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Deep in the art of Texas: focus on Dallas as a flourishing community of dealers and collectors

Talley Dunn of Gerald Peters Gallery states with pride that “The art community as a whole is growing”

Jason Edward Kaufman

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When Ray Nasher’s collection of modern sculpture toured museums in San Francisco and New York earlier this year, critics labeled the Dallasite’s holdings the world’s greatest in private hands—not bad for a city known more for its football team than for its cultural riches. Then in May, the developer promised to build and endow a sculpture garden across the street from the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) in which to display many of his largest pieces. The announcement gave a boost to the city’s ego, driving home the message that Dallas deserves art of the highest caliber.

Also making a splash on the contemporary scene is financier Howard Rachofsky, who hired Richard Meier to design the palatial home in which he now conducts public tours of his

extensive collection of international art of the past two decades.

“The art community as a whole is growing,” says Talley Dunn, director of Gerald Peters Gallery and president of the Dallas Art Dealers Association (DADA). “Private collectors like Mr Rachofsky are becoming more visible, a new not-for-profit space called the McKinney Avenue Contemporary (The MAC) has opened, the DMA has just hired two new curators of contemporary art, and there’s a tremendous amount of collector involvement at all levels.”

“Collectors really enjoy supporting and following local artists,” she adds, citing in particular Richard and Nona Barrett who have acquired art by post-war Texans like David Bates, Vernon Fisher, James Surls, and Nic Nicosia, all of whom work in the area. And there are old-guard collectors as well, such as Margaret McDermott, widow of one of the founders of Texas Instruments, who owns an important group of Impressionist and Modern pictures.

Though Ms Dunn modestly denies that Dallas has a true “gallery scene,” she notes that a number of older galleries cluster in the Uptown district, and several younger ones have opened in Deep Elm. DADA organises Gallery Walks when members across town hold concurrent openings. The next is 6 September.

Collectors of contemporary art have several alternatives:

Gerald Peters Gallery (+1 214 969 9410), represents established artists like William Wegman, John Alexander, Annette Lawrence, Vernon Fisher, and James Surls. (Mr Peters has branches also in New York and Santa Fe. See p.39).

Barry Whistler Gallery (+1 214 939 0242), has for ten years focused mainly on living Texans such as Helen Altman, The Art Guys, Joseph Havel, Michael Miller, and Michael Ray Charles.

Turner & Runyon (+1 214 653 1130) is a six-year-old partnership between Kenneth Turner and John Runyon, which exhibits Ross Bleckner, Peter Halley, and Ian Davenport. “We like to be a pipeline from New York and Europe into Texas,” says co-owner Runyon, noting that upcoming shows include Luis Jimenez, Karen Davie, and April Gornik.

The burgeoning market for photographs has two principal suppliers in Dallas:

Afterimage Gallery (+1 214 871 8140) shows contemporary and classic images.

Photographs DO NOT BEND (+1 214 969 1852) specialises in contemporary and Latin American

work.

There are opportunities for collectors in other areas as well:

Valley House Gallery (+1 972 239 2441), founded in 1954, deals in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century art, primarily American, with several contemporary figurative artists as well. Kevin Vogel, the second-generation proprietor, currently has in stock works by George Caleb Bingham, J. Alden Weir, Mary Cassatt, and Edwin Long. Summer shows will feature English outsider artist Terri Fitzpatrick and historical pictures of the state's natural wonders.

David Dike Fine Art (+1 214 720 4044), founded in 1986, also deals in nineteenth- and twentieth-century American art, with a strong emphasis on early Texas regional artists like landscapist Julian Onderdonk.

Altermann & Morris Galleries (+1 214 871 3035) carry art of the American West.

Brian Roughton (+1 214 871 1096) sells nineteenth-century academic realists like Bouguereau and Daniel Ridgeway Knight to clients including Texas millionaires Lamar Hunt and Ross Perot.

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