

PAPER CITY

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VITAL HOUSTON MUSEUM CELEBRATES 70 YEARS BY FREEZING TIME

by Catherine D. Ansporn



Will Boone with his live auction canvas "Threat," 2018, at the 2019 CAMH Gala and Art Auction.

Not every fundraiser toasts 70 years. Even rarer are such milestones for an avant-garde arts institution.

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, however, opened October 31, 1948, making it the second-oldest non-collecting arts institution in America. (Read about the museum's infamous bread fight [here](#).)

So it was with considerable fanfare that the CAMH marked the finale of its 70th-year festivities with a gala that was equal parts elegance and fun.

Freeze Frame, as the night was titled, was co-chaired by dynamic couples Haydeh and **Ali Davoudi** and Jordan and **Dylan Seff**. Some 250 guests flocked to the museum, which was cleverly reimaged by **Rebekah Johnson** of Bergner & Johnson into an abstract, white-on-white *mise en scène*, with even the chandeliers cocooned in fabric. It made for an artful backdrop for the seated dinner by A Fare Extraordinaire in the Brown Foundation Gallery and the live auction.

Auction Drama

Christie's Steven Zick hammered down six lots, including creations by Cheryl Donegan, Jamal Cyrus, Aaron Parazette, and Gael Stack (all CAMH exhibited), along with a work by UT professor Margo Sawyer and upcoming museum

headliner **Will Boone**. A portion of the space was theatrically curtained off, allotted to the 21 silent art auction lots. Guests cocktailed, checked out the offerings, and bid by smartphone for works by **McKay Otto**, **Thomas Glassