

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BECHTLER MUSEUM OF MODERN ART PRESENTS TERESA HUBBARD / ALEXANDER BIRCHLER: FLORA
– Charlotte’s Modern Art Museum First Venue on East Coast to Present Large-Scale, Double-Sided Film Installation –

(Charlotte, N.C.) – The Bechtler Museum of Modern Art is pleased to present *Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler: Flora*, a multimedia project based on the Swiss American duo’s discoveries about the unknown American artist Flora Mayo. Organized by the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, *Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler: Flora* will be on view at the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art from September 23, 2023 through January 21, 2024. *Flora* premiered at the Swiss Pavilion of the 57th Venice Biennale in 2017, and the Bechtler exhibition marks the first time the work will be seen on the East Coast.

Hubbard / Birchler have been working collaboratively since 1990, employing video, sound, photography, and other mediums to explore connections between history, memory, social relationships, and narratives both factual and imagined. Their double-sided film installation *Flora* and accompanying work *Bust* (both 2017) spotlight the life of Flora Mayo, who in the 1920s studied alongside Swiss sculptor Alberto Giacometti at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris, and with whom she had a romantic relationship. While Giacometti is among the most celebrated artists of the 20th century—one who is strongly represented in the Bechtler Museum’s permanent collection—the majority of Mayo’s oeuvre has been lost or destroyed, and her biography was previously relegated to a footnote in Giacometti’s scholarship. Hubbard / Birchler reframe this story from a feminist perspective, bringing Mayo’s compelling biography to life through a hybrid form of storytelling that deftly weaves together narration, reenactment, and documentary.

Flora is conceived as a conversation between Flora Mayo and her son, David Mayo—whom Hubbard / Birchler found living near Los Angeles after an exhaustive international search. The two-channel video is presented on opposite sides of a large, custom-built screen, each video revealing a different story while sharing the same soundtrack. On one side of the screen an actress portrays a lively, youthful Mayo creating a bust of Giacometti in her Paris studio; on the other, David shows viewers a treasure trove of his mother’s archival material—letters, diaries, and photographs—and describes her later challenges and struggles in life as a single working mother. *Flora* unfurls as a multifaceted dialogue across place and time: between a mother and son, Mayo and Giacometti, Europe and the United States, past and present, and evidence and imagination.

“*Flora* is a captivating and timely work,” says Bechtler Curator Katia Zavistovski, “one that revives an aspiring woman artist’s overlooked life and practice, and challenges us to consider how art history is scripted and whose stories get told.”

The Bechtler will also display the related works *Bust* and *Archive, Flora Luella Lewis Mayo* (2019–23). *Bust* comprises a reproduction of a lost photograph from around 1927 that shows Mayo and Giacometti flanking a portrait bust she made of him, and a reconstruction of the no-longer-extant sculpture. The work expands the formal and conceptual layers of Hubbard / Birchler’s project, juxtaposing Mayo’s narrative of ephemerality and loss with the tangible, material reconstruction of her destroyed sculpture, giving absence both form and weight. *Archive* reinforces this tension and illuminates Hubbard / Birchler’s process of creating *Flora*. *Archive* incorporates a selection of Hubbard / Birchler’s

-more-

Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler: Flora – 2

sketches and journals, as well as a chronology exploring the intersection of Mayo's and Giacometti's biographies. In Charlotte, a new entry will be added highlighting the Bechtler family's close relationship with Giacometti: Hans Bechtler, father of the museum's founder, Andreas Bechtler, was a friend and patron of Giacometti's; in 1965, he helped establish the Giacometti Foundation in Zürich and served as its first president. The Bechtler Museum's presentation will also include a rarely exhibited self-portrait bust by Mayo.

"Showing Hubbard / Birchler's work, and in particular *Flora*, is fitting for the Bechtler as we expand our exhibition program to embrace global modernism and the contemporary response to this rich art historical period," said Executive Director Todd D. Smith. "The Bechtler is uniquely positioned to host this exhibition as the Bechtler family has a long history with Giacometti, with Bessie and Hans Bechtler having been important patrons and friends of the artist for decades."

Adjacent to *Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler: Flora* will be the pendant exhibition *Giacometti and the Artists of the Grande Chaumière*. Drawn from the Bechtler Museum's permanent collection, this section will feature work by an international array of artists who attended the famed Parisian art school, including Giacometti, Alexander Calder, Joan Miró, Alicia Penalba, Germaine Richier, Kumi Sugai, Maria Helena Vieira da Silva, and Zao Wou-Ki, among others. The exhibition demonstrates the Académie de la Grande Chaumière's embrace of artists from around the world, and further contextualizes the vibrant setting in which Giacometti and Mayo developed their art practices and fell in love.

About the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art

The Bechtler Museum of Modern Art is the only museum in the Southern United States dedicated to European and American modern art and its legacies. Capturing a remarkable era of art history from the collection of the Zürich-based Bechtler family, the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art collection includes works by some of the most important and influential figures of modernism, including Alexander Calder, Le Corbusier, Edgar Degas, Max Ernst, Alberto Giacometti, Barbara Hepworth, Jasper Johns, Paul Klee, Alfred Manessier, Joan Miró, Kenneth Noland, Pablo Picasso, Bridget Riley, Nicolas de Staël, Andy Warhol, and a wealth of other 20th-century notables. The museum, designed by Swiss architect Mario Botta, prominently features Niki de Saint Phalle's iconic *Le Grand Oiseau de Feu sur l'Arche (The Firebird)* on its entrance plaza. Located in the heart of Uptown, the Bechtler is a light-filled community space created to inspire and engage first-time visitors and long-term supporters alike.

About the Artists

Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler are among the most important contemporary artists working with film and new media. Their work is held in numerous public collections worldwide and their extensive international exhibition history include venues such as the 48th and 57th Venice Biennale; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden at the Smithsonian, Washington D.C.; Kunstmuseum Basel; Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA); Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; National Museum of Art, Osaka; Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; Tate Museum Liverpool, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others. Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler are represented by Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York / Los Angeles and Lora Reynolds Gallery, Austin. Hubbard and Birchler are Professors in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Texas at Austin.

###

Media Contact:

Hillary Hardwick, Deputy Director for Marketing and Communications
Hillary.hardwick@bechtler.org | 704.353.9204