

**NEW INSTALLATION BY
JANET CARDIFF AND GEORGE BURES MILLER
BRINGS “MUSIC OF THE SPHERES” TO THE MENIL’S BYZANTINE FRESCO CHAPEL**

Opening January 31, 2015, Installation is First in a Series
That Will Give New Purpose to a Space Built for Sacred Art

HOUSTON, TX, December 10, 2014—Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, renowned internationally for audio and video “walks” and installations that immerse viewers in uncanny environments combining actual and recorded experiences, are the first artists to be commissioned by the Menil Collection to create a year-long installation in the institution’s Byzantine Fresco Chapel.

Opening to the public on January 31, 2015, the new Cardiff-Miller work inaugurates an experimental series of long-term, site-specific installations giving new life to the chapel, which will join the Cy Twombly Gallery and the Dan Flavin Installation at Richmond Hall as a free-standing building devoted to modern and contemporary art on the Menil’s 30-acre campus.

Opened in 1997, the Byzantine Fresco Chapel was designed by architect Francois de Menil to house a group of 13th-century Greek Orthodox frescoes that the Menil, acting on behalf of the Church of Cyprus, rescued from looters, restored, and displayed in a consecrated chapel. Setting a high mark in the field of cultural heritage and stewardship, the loan agreement concluded in 2012, when the Menil returned the restored frescoes to Cyprus as a donation from the museum.

Organized by Toby Kamps, curator of modern and contemporary art, Cardiff-Miller's first mobile will fill the now-deconsecrated space with a sonic and visual experience inspired by ancient Greek philosopher Pythagoras's concept of "the music of the spheres." This theory that the movement of celestial bodies creates harmonies has recently been corroborated by scientists. Visitors will hear an audio collage including recordings collected by the NASA spacecraft Voyager when monitoring the interaction of solar winds and Earth's ionosphere. Because the ions vibrate within the range of frequencies audible to the human ear, it has been possible to convert their resonances into sounds, which will become part of the aural experience. Among the objects suspended in the mobile will be an array of mirrors and a small player piano.

"One of our fundamental goals," said Menil Director Josef Helfenstein, "is to enable people to experience the subtle and yet powerful resonance inherent in art from many periods and traditions, from Greek antiquities and African masks to modern paintings and sculptures. We feel it is profoundly meaningful to repurpose our Byzantine Fresco Chapel as a space for long-term, contemporary installations that offer such experiences, and are proud to begin with this remarkable new work by Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller."

A married couple based in Grindrod, British Columbia, Canada, Janet Miller and George Bures Miller have been artistic collaborators since the 1980s. They are best known for their encompassing, often interactive site-specific work incorporating sound, video, and sculptural elements. These pieces have included a series of walks in which participants listen to recordings on headphones and watch portable video screens while being guided through places such as museums and train stations, creating a sometimes uncanny melding of real and recorded experiences. Recent major installations by Cardiff-Miller have included the outdoor piece *Forest (for a thousand years)* at documenta XII in Kassel, Germany (2012); *The Murder of Crows* (2012) at the Park Avenue Armory in New York City; and *The Forty Part Motet* (2013) installed in a 12th-century Spanish chapel at the Cloisters in New York, the first work

of contemporary art ever to be shown at this branch of the Metropolitan Museum of Art specializing in medieval art.

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