

Dallas' Site 131 gallery is closing

Site 131 Owner Joan Davidow bids an elegiac farewell to her ambitious gallery.



Site 131 curator and co-founder Joan Davidow pictured at Site 131, Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2024, in Dallas. (Eliás Valverde II / Staff Photographer)

By Kendall Morgan, Nov. 9, 2024

One of Dallas' most innovative contemporary spaces is closing in December 2024.

Opened in 2015 by longtime Dallas arts influencer Joan Davidow and her son, Seth, Site 131 was designed to be an ambitious, non-collecting gallery from the beginning.

Throughout the next decade, Site showed envelope-pushing work from artists including Manuel Burgener, Alicia Eggert, and Jeremiah Onifadé and mounted notable exhibitions of local collectors Carter/Wynne, Curtis E. Ransom and Howard Rachofsky.

A lifelong art aficionado, Davidow has worked as an on-air commentator for PBS and as director of the Arlington Museum of Art and the Dallas Contemporary. In 2015, she was inspired by her real estate investor son to take a gamble on a brick-and-mortar space of their own at 131 Payne Street in the Design District.

“The 131 thing was Seth’s idea,” Davidow explains. “Site 131 was a total invention to show art from there and beyond — there was nothing like that other than in museums. We ended up showing over 1,000 artists, but what happened in that time period was shipping art became very costly, and we couldn’t keep doing that.”



In 2015, Joan Davidow and her son, Seth Davidow, stood inside of the warehouse space that would become their Site 131 in Dallas. (David Woo / Staff Photographer)

When Seth Davidow died last year from complications of Lou Gehrig’s disease, it was a substantial blow. Still, Joan Davidow felt it was crucial to keep the space going until the 10-year mark to honor his legacy.

“Seth didn’t have [the gallery’s provision] in his will. The people now overseeing his holdings since he died said they would rent it out to me for one more year, but only one more,” Joan Davidow explains. “It was meaningful to me, so I wanted it to be a decade.

It was Seth’s idea [to create Site 131], and it was such a sweet thing to do together, I can’t duplicate that.”

Davidow chose to close Site out with “Reply All,” featuring the billboard-sized paintings of interdisciplinary artist SV Randall. As the show continues, she is contemplating her



Site 131 curator and co-founder Joan Davidow poses next to “CC/BCC” by artist SV Randall at Site 131, Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2024, in Dallas.(Elías Valverde II / Staff Photographer)

next step, which could mean leading art tours for curious culturalists or writing grants for a new school at the University of Texas at Dallas that solves chronic pain management.

Says Davidow, “I am open to change after 45 years of working in a highly directive program that invited me to invent things in the culture and to do it with somebody that I loved. But there’s always room for invention; there’s always room for new ideas and awareness and matchmaking of audience potential. Who knows what comes next? It’s totally open.”

Details

SV Randall: *Reply All* runs through Dec. 14 at 131 Payne St., Dallas, site131.com