

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

5216 Montrose Boulevard
Houston, Texas 77006
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Press Release

Staff Announcement

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston Appoints Ryan N. Dennis as Senior Curator and Director of Public Initiatives, Promotions for Rebecca Matalon and Patricia Restrepo



Left to Right: Ryan N. Dennis, Senior Curator and Director of Public Art. Photo by Charles A. Smith./ Rebecca Matalon, Senior Curator. Photo by Briia Lauren./ Patricia Restrepo, Curator. Photo by Karen Navarro.

#TrustArtists
#atCAMH

Press Contact

For high-resolution images or media inquiries, contact:

Michael Robinson
Communications and Marketing
Manager
mrobinson@camh.org
713.284.8255

HOUSTON, TX (April TBC, 2023) —Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH) announces new curatorial appointments with the addition of Ryan N. Dennis as Senior Curator and Director of Public Initiatives, along with the promotions of Rebecca Matalon to Senior Curator and Patricia Restrepo as Curator. Dennis will join the Museum in June.

As a non-collecting museum, CAMH is focused on the art of our time and realizing projects that create unexpected and unforgettable contemporary art experiences. For 74 years, CAMH has introduced leading-edge artists to Houston, welcomed new audiences to contemporary art, and presented exhibitions that define global art history. Dennis and Matalon join a rich lineage of CAMH curatorial leaders—including Valerie Cassel Oliver, Toby Kamps, and Paul Schimmel—to lead the Museum’s exhibitions, which often tour major venues nationally. Restrepo will expand her focus to include survey exhibitions and continue the Museum’s legacy of catalytic solo shows.

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In addition to Museum exhibitions, CAMH has significantly broadened its curatorial reach over the last three years through local partnerships with community organizations such as Houston Freedmen's Town Conservancy and Houston Independent School District. CAMH additionally serves as a curatorial leader for civic scale projects throughout the US, which connect the Museum's artist relationships and curatorial expertise to implement integrated public art initiatives that benefit local contexts and audiences. With years of experience working in direct collaboration with diverse communities, Dennis will provide curatorial vision and initiate opportunities and support for artists working beyond the walls of the Museum.

"CAMH is thrilled to recognize the extraordinary talents of our curatorial team and expand upon them," says Executive Director Hesse McGraw. "Ryan Dennis's 10-year tenure in Houston at Project Row Houses and the Menil Collection is legendary, and it's an honor to welcome her back to the city through this role. Ryan is a leading national curatorial voice whose work uniquely bridges artists and communities with institutions. Rebecca and Patricia have brought impactful and inspiring exhibitions to CAMH, like *Garrett Bradley: American Rhapsody* and *Slowed and Thrown: Records of the City Through Mutated Lenses*, respectively. CAMH's curatorial team will present groundbreaking exhibitions inside and beyond our walls."

Ryan N. Dennis currently serves as the Chief Curator and Artistic Director of the Center for Art & Public Exchange (CAPE) at the Mississippi Museum of Art (MMA). Most recently, Dennis co-curated, with Jessica Bell Brown, the critically acclaimed exhibition, *A Movement in Every Direction: Legacies of the Great Migration*, currently on view at Brooklyn Museum and traveling nationwide through 2024. Her recent projects include *Leonardo Drew's City in the Garden* (2020), *Betye Saar: Call & Response* (2021), *Dusti Bonge: Piercing the Inner Wall* (2021) and organizing CAPE artist-in-residence Shani Peter's *Collective Care for Black Mothers and Caretakers* (2022) with the local Jackson community. Before joining MMA, she served as the Curator and Programs Director at Project Row Houses (PRH) in Houston, where she worked with over 100 BIPOC artists to exhibit their work in PRH's shotgun houses. She led the creation of the 2:2:2 Exchange Residency Program with the Hyde Park Art Center in Chicago and established Project/Site, a temporary, site-specific, commission-based public art program. In 2017, she launched the PRH Fellowship with the Center for Art and Social Engagement at the University of Houston's Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts. Dennis earned her Master's degree in Arts and Cultural Management from Pratt Institute, focusing

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on Curatorial Practice. Her writings have appeared in online and print catalogs, journals, and international publications. She has been a visiting lecturer and critic at numerous art schools and institutions and has taught courses on community-based practices and contemporary art at the University of Houston. Dennis was a Class of 2019 Fellow at the Center for Curatorial Leadership, a program that offers leadership training to art museum curators. Recently she was the co-curator of the 2021 Texas Biennial, *A New Landscape, A Possible Horizon* (2021), and the guest art editor for *Gulf Coast: A Journal of Literature and Fine Arts*.

Rebecca Matalon is Senior Curator at CAMH, where she has organized solo exhibitions for artists including Garrett Bradley and Mariah Garnett, as well as the two-person show *Wild Life: Elizabeth Murray & Jessi Reaves* (2021). These widely celebrated exhibitions toured to The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, The Momentary, and the Carnegie Museum of Art, among others. Additionally, she organized the Houston presentations of *Cauleen Smith: We Already Have What We Need* (2021) and *Diane Severin Nguyen: IF REVOLUTION IS A SICKNESS* (2022). Matalon is currently working on the first U.S. solo museum presentation of work by Brooklyn-based artist and filmmaker Jordan Strafer, among other projects.

Previously, Matalon was Assistant Curator at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA), where she organized exhibitions including *Tongues Untied* (2015), *Mickalene Thomas: Do I Look Like a Lady?* (2016), *Welcome to the Dollhouse* (2018), and *Décor: Barbara Bloom, Andrea Fraser, Louise Lawler* (2018). In 2018, she co-organized *Zoe Leonard: Survey*, a major mid-career retrospective of the work of Zoe Leonard, which debuted at The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York before traveling to The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA. Matalon was a Co-Founder and, from 2015–18, Curator at JOAN, a not-for-profit exhibition space in Los Angeles dedicated to presenting the work of emerging and under-represented artists. She has contributed to multiple publications and regularly lectures on contemporary art and curating. Matalon serves on the Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI) board and was on the Organizing Committee of Texas Talks Art, a multi-institutional initiative launched in January 2021.

Patricia Restrepo is Curator at CAMH, where she has worked since 2014. A native Houstonian, Restrepo co-curated *Slowed and Thrown: Records of the City through Mutated Lenses* (2020–2021), an interdisciplinary exhibition orbiting around DJ Screw's process of material manipulation and featuring artists including Jamal Cyrus,

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Shana Hoehn, Tomashi Jackson, Liss LaFleur, and Sondra Perry. She curated *Will Boone: The Highway Hex* (2019), which commissioned site-specific installations and was Boone's first solo museum exhibition. For *Stage Environment: You Didn't Have to Be There* (2018), Restrepo explored CAMH's then 70-year history of championing performances by artists such as Laurie Anderson, James Lee Byars, Joan Jonas, Autumn Knight, and Robert Rauschenberg. Restrepo coordinated CAMH's presentations of *Troy Montes Michie: Rock of Eye* (2022) and *The Dirty South: Contemporary Art, Material Culture, and the Sonic Impulse* (2021). She is organizing the first mid-career survey of work by Houston and Los Angeles-based artist Vincent Valdez, co-curated with Denise Markonish of MASS MoCA.

Restrepo has managed and contributed to CAMH's artist-centric publications and increased their public accessibility through digitization. Her curatorial approach fosters exhibitions as laboratories to focus on the generative potential of archives, interdisciplinary dialogue, and performance. Restrepo previously worked at international art institutions and publications, including the Institute of Aesthetic Research (Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas) of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). Restrepo holds a Master's degree from Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium, and Bachelor's degrees from Rice University.

CAMH Mission

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston presents extraordinary, thought-provoking arts programming and exhibitions to educate and inspire audiences nationally and internationally.

General Information

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is located at 5216 Montrose Boulevard, in the heart of Houston's Museum District.

Hours

Wed 11AM–6PM
Thu 11AM–9PM
Fri 11AM–6PM
Sat 11AM–6PM
Sun 11AM–6PM

Admission is always free. For more information, visit CAMH.ORG or call 713.284.8250.

About Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

Established in 1948, CAMH is one of the oldest non-collecting contemporary art museums in the country, and is internationally known for presenting pivotal and landmark work by artists recognized as the most important of the 20th and 21st centuries. CAMH's mandate is to be present, to connect artists and audiences through the urgent issues of our time, and to adventurously promote the catalytic possibilities of contemporary art. CAMH's programming, both in and beyond the Museum, is presented free to the public, and advocates for artists' essential role in society.