



OGDEN MUSEUM  
OF SOUTHERN ART

**Ogden Museum of Southern Art Announces Awardees for *Louisiana Contemporary* Prizes**

**Artists Selected as Part of Opening of *Louisiana Contemporary*,  
the Museum's Annual Juried Exhibition,  
Presented by The Helis Foundation**

**New Orleans (August 5)**—The Ogden Museum of Southern Art announced today the artists who have received awards as part of *Louisiana Contemporary*, the Museum's annual juried exhibition featuring work by contemporary artists from across the state. Each year, with support from The Helis Foundation, the Ogden Museum honors four of the presenting artists, highlighting some of the most provocative and compelling works in the exhibition. This year, the lead award, The Helis Foundation Art Prize, which comes with \$5,000, has been given to artist Jessica Strahan, whose most recent paintings explore the African diaspora within the context of life in New Orleans. Artists Sarrah Danziger, Thomas Deaton, and Rachel David were also recognized for their exceptional work.

The Ogden Museum first launched *Louisiana Contemporary* in 2012, to establish a vehicle that would bring to the fore the work of artists living in Louisiana and highlight the dynamism of art practice throughout the state. The 2019 edition, which opened to the public on August 3, includes 23 artists and 44 works of art, spanning painting, photography, sculpture, works on paper, and mixed-media installation. Artists were chosen from among 364 applicants by guest juror David Breslin, the recently promoted Director of Curatorial Initiatives at the Whitney Museum of American Art, and represent the forefront of Louisiana's vibrant visual culture. The Helis Foundation, which funds the associated awards for the initiative, also provides critical annual support for the creation of exhibition. *Louisiana Contemporary*, which is accompanied by a catalogue, will remain on view through January 5, 2020.

"*Louisiana Contemporary* provides an essential ongoing platform to discover and experience the depth and diversity of work being produced by Louisiana artists, in support of our wider mission to connect audiences with and widen understanding of art of the American South. Each year, we are inspired by the visions and innovations of the featured artists, whose work engages with formal and conceptual dialogues within contemporary practice, as well as with some of the most pressing social and political issues of our time. We are grateful to The Helis Foundation for their ongoing support for this initiative and to the artists who continue to challenge and compel us in new and exciting ways," said William Pittman Andrews, Executive Director of the Ogden Museum.

To provide opportunity for participation by the widest array of artists and to ensure a robust curatorial program, the Ogden Museum developed a two-part selection process, which includes



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an open call for applications and a jurying process that is led by a different invited juror each year. In addition to Breslin, prior jurors have included Courtney J. Martin, Director of the Yale Center for British Art and former Deputy Director and Chief Curator at the Dia Art Foundation; Shantrelle P. Lewis, an independent curator, author, and documentarian; and Bill Arning, former Director of Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. Jurors also participate in public programs that examine the scope of each year's presentation, and for the 2019 edition, Martin joined Breslin for an intensive portfolio review and public discussion. Since the inaugural exhibition, eight years ago, the Ogden Museum has shown 394 artists, making *Louisiana Contemporary* an important moment in the national arts calendar to recognize and experience the spectrum and vitality of artistic voices emanating from New Orleans and across Louisiana.

For the 2019 edition, Breslin was attuned to artists and artworks that are actively engaging with this particular moment in American history, through different media and stylistic and technical approaches. The featured works are further connected by a sense of hopefulness in difficult times. In his Juror's Statement, Breslin said, "The works hold us here, as testaments of our time, but also signal that other, better futures can still be within reach." The full roster of 2019 artists includes:

|                   |                 |                          |
|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| John Alleyne      | Ben Depp        | Ruth Owens               |
| Luis Cruz Azaceta | Sarah French    | Dan Rule                 |
| Mac Ball          | John Gargano    | Claire Samani            |
| Sean Clark        | Kristina Larson | Jill Shampine            |
| Tony Dagradi      | Julian Martin   | Leona Strassberg Steiner |
| Sarrah Danziger   | Kristin Meyers  | Jessica Strahan          |
| Rachel David      | Lara Morgan     | Carlie Trosclair         |
| Thomas Deaton     | Tom O'Brien     |                          |

As part of *Louisiana Contemporary*, the Ogden Museum and The Helis Foundation also established a series of awards that celebrate some of the most innovative work in the exhibition and provide unrestricted funds to four of the featured artists, further supporting their practices and careers. Awardees are selected by the guest juror during a critical review of the work after installation has been completed. More information about the 2019 award recipients follows below.

- **Jessica Strahan's** drawings and paintings are inspired by the physical, emotional, and spiritual landscape of New Orleans. The city's rich culture, distinct landmarks, and colorful—and tragic—history emerge within Strahan's work as she works to visually capture the essence of her home city. In her latest series, *House of Blues*, Strahan positions individuals with strongly defined African features in distinctly New Orleans spaces, emphasizing the history and experience of the African diaspora. Her work was recently the regional winner of the Bombay Sapphire Artist Series at Art Basel in Miami.



