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OUT OF SITE

Inside Joan and Seth Davidow's Site 131.

On a Friday afternoon in March, Joan Davidow places a black hardbound book in front of me. Davidow, empress of the Dallas contemporary art scene, urges me to take a look, her excitement palpable.

I peek inside “the notebook,” as she calls it, thumbing through pages of photographic postcards arranged in vivid juxtapositions. Stark wooden planks stand opposite flattened monochromatic canvases; saturated blacks ripple and crack, revealing illusionistic ballpoint pen scratches.

These collections of postcards aren't just calling cards for artists; they are tangible insights into Davidow's curatorial process. They are [Site131](#)'s future.

Site131 is the brainchild of Joan and her son Seth Davidow, a duo passionate about the contemporary art scene yet privy to the vagaries of commercial consumption. A conversation between the two during Art Basel Miami propelled them to create a modern-day *kunsthalle* for Dallas that would both engage the public and augment the goings-on of more institutionalized art settings.

After hiring David Droese of Droese Raney Architecture to renovate the former warehouse on Payne Street, the Davidows quickly turned their sights towards contacting local, national, and international artists keen to have their work made public.

“There's a hierarchy to how artists build careers,” Joan says. “Artists have to show at certain places before galleries pick them up; they have to have a track record. This is part of that track record.”

Joan says this with a knowing smile. She's smartly aware of her own successful track record with introducing raw-edged artistic talent to the region through her tenures at the Dallas Contemporary and Arlington Museum of Art. To nurture talent beyond the fiscal lifeline of public viewings, Joan eschews checklists and price tags in favor of white-walled space and informed exegeses.

“A commercial gallery will show you what something costs, either on a label or in a handout. You know why you are going there. But that's an aside to us, a secondary aspect. I engage the writers of our handouts to provide context for the works seen on our walls. I intentionally create sparseness in the gallery. I'm selective for a reason.”

Davidow plans on introducing more formal methods of contemporary art engagement for her non-profit space, including talks and programs that anchor the works with their artistic ancestors.

This nexus of education and commercial viability is exactly what makes Site 131 a powerful player in the Dallas art scene. But Joan already knows this. That knowing smile comes from an art maven secure in her dynastic role, steadily building a new playground for contemporary amateurs and serious-minded Dallas patrons alike.

The Details: Site131 is located at 131 Payne Street. Find out more [here](#).

-Alex Remington

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