

Curating Backward

Green Family Art Foundation's *Fields of Visions* lets local collectors—and their choices—lead the narrative.

BY DARRYL RATCLIFF



Ewa Juszkiewicz, *Untitled*, 2020, oil on canvas, 31.50 x 25.56 in. Courtesy of the Karpidas Family. © Ewa Juszkiewicz. Courtesy the artist and Gagosian.



Above: Berndnaut Smilde, *Nimbus Mdbk*, 2021, digital C-type print on aluminum, 49.25 x 73.62 in. Collection of Gowri and Alex Sharma. © Berndnaut Smilde. Courtesy of the artist and Ronchini, London. Below: Hadi Falapishi, *Young and Clueless (Bunny, Bear, Bear)*, 2021, stuffed animals, glazed ceramic, pots, and lace, 60.12 x 54.25 x 25.12 in. The Pinnell Collection. © Hadi Falapishi. Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York.

Fields of Vision: Dallas Collects, on view at the Green Family Art Foundation from February 7 through August 9, brings together 42 works drawn from private Dallas-based collections. Rather than organizing the exhibition around a single artist, movement, or theme, curator Sara Hignite structures the show through the act of collecting itself—beginning not with an abstract idea but with works already chosen, acquired, and lived with. The result is an exhibition shaped as much by prior decisions and relationships as by curatorial design.

Hignite has described the process as “curating backwards.” The idea for a show focused on Dallas collections was initially proposed by Eric Green, who, as Hignite recalls, “just let me run with it.” Starting with 42 confirmed lenders, she selected a single work from each collection and built the exhibition from there. “This as opposed to the standard curatorial path of choosing an artist or a theme or concept and then finding the lenders who have the art you want to include,” she explains. “I found it refreshing for the art to steer the exhibition narrative with this show.”

That reversal is not just procedural; it shapes how the exhibition reads. Rather than presenting collecting as background context, *Fields of Vision* treats it as an active force. The show becomes less a survey of contemporary art than a map of how art is encountered, chosen, lived with, and eventually made public.

That process matters in Dallas. Long recognized for the strength of its institutions and the seriousness of its collectors, the city now helps shape how contemporary art moves and gains value, not just where it’s shown. From her vantage point now living in New York, Hignite sees Dallas as unusually coherent in this regard—a place where artists, collectors, fairs, and institutions operate in close conversation. “Dallas has been a major arts city for some time,”



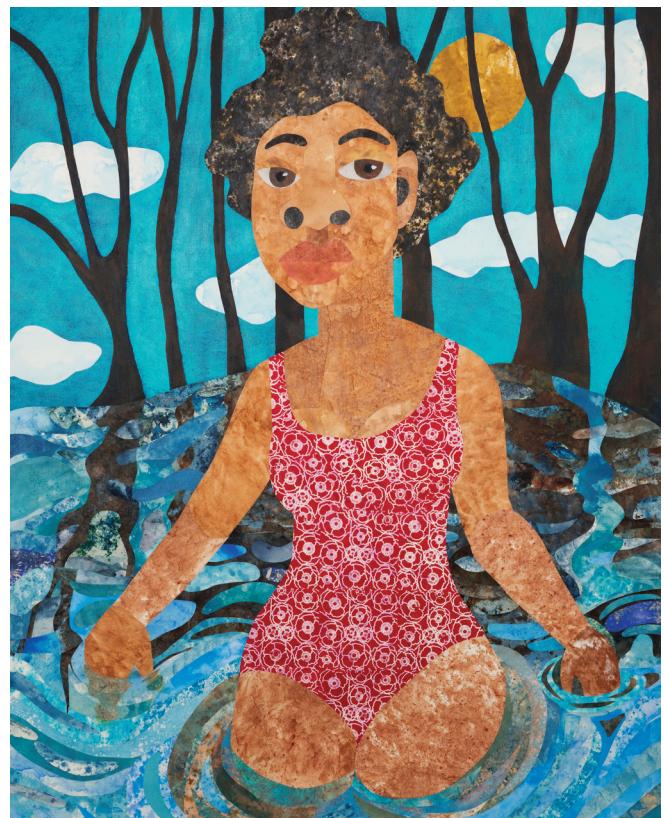
Hugh Hayden, *Real Tree*, 2023, cherry bark on Zegna suit, jacket, 35 x 32 x 8 in., pants, 43 x 28 x 5 in. Green Family Art Foundation. Courtesy of Adam Green Art Advisory. © Hugh Hayden. Courtesy of Lisson Gallery. Photograph by Dawn Blackman.



Thokozani Madonsela, *Abaflowenu uyobathola phambili*, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 36 x 40 in. Calvin LaMont of The LaMont Foundation. Photograph by Grace Tighe.



Tomoo Gokita, *Seek*, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 89.50 x 72 in. The Rachofsky Collection. © Tomoo Gokita. Courtesy of the artist and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles/New York/Tokyo. Photograph by Jenalee Harmon.



Clockwise from left: Devin Troy Strother, *Sax Cat*, 2021, oil on linen, 40 x 30 in. Collection of Porschla and Jason Kidd. Photograph by Grace Tighe; Evita Tezano, *Beyond the Path There is a New Birth*, 2023, acrylic and mixed-media collage on canvas, 60 x 48 in. Collection of Marlo and Jeff Melucci. © Evita Tezeno. Courtesy of the artist and Luis De Jesus Los Angeles; Ja'Tovia Gary, *Citational Ethics* (Saidiya Hartman, 2017), 2020, neon sculpture, 47 x 47 x 6 in., edition 3/3, Collection of the Carl & Marilynn Thoma Foundation. © Ja'Tovia Gary. Courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery. Photograph by Steven Probert.



she notes, “and that identity has evolved and grown over the years,” sustained by a civic belief in the importance of the arts “not only to a city’s success but at a societal and even just a human level.”

