press release

For Immediate Release
Contact: Erin Rolfs
Senior Director of Marketing
and Communications

erin.rolfs@rice.edu
713-348-4115
moody.rice.edu

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Moody Center for the Arts at Rice University Announces Exhibition Calendar for 10th Anniversary Year

The Moody Center for the Arts inaugurates its anniversary year with Diana Thater: True Life Adventures, *opening January 22, 2027, to be followed by single-artist presentations of Trenton Doyle Hancock in the summer and Kenneth Tam in the fall.*



Diana Thater, ©Victor&Simon - Clément Vayssieres. Courtesy of the artist. Kenneth Tam, Photo by Isabel Penzlien. Courtesy of the artist. Trenton Doyle Hancock, Meridith Kohut, courtesy of Norr Cohan.

November 4, 2026 (Houston, Texas) — The Moody Center for the Arts inaugurates its tenth anniversary year with *Diana Thater: True Life Adventures*, opening January 22, 2027. Her solo show, closing May 15, precedes single-artist presentations of Trenton Doyle Hancock in the summer and Kenneth Tam in the fall. As the Moody celebrates its first decade, these exhibitions and related programming

demonstrate the institution's national reach, regional relevance, and critical role as an interdisciplinary platform for Rice University.

“Reaching this exciting milestone for the Moody, with these artists as partners, underscores the values that have guided us from the beginning,” said Joel Thompson, Deputy Director and Interim Divisional Lead at the Moody Center for the Arts. “Representing local, regional, and international impact, each artist asks questions that require a synthesis of art, science, and the humanities to answer.”

The anniversary year begins with a return to an artist whose work has been part of the Moody’s history since its founding. Thater’s *The Starry Messenger* (2014) was presented during the center’s inaugural year, establishing an early connection with an artist whose practice bridges contemporary art, science, and technology. A decade later, *Diana Thater: True Life Adventures* brings together works spanning her career to examine humanity’s evolving relationship with nonhuman life and the ways imaging technologies shape our understanding of animals, ecosystems, and worlds beyond the human.



Diana Thater, *Practical Effects*, 2022. Courtesy of the artist and David Zwirner.

“Diana’s work asks us to consider what it means to encounter another living being through an image, and how much of that encounter is shaped by the technologies and assumptions we bring to it,” said Claudia Mattos, Associate Curator at the Moody Center for the Arts. “Revisiting a selection of her works today, including some first exhibited nearly three decades ago, reveals just how prescient her thinking has been, particularly as questions about ecological responsibility and our relationship to the natural world have become increasingly urgent.”

Since the 1990s, Thater has been a pioneering figure in video installation, expanding the possibilities of the moving image beyond the screen and into the surrounding architecture. Across immersive installations incorporating projected video, sound, and colored light, she creates environments that draw viewers into the image while making visible the technologies responsible for its construction. Her work foregrounds the conditions through which the natural world is observed and represented, revealing how encounters with other forms of life are shaped by human systems of knowledge, display, and control. *True Life Adventures* offers a renewed perspective on a practice that anticipated many of today’s conversations surrounding ecology, representation, and the agency of the more-than-human world.

Complementing Thater’s immersive approach, subsequent exhibitions with Hancock and Tam move from the nonhuman to the mythic self to the social body. With each artist expressing the Moody’s signature concern for integrating communities and bridging differences, the 2027 anniversary season offers enveloping worlds that allow visitors to consider how we are seen and how we see others.

Seasonal Exhibition Dates:
Diana Thater: True Life Adventures | January 22 - May 15, 2027

Trenton Doyle Hancock | June 4 - August 21, 2027
Kenneth Tam | September 10 - December 23, 2027

More About *Diana Thater: True Life Adventures*



Diana Thater, *The best animals are flat animals*, 1998. Courtesy of the artist.

Programming | Free + Open to the Public

Friday, January 22, 6 – 8 p.m. | Opening reception with remarks from the artist
Saturday, January 23, 2 – 4 p.m. | Artists-in-Dialogue: Diana Thater + Lisa O'Bryan
Saturday, March 27, 3 – 5 pm | New Art / New Music Spring 2027

Exhibition Detail | Gallery Hours Tuesday - Saturday, 10 am - 5 pm

Spanning three decades of Diana Thater's career, *True Life Adventures* brings together early video installations and more recent works that examine humanity's relationship to the nonhuman world. Featuring works rarely seen in the U.S. alongside others presented in new contexts, the exhibition traces Thater's sustained interest in how animals are observed, represented, and understood through human-made frameworks.

