

For Immediate Release: August 13, 2007
Media Contact: Sheree Scarborough (512-475-6784)
Brady Dyer (512-232-5171)

**Interactive Exhibition Brings Together Works by Nine Contemporary Artists
to Explore New Ways of Distributing Art**

Transactions
September 11–November 18, 2007

AUSTIN, Texas—The Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin will present *Transactions*, on view September 11 to November 18, 2007—part of the museum’s line-up of contemporary exhibitions this fall. Organized by the Blanton, the exhibition focuses on artists who have developed a radical approach to artistic production and distribution. Instead of relying solely on galleries and museums to deliver their work to the public, these artists insert art directly into everyday life, relying on existing systems of distribution, from the Internet and mail order catalogues to storefront businesses and outdoor markets. Through this process, artists will fully shed much of what makes art legible as art, while simultaneously embracing its capacity to fundamentally alter and enhance our understanding of the world around us.

One of the most compelling aspects of *Transactions* is the way in which the various projects it features will be realized. While some document activities or interventions that have come to a conclusion, several exist beyond the walls of the museum. These “living” projects are not only completed by viewer participation, they also test our expectations for a museum exhibition.

Transactions will explore the use of alternative systems of distribution by nine artists working in the United States, the Middle East, and Latin America: Conrad Bakker, Daniel Bozhkov, Eugenio Dittborn, Christine Hill, Emily Jacir, Ben Kinmont, Cildo Meireles, Seth Price, and Zoë Sheehan Saldaña. Spanning the years 1970 to 2007, the content of the exhibition ranges from videos and sculptures to photographs, paintings, and a variety of printed matter. An example of one of the performative pieces is Conrad Bakker’s *Untitled Project: rEpLICA [SPAM]*, which takes the form of an e-commerce web site that distributes hand-carved, hand-painted sculptures representing knock-offs of designer

watches. Bakker invites the public to participate in this endeavor by signing up to receive “spam” emails, which will direct recipients to his Web site and allow them to actually purchase one of his sculptures, but not without first reading commentary on commodity culture and consumerism, courtesy of Karl Marx.

Also included in *Transactions* is Ben Kinmont, who has reprinted antiwar messages from the 1960s and 1970s in national and regional publications such as *Artiles*; Emily Jacir, who asked sixty Palestinians to place personal ads in the *Village Voice* seeking Jewish mates and, by implication, the right to utilize Israel’s “Law of Return”; and Zoë Sheehan Saldaña, who duplicated a blouse purchased from a Wal-Mart store in Vermont and then secretly placed the hand-sewn shirt back on a rack in the same store for potential sale at \$9.77, an action known as shop-dropping.

In addition to exploring the projects of these nine individual artists, *Transactions* also will examine the reasons behind their use of alternative systems of distribution. Depending on the artist, his or her motives might be political, critical, playful, generous, or a combination of all four. No matter what the specific inspiration, though, all of the artists in *Transactions* provide considerable insight into the nature of artistic practice, the mechanics of the art market, the role of viewers, and the relationship of artists to the public today.

Transactions is organized by the Blanton Museum of Art. Funding for the exhibition is provided by Michael Chesser, Jeanne and Michael Klein, and a grant from Houston Endowment Inc. in honor of Melissa Jones for the presentation of contemporary art at the Blanton, and is supported by the generosity of the members of the Blanton Contemporary Salon.

Public Programs and events

The Blanton will offer a selection of programs in conjunction with the exhibition. Offerings will range from a *Transactions*-inspired *B scene*, the museum’s monthly art party, Friday, October 5 (6–11 p.m.) to *Artistic License* with Ben Kinmont, Thursday, September 27 (6 p.m.) and exhibition tours with Benjamin Gregg, professor of government, The University of Texas at Austin, Thursday, September 27 (12:30 p.m.) and assistant curator Kelly Baum, Thursday, October 18 (12:30 p.m.). There will be a special lecture with Grant Kester, art historian and critic, on Sunday, October 21, at 2 p.m.

Exhibition catalogue

Transactions is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, published by the Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin. The 60-page book includes an introduction on the history of alternative systems of distribution in art as well as essays on the individual artists and their projects by Kelly Baum, the museum's assistant curator of American and contemporary art and the curator of this exhibition. The catalogue presents new scholarship and features approximately 20 illustrations.

Fall Season at the Blanton also includes second contemporary project, *Mike's World: Michael Smith and Joshua White (and other collaborators)*, September 11–December 30, 2007

Organized by the Blanton, *Mike's World* will be the first major retrospective of internationally renowned performance/video/installation artist Michael Smith and his New York-based collaborator, director/artist Joshua White. This extraordinary exhibition features some 30 years of short videos, installation environments, and other performance-related materials detailing the adventures of "Mike," a sweet but hapless Everyman character created by Smith, and his hilariously awkward and ineffectual search for a piece of the American Dream. The curator for the show is Annette DiMeo Carlozzi, curator of American and contemporary art and director of curatorial affairs for the Blanton.

The Blanton's contemporary season extends into 2008 with *Jorge Macchi: The Anatomy of Melancholy*, December 18, 2007–March 16, 2008. This will be the first comprehensive U.S. exhibition of one of Latin America's principal contemporary artists. Macchi produces work that is characterized by drawing poetic potential from everyday situations and materials. The exhibition will showcase approximately 40 of Macchi's most important works, spanning 15 years of artistic production in a variety of media including video, installation, drawing, sculpture, and collage.

The Blanton Museum of Art

The Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin is one of the foremost university art museums in the country, and has the largest and most comprehensive collection of art in Central Texas. The museum welcomes and engages all visitors by offering personal, extraordinary experiences that connect art and ideas, reaching within and beyond The University of Texas campus to stimulate the thriving, creative

community that is Austin, Texas, and beyond. The Blanton's permanent collection of more than 17,000 works is recognized for its European paintings, an encyclopedic collection of prints and drawings, and modern and contemporary American and Latin American art.

Hours and Admission

Located at the intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Congress Avenue, the museum is across the street from the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum and is adjacent to downtown Austin. The museum is open Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 10-5, Thursday 10-8 (free admission day), and Sunday from 1-5. Admission is free to members, all current UT ID-holders, and children under 12, \$7 for adults, \$5 for seniors, \$3 for college student with valid ID, and \$3 for youth (ages 13–21). For information call (512) 471-7324 or visit www.blantonmuseum.org.

#

For further information please contact:
Sheree Scarborough / Brady Dyer
Blanton Museum of Art
The University of Texas at Austin
(512) 475-6784 / (512) 232-5171
s.scarborough@mail.utexas.edu/bdyer@mail.utexas.edu