

Media contacts:

Eli A. Haddow, The Historic New Orleans Collection
(504) 556-7603 | elih@hnoc.org

Sarah Chambless Federer, Gambel Communications
(985) 373-5271 | sarahc@gambelpr.com

533 Royal Street | 400–410 Chartres Street
(504) 523-4662 | wrc@hnoc.org | www.hnoc.org
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Three decades of contemporary art to be assembled in “Art of the City”

Opening fall 2018, display made possible through funding from The Helis Foundation

July 2017 | New Orleans, Louisiana—History and contemporary art will interact to refresh perceptions of the city in the inaugural exhibition at The Historic New Orleans Collection’s new Seignouret-Brulatour Building. “Art of the City: Postmodern to Post-Katrina,” presented by The Helis Foundation, is set to open in fall 2018.

The Crescent City’s endurance and resilience have given rise to a thriving contemporary art scene. The “Louisiana ‘Major Works 1984’” exhibition at the 1984 Louisiana World Exposition provides a rough starting point for a renewed cultural consciousness that gained further impetus after Hurricane Katrina and continues to this day. In “Art of the City,” New Orleans interdisciplinary artist, curator and educator Jan Gilbert assembles the diverse perspectives of artists reacting during three decades of strife and progress in the layered city that fueled their inspiration.

“The fecund and tumultuous climate of this period in the life of this city steeps artists and their visions,” said Gilbert. “For THNOC to showcase this recent explosion of the New Orleans contemporary art culture, here at this tricentennial moment, is to recognize its importance as history in the making and is a significant commitment to the future of art in this city.”

The exhibition, made possible by a significant gift to THNOC from The Helis Foundation, will include a robust programming schedule and components that live outside the gallery walls, some of which will be introduced early in 2018 before the display opens to the public.

“As we celebrate the tricentennial of the city of New Orleans, The Helis Foundation is proud to support this important exhibition celebrating New Orleans’s finest contemporary artists responding to our rich cultural history,” said David Kerstein, president of The Helis Foundation. “THNOC is uniquely positioned to tell this story within the context of 300 years of significant artistic achievements highlighted in its collection.”

“Art of the City” will feature the work of more than 75 artists, both homegrown visionaries and devoted visitors. It includes established masters like Krista Jurisich, Douglas Bourgeois and Luis Cruz Azaceta; familiar names like Candy Chang and Gina Phillips; and rising stars like Zarouhie Abdalian, Brandan Odums and Rontherin Ratliff.

Like the city’s iconic food, music and architecture, art in New Orleans reflects the cultural, historical and social currents that move everyday life. A unique gathering of works, “Art of the City” eschews structure for spontaneity, weaving points of view through a display that relishes making the known seem new or unfamiliar.

“We wanted to create a gallery environment that simulates a stroll through our urban landscape of colliding idiosyncrasy and cultural traditions,” said Gilbert. The exhibition will run for six months in new purpose-built galleries within THNOC’s Seignouret-Brulatour Building, 520 Royal St., which is scheduled to open fall 2018. Details on the exact dates of the display and related programming will be announced at a later time.