

PRESS RELEASE

THE RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART ANNOUNCES  
“MEASURE YOUR EXISTENCE,”  
A GROUP EXHIBITION ABOUT IMPERMANENCE,  
TO OPEN FEBRUARY 7, 2020

Exhibition includes works by contemporary artists Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Shilpa Gupta, Tehching Hsieh, Meiro Koizumi, Lee Mingwei, and Taryn Simon



Public Opening: February 7, 6:00–11:00 PM

**NEW YORK, NY, November 25, 2019** — The Rubin Museum of Art is pleased to announce its first exhibition of 2020, “**Measure Your Existence**,” a new group show organized by guest curator of contemporary art, Christine Starkman. Opening February 7, 2020, the exhibition will feature six contemporary artists who address the fleeting nature of existence through performance, installation, film, sculpture, and photography. The artists interrogate the transitory nature of fate, relationships, borders, and more, and in doing so call attention to the importance and inherent power of the present moment. The exhibition will be part of the Rubin Museum’s yearlong thematic exploration of impermanence and accepting change, a fundamental principle in Buddhist philosophy. “**Measure Your Existence**” will be on view from February 7 to August 10, 2020, and will feature works by Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Shilpa Gupta, Tehching Hsieh, Meiro Koizumi, Lee Mingwei, and Taryn Simon.

The artists in “Measure Your Existence” come from a broad range of philosophical and theoretical backgrounds, and collectively their work spans five decades, yet they all respond to history, change, duration, memory, loss, disappearance and reappearance. **Felix Gonzalez-Torres’s** “Untitled” (Placebo) (1991) has an ideal weight of 1,200 pounds. In this

manifestation of the work, silver-wrapped hard candies are arranged as a large carpet on the gallery floor. Visitors can choose to take individual pieces of candy, making them active participants in the physical form that the work takes in this particular exhibition. While the candies will dwindle as individuals take from the work, the exhibitor can replenish the candies as they see fit. “Untitled” (Placebo) can be understood as a means of registering the poetic boundaries between public and private, art and life, and the transitory nature of each moment. Similarly, ephemera and documentation from **Tehching Hsieh’s** “One Year Performance” (1980–81) highlight the passage of time and the disappearance of the self, as for a full year the artist marked every hour by punching a timecard in his studio. Hsieh documented the performance by taking a self-portrait next to the time clock at each hour.

Participation is at the heart of **Lee Mingwei’s** “The Letter Writing Project” (1998), which invites visitors to enter a booth and write letters of remembrance to a deceased or absent loved one, or write letters of forgiveness and gratitude. The work reflects on trust, the exchange of unspoken words, and the possibility of making amends. In **Taryn Simon’s** photographic and textual project “A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters I–IVIII” (2008–11), the external forces of territory, power, circumstance, and religion collide with the internal forces of psychological and physical inheritance. The work considers the fragile nature of survival, mapping the relationships among chance, blood, and other components of fate.

The disappearance of people and places haunts **Shilpa Gupta’s** “1:14:19 / 1188.5 Miles of Fenced Border — West, North-West / Data Update: Dec 31, 2007” (2011–12). When multiplied by the ratio in the title, the length of the white thread wound into a large oval-shaped object equals that of the fenced border between India and Pakistan. The static and poetic form of the artwork stands in contrast to the disputed, volatile border where national and social identifications shift and are reinforced. Reality and fiction also blend in **Meiro Koizumi’s** “My Voice Would Reach You” (2009). To create the video, Koizumi asked an actor to write a letter to his deceased mother, which Koizumi then turned into a script for the actor to follow when randomly calling Japanese companies and inviting his mother out for the weekend. The ensuing conversations captured on film document the actor’s deep, moving emotions of loss and grief.

“‘Measure Your Existence’ invites the viewer to experience the concept of impermanence through participation, co-creation, and reflecting on change, duration, and disappearance,” says guest curator **Christine Starkman**. “The artists make us aware of ourselves sensing the flow of time and change. Materiality is also at the heart of this show.”

As part of the exhibition, artist Lee Mingwei will give a *Brainwave* talk exploring the mechanics of grief on Saturday, February 29, at the Rubin Museum of Art.

In 2020 the Rubin’s exhibitions, programs, and experiences are unified in exploring the concept of impermanence. Drawing on a diverse range of sources and perspectives — from contemporary art to scientific theories to Buddhist philosophies — the Rubin will explore the freedom and ease that comes from letting go of expectations and consciously living in the present.

### About the Artists

**Felix Gonzalez-Torres** (b. 1957, Cuba; d. 1996, United States) has had many significant solo

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and retrospective exhibitions since the 1980s, beginning with his first institutional solo exhibition at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, in 1988. He represented the United States at the Venice Biennale in 2007 with the exhibition *Felix Gonzalez-Torres: America*. Other major solo exhibitions include *Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Specific Objects without Specific Form*, Wiels, Brussels; *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*, Serpentine Gallery, London; and *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, as well as exhibitions at the Fondation Beyeler; MMK Museum fur Moderne Kunst; Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden; and the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago. Gonzalez-Torres studied photography at the Pratt Institute, New York; received an MFA from the International Center for Photography, New York; and attended the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program, New York.

