

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CONTEMPORARY ARTS MUSEUM PRESENTS
FIRST EXHIBITION IN THE SOUTHWEST
OF SCOTISH ARTIST CHRISTINE BORLAND**

Art Meets Medical Ethics and Morality

March 22 – June 23, 2002

Thursday, March 21, 2002

6:30 p.m., Gallery Talk

7:00 – 9:00 p.m., Exhibition Preview

Houston, TX--The Contemporary Arts Museum will present the exhibition *Christine Borland* from March 22 to June 23, 2002. Christine Borland is a Scottish artist whose work embraces scientific thought and research to explore the fragile yet resilient nature of human life. The methods and materials she chooses for her art (such as spider-dragline filament, bone china, bronze, and glass) contrast with the gravity of the issues she addresses: genetics, individual identity, medical ethics and morality.

At the core of Borland's work is a strong curiosity about the underlying and unexplored assumptions that guide scientific research. Over the last decade, she has collaborated with osteologists to analyze bone, experts in facial reconstruction to rebuild faces onto skulls, geneticists to explore prenatal testing, and biochemists to explore cellular structure. Christine Borland's immersion in the realm of science allows viewers to experience contested issues and significant advances in unique and unexpected ways.

Christine Borland has stated, "The heart of what I am trying to discuss is very dark, very strong and passionate, and if you can reach that through quite a rational process, I think it becomes more powerful, and importantly, more powerful to the viewer."

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The exhibition presents an overview of Borland's work from 1994 to 2001. Characterized by a formal, ethereal beauty, *Spirit Collection: Hippocrates* (1999) is composed of almost one hundred drop shaped vessels containing a leaf reduced to a skeletal form by bleach. The leaves, suspended in a clear preservative solution, are from a tree Christine Borland happened to notice while visiting the Department of Medical Genetics at Glasgow University. The tree was grown from seeds of the Plane Tree of Hippocrates in Kos, Greece, where it is said that Hippocrates taught his students. Today, the Hippocratic oath remains an expression of ideal conduct for Western physicians, and it is the ethical terrain of medical research that Borland explores.

The *Set Conversation Pieces* (1998) are cast from female pelvises molded from obstetric models. Cradled in each pelvis, porcelain fetal skulls sit in a variety of childbirth positions while the upper bones are painted with English china patterns such as blue ships, islands, and trees. Although *Bullet Proof Breath* (2001)—a glass bronchial tree with spider-silk wrapped branches—appears fragile, spider silk has a tensile strength greater than that of steel and is being developed for potential use in ballistic-protection garments. Scientists continue to seek a way to mass-produce the filament.

In *Second Class Male/Second Class Female* (1996) the artist traces the reconstruction of two heads from unidentified male and female skulls. This culmination of a series of projects focused on investigations conducted with police and forensic experts, *Second Class Male/Second Class Female* typifies Borland's approach to making art. In all of her work, Christine Borland's impulse remains investigative rather than didactic.

Christine Borland was born in 1965 in Darvel, Ayrshire. She studied at the Glasgow School of Art and the University of Ulster. She has had recent solo exhibitions at the Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia (2001); Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee (1999); De Appel, Amsterdam; Fundação Serralves, Lisbon; and Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich (1998-1999). Her work has been included in group exhibitions such as *Partage d'Exotisme, Biennale d'Art Contemporain de Lyon* (2000); *Manifesta 2*, Luxembourg (1998); the *Turner Prize Exhibition*, Tate Gallery, London (1997); and *Sculpture Project Munster* (1997). Christine Borland lives and works in Glasgow.

The exhibition has been organized by the Art Gallery of York University in Toronto, and will also travel to the Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design after being seen in Houston.

PUBLICATION

The exhibition *Christine Borland* is accompanied by a 96-page, illustrated catalogue published by the organizing institution and a small *Perspectives*-format catalogue published by the Contemporary Arts Museum.

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PERSPECTIVES SERIES SUPPORT

The Houston presentation of *Christine Borland*, the 132nd exhibition in the Museum's long-running *Perspectives* series, is made possible by grants from Philip Morris Companies Inc., and the patrons, benefactors, and donors to the Museum's *Perspectives* Fund: Toni and Jeffery Beauchamp, Fastow Family Foundation, Harris and Eliza Kempner Fund, Estate of Mary Lynch Kurtz, Marley Lott, Mithoff Family Foundation, Evelyn and Roy Nolen, William F. Stern, and Herbert Wells.

Perspectives catalogues are supported by The Brown Foundation, Inc.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Gallery Talk

Thursday, March 21, 2002

6:30 p.m.

Christine Borland will speak about the work in the exhibition.

FAQTEAM

The FAQTeam, or Frequently Asked Questions Team, is a group of young artists and art historians who are available in the Museum to give instant tours or answer questions about current exhibitions and contemporary art in general. The FAQTeam is available on Thursdays from 3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., Saturdays from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Sundays from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. The FAQTeam is made possible by a grant from Union Pacific Railroad.

ARTPHONE

Design your own audio tour at no charge with the Artphone. Listen to artists and curators discuss work in the Museum's current exhibitions.

SUPPORT

The Museum's operations and programs are made possible through the generosity of the Museum's trustees, patrons, members and donors to its programs. The Contemporary Arts Museum receives partial operating support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the City of Houston and the Texas Commission on the Arts through the Cultural Arts Council of Houston/Harris County, and the Houston Endowment, Inc.

Continental is the official airline of the Contemporary Arts Museum.

Contemporary Artifacts, the Museum's education programming for schools, is supported by grants from: M.D. Anderson Foundation, Lee and Joseph D. Jamail Foundation, Marian and Speros Martel Foundation Endowment.

MUSEUM INFORMATION

Admission to the Museum is free through the generosity of Les Marks and Marks Automotive Group.

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Hours Tuesday - Saturday: 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
 Thursday: 10:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.
 Sunday: noon - 5:00 p.m.

Closed Mondays, New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

MISSION

The Contemporary Arts Museum is a not-for-profit institution dedicated to presenting the art of our time to the public. As a non-collecting museum, its mission is to provide a forum for art with an emphasis on the visual arts of the present and recent past; to document new directions in art through changing exhibitions and publications; to engage the public in a lively dialogue with today's art; and to encourage a greater understanding of contemporary art through education programs.

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