

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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***Focus on the 70s and 80s: Houston Foundations Part II***

August 26 through November 4, 2017

Schedule of events during exhibition to follow

JOHN ALEXANDER LEE BENNER HJ BOTT BOB CAMBLIN MEL CHIN IBSEN ESPADA  
DAVID P. GRAY VIRGIL GROTFELDT ANN HARITHAS ROBERTA HARRIS MIKE HOLLIS  
DOROTHY HOOD PERRY HOUSE LUIS JIMENEZ LUCAS JOHNSON SHARON KOPRIVA  
BERT L. LONG JR. JESSE LOTT SUZANNE MANNS BASILIOS POULOS FORREST PRINCE  
DON REDMAN JULIAN SCHNABEL EARL STALEY JAMES SURLS DICK WRAY

Deborah Colton Gallery is pleased to present ***Focus on the 70's and 80's: Houston Foundations Part II***, a group exhibition of multimedia works by artists who contributed to art scene in the 70's and 80's, which greatly influenced the Houston arts today. ***Focus on the 70's and 80's*** is part of the gallery's Foundations Projects. Though conceived in 2013, ***Houston Foundations*** was launched during FotoFest 2016 with the Gallery's Suzanne Paul ***PROOF*** exhibition.

As Deborah Colton states,

*"Houston today is a dynamic international city that thrives on its rich diversity and has the potential to become a leading national and international destination city of the arts. Respecting our past in terms of how we became who we are today gives us a strong foundation to continue to build upon. Suzanne Paul's archives and our PROOF exhibition was an important way to start this process, and I have been committed to making this investment for the city by perserving and working towards organizing her archives since 2005. Part II of this project is far greater than Suzanne Paul's work alone, and includes an exhibition which highlights many of the artists who contributed to the vibrant art scene during a time of rapid and dynamic growth... and then changes.. The series of Panels and Discussions strives to help identify our artistic roots and how this and the city's changing envinorment over the years have contrubited to what the Houston art community is today, as we all move forward together to the future."*

In addition to the exhibition, there will be the ***Foundations Symposium Series*** which will consist of a series of seven filmed artist talks, panels and lectures that will also give the audience a chance to interact and address "where have we been, what is special and unique about us and where should we go collectively as a city in the future". The professional videos will be available on line for all to have access to.

Deborah Colton Gallery is founded on being an innovative showcase for ongoing presentation and promotion of strong historical and visionary contemporary artists world-wide, whose diverse practices include painting, works on paper, sculpture, video, photography, performance and conceptual future media installations. The gallery aspires to provide a forum through connecting Texas, national and international artists to create awareness for positive change.

***Houston Foundations*** is an extension of this mission that was created at the time of Colton's first Houston exhibition in 2000, and continues to be the focus today.

Born on the bayou in east Texas, **John Alexander** has made an international career as a skilled draftsman, a painter of lush landscapes, and as a satirist creating allegorical tableaux. Alexander (b. 1945) began studying art at Lamar University in his hometown of Beaumont. After earning an MFA in 1970 from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Alexander took a teaching position at the University of Houston, where he became a key figure in the city's nascent art scene. Alexander moved to New York City in 1979, taking a SoHo loft he still calls home. In addition to his continuing fascination with the surreal and humankind at its worst, Alexander gravitates toward depicting marshy landscapes, and studied portraits of flora and fauna, particularly the birds flocking to his part-time home on Long Island's East End. Naturalism and conservation remain hallmarks of his work, and he says the Beaumont bayou of his youth is never far from his mind. Alexander has been widely exhibited, with major shows at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C., and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. His work can be found in public collections at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Dallas Museum of Art; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and many others.

**Lee Benner** artistic endeavors are as well known as his love for Houston history. What began with a homemade go-cart at the age of ten evolved into multimedia sculptures over his extensive career. Traveling cross-country and into Mexico led to studio photography for Benner. Sculpture was next on his artistic journey as he began *Design Concepts*, his first sculpture studio, and his first commission for Coca-Cola. Through the years Benner cultivated an interest and talent for filmmaking and jewelry, eventually developing a line of jewelry and even furniture too. Reflecting on his work, Benner confesses "My hobby is Houston history. Houston is a future city. History is getting revitalized, and I thought a lot might be missed. I'm interested in true stories of old Houston and Houstonians. I really love history."

