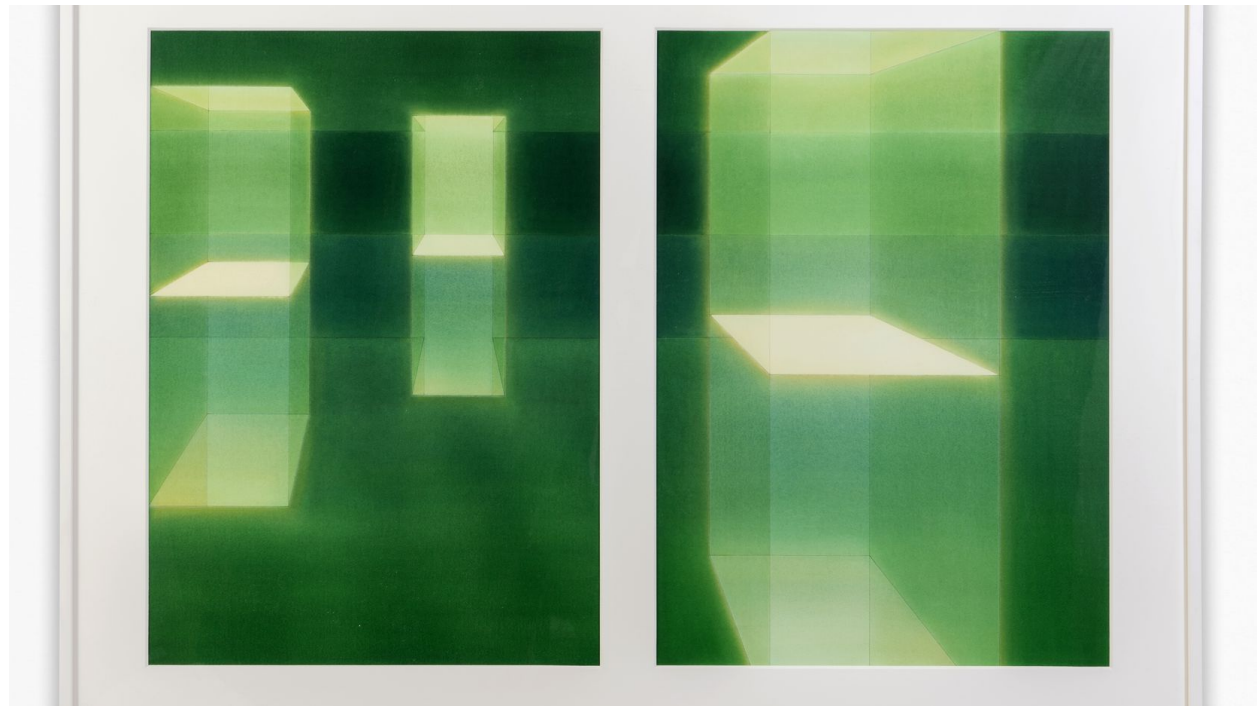


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SITE131 gallery showcases emerging artists in talent-rich 'Fresh Faces' exhibition

Curators selected 29 works from the vast Rachofsky collection.

By Benjamin Lima
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The late Italian architect Laretta Vinciarelli's 2005 watercolor "Suspended in Green 4a and 4b" features glowing green rectilinear boxes that appear to hover weightlessly in a swirling, viscous fluid, suggesting an uneasy encounter between the machine-made and the organic. "Fresh Faces from The Rachofsky Collection" continues through Dec. 18 at SITE131 in Dallas' Design District.(TOTAH)

The freshness in "Fresh Faces," a show of emerging contemporary artists at SITE131 in the Design District, derives not only from the chance to see work by artists who are somewhat unfamiliar in these parts, but also from its rather surprising source.

The paintings are drawn from the collection of Cindy and Howard Rachofsky, better known for their holdings of blue-chip works by artists of the post-World War II generation, which are often on view at the Dallas Museum of Art and on regular display at the collectors' warehouse in Farmers Branch.

About 100 of the more than 1,000 works in The Rachofsky Collection, however, are by younger and less established artists generally classified as "emerging" — and many of these works haven't yet been exhibited in Dallas at all. From this latter category, the Rachofskys invited SITE131 co-founders Joan and Seth Davidow to expertly curate the selection of 29 works in the current show.

Is it possible to make any generalizations about the group? First, most of the artists represented here were born in the 1970s and 1980s (i.e. from late Generation X to early millennial) and are working their way up the ladder of the art world.



Borna Sammak's "Untitled," a 2014 embroidery-on-canvas work, is featured in the "Fresh Faces" exhibition. (Stephanie DeLay)

But the category is broad enough to range from Italian-born Enrico David, now in his early 50s and a veteran of multiple Venice Biennales and international museum exhibitions, to Ryan Nord Kitchen and Torey Thornton, both still in their early 30s but already making a mark in the gallery world.

Second, all the works here are paintings (except for *Weed #456*, a clever bronze by Tony Matelli that greets visitors in the foyer), and the show gives viewers a compact introduction to the remarkable range of that medium, from Borna Sammak's embroidery and Channing Hansen's hand-spun, hand-dyed wool to the use of pastel by Aaron Garber-Maikovska and Sanya Kantarovsky.

Third, in the words of essayist Rainey Knudson, the fresh faces here are all "drawing from the history of painting as a bank of materials or techniques." Her essay further cites educator Thomas Fulmer to the effect that they are "putting their spin on the history of painting ... using it as a plaything."



Sanya Kantarovsky's 2015 work "Apples and Oranges" combines oil, pastel, watercolor and oil stick on linen. (Stephanie DeLay)

The question then becomes: Are all facets of the history of painting now equally available to all artists everywhere, governed only by personal taste, or is it still possible to find criteria with which to evaluate such works as better or worse?

Personally, I was drawn to the watercolors by the late Italian architect Lauretta Vinciarelli (also highlighted by Knudson), in which glowing green rectilinear boxes in one-point perspective appear to hover weightlessly in a swirling, viscous fluid, suggesting an uneasy encounter between the machine-made and the organic.

Another outstanding green painting is Sarah Crowner's 2018 *Green Screen*, whose sewn-canvas technique draws on the industrial-minimal aesthetic of Blinky Palermo (a postwar pioneer of sewn fabric painting) but likewise transforms it into something quasi-organic and thus uncanny.

My mind also kept returning to Anna Conway's surrealist-hyperrealist *Rhino*, in which a solitary figure, alone in a dusky museum courtyard, contemplates a sculpture of the majestic beast, barely visible in the shadows. Conway brings together the solitary noir atmosphere of Edward Hopper and the slick Pop-built environment of Ed Ruscha for a result both absorbing and disturbing.

Some of the other works, however, seemed a little bit too close to postwar figures like Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman or Willem de Kooning for my own comfort. I wasn't quite convinced that the sources were being sufficiently transformed into something new.

Despite such quibbles, however, the show should absolutely not be missed. It contains far more riches than can be mentioned here. Patient viewers can keep track, over the coming decades, of who, from among these ranks of the "emerging," will be eventually promoted into the blue-chip canon.

Details

"Fresh Faces From The Rachofsky Collection" continues through Dec. 18 at SITE131, 131 Payne St. Fridays and Saturdays from noon to 5 p.m. and by appointment. 214-871-2971. site131.com.