

INTERVIEW BY CHARLES DEE MITCHELL

PRESENTING SEAN HORTON

A New York art dealer comes home to open a gallery in Oak Cliff.



From left: Sean Horton at his Dallas gallery, September 2018. Leo Gabin, *When Bout it Bout it Fails*, 2015, lacquer, acrylic, spray paint, and silkscreen on canvas, 81 x 58 in. Courtesy of the artist & Sean Horton (presents), Dallas.

A regional destination for quinceañera dresses, West Jefferson, too, is a generous host for the art-minded. A few blocks away from The Kessler and The Texas Theatre, tucked between Lucky Dog Books (yes, a real bookstore) and a tuxedo shop and salon, gallerist Sean Horton just opened shop in September with his eponymous gallery.

Curator and art writer Charles Dee Mitchell shares the details.

Charles Dee Mitchell: *Welcome back to Dallas, Sean. How long have you been working on this return to your home state?*

Sean Horton: Thank you, Dee. I actually explored the idea of opening a gallery in Texas back in 2006 before I opened on the Lower East Side of New York City. It's a long story with a twist of fate; a sneaker shop on Eldridge Street skipped its lease and the building super named Rodrigo told me that Jesus wanted me to have the space. I was slightly confused, but the price was right. And of course I couldn't say no to Jesus. That decision set me on course for owning and operating the gallery in New York for over a decade. About two

years ago my wife and I found ourselves at Buc-ee's doing some last-minute Christmas shopping when the idea of spending more time in Texas seemed appealing. It wasn't until we bought a little 20s bungalow in Oak Cliff earlier this year that I really committed to opening a gallery in Dallas.

CDM: *Are you still involved with galleries elsewhere? Do you think it's important to have multiple sites in today's market?*

SH: The new gallery dubbed "Sean Horton (presents)" on West Jefferson Boulevard in Dallas will be the only exhibition space. It is important to me for the gallery to have a connection to a place, a neighborhood. I enjoy operating in residential areas alongside other small businesses that share an entrepreneurial spirit. Our industry is one of the last to grapple with the shift away from brick and mortar to online; I think we are all redefining what it means to operate a contemporary art gallery today. While a certain level of portability is required of galleries in this new virtual field, making compelling gallery shows is still the most rewarding aspect of what I do. Art fairs, temporary exhibitions, having a presence in different cities—

those are all facets of promoting art and artists, but there needs to be a headquarters where art can be viewed in person and in the proper context...and for now that will be in Dallas.

CDM: *What changes do you see in the Dallas art scene?*

SH: It's been remarkable to see how the Dallas Art Fair has established an expansive culture of collecting by attracting galleries from around the world. The fair has really become a rallying point for collectors who are interested in discovering of-the-moment art from the Lower East Side or Europe, which seem to be two of the most popular sources. Not too long ago Texas collectors sometimes felt like they didn't have access to the best artwork that galleries had to offer. Now the best galleries in the world bring great art to Dallas. I have been surprised by how many of my colleagues do business here year-round. For a gallery like mine that worked so hard to carve out a niche in a highly competitive city like New York, it's refreshing to be part of such an enthusiastic and supportive community.

CDM: *Here's the first question everyone asks when they hear you are opening a new gallery, and I'll make it my last. Who are you going to show? What will be the program?*

SH: My focus will be on bringing the work of nationally and internationally established artists, as well as emerging figures, to Texas audiences. I have been working with my friend, the curator and critic Joseph Wolin, to produce a series of two-person exhibitions coupled with a critical essay. The first pairing is Claire Fontaine (Paris, France) and Leo Gabin (Ghent, Belgium); both present a collective practice as the product of a single sensibility. In addition to working directly with artists, I am looking forward to collaborating with other galleries, curators, and critics to introduce new art and ideas to Dallas. **P**



Claire Fontaine, *Untitled (Sell your debt)*, 2012, three-color neon on framework (Tecnolux: Ruby Red Argon No. 18, White 6500K No1S and Ultra Blue No. 122), 8mm glass tube, back-painted, electronic transformer and cable and framework, 3.5 x 42.33 x 1.5 in., Edition of 5 plus II AP. Wall- or window-mounted. Courtesy of the artist & Sean Horton (presents), Dallas.

ABOUT THE INTERVIEWER:

Charles Dee Mitchell is a retired bookseller who has also been a freelance art writer. His reviews and essays have appeared in *The Dallas Morning News*, *Artforum*, and *Art in America*. He has contributed essays to exhibitions at the Dallas Museum of Art, the Columbus Museum of Art (Ohio), and the Armand Hammer Museum at UCLA. He has also curated exhibitions for both commercial galleries and non-profit venues.