Born in 1933, **HJ Bott** describes himself as a Baroque Minimalist, and is one of the most celebrated artists of his generation. Inspired by such artists as Joseph Albers and Barnett Newman, Bott first came to prominence in the mid 1950s in Germany and France while working as a propaganda analyst for the United States Army. Now living and working in Houston, Texas, Bott continues to create a prolific body of work more than six decades strong. Bott's works are included in more than seventy museum and university collections worldwide, including the Museum of Fine Art, Houston; the Denver Museum of Art; the New Orleans Museum of Art; and Columbia University, New York.

**Bob Camblin** was born in Oklahoma in 1928 and studied painting at the Kansas City Art Institute, earning an MFA in 1955. He taught at Rice University from 1967 to 1973 with Joe Tate and Earl Staley, with whom he shared a studio space. His influence and art was a constant undercurrent in the Houston art scene, revealing much about the environment and those that surrounded him. He left Houston in the early 80s. Known for his drawings, watercolors, paintings and his gregarious, direct personality, Camblin was included in the *Fresh Paint, The Houston School* Museum of Fine Arts exhibition in 1985 and was the only artist without a written statement in the catalogue. .

**Mel Chin** was born in Houston to Chinese parents, the first of his family born in the United States. In 1975, Chin graduated from Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee. In 1976, Chin created *See/Saw: The Earthworks* for Houston's Hermann Park, where the artist manipulated two sections of the park's surface to create a kinetic, minimalist earthwork. He is the recipient of two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, in 1988 and 1990. His work has been documented in the popular PBS series *Art:21, Art of the 21st Century*. One of Chin's most recent artistic feats was presented in Houston in 2015 — a city-wide retrospective, *Mel Chin: Rematch*, which included simultaneous installations across four venues, including the Asia Society Texas Center, the Blaffer Art Museum, the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, and the Station Museum of Contemporary Art.

**Ibsen Espada** was born in Queens, New York. Espada has been a major force in the history of contemporary gestural abstraction in Houston since the early 80s. He grew up in Puerto Rico and studied under Cuban muralist, Ronaldo Lopez Dirube. He earned his bachelor of fine arts degree at the University of the Sacred Heart in San Juan. After relocating to Houston, he continued art studies at the Glassell School of Art under Dorothy Hood. Espada worked with Hood as her studio assistant and she encouraged him to develop his first portfolio of work. Since then, in addition to Puerto Rico, Colorado, Shanghai, Russia, and all throughout Texas, Ibsen's artwork has been exhibited in Houston since 1975. He is also included in permanent Museum collections in Houston, Corpus Christi, Beaumont, Forth Worth,

and Lubbock. Espada's mixture of formalized and public art, together with the more spontaneous, informal gesture of graffiti and street art, became a moment of genesis for the young artist. And that, together with the pervasive influence of Abstract Expressionism, brought a fusion of influences together where the art of Ibsen Espada could develop, grow, and flourish.

**David P. Gray**, born in 1952 in Atlanta GA., moved to Houston from Mexico in 1960. Gray's signature style reveals a personal and contemporary expression of beauty and order that pays homage to the Classical Tradition in its craftsmanship. Collectors of David's work often relate that his painting provoke a sense of peace, stillness, or a contemplative mood. His award winning works have been covered by major art publications including Southwest Art, Art of the West, and American Art Collector. Gray taught Art and Photography for the University of St. Thomas, in Houston Texas from 1976 – 1985 and Tomball College 1994 - 1995 In addition to group and solo exhibits across the United States, Gray has also received a plethora of awards including Oil Painters of America's "Best of Show," and "Award of Excellence, Best of Show in the 2006 Lawndale Big Show in Houston, Texas.

