

New Art Space Site131 Opens Saturday

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BY LAUREN SMART



If Joan Davidow's name sounds familiar, it's likely because of her tenures as the director of the Arlington Museum of Art and Dallas Contemporary. She's one of the city's go-to experts about art and she has an eye for up-and-comers. These days she imparts her insight in segments for KERA, the local NPR affiliate, and in classes at institutions like Southern Methodist University, where she recently dedicated numerous weeks to the subject of Texas art stars. No one is more grateful for Davidow's teachings than her son, Seth. It was his idea to open Site 131 and let his mother program the non-profit art space.

"Mom has always had a good eye for emerging, contemporary artists," says Seth, who relied on Joan's advice as he began building his own art collection. "And now she will have an environment to show the work that she finds."

Saturday night the first exhibition, *Layering*, opens in the space, featuring the work of Dallas-based artists Marjorie Schwarz and Arthur Peña, alongside the work of New Jersey-based artist Lauren Muggeo. As the title suggests, all of these artists use layers in their work. Schwarz and Peña both with paint, while Muggeo threads materials together. Joan is especially interested in pulling together the work of artists from "here, there and beyond," meaning locally, nationally and internationally.



"I'm interested in showing artists whose work I see as connected in some way," says Joan. "Sometimes it will be obvious; sometimes I might be the only one who sees it."

The space sits northwest of downtown at 131 Payne St. (hence the name), just a few doors down from Cydonia Gallery and Texas Ale Project. The interior is a collision of industrial, high ceilings and pristine white walls. When Seth bought the place around seven years ago, it was filled to the brim with car windshields. It was a familiar sight for the Davidows, whose family business was in the auto industry for three generations. About a year ago, they began to ready the space to become Site 131, with a projected opening of this summer. Some hiccups along the way led to exhibition rearranging and rescheduling, but both Davidows are happy with the end result.

"When Seth asked me if I wanted to do something art related with him on Payne Street, I thought, 'Whoa, to do this with my son in my lifetime,'" says Joan. "I couldn't be more happy."

Seth says thanks to his mom, he and his brother grew up in art. She was always making work, primarily ceramics, while they were children and she would check out prints of famous artworks from the local library to hang in their room for a month at a time. It wasn't until he was an adult that

Seth began to appreciate art on his own. Now, he's building an art collection of his own and plans to work closely with Joan to choose the artists for the exhibitions.

Joan also plans to use Site 131 as a place for discussions about art. She hopes to host informal sessions where collectors or curators will share their experiences from different art fairs, and to create a place where young collectors can learn how to approach artists or galleries. Because the work won't be for sale at Site 131, it is the ideal space for curiosity to interact with knowledge.

Site131 will be open regularly Fridays and Saturdays and by appointment. Layering opens with a reception from 6-9 p.m. Saturday. More at site131.com.

Photos:Stephanie DeLay