Many of the works in *Fields of Vision* were acquired after 2020, and that timing is evident in the exhibition’s emotional tone. While the post-pandemic collecting boom has been widely noted, Hignite points to something subtler: “Beyond that,” she says, “we observe common themes bubbling up in work collected during and after the pandemic—themes of loss, isolation, displacement, and, ultimately, hope for the future. It may have been subconscious, but it’s there.” Rather than imposing a framework, the exhibition allows these shared concerns to surface on their own.

The variety of materials and approaches reinforces this reading. Assemblage, painting, sculpture, and text-based works sit side by side, without forcing stylistic unity. What links them is not form but feeling. Hignite notes that these themes only became clear after the selections were complete, suggesting that the exhibition reflects a broader post-pandemic mood filtered through individual acts of collecting.

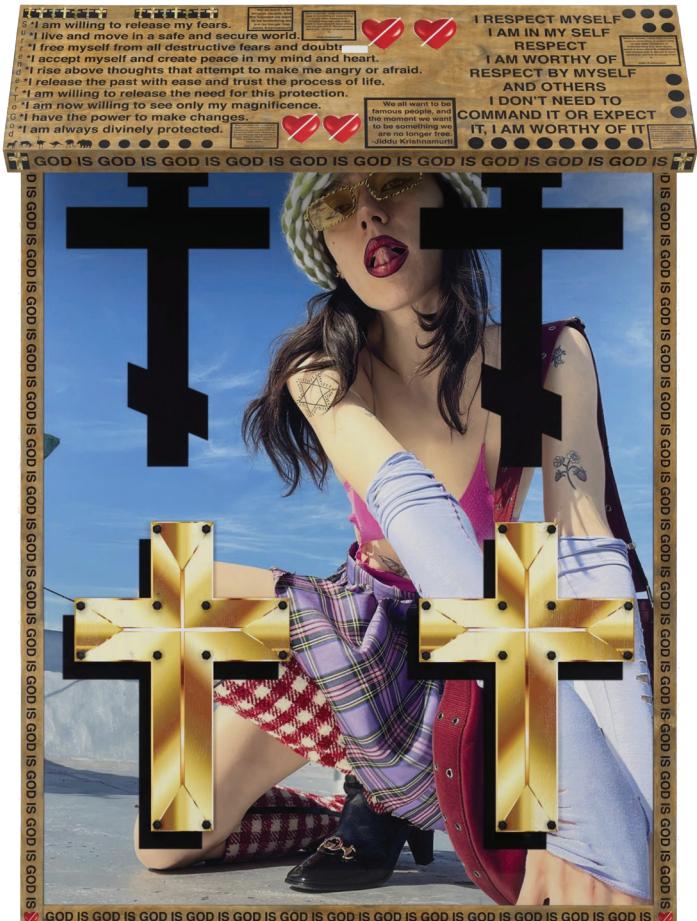
One of the exhibition’s quieter strengths is how clearly it reflects Dallas as a place of encounter. Many of the works on view were acquired through local galleries, museum-related travel, or at the Dallas Art Fair. Others involve artists who have exhibited, worked, or maintained long-term relationships in the city. In these instances, collecting reads less like distant acquisition and more like proximity: art first encountered here, then lived with elsewhere, before returning to public view.

The presence of artists such as Hugh Hayden, Ja’Tovia Gary, and Evita Tezeno underscores Dallas’ role as a place where demanding work—formally, politically, and emotionally—is supported and sustained. Alongside Dallas-based and Texas-rooted figures such as David-Jeremiah and Celia Álvarez Muñoz, the exhibition collapses the familiar divide between “local” and “international.” What emerges instead is a picture of Dallas as a place where artistic value is built through sustained relationships and repeated engagement, then circulated outward into a wider conversation.

The collectors themselves appear not as a single class but as a range of approaches. Some, including Debbie and Eric Green, Nancy Nasher and David Haemisegger, Cindy and Howard Rachofsky, and Marilynn and Carl Thoma, have developed models that extend private collecting into public-facing institutions and foundations. Others—emerging collectors, such as Michael Buss, Annika Cail, and Grace Cook, alongside long-established ones like Deedie Rose, Tim Headington, Janelle and Alden Pinnell, and Sheryl Adkins-Green and Geoff Green—appear through a single, carefully chosen work. What connects them, Hignite observes, is not scale or status, but sincerity. “Pretty much everyone genuinely loves art and takes collecting really seriously,” she says. “The intention with which each collector in the show approaches collecting is remarkable.”

That focus on intention also shaped Hignite’s selection process. Alongside chronological boundaries, she drew on Andrea Fraser’s mapping of contemporary art’s subfields to ensure a broad range of practices and positions. The goal was not to be comprehensive, but to show the depth and variety of contemporary art collecting in Dallas without flattening it into a single story.

For audiences outside the art world, *Fields of Vision* offers a rare opportunity to see private collections made public. Rather than presenting collecting as opaque or elite, the exhibition frames it as a series of human choices—moments of recognition, risk, and care. As Hignite puts it, she hopes the exhibition resonates as viewers navigate, “individually and collectively, what it means to be human in this post-pandemic world.” ♦



Above: Jordan Wolfson, *Untitled*, 2022, UV print on plywood and Dibond with gloss coat, aluminum, 99.62 x 72.50 x 18 in. The Hartland & Mackie / Labora Collection. Below: Leslie Martinez, *Talking Points*, 2024, canvas scraps, used studio rags, used studio clothing, polyester sewing threads, paper fragments, paint chips, modeling paste, and acrylic paint on canvas, 60 x 48 x 6 in. Collection of Joyce Goss. © Leslie Martinez. Photograph by Evan Sheldon.