



ENDPAPER

A mother's mirrored passion with her late son is remembered in SITE131's ...to see is a gift: Seth Davidow collection.

BY JOAN DAVIDOW PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEPHANIE DELAY

Collections evolve from people who engage with art—each in their own magical way. This one began in the family room, the one spot in our small suburban North Florida home that was for the artwork we checked out of the library monthly. Other artworks we painted in the garage. The boys visited Daddy's auto parts shop on Saturdays and made drawings there. What a simple life it was.

When that thriving business sold, we moved to Dallas. Seth graduated high school and the University of Texas and started his own business, combing service stations for used auto parts to resell and recycle. It was a tough, dirty business, and Seth was no longer interested in family museum visits. "Count me out!" he claimed.

Years later, he learned that a Florida bank was selling its art collection. "Mom, help me review the art collection. I want to buy some art." That was a turnaround that initiated Seth as a collector. About the same time, he met his future wife, Marni, and they began building their architect-designed house together.

Seth then engaged the highly respected area art consultant Michael Thomas, taking international trips to purchase major artworks that knock your socks off. He never showed off his art, bragged about it, or invited people to see it. It was simply part of his life. The new works adorned their dramatic living space.

As disparate as the Seth Davidow collection appears, every piece

has a reason. His eyes and mind engaged art the way he engaged life—by becoming captivated by the imagery and the concept. He was a private guy who probably would have hesitated to share his collection with a larger audience. I would have begged him to reconsider.

Seth passed away this summer from a grueling disease, but his assembled bright, colorful, and commanding collection over a 30-year period lives on. Thirty artworks hugging the SITE131 walls display the exuberance of someone wrapped in the dynamism of today's art. "I grew up in a home [that] lived and breathed contemporary art," he had said of his attachment to contemporary art. For Seth to gather his own assemblage of new art was a natural extension of the way he witnessed the world every day.

It was my pleasure to curate the presentation *to see is a gift: Seth Davidow collection*; it's warm, charming, and extremely personal.

Little piggy by Billy Ray Mangham at the entrance was an early purchase of Seth's that "lived in" the master bedroom. Charming and welcoming stands *Scooter* by Aaron Young. The innocent little fella makes sure you know this is a place where young people dwell. Dallas artist Linda Ridgway's bronze arc, *Eye Line*, also welcomes guests. This, her first-ever bronze piece, is simple, elegant, and engaging, a gift to Seth and Marni from Mom when they moved into their new home. The 1984 color woodblock print entitled *Ochre* set the stage for all the art that followed.

In the main gallery hangs a most dramatic artwork, by British artist Thomas Ruff, entitled *m.a.r.s.01*, that could be the landscape on Mars or a huge desertscape. Commanding the viewers' attention is Jacqueline Humphries' large, dynamic painting of strong calligraphic markings over a silver field. Nearby is Callum Innes' *Untitled No 32*: two side-by-side simple masses in two distinct colors, purple and silver.

SITE131 presents a cherished private art collection that Seth was proud of, making this especially fitting to remember him. **P**



Clockwise from top left: Installation view shows off Jacqueline Humphries dramatic painting; *Little piggy* by Billy Ray Mangham happily welcomes guests to SITE131; Seth and Joan Davidow at the opening of SITE131; Installation view with Thomas Ruff's *m.a.r.s.01*, in the foreground.

ABOUT JOAN DAVIDOW

In her first job as an art resource teacher, Joan Davidow says, "I hauled art supplies in my car." Reporting on the arts for KERA radio for years catapulted her to founding director of the Arlington Museum of Art; she then led a capital campaign for Dallas Contemporary's new quarters. Founding SITE131 with her son Seth "brings me continuing joy to guide audiences to know and love contemporary art."