

Site 131 showcases works from the Texas-heavy Carter/Wynne Collection

The paintings, sculptures, photography and more are mostly by Texas artists.

By John Zotos
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"*This Was a Lie*," a mixed-media assemblage by Jake Elliot and River Shell, is on display as part of "Texas Collects: Carter/Wynne Family Collection," which runs through Dec. 10 at SITE131. (Nan Coulter / Special Contributor)

After a seven-year run, the nonprofit art space SITE131 was about to shut its doors this past summer, but it turns out the gallery wasn't quite ready to hang it up.

After discussions with local art figures, artistic director Joan Davidow decided that the institution's next phase would consist of a series of exhibitions titled "Texas Collects," with the goal of bringing a selection of artworks culled from a local private collection that the public has never seen, much less heard of.

The Carter/Wynne Family Collection, the first in the series, is housed in a family home with about 3,000 pieces of contemporary art in a wide range of media.



Michael Wynne has amassed about 3,000 pieces of contemporary art, mostly by Texas artists. (Nan Coulter / Special Contributor)

Mostly by Texas artists, the collection includes mail art, works on paper, sculptures, paintings and a touch of photography. The collection is the brainchild of art collector Michael Wynne, an artist himself, who amassed the art over the last 30 years, along with his wife, Betsy Carter. The images struck a chord that later led to a realization: “My desire to own art and my desire to make art went hand in hand,” such that “making art came from a desire to own art.”

Wynne’s taste in art is eclectic and personal. He buys what appeals to him without interest in art as an investment, usually as a way to support local, young and emerging artists.

For instance, in a painting titled *Still-Life* by Jeff Elrod, we see an early example of the Texas artist’s exploration of abstraction, with images of lines and squiggles designed using a rudimentary computer program in 1999.

Wynne loved it so much that he used his entire yearly art budget for this single imposing painting. “It’s still the most we ever spent on one item,” Wynne says.

Elrod went on to a successful career on an international level.

Stephen Laphisophon, a local artist and professor, is represented in the exhibition with one of his readily recognizable abstractions in mixed media. He has known Wynne for several years and says, in an essay written for this exhibition, “Michael is a fervent supporter of younger and under-appreciated artists” who “is part-archivist and part-chronicler: rescuing and caring for works that might otherwise go unnoticed.”

All of the art on view was chosen by Site 131 to illustrate the contrasting styles found in a private collection unconstrained by institutional demands.

When passing through the entryway foyer, don’t miss Greg Meza’s intermingling of Pop Art and politics with a sculpture, *Untitled*, that features a nylon American flag curled up and wrapped in resin and epoxy. Another highlight is a bright painting by artist Yek, also called *Untitled*, with lines inspired by painted pinstripes found in car culture, on a rigid



Stephen Laphisophon, a local artist and professor, is represented in the exhibition with the 2014 abstract mixed-media work "*Untitled*." He wrote an essay for the exhibition lauding Michael Wynne and his support for younger and under-appreciated artists. (Nan Coulter / Special Contributor)



"Still-Life" by Jeff Elrod offers an early example of the Texas artist's exploration of abstraction, with images of lines and squiggles designed using a rudimentary computer program in 1999. (Nan Coulter / Special Contributor)

geometric support that enters three-dimensionality.

It's composed of an old musical drum on top of which sits a reddish plastic container and a wrinkled paper bag with the title scribbled over the surface.

Executed in 2022, it's a new addition to a living collection intended to inspire both seasoned and would-be collectors.

Details

"Texas Collects: Carter/Wynne Family Collection" continues through Dec. 10 at Site 131, 131 Payne St., Dallas. Open Friday from noon to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 1 to 3 p.m., and by appointment. Free. Call 214-871-2971 or visit site131.com.