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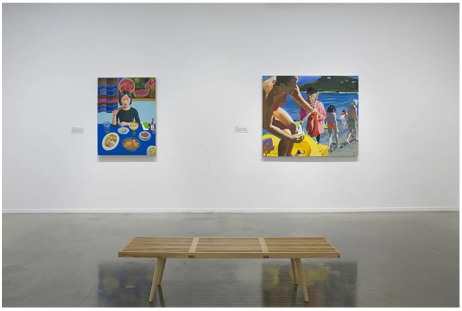
Reflecting on the Past Through Materiality and Color

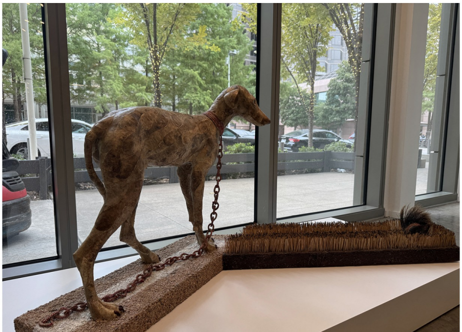
by Jessica Fuentes | November 1, 2025

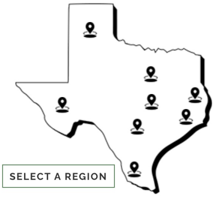
The Green Family Art Foundation (GFAF) is a hidden-in-plain-sight gem. Located on Flora Street in Dallas' Art District, just blocks away from the Dallas Museum of Art and the Nasher Sculpture Center, the (relatively) small but mighty 4,000-square-foot exhibition space packs a punch. Whether hosting shows organized by museums or focusing on its own collection, GFAF has mounted impressive exhibitions that remain on my mind even years later — *Women of Now: Dialogues of Memory, Place & Identity* (2022); *Black Abstractionists: From Then 'Til Now* (2022); *Maternity Leave: None Of Women Born* (2023); *Rupture & Connection* (2024); and add to the list the current exhibition *New York Academy of Art Chubb Fellows and Friends*.



An installation view of "New York Academy of Art Chubb Fellows and Friends," at the Green Family Art Foundation, 2025. Photo: Evan Sheldon

Curated by GFAF's Director Katherine Delony, *NYAA Chubb Fellows and Friends* presents works by recipients of the Chubb Fellowship, a postgraduate program that provides funding for three New York Academy of Art (NYAA) alumni to serve as teaching assistants and mentors at the school alongside their NYAA peers and visiting artists. Included in the exhibition are big names like Amy Sherald, Cecily Brown, Jenny Saville, and Eric Fischl, who shine and set the tone for some of the thematic strokes across the exhibition — distinct use of color, abstraction, figuration, and narrative approaches. Though perhaps one of the most captivating throughlines is materiality.

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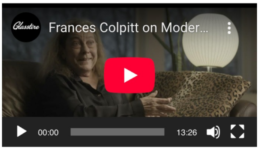

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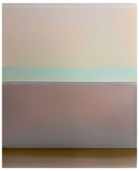

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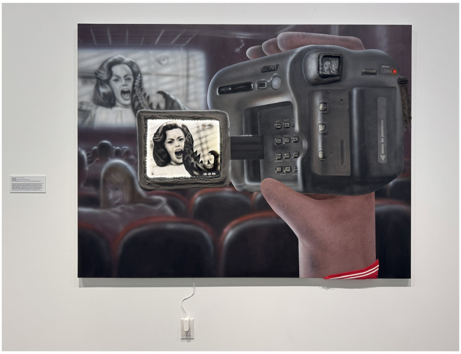
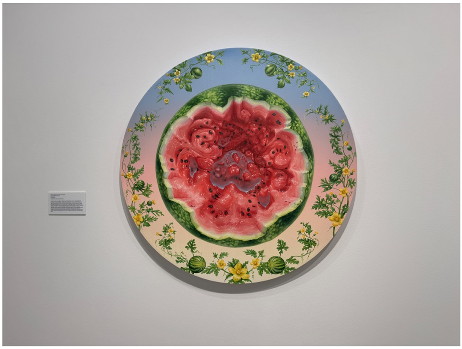
Brendan Sullivan, "Chain Breaker-Path Maker," 2022, baseball leather and stitching, wood, steel, foam, clay, bamboo, boar hair, gravel, 60 x 24 x 12 inches

Brendan Sullivan's *Chain Breaker-Path Maker*, a sculpture of a dog wearing a chain leash and walking a narrow path, is eerie from a distance. The texture of the thin, pale dog appears skinlike, but upon closer inspection the unmistakable figure eight shape of baseball leather reveals itself. The leash and chain too are made from baseball parts, consisting of a seemingly endless strand of red stitching. Even with this familiar material, the piece maintains its strange air. Dissecting and repurposing America's pastime carries weight, which is amplified by the content — a dog that has broken free, yet carries the remnants of its chains and walks toward an ominous path that is still unfurling before it. Part of the artist's *As American As* series, the work speaks to struggle, courage, and perseverance, while echoing our country's dichotomous history of slavery and mass incarceration and freedom and progress.



