

An Artful Life

Deborah Colton & Her Texas Home for International Contemporary Art

GALLERY OWNER AND COMMUNITY leader Deborah Colton takes pride in the fact that her gallery is an entity of the world. It is an international art zone in the middle of one of the nation's largest and fastest growing cities. Nonetheless, true proof of presence is in the ether. "When one Googled 'Deborah Colton Gallery,'" Colton said, "the first thing that would come up would be 'An International Contemporary Art Gallery based in Texas.'"

Since opening the space in 2004 as Deborah Colton Gallery, Colton has hosted an array of artists from around the world and major international exhibitions, such as "China Under Construction" and "Qatar Narratives." While Colton is at the helm of most curatorial endeavors, she continues to work on occasion with Carolyn Farb. An effervescent and singular presence, Farb was Creative Director of the gallery for two years in an earlier incarnation as Colton & Farb Gallery.

Colton and Farb connected years ago through the passion of artist patronage. Colton says, "my beginnings" in the gallery world "started as a patron [through] extending my love for the arts and the artists in terms of investing all these years in providing a good private gallery...to promote them and help them have a steady income in their fields as artists...My background comes from this, as did Carolyn's, which is why she always felt so comfortable in our gal-



Inside Deborah Colton Gallery.

leadership early on, graduating magna cum laude from Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut. She did not though graduate with a degree in art or art history, but marketing.

With a background in business promotion, Colton developed art-world savvy and a profound sense of professionalism later while living with her family in Thailand. As a result of her community leadership in the local art world there,

the international puzzle, Colton shifted her career, moving from private patron to public impresario. Referring to the coming exhibition, Colton says, "These artists who will be back at the gallery in our January-February exhibition go back to my deepest roots and inspiration and beginnings as a private gallerist." In short, hers is a welcoming space. Colton combines an astute sense of aesthetic judgment with an openness to difference in the world. "This was always my goal," Colton says referencing the greater city of Houston. "We wanted to enhance the art scene in Houston and provide something fresh, strong, and different."

Creating something of a dialectic between the far-away and right-here, the global and the local, Deborah Colton Gallery [DCG] maintains a close-knit sense of place. Reflecting an equal-opportunity commitment to artists from the neighborhood and beyond, the current exhibition, "Truth: Sublime Beyond Words," shows the work of five artists currently living in or around Houston. A collection of white canvas and steely grey totems, together the works strike a sense of symbolic transcendence and, by connection, neo-modernism. Conceptually parallel to "Statuesque," the sculpture exhibition the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas in the spring 2011 which bore a similar sense of the modern, the works currently showing in Colton's space seem a collective throwback to the mid-20th century. With the exception of David Graeve, a sculptor who strikes a hand-felt presence in the short, twisted tendrils of brick glass

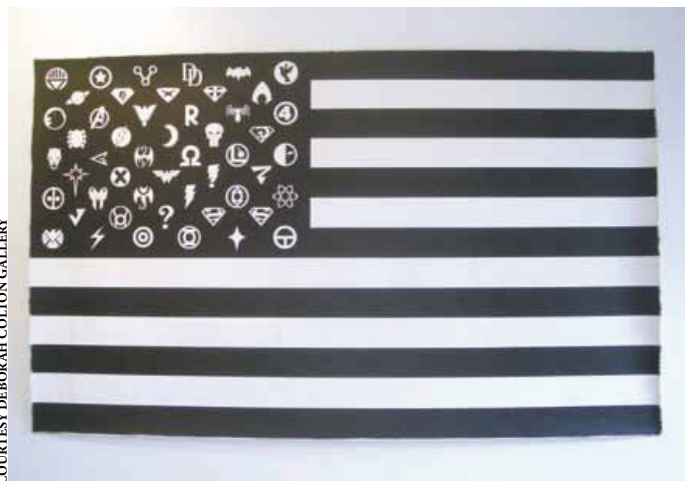
mounted to the surface of a video monitor, the four painters in the exhibition are preoccupied with questions of the play of paint and gesticulation on the surface and, as the show theme suggests, queries of sublime presence and truth with a capital "T." Perhaps to the disappointment of deep readers of philosophy and practitioners of analytics of otherness, one can only deduce by the work in this show that "truth" and the "sublime" are delimited by the color white. Simply put Truth = white. On a note of process, craft, surfaces and action painting, one might imagine a gestural face-off between Joseph Cohen, whose layers of dripped paint in a mid-size triptych are so thick that they create delicate stalactites, and McKay Otto, whose canvases covered in translucent nylon mark an absolute resistance and denial of the drip and the artist's hand. With respect to the drip, Cohen is to Otto as Pollock is to Kelly, as in Ellsworth.

True to the spirit of Colton and, more importantly, artists Cohen, Graeve, Daniel-Hayne, Otto and Williams, the current exhibition "Truth: Sublime Beyond Words" is exploding with energy. Mid-size and large canvases crowd the walls of the front gallery, perhaps to the point of overwhelming the art itself.

— CHARISSA N. TERRANOVA

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Matt Messinger, "Flag," 2011, Black and White Gesso on Canvas, 36 x 60 inches.

lery." While on the same page when it comes to artists, other, distinct geographies emerge in listening carefully to accents, Houston for Farb and New Jersey for Colton. Originally from the northeast, Deborah bore the imprimatur of

many asked her to open her own space. It was "the group of artists who asked me to become a private gallerist...the Thai artists, Deans, and professors at the university, where I assisted when I lived there." Adding yet another piece to

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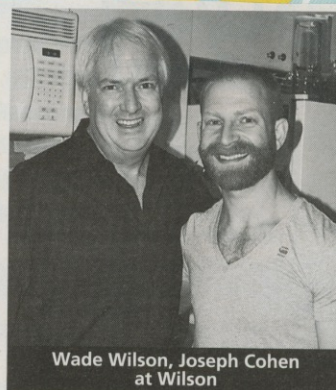
Art Appreciation in the New Year

SETH VAUGHAN, KIM COFFMAN



Deborah Colton, McKay Otto
at Colton

Lebanese-born artist **Rania Daniel** was heralded at the grand opening of her new solo exhibition, "Urban Illusion," at Deborah Colton Gallery. Wowed by her work: husband **Jamal Daniel**, gallery owner **Deborah Colton**, **Matt Messenger**, mega-collector **Lester Marks**, **Marcy Taub Wessel**; and **Monsour Taghdisi**. Wade Wilson Art welcomed **Joseph Cohen** home from his Italian odyssey with "Fatto in Italia." Commending Cohen: **Harriet** and **Gil Gertner**, **McKay Otto**, **Anna Dean**, and **Jana Cothren**. **Robert McClain's** namesake gallery mounted "Reel to Reel," an installation by **Jeff Shore** and **Jon Fisher** that served as the backdrop for a dinner party shared by the art elite. Ruminating over the repast: the Blaffer's **Claudia Schmuckli** and **Matthew Drutt**, **Valerie Cassel Oliver** of the CAMH, **Jereann Chaney**, **Judy Nyquist** and **Mary Lou Swift**. *Seth Vaughan with Erin Oppenheim*



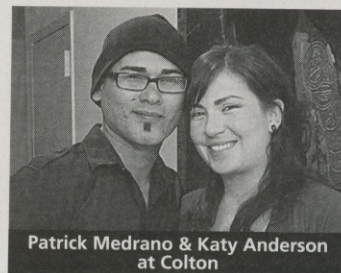
Wade Wilson, Joseph Cohen
at Wilson



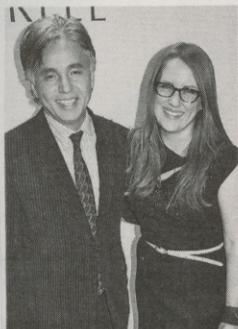
Jamal & Rania Daniel at Colton



Matt Messenger
Wendy Brown at Colton



Patrick Medrano & Katy Anderson
at Colton



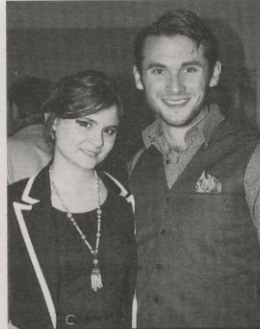
Robert McClain
Erin Siudzinski at McClain



Aliyya Stude
at Colton



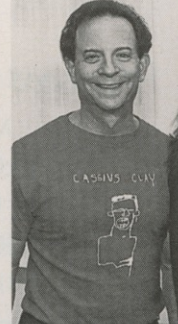
Lucas & Tania Evans
at Colton



Adrienne Meyers
Vincent Meyers at Wilson



Donatella
Benckenstein
at Colton



Lester Marks
at Colton



Masoud & Sima
Ladjevardian
at Colton



Valerie Cassel
Oliver
at McClain



Michel Muylle
Lucinda Coble
at Wilson



Jereann Chaney, Judy Nyquist
Mary Lou Swift at McClain



Lucy Anderson & Jeff Shore, Jon Fisher
at McClain



Paul Horn
Angelbert Metoyer at Colton