Born in 1948 in Decatur, Illinois, **Virgil Grotfeldt** earned a bachelor's degree in art education from Eastern Illinois University in 1971 and a master's degree at Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia in 1974. He moved to Houston in 1977. He began teaching painting and drawing at HBU in 2002, where he was also widely considered instrumental in the concept and construction of the University Academic Center's new building, of which the art department occupies about 70 percent. Grotfeldt's work is included in many private and public collections, including The Menil Collection, Houston, Texas; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York; NOG Insurance Company, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Free International University World Art Collection, Zeist, The Netherlands; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas; Dallas Museum of Art; El Paso Museum of Art; Tyler Museum of Art, Tyler, Texas; and Upriver Gallery Collection, Chengdu, China.

Born in New Jersey, **Roberta Harris** grew up in Houston. She was chosen for the Independent Study Program at the Whitney Museum of American Art and studied at Parson's School of Design, Hunter College, University of Texas, and received a B.A. degree from the University of Houston. She has been a visiting lecturer at the Kimbell Art Museum, Ft. Worth; the Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico; Brookhaven College, Dallas; University of Houston and the Menil Collection, Houston. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally and is included in many collections including MTV Corporation, Chase Manhattan Bank, Frito-Lay, Hewlett-Packard and Texas Heart Institute. In 2009, The Women's Museum (a Smithsonian Institution) Dallas, Texas, honored her with a retrospective of her work, titled "UP," covering the period of 1985-2009. Reflecting on her work, Harris states, "Throughout my career, through a variety of media, my mission as an artist has been to inspire hope and its corollaries - dialogue, joy, encouragement, strategy, peace, kindness and imagination. This approach is not the least bit sentimental. Given the challenges that we face, hope demands courage, commitment, endurance and renewal - the best expressions of the human spirit."

**Ann Harithas** draws from a well of classic Texas culture, education, and personal history to create her art. Born in Houston 1943, Ann Harithas spent her childhood between school in Victoria, Texas and her parents' nearby cattle ranch where her interests in collage were recognized and nurtured from an early age. As an instrument for learning, collage would not only be a fundamental component of her adolescent development, but consequently has evolved to become the predominant medium in which she expresses herself as an adult. After graduating from the University of Texas with a degree in English, she received her MFA from Rice University. As the early founder and proponent of the Art Car movement in Houston in the 1980s, Ann continued to diversify her methods and application of collage and assemblage, including the creation of her own art cars. This marked an evolution of her techniques, employing technological advancements in color printing, construction, and materials. Summoning her personal history to capture and catalog her experience, Ann assembles her past and present to express a notion of time that invariably oscillates between 'what has been' and 'what can be.

As one of the early Texas abstract artists, and one of the few female artists working in large scale throughout the decades, **Dorothy Hood** led an adventurous life. Born in Bryan, Texas in 1918 and raised in Houston, she won a scholarship to the Rhode Island School of Design and went on to study at the Art Students League in New York. Hood was front and center in the cultural, political, and social activity of Mexico and Latin America during a period of intense

creative ferment. She developed close friendships with all the European exiles, Latin American surrealists, and Mexican social realists of the time -- artists, composers, poets, playwrights, and revolutionary writers which influenced her art. Upon returning to Houston in 1961, Hood began to produce the epic and deeply emotive paintings that evoked the limitless skies and psychic voids of space. This prolific body of work would be the material with which she would be recognized for her outstanding contribution to the visual arts, not only in Houston, but all throughout Texas too—earning her the title of Texas Artist of the Year in 1984. Over the next four decades, she became a renowned and highly collected Texas painter whose works were spread across the United States.