**Shilpa Gupta** (b. 1976, India) studied sculpture at the Sir J. J. School of Art and has had solo shows at the Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Arnhem; Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati; OK Center for Contemporary Art, Linz; and Arnolfini, Bristol. Her work has been exhibited at the 58th Venice Biennale (2019); MoMA (2018); Kochi Muziris Biennale (2018); Gwangju Biennale (2008 and 2018); Kathmandu Triennale (2017); Mori Art Museum (2017); Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (2016); Musée de design et d'arts appliqués contemporains, Lausanne (2016); Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (2016); 12th Havana Biennial (2015); Guangdong Museum of Art (2015); 8th Berlin Biennale (2014); Sharjah Biennale 11 (2013); Yokohama Triennale (2008); and Liverpool Biennale (2006), among others.

**Tehching Hsieh** (b. 1950, Taiwan) dropped out of high school in 1967 and took up painting. After finishing compulsory army service (1970–73), Hsieh had his first solo show at the gallery of the American News Bureau in Taiwan. Shortly after Hsieh stopped painting. He made the performance action *Jump Piece* and broke both his ankles. He trained as a seaman and used it as a means to enter the United States in 1974. He was an illegal immigrant for 14 years until he was granted amnesty in 1988. Starting in the late 1970s, Hsieh made five *One Year Performances* and a *Thirteen Year Plan*. Using long durations and making art and life simultaneously, Hsieh achieved one of the most radical approaches in contemporary art. He made a name for himself in the New York art scene then retreated from the art world. In recent years, Hsieh has exhibited his work in North and South America, Asia, and Europe.

**Meiro Koizumi** (b. 1976, Japan) attended the International Christian University, Tokyo; Chelsea College of Art and Design, London; and the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam. His solo exhibitions include Perez Art Museum, Miami (2018); Annet Gelink Gallery (2017); De Hallen, Haarlem (2016); Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City (2015); Arts Maebashi, Maebashi (2015); Kadist Art Foundation, Paris (2014); Museum of Modern Art, New York (2013); Centro de Arte de Caja de Burgos (2012); and the Mori Art Museum (2009). He has participated in group shows such as Shanghai Biennale (2018), Asia Pacific Triennial, Brisbane (2018), Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul (2017), La Biennale Montréal (2016), Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery (2014), Pinchuk Art Centre (2012), Hara Museum of Contemporary Art (2011), Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2011), Liverpool Biennial (2010), Media City, Seoul (2010), and others.

**Lee Mingwei** (b. 1964, Taiwan) currently lives in New York and Paris. He creates participatory installations and one-on-one events, where strangers explore issues of trust, intimacy, and self-awareness. His projects are often open-ended scenarios for everyday interaction. Lee received an MFA from Yale University in 1997 and has had solo exhibitions at the

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Queensland Gallery of Modern Art, Centre Pompidou, and more.

**Taryn Simon** (b. 1975, United States) works in photography, text, sculpture, and performance. Her projects direct attention to familiar systems of organization — bloodlines, criminal investigations, mourning, flower arrangements — making visible the contours of power and authority hidden within them. Her work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art; Whitney Museum of American Art; Ullens Center for Contemporary Art; Tate Modern; and Neue Nationalgalerie; among others. Her honors include the Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship in Photography and a Photo London Master of Photography award.

### **About Christine Starkman**

Christine Starkman has organized over a dozen high-profile exhibitions of Asian and contemporary art. From 2000 to 2016, she was Curator of Asian Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, where she established dedicated galleries for the arts of the Islamic world (2007), Korea (2007), India (2009), China (2010), and Japan (2012). She worked on site-specific commissions with contemporary artists Cai Guo-Qiang (2010) and Do Ho Suh (2016) and co-organized two exhibitions with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art: “Treasures from Korea: Arts and Culture of the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910)” (2014) and “Your Bright Future: 12 Contemporary Artists from Korea” (2009). She did PhD coursework in art history at Rice University. In 2017 she was visiting scholar at the University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), and international researcher in residence at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Seoul, Korea.

### **About the Rubin Museum of Art**

The Rubin Museum of Art is an arts and cultural hub in New York City’s vibrant Chelsea neighborhood that inspires visitors to make connections between contemporary life and the art and ideas of the Himalayas and neighboring regions. The Rubin encourages personal discoveries through its diverse array of thought-provoking exhibitions and programs, including films, concerts, and onstage conversations, as well as immersive experiences that spark new ways of seeing the world. Emphasizing cross-cultural connections, the Rubin is a space to contemplate ideas that extend across history and span human cultures.

[www.RubinMuseum.org](http://www.RubinMuseum.org)

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Image captions:

Chapter I. Taryn Simon, from *A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters I–XVIII*, 2011.

© Taryn Simon. Image courtesy the artist.

Tehching Hsieh (b. 1950, Nan-Chou, Taiwan); *One Year Performance 1980–1981, Punching the Time Clock*; 1980–1981; photograph; © Tehching Hsieh 1979; image courtesy the artist and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York