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- **Sarrah Danziger** is a photographer currently based in New Orleans. For more than two decades, Danziger has used her camera lens to examine womanhood, in both historic and contemporary contexts. Her images are often imbued with a kind of magical realism that suggests a potent mythology around femininity. Her practice is rooted in using the camera as a tool to engage with the depths and layers of identity. Her work has been featured in *BUST*, *Vice*, *OUT*, *Rolling Stone*, *Newsweek*, *American Songwriter* (cover), *Fader*, and the *Wall Street Journal*, among others.
- **Thomas Deaton**, who is currently based in New Orleans, began his artistic career as a printmaker, receiving a degree in the discipline from The University of Lafayette in 2011. When he found himself without a print shop in 2015, he began working exclusively with woodcuts and engravings. Most recently, Deaton has added painting to his practice, producing works that are infused with the textures, patterns, and shapes of his woodcuts. Deaton combines these graphic qualities with freeform painterly gestures and rich color saturation, creating works that live between “printer-ly painting” and “painterly print.”
- **Rachel David** is a blacksmith, sculptor, designer, and maker, based in New Orleans. Her practice embraces a wide range of approaches, including sculpture, furniture, architectural work, and garden elements. David is committed to social activism and to working in ways that speak to the importance of community-building and environmental justice. Her diverse works capture both her imaginative spirit and her commitment to social engagement. Her work has been collected by the City of New Orleans, the Simone Benetton Foundation, and numerous private collectors.

### **About David Breslin**

In July 2019, David Breslin was promoted to the newly created position of Director of Curatorial Initiatives at the Whitney Museum of American Art. He previously served as the DeMartini Family Curator and Director of the Collection at the museum. Prior to joining the Whitney, Breslin was the John R. Eckel, Jr. Foundation Chief Curator at the Menil Drawing Institute in Houston, Texas. Previously, he was Associate Director, Research and Academic Program and Associate Curator of Contemporary Projects at the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts. At the Whitney, Breslin has organized the exhibitions *Spilling Over: Painting Color in the 1960s* and *Where We Are: Selections from the Whitney’s Collection, 1900-1960*. He also co-organized *David Wojnarowicz: History Keeps Me Awake at Night* and *An Incomplete History of Protest: Selections from the Whitney’s Collection, 1940-2017*. Breslin has also organized exhibitions such as *Raw Color: The Circles of David Smith* and *Monet | Kelly* at the Clark Art Institute and co-curated *Make It New: Abstract Painting from the National Gallery of Art, 1950-1975*. His exhibition, *The Condition of Being Here: The Drawings of Jasper Johns*, opened at the Menil Collection in 2018. Breslin is also overseeing the catalogue raisonné of the drawings of Jasper Johns. He has written essays on the work of, among others, Valentin Carron, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Jenny Holzer, Cady Noland, Pablo Picasso and Paul Thek. He earned a



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bachelor's degree in English from Amherst College, a master's in art history from Williams College and a Ph.D. in the history of art and architecture from Harvard University.

### **About the Ogden Museum**

Located in the vibrant Warehouse Arts District of downtown New Orleans, Louisiana since 1999, the Ogden Museum of Southern Art welcomes 85,000 visitors annually to experience and learn about the artists and art movements of the American South. It is home to a collection of more than four thousand works, making it the largest and most comprehensive repository dedicated to Southern art in the nation, with particular strength in the genres of Self-Taught art, Regionalism, photography, and contemporary art. The Museum is further recognized for its original exhibitions, public events and educational programs, which examine the development of visual art alongside Southern traditions of music, literature and local craft. Among its recent exhibitions are *Piercing the Inner Wall: The Art of Dusti Bongé* (2019), *The Whole Drum Will Sound: Women in Southern Abstraction* (2018), and *Solidary & Solitary: The Joyner/Giuffrida Collection*, presented by The Helis Foundation (2017-2018).

The Ogden Museum is open daily from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. with extended hours on Thursdays from 6 – 8 p.m. for Ogden After Hours. Admission is free to Museum Members and \$13.50 for adults, \$11 for seniors 65 and older, \$6.75 for children ages 5-17 and free for children under 5.

The Museum is located at 925 Camp Street, New Orleans Louisiana 70130. For more information visit [ogdenmuseum.org](http://ogdenmuseum.org) or call 504.539.9650.

### **About The Helis Foundation**

The Helis Foundation is a Louisiana private foundation, established and funded by the William Helis Family. The Helis Foundation's resources and objectives are divided into two areas: the general fund, and the Diana Helis Henry and Adrienne Helis Malvin Art Funds. The general fund focuses on community needs primarily within the Metropolitan New Orleans area by granting funds to numerous local nonprofit organizations.

The Art Funds were established by bequests from Diana Helis Henry and Adrienne Helis Malvin. The Art Funds make grants to sustain operations, to provide free admission to, and to acquire significant art works on behalf of major institutions within the Metropolitan New Orleans area. The Art Funds also underwrite major initiatives and special projects, such as Prospect.3's *Basquiat and the Bayou* presented by The Helis Foundation, the ongoing *Poydras Corridor Sculpture Exhibition* presented by The Helis Foundation, the installation of Lynda Benglis' *The Wave of the World* in City Park, *The Helis Foundation Enrique Alférez Sculpture Garden*, *Solidary & Solitary: The Joyner/Giuffrida Collection* presented by The Helis Foundation organized by the Ogden Museum of Southern Art and the Baltimore Museum of Art, and The Historic New Orleans Collection's Tricentennial Exhibition, *Art of the City: Post Modern to Post*



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*Katrina*. In 2019, the Foundation launched the first large-scale mural exhibit: *Unframed* presented by The Helis Foundation, a collection of five murals in Downtown New Orleans. In partnership with the Arts Council New Orleans, *Unframed* features the first Southern U.S. commission by internationally-acclaimed artist Fujiko Nakaya at the Louisiana Children's Museum.

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