**Mike Hollis** was born in Houston, Texas, in 1953. After receiving his BA in Fine Arts from the University of St. Thomas, Hollis has built a well-respected and much admired reputation as a favorite among Houston artists. Merging West Coast concepts with geometric abstraction, Hollis has created an easily recognizable body of work that is both cerebral and emotive. He creates his paintings utilizing various methods, blending various painting techniques with new technology. Hollis is a decades-long devotee of geometric abstraction, using techniques and strategies generally attributed to post-minimalism. Having mastered this approach he has also found ways to give each work a radical new meaning while imbuing it with calculated emotions. With works found in major collections including The Museum of Fine Arts: Houston, the Menil Collection, Houston, and The Chase Manhattan Bank, NY, Hollis has presented solo exhibitions of his work in Houston and nationwide, including in Santa Fe, New Mexico and in New York, New York.

**Perry House** was born in Orange, Texas. He pursued art as a vocation at the California College of Arts and Crafts where he earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees in fine arts. Upon his return to Texas, House settled in Houston and began his lifelong career as an artist and a teacher of artists. His work often strips away decoration, narrative, sex, politics, and traditional perspective, while at the same time evoking the passage of time, weight, depth, and our mortal coil. As Houston's art scene was coming of age, House was one of the early pioneers of abstraction, showing with some of the most historically notable galleries in Houston. In the collection of the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, the artist received an NEA fellowship award in 1990 and mounted solo efforts at *Diverse Works* in 2000, curated by Susie Kalil, and 2004 at the Galveston Arts Center curated by Clint Willour. On his work House comments "My art has always been about some particular opposites; elegance and violence, humor and horror, the sacred and the profane. Things are sectioned, distorted and exploded." Perry House has since retired from Houston Community College, Central after 30 years of teaching and is now painting full-time.

**Luis Jimenez** is a sculptor whose work marries elements of pop culture and social commentary with allusions to his Mexican-American heritage. Known for his large, colorful fiberglass sculptures that often incorporate neon and electrical lighting, Jimenez extended his bold choices of materials to his subject matter, creating confident and expressive figures while exaggerating cultural stereotypes. Much of his work deals with social and political issues and explores the cultures and legends of both Mexico and the United States. His work has been shown at museums throughout the United States and his work is part of the permanent collections of the Centro Cultural Arte Contemporaneo, Mexico, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York, Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York National, Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C., and the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C., as well as many others.

**Lucas Johnson** was a self-taught, multi-disciplinary artist immersed in the creative community in Houston from the time of his settling here in 1973 until his passing in 2002. He lived for an extended time in Mexico City, where he was embraced and influenced by artist contemporaries who followed the great Mexican muralists. Self-taught in drawing, paintings, printmaking and bronze casting, he debuted paintings for the first time in 1967. Johnson was a guest instructor in the arts at the Glassell School of Art and at Houston's Rice University. His work is represented in the permanent collections of museums in Mexico City, the Menil and Museum of Fine Arts Houston, and the Modern Art Museum in Tel Aviv. In 1993 Johnson was a founding board member of the Houston Artists Fund with two associates, effectively establishing a charitable organization, still active, that serves as a fiscal sponsor for nonprofit art-related projects and provides administrative support and budgets monitoring for funds raised from the art community.

**Sharon Kopriva** is a Houston native. Her career launched in 1985 with the exhibition *Fresh Paint* at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. In the past 25 years she has exhibited her art in major cities in the United States, Mexico, Peru,

India, Cuba, China, and Europe. In addition to her participation in *Fresh Paint*, her most notable exhibitions include a solo show curated by the legendary Walter Hopps at The Menil Collection in 2001 and a retrospective of her work shown at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, curated by Bradley Sumrall in 2012, entitled *From Terra to Verde*. Kopriva is deeply influenced by a varied set of inspirations, including her Catholic upbringing, the wonders of nature, and her continued spiritual journey.