Trey Abdella, "Bootleg," 2021, acrylic, plastic, resin, glass, fabric, and red lights on linen, 60 x 78 inches

In a nearby space, Trey Abdella's *Bootleg* captivates. By sheer size it demands attention, and then holds the viewer's gaze through repetition and built surfaces. A large cartoonish and sandpaper-like textured hand holds a gigantic (compared to today's camera phones) digital video camcorder (DV camera) filming a movie in a theater. The scene is repeated, and distorted, on the DV camera's flipped-out screen and in its smaller viewfinder. Buttons and the viewfinder on the camera are built off the linen paint surface, adding dimensionality to the work, and the DV camera's screen is lit with LED lights. Much like Sullivan's dog, this is a strange yet familiar work. Abdella speaks to nostalgia both in the depiction of a horror film in a movie theater and in the act of recording on a now obsolete media device. Yet, the use of multiple screens speaks to how we often consume media today — through small, private screens, even when large, communal ones are available to us.



Alonsa Guevara, "Call of the Watermelon," 2021, oil on canvas, 48 x 48 inches

My favorite gallery was a room of paintings, where works by Alonsa Guevara

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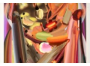

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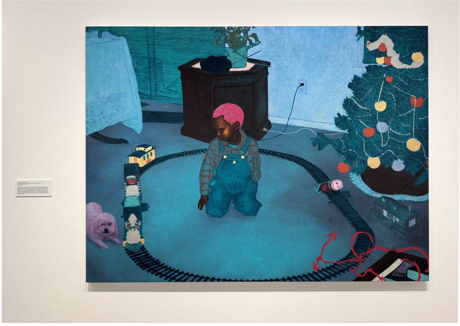
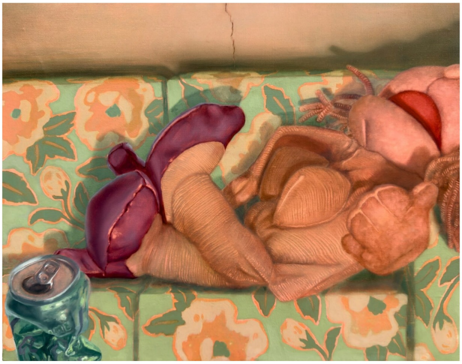
and Arcmanoro Niles hold their own alongside Sherald and Fischl. Guevara's lush red watermelon, eaten straight through the center, as if by a ravenous person, beautifully portrays the texture of the fruit's flesh. A pool of juice remains at the center, where the heart of the watermelon has been devoured. It conjures childhood memories of when my father would dutifully carve a watermelon into slices for the family to share, but, sometimes, my mother would get to the fruit before the rest of us and would take the center for herself. We'd ask why and she'd simply respond "It's the best part." It was silly and playful, somewhat selfish, but maybe somewhat deserved. While the eaten watermelon is the main point of focus at the center, the periphery of the tondo illustrates that there is more fruit to come — watermelons grow and flowers bloom on the vines at the edges of the work.



Arcmanoro Niles, "Never Knew What Little Time We Had (I Lost The Nameless Things)," 2019, oil, acrylic, and glitter on canvas, 57 x 78 inches

Niles' haunting painting of a young child playing with a train set near a Christmas tree weaves in and out of flatness and dimensionality. Painted in the artist's iconic jeweltone palette, the deep blues and greens set the tone. The child sits alone, in the middle of an oval toy train track, and appears timid as he looks down and away from the viewer. His hair and eyebrows, painted with a bright pink glitter, give the melancholy work a sense of whimsy — the treatment reminds the viewer that the inner worlds of children are often unknowable places and though the solitary scene is somber, the imagination within is gleaming.



Laura Romaine, "Reclining Nude," 2025, acrylic and oil on linen, 14 x 18 inches

In the final room, across from a wall-sized work, a small painting takes center stage. A classic scene — a reclining nude — is made magnificently absurd. On a boxy floral couch, a pink puppet, nude except for shiny heels, lays with legs crossed, head back, and an arm reaching out toward the viewer. For added measure, a crumpled green (beer or soda) can sits in the foreground. Perfectly rendered textures fill the work, with variation between the puppet's corduroy-seeming body, softer hands and face, and sleek pink high heels. The piece is seriously playful, using an innocent childhood object to poke at the objectification of women across time (and art history).

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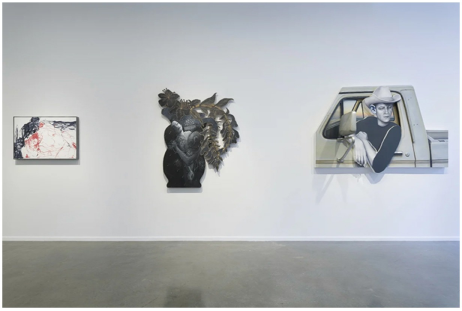

An installation view of "New York Academy of Art Chubb Fellows and Friends," at the Green Family Art Foundation, 2025. Photo: Evan Sheldon

New York Academy of Art Chubb Fellows and Friends at the Green Family Art Foundation brings together works by artists associated with NYAA for over 40 years. While the exhibition's title explains the *who* of the show, it does little to prepare visitors for the *what*. Despite this, the exhibition was top of my list of things to see this fall because of GFAF's reputation for mounting high-caliber shows. The broad scope of *NYAA Chubb Fellows and Friends* illustrates the breadth of NYAA alumni. From loose painterly brushwork to meticulously depicted scenes, the showcased pieces present various styles, themes, and points of connection. Many of the works were made within the last five years, and point to ways artists are exploring memory and the past through the physicality of materials and evocative use of color.

New York Academy of Art Chubb Fellows and Friends *is on view through December 14, 2025, at the Green Family Art Foundation in Dallas.*

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