

## Nasher Sculpture Center Announces Next Nasher Public Exhibition Artist, Shelby David Meier

*Dallas-based artist presents installation dedicated to the everyday object*

DALLAS, Texas (February 22, 2021)—The Nasher Sculpture Center announces the next exhibition for Nasher Public in the Nasher Store gallery, **Shelby David Meier: *A Part of the Whole*** on view February 25 – March 21, 2021. Shelby David Meier's Nasher Public installation invites viewers to consider the role everyday objects play in our lives and to reflect on our relationship with the things we leave behind.

At first glance, Meier's installation could be mistaken for the remnants of a previous event. The gallery is bare apart from a pile of ostensible Styrofoam cups and food takeout boxes covered in flowers and a single envelope, torn open and floating on the nearby wall. A closer look reveals that the single-use containers are actually ceramic casts of those objects, remade in a material common to formal tableware. And the floating envelope is not an envelope at all, but a paper sculpture mimicking so-called "security" envelopes, complete with a cutout address window and dense pattern that Meier traced by hand. Both objects purport to be something they are not and in doing so, draw connections between their materials and those things they are pretending to be. Meier notes the relationship between the dissimilar materials of ceramic and Styrofoam: "Ceramic is a material that does not erode over time and so is often used to date and understand past cultures. Though much more recent, Styrofoam is also a material that does not erode, but it is not something that we might consider as far as its impact over time."

Contrasting the permanence of ceramics (and Styrofoam) are the flowers that will wilt and dry over the course of the three-week installation, introducing an element of time to the sculpture: "As an organic material, the wilting flowers perform the passing of time," Meier says, "placing the work in the present while signaling a before and after." Meier's inclusion of flowers resonates with the work of Modernist sculptor Isamu Noguchi, who likewise created ceramic sculptures that he used as vessels for flowers, while the form of Meier's sculpture—material piled into a corner on the floor—recalls the work of Lynda Benglis or Claes Oldenburg.

The exhibition title derives from a quote by Albert Einstein, who, in an effort to console a grieving parent, wrote about interconnectedness and our need for compassion:

A human being is a part of the whole, called by us 'Universe,' a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security.<sup>i</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us of the ever-greater need for compassion, as well as increased a desire for human connection. It has also revealed inherent problems within our society and the fragility of social safety nets. With this mindset, and homebound due to the pandemic, Meier began working on a series of paper sculptures after security envelopes—objects with implicit built-in protection. Intended to conceal sensitive information as it travels through the postal system, the

security features of the envelopes are nothing more than patterned ink on otherwise flimsy pieces of paper. These works became a metaphor for the current situation, as Meier describes these sculptures that begin as drawings:

The security envelope drawings were a response to what has been happening [in the COVID-19 pandemic] and the amount of time people would be spending at home—and I was spending at home—thinking about ideas of safety. I think the situation has also exposed a lot of things that we, for a long time, have ignored or haven't really given the attention that is needed. For me, another aspect of it is recognizing the importance of patience as a prerequisite for understanding and what that can do and recognizing our individual responsibility and contribution to what it takes to live in a safe and healthy community.

Juxtaposing nature and culture, ephemerality and permanence, Meier's sculptural facsimiles of mundane objects encourage viewers to take a closer look and see the humanity in all of their slight imperfections.

**About Shelby David Meier**

Shelby David Meier grew up in Littleton, Colorado and has lived in Dallas/Fort Worth for the past ten years. While completing his BFA at Texas Christian University in 2011 he joined the artist collective HOMECOMING! Committee, a multi-year endeavor that involved many collaborative projects hosted by the Dallas Museum of Art, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, the Texas Biennial and many other galleries and institutions. Meier furthered his individual practice as a member of the artist-run gallery 500X in Dallas and later earned an MFA from the Meadows School of the Arts at Southern Methodist University. He has given talks, performed, and shown his work extensively in alternative spaces and galleries throughout the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Most recently, Meier exhibited work in the 2020 SPRING BREAK Art Show in New York City. He lives and works in Dallas.

**About Nasher Public** | Nasher Public is an ongoing, two-pronged public art initiative which aims to generate access to public art by North Texas artists at the Nasher and throughout the greater Dallas community. The project will launch first at the Nasher in a newly formed gallery, presenting monthly exhibitions over the next year, followed by an ongoing series of off-site exhibitions in partnership with area businesses. The new gallery, formerly occupied by the Nasher Store, fronts Flora Street and is directly accessible from the Nasher's entrance foyer. For the duration of the project, the space will be open to the public free of charge during the museum's public hours, and viewable through the windows during off hours.

**About Nasher Sculpture Center** | Located in the heart of the Dallas Arts District, the Nasher Sculpture Center is home to the Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection, one of the finest collections of modern and contemporary sculpture in the world, featuring more than 300 masterpieces by Calder, de Kooning, di Suvero, Giacometti, Gormley, Hepworth, Kelly, Matisse, Miró, Moore, Picasso, Rodin, Serra, and Shapiro, among others. The Nasher Sculpture Center is open Thursday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$7 for seniors, \$5 for students, and free for children 12 and under and members, and includes access to special exhibitions. Visitors must book a timed ticket in advance. For more information, visit [www.NasherSculptureCenter.org](http://www.NasherSculptureCenter.org).

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# Nasher Sculpture Center

PRESS RELEASE

For high resolution images, please follow:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/4ere4cwgu3z4agk/AAA3VeJHnm1JYxalmkw5KOJka?dl=0>

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<sup>i</sup> Walter Sullivan, "The Einstein Papers. A Many of Many Parts," *The New York Times*, Marcy 29, 1972, 1.

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