**Bert L. Long, Jr.**, a self-taught artist, was born in 1940 in Texas, grew up the Houston's historic Fifth Ward and received his formal education from UCLA. Following a career as a master chef Long, decided to devote himself entirely to art in 1979. He began to explore folk art and assemblage to create a unique body of work, attracting the attention of Jim Harithas, then Director of the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, and artists John Alexander, Salvatore Scarpitta and James Surls. His life spanned an era of radical change in the American social climate, the influence of which can be seen clearly in his work. Long's paintings and sculptures incorporate a high level of skill and sophisticated knowledge of art history, along with complex philosophical and social issues. Long describes the philosophy behind his work as "a quest to help people diagnose their inner self," believing his art to be "the vehicle to help facilitate [such a] process." The late Peter Marzio, former Director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, said of Bert Long: "Bert Long does not avert his gaze from that which is painful, but as [his artworks] testify, he also brings a spirit of joy and redemption to his art. We can all learn from this great artist." Over Long's 33-year career as a painter, sculptor, and photographer he was awarded several significant awards including the National Endowment for the Arts Grant in 1987 and the prestigious Prix de Rome fellowship in 1990.

**Jesse Lott** is an African-American sculptor of great distinction and a long time 5th Ward, Houston resident, who began his artistic career creating and selling his works as a student at E.O. Smith Elementary School in 1957. Jesse Lott works in paper, metal, and wood as well as working with armatures and wire, all the while building with his artistry a capacity for emotional power. His technique is derived from collecting and recycling discarded materials, as a type of urban archeology fused with scientific methodology. He has influenced many artists, including Texans as well known as James Surls, Bert Long Jr. and Angelbert Metoyer. The all-ages workshops that he has held over the years in his studio as a community service have inspired many students who would otherwise have no exposure to art. Lott's community-oriented philosophy and his Artists in Action program helped spark the creation of the now famous Project Row Houses."

**Suzanne Manns** was born in Pittsburg, PA. in 1950. She received her B.F.A. in Painting and Printmaking from Carnegie-Mellon University and did graduate studies in Printmaking at the Rhode Island School of Design, after which she studied under master printmaker Dadi Wirz from Atelier 17 in Paris. In 1973, she moved to Houston and in 1975 began to teach at the Glassell School of Art at the Museum of Fine Arts. At Glassell she established a substantial printmaking department. She currently is on faculty at Glassell, teaching in the Drawing Department. Early works from Houston referenced the burgeoning downtown skyline. Later drawings and prints depicted cities which were important to her personal history such as Paris, Florence, and Washington D.C. From the mid 90's to the present, her work is inspired by the garden of her Heights bungalow and other personal places/landscapes. The work combines both traditional and innovative print and drawing techniques. Her work is a diary of intimate experience meditating on the fragile, yet enduring nature of life. She has shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions, nationally and internationally. Her work is included in private and public collections including The J.P. Morgan Chase Collection, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

**Basilios Poulos** came to Houston in 1975 from NYC to be Artist-in-Residence at Rice University. He was born in South Carolina and went to the Atlanta School of Art for his BFA and Tulane University for his MFA. His many art career honors include French Gov Grant from 1965-1966, Guggenheim Fellowship 1974, Artist Residency at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris 1983, and Visiting Professor for the University of Georgia Studies Abroad Program, Cortona, Italy 1997. His solo exhibitions in Paris, Athens, NYC, Atlanta, San Francisco, New Orleans, Houston, and others comprise forty-eight years of painting. Retiring from teaching at RiceU in 2008, Poulos has continued to paint in his Houston studio with sojourns to his Greek village studio near Sparta in the Peloponnese.

**Forrest Prince** was born in Houston, Texas in 1935. With no formal art education, he began making art in 1969, and in 1976 was given his first solo exhibition at the Contemporary Art Museum, Houston. In 1983 Prince founded the Praise God Foundation. His body of work is unusual in its freedom from the machinations and impurities of the art world and represents man's higher spiritual aspirations. In addition to his Christian religious work, Prince's artwork is also concerned with political and social issues. Some of his artworks involve the artist's investigations into food consumption other works severely question the satanic practices of the US Government. He has participated in many group exhibitions in museums and galleries including: Diverse Works, Hooks-Epstein Gallery, San Antonio Museum of Fine Arts, Lawndale Art Center, Art Car Museum, Station Museum, and The Menil Collection. .

**Don Redman** was born in Houston and spent much of his childhood on the Gulf of Mexico. His father was a ship builder and provided him his first opportunities to work with steel, while his mother supplied him with stockpiles of wood with which he could carve, saw, and paint. After attending the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts and the Art Institute of San Francisco, he was fortunate to become the apprentice to several internationally recognized artists; among them Luis Jimenez, James Surls, and Salvatore Scarpitta. Over his forty plus years as a sculptor, his work has grown from a fascination with kinetics to a more subtle utilization of movement created by light. His sculptures are in public, private, and corporate art collections throughout the United States and around the world.

**Julian Schnabel** is a lauded/ award-winning American painter and filmmaker. Born in 1951, Schnabel moved with his family to Brownsville, Texas, when still young. It was in Brownsville that he spent most of his formative years and where he took up surfing and resolved to be an artist, graduating from Brownsville High School in the late '60s. He entered into his collegiate studies the University of Houston in 1969 and received his B.F.A. in 1973. In 1976, Schnabel had his first self-titled solo museum exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston. Though he maintained a studio practice in the Houston Heights for some years after graduating from university, by 1979 Schnabel found himself in New York City, eventually establishing himself as one of the leading figures of the art world in the 1980s.

**Earl Staley** was born in the Chicago suburb of Oak Park, received his BFA from Illinois Wesleyan University and his MFA from the University of Arkansas. His first teaching position was at Washington University, Saint Louis, Mo. Earl arrived in Houston in 1966 to teach at Rice University. In 1969 he became the chairperson at the new studio art department at the University of St. Thomas. He left that position to move to Rome Italy with a fellowship at the American Academy in Rome. He remained there 4 years studying the old masters and painting from the Classics. His major influences are Texas/Mexico and Classical Art. Earl showed at the 1973 Whitney Biennale, and then in 1979 in the landmark show *Bad Painting* at the New Museum, NY. He has had two exhibits at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston; one was a 10-year survey 1974-1984 which traveled to the New Museum, NY. Earl was included in Fresh Paint in Houston and the Venice Biennale 1984 and numerous exhibits across the USA and Europe. Since 1992 He teaches at Lonestar College/Tomball.

**James Surls** is one of the most preeminent artists that the state of Texas has produced. Born in East Texas, James Surls has long been held as a respected artist and dynamic art educator. He earned a B.S. at Sam Houston State College, and an M.F.A. at Cranbrook Academy of Art. Surls' artistic output ranges from pencil drawings and prints to monumental steel and bronze sculptures. Early in his career he taught at Southern Methodist University, and he continues to lecture about art around the country. He has been at the forefront of the contemporary sculpture scene for decades and has exhibited at the Whitney Museum of Art, the Walker Art Center and the Art Institute of Chicago, as well as in numerous international venues and dozens of Texas museums. His works are in the collections of major museums including the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and the Museum of Modern Art. As a sculpture instructor at the University of Houston, and with the support of fellow artist John Alexander, he founded the Lawndale Alternative Space for Art in 1979, today Houston's Lawndale Art Center, and championed alternative and experimental processes and approaches to art-making. He has also founded an artist's compound where he established his studio in Splendora, Texas.

A native Houstonian born in 1933, **Dick Wray**, was an artist of incomparable talent and personality who played a critical role in the development of Houston's contemporary art scene since the 1950s. Often categorized as an Abstract Expressionist, Wray is best known for his explosive and dynamic abstractions that received numerous accolades from Houston's critical community as well as notable arts figures across the United States throughout his career. Wray attended the University of Houston's School of Architecture followed by the Kunstakademie, Dusseldorf, Germany. Returning to Houston in 1959, he began seriously working as an artist. Over the next fifty years, he participated in a large number of important exhibitions nationally, landing his first solo exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston in 1975. Wray was an instructor at the Glassell School of Art from 1968 until 1982. Wray was awarded the Ford Foundation purchase prize in 1962, a prestigious Artist's Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1978 and named Texas Artist of the Year by the Art League of Houston in 2000. His work is in major collections, including the Albright Knox Museum, Buffalo, National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, the Museum of Fine Arts and the Contemporary Art Museum of Houston and the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.