The exhibition takes its title from Thater's *True Life Adventures* (2018), a site-specific video projection that references the Disney-produced series of wildlife documentaries of the same name. Produced between 1948 and 1960, the films were influential in shaping popular perceptions of the natural world, presenting animal behavior through carefully constructed narratives that blurred the line between documentary and entertainment.

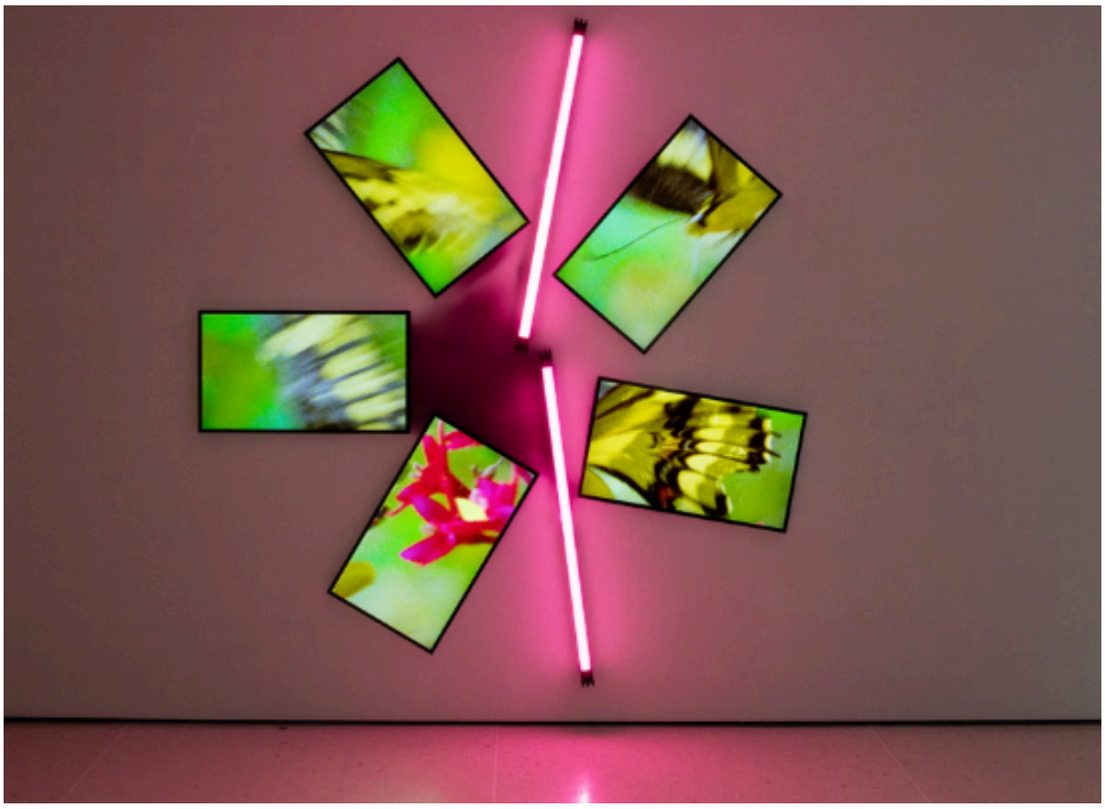
"Her installations make us conscious of our own position as viewers, while questioning the possibility of ever fully understanding the lives and experiences of other species," said Mattos.

Likewise, two works from 1998, *The best animals are the flat animals* and *The best space is the deep space*, consider the relationship between animals, entertainment, and representation. The former juxtaposes close-up footage of zebras, whose stripes dissolve into abstract patterns, with images of a trained zebra performing tricks. The latter features a horse bowing in a *Medieval Times* dinner theater arena, its gesture part of a choreographed spectacle. Both works reveal how animals are conditioned to meet human expectations.

Questions of interspecies communication emerge in *Yes, there will be singing* (2020) and *The Conversation* (2021). The former is a sound and light installation inspired by Whale 52, whose unusual vocalizations—at a frequency of 52 hertz—

are said to go unanswered by other whales of its kind, earning it the nickname “the loneliest whale in the world.” Originally presented exclusively via livestream during the COVID-19 pandemic, the work will be experienced in person for the first time as an installation at the Moody. In *The Conversation*, Thater brings together the vocalizations of three parrots with human speech, challenging assumptions about animal language and intelligence and raising broader questions about the limits of human understanding of communication across species.

The exhibition spans works exploring the lives and behaviors of a wide range of species, from zebras and horses to butterflies, whales, parrots, giraffes, elephants, and others. Across these varied subjects, *True Life Adventures* reflects Thater’s dedicated exploration of the complex relationships between humans and other forms of life, and the ways we observe, represent, and seek to understand them.



About Diana Thater

Diana Thater (b. 1962, San Francisco) is among the most influential artists to emerge in the 1990s. She creates film, video, and installation works that challenge how we experience moving images. Drawing on sources as varied as literature, animal behavior, mathematics, chess, and sociology, she layers projected imagery onto the surrounding architecture, building complex relationships between time and space.

Thater has had solo exhibitions internationally, including LUMA Arles, France (2024); the ICA Watershed, Boston (2018); and *A Runaway World*, which debuted at The Mistake Room, Los Angeles (2017), before traveling to Borusan Contemporary, Istanbul, and the Guggenheim Bilbao. The Los Angeles County Museum of Art organized *The Sympathetic Imagination* (2015), a mid-career survey that traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. Earlier solo shows include The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Secession, Vienna; and Kunsthalle Basel. Her work is held in museum collections worldwide.

Thater’s honors include a Milestone Grant from the Trellis Art Fund (2025), a LACMA Art + Technology Lab Grant (2018), a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship (2005), and a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship (1993). Thater studied art history at New York University and received her MFA from ArtCenter College of Design in Pasadena, where she has taught since 1995 and now chairs the Art Department.



Diana Thater, *The best space is deep space*, 1998. Courtesy of the artist.

About the Moody Center for the Arts
The Moody Center for the Arts at Rice University is a state-of-the-art, non-collecting institution dedicated to transdisciplinary collaboration among the arts, sciences, and humanities. Nationally recognized for its ambitious multidisciplinary exhibitions and experimental programming, the Moody brings together artists, Rice faculty, and the broader Houston community to bridge differences and discover new ways of learning. The Moody is free and open to the public year-round.

Website: moody.rice.edu
Social Media: @theMoodyArts
Phone: +1 713.348.ARTS
Address: Moody Center for the Arts at Rice University
6100 Main Street, MS-480, Houston, TX 77005
(University Entrance 8, at University Boulevard and Stockton Street)

Hours & Admission
Exhibition spaces are open to the public and free of charge Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and closed Sundays, Mondays, and holidays. Events and programs are open to the public. For schedule, registration links, and prices as applicable, visit moody.rice.edu.

Directions & Parking
The Moody Center for the Arts is located on the campus of Rice University and is best reached by using Campus Entrance 8 at the intersection of University Boulevard and Stockton Street. As you enter campus, the building is on the right, just past the Media Center. There is a dedicated parking lot adjacent to the building. Payment for the Moody Lot is by credit card only.
For campus maps, visit www.rice.edu/maps.

About Rice University
Located on a 300-acre forested campus in Houston, Rice University is consistently ranked among the nation's top 20 universities by U.S. News & World Report. Rice has highly respected schools of Architecture, Business, Continuing Studies, Engineering, Humanities, Music, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences, and is home to the Baker Institute for Public Policy. With 3,879 undergraduates and 2,861 graduate students, Rice's undergraduate student-to-faculty ratio is 6-to-1. Its residential college system builds close-knit communities and lifelong friendships, just one reason why Rice is ranked No. 1 for quality of life and for lots of race/class interaction and No. 2 for happiest students by the Princeton Review. Rice is also rated as the best value among private universities by Kiplinger's Personal Finance.

Press Contact
Erin Rolfs | +1 713-348-4115 | erin.rolfs@rice.edu