth Management, King & Spalding L.L.P., KPMG, LLP, Judy and Scott Nyquist, Belinda Phelps and Randy Howard, David I. Saperstein, Scurlock Foundation, and Karen and Harry Susman.

### **EDUCATION SUPPORT**

The Museum receives support for its education programs from: Anonymous, Baker Hughes Foundation, Louise D. Jamail, John P. McGovern Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. I.H. Kempner III, Kinder Morgan Foundation, Leticia Loya, Andrew R. McFarland, M.D. Anderson Foundation, Marian and Speros Martel Foundation Endowment, Mrs. Louisa Stude Sarofim, Martha Claire Tompkins, and 20K Group, LLC.

Teen Council is supported by Mrs. Louisa Stude Sarofim with additional support from Baker Hughes Foundation.

### **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, Elizabeth Howard Crowell, Barbara and Michael Gamson, Brenda and William Goldberg, Mr. and Mrs. I.H. Kempner III, Leticia Loya and Faye Sarofim.

CAMH's operations and programs are made possible through the generosity of the Museum's trustees, patrons, members, and donors. CAMH 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, and The Wortham Foundation, Inc.

United 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.

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**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 Wednesday 11AM-7PM, Thursday 11AM-9PM, Friday 11AM-7PM, Saturday and Sunday 11AM-6PM. Admission is always free. For more information, visit [www.camh.org](http://www.camh.org) or call 713 284 8250.