

INVITATION ONLY

HOW JAMES COPE TURNED A ONE-OFF DALLAS
EXPERIMENT INTO AN INSIDER FAIR PHENOMENON.

BY BEN LIMA



Estefania Puerta, *Laughing Death Drive*, 2025, stained glass, rosemary oil, chain, artist hair, Caravaggio painted leg, Mugre's fur, incense paper, Jean Cocteau's hands, photograph of a cafe in Manizales, a dime, artist spit, photo of wedding moon, ladybug that fell perfectly in that hole on its own accord, wedding clover picked by Nick, ink, nylon, aluminum leaf on panel. Dimensions variable. Courtesy of Nina Johnson and the artist. Photograph by Blaine Davis.

James Cope never saw himself running an art fair. “I’m primarily an art dealer with a gallery,” he says ahead of the fourth edition of his brainchild, the Dallas Invitational. The accidentally annual event will welcome 22 select galleries to the Rosewood Mansion on Turtle Creek April 16–18.

The Invitational is “still in its infancy as an art fair,” Cope observes. “It was supposed to be a one-off project, but by the summer of that first year, I started getting approached by galleries asking how they could apply for the following year.” Although he had not predicted the interest, he says it is “a testament to the strength of Dallas that we can have multiple fairs and succeed.”

The Invitational is, self-consciously, a different model from the major art fairs, which Cope describes as “so draining emotionally and financially—even if you do well, they don’t seem to be working for people on that scale anymore.” The Invitational moved last year from its original home at the Fairmont in the Arts District to the legendary Mansion, giving visitors a chance to experience the presentations thoughtfully, in a relaxed atmosphere.

Although the event has almost doubled in size from the original



Katie Stout, *Fey (Yellow)*, 2026, glazed ceramic, 18 x 16 x 16 in. Courtesy of Nina Johnson and the artist. Photograph by Blaine Davis.



Sol Kordich, *Immolation*, 2026, oil on canvas, 76 x 84 in.
Photograph courtesy of Anna Erickson Presents, Nashville.



Kyoko Idetsu, *You might have been my son*, 2025, oil on canvas 12 x 9.75 in.
Photograph by Paul Salvesson. Courtesy of the artist and Hoffman Donahue, New York / Los Angeles.



Ann Craven, *Moon* (*NY Times T, WS, 12-4-25, 9:45 PM*), 2025, oil on linen 14 x 14 in. Photograph by Paul Salvesson Courtesy of the artist and Hoffman Donahue, New York / Los Angeles.



Rob Davis, *Plate 2*, 2025, watercolor on paper, 8.75 x 11.5 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Nina Johnson.



Mel Kendrick (b. 1949), *Red Holes 4*, 2017, mahogany and Japan color, 23 x 16.50 x 4.50 in., base: 21 x 14 x 42 in. Courtesy of David Nolan Gallery, New York.



Marcia Kure, *Reticulation III*, 2022, pigment, pastel, charcoal, kola nut, indigo, ink on canvas, 72 x 48 in. © Marcia Kure. Courtesy of Susan Inglett Gallery, New York.

13 galleries in 2022, it is still a much smaller operation than the Dallas Art Fair, with its 90-plus galleries. And, as its name indicates, participation is by invitation only.

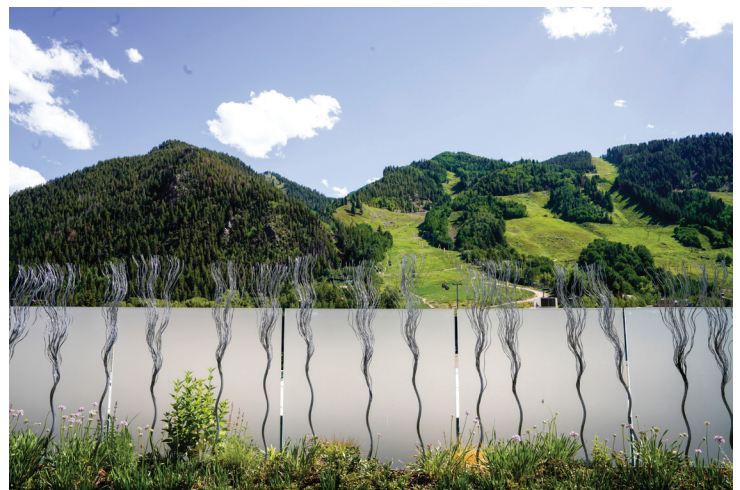
Cope takes a “curated and personal” approach to selecting galleries for the fair. “I don’t care if you are cool or blue-chip,” he says. “I want a selection of galleries that play well together and are collegial. I also want to highlight galleries that are doing great things outside of the traditional ‘cultural centers.’” These include Nina Johnson of Miami, Good Weather of Chicago, and Anna Erickson Presents of Nashville, all of which will be represented this year.

In a short four years, the Invitational has seen both continuity and change. As well as Cope’s own gallery, three other galleries have been coming to Dallas from the beginning: François Ghebaly, Hannah Hoffman (now Hoffman Donahue after a merger with Bridget Donahue), and LOMEX. Fully half of the fair’s roster, however (11 of the 22 galleries), are showing this year for the first time. Among them is Anna Erickson, who started her eponymous gallery after stints at Gagosian and Hauser & Wirth, and is looking forward to seeing “the incredibly vibrant art community” in town. Erickson will be showing two women painters: Berlin’s Sol Kordich and New York’s Angela China.

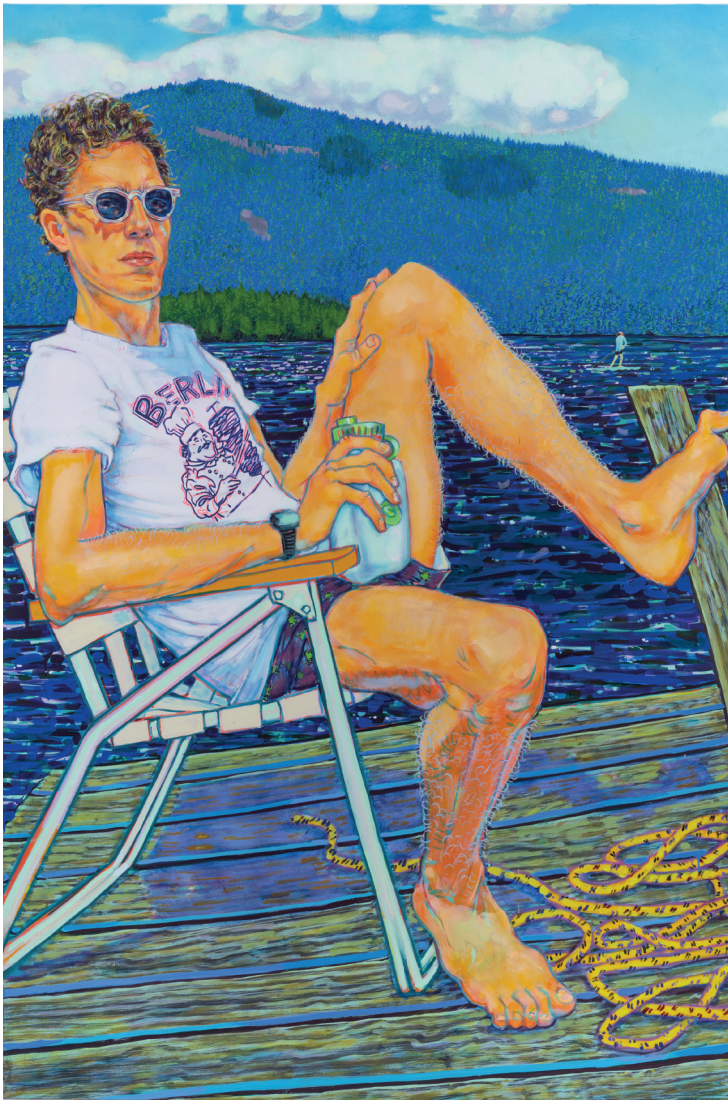
Another first-time participant, Nina Johnson will bring a wide-ranging and stimulating exhibition, including fanciful, witty embroidery by Louisville-based Elsa Hansen Oldham; Surrealist-influenced mixed-media pieces by Colombian-born Estefania Puerta; South Korea-born Minjae Kim; Katie Stout’s stunning ceramics; and a set of cool, crisp watercolors by Rob Davis.

New York galleries will also have a notable presence this year. Among them, also for the first time, New York’s Galerie Lelong will bring names familiar to the Dallas art community, such as Jaime Plensa and the Eritrean American abstract painter Ficre Ghebreyesus, as well as other international talents, including the Ethiopian-born, New York-based Tariku Shiferaw and the abstract biomorphic paintings of Italian Argentine Elda Cerrato. “The Dallas arts community is a truly special one,” said Lelong’s Mary Sabbatino and Liz Bower in a statement. “To engage in an intimate environment surrounded by wonderful colleagues is an opportunity we didn’t want to pass over.”

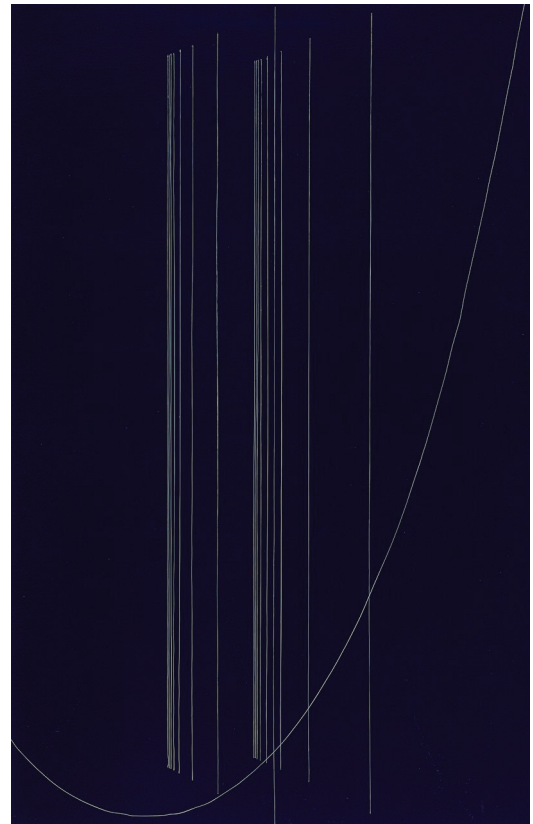
Susan Inglett Gallery of New York, also a first timer, will get into the local spirit. “Thinking about that Texas landscape, we’ll



Maren Hassinger, *Garden*, 2020, concrete and wire rope, 61.50 x 12 x 12 in. each (43 units). Photograph by Simon Klein. © Maren Hassinger. Courtesy of Susan Inglett Gallery, New York.



Hope Gangloff, *Arnold (Lehman-Richter)*, 2025, acrylic on canvas, 72 x 48 in. © Hope Gangloff. Courtesy of Susan Inglett Gallery, New York.



Kate Shepherd, *Modern Dance Building with catenary (pure custom purple)*, 2015, enamel on wood panel, 38 x 24 in. © Kate Shepherd. Courtesy of Gallery Lelong, New York.



Richard Serra, *Videy Drawing VIII*, 1991, paint-stick on German etching paper, 20.50 x 19.25 in. Courtesy of Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Beverly Hills.



Todd Cramer, *Untitled*, 2026, oil on linen, 14 x 11 in. Courtesy of James Cope Gallery.



Amelia Barratt, *Plant*, 2025, oil on canvas, 17.75 x 13.75 x .75 in.
Courtesy of the artist and CORPUS, Cambridge, UK.



Richard Walker, *Untitled*, 2024, oil on board, 31.12 x 19.25 x .75 in. Courtesy of CORPUS, Cambridge, UK.



Robyn O'Neil, *Everyone Loves Something (Even if it's only tortillas)*, 2017, graphite on paper, 22.75 x 30 in. Courtesy of the artist and Susan Inglett Gallery, New York.



Chakaia Booker (b. 1953), *Revolving Suspicion*, 2023, rubber tires and wood, 26 x 30 x 10 in. Courtesy of the artist and David Nolan Gallery, New York.



Elda Cerrato, *Depolarization mutua de dos Entes*, 1970, acrylic on canvas, 17.90 x 14 in. (framed). Courtesy of Gallery Lelong.

be planting Maren Hassinger's wire rope *Garden* outside Room 106 and kicking back lakeside with Hope Gangloff's *Arnold (Lehman-Richter)*," says Inglett. She also will show paintings by Marcia Kure inspired by her 2021 wall drawing at the Menil, and drawings by Robyn O'Neil, who has made temporary tattoos for the occasion. "First come, first served! I'll save a tattoo for you :)" Inglett adds.

Also coming from New York, David Nolan will bring a mix of established and emerging artists. "Dallas has a hunger for new artists, but also a strong interest in gem-like objects: drawings,

paintings, sculptures," he says. Nolan will have works by Barry Le Va, an artist associated with Richard Serra, as well as contemporary works by Chakaia Booker and Jorinde Voigt.

Although most galleries will come from New York and Los Angeles, the international art scene will have a strong presence as well. Mexico City's Galería Mascota will show an abstract piece by the Swiss artist Yves Scherer, who was featured in last fall's Dallas Contemporary gala as well as in major art fairs Zona Maco in Mexico City and Arco Madrid.

Appearing for the third time is London's Vardaxoglou Gal-



Matthew Brannon, *Sunglasses lunch with my decorator, late night phone call with my therapist*, 2025–2026, silkscreen with hand-painted elements, 55.87 x 49.37 x 2 in. (framed). Photograph by Kevin Frances. Courtesy of the artist and Gió Marconi, Milan.



Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg, *The Soft Spot (Floor, 31 cm)*, 2023, wood, wire, resin, grout, polymer clay, acrylic paint, 18.70 x 12.20 x 7.28 in. Photograph by Fabio Mantegna. Courtesy of the artists and Gió Marconi, Milan.



Yves Scherer, *Imagine*, 2024, oil on linen, 36 x 36 x 1.75 in. Courtesy of the artist and Galería Mascota, Mexico City.



Jaume Plensa, *Compressed in White (Carlota)*, 2024, glass, 22.50 x 10.62 x 6.25 in. © Jaume Plensa. Courtesy of Gallery Lelong.

lery, which will be showing 20th-century British artists Howard Hodgkin and Barbara Hepworth as well as younger contemporary names such as Lewis Brander and Tanoa Sasraku, the latter fresh from her show at the ICA London last fall. “In doing the Dallas Invitational we have been able to establish strong relationships with collectors and institutions in Texas and beyond, so we are happy to be back,” says Alex Vardaxoglou.

Jeremy Parker, director of CORPUS in Cambridge, England, attended the first Invitational, where he was “struck by the attention and focus that the format encourages, creating an environment that allows for meaningful conversations and connections to develop.” CORPUS will bring works by two Glasgow-based artists: painter and performance artist Amelia Barratt, who recently collaborated with rock legend Bryan Ferry; and Richard Walker, Barratt’s former teacher at the Glasgow School of Art, who draws on his earlier experience as a scenery painter for the Scottish Opera.

After attending last year’s Invitational, Gió Marconi of Milan will participate this year for the first time. “We both loved it in Dallas last year—the incredible museums with their fantastic shows and collections and especially also the kindness and warmth of the Texans!” says Marconi’s Esther Quiroga. The gallery’s presentation in Dallas will have a lively, playful spirit, including sculpture by duo Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg, paintings by André Butzer, and silkscreens by Matthew Brannon.

What comes next for the Invitational, after four years of growth and success? Cope says he has been approached to expand the fair to other cities, such as London and New York, “but we shall see, one step at a time” he says. “I never saw myself as running an art fair,” as well as his own gallery, “but now I do, and very much enjoy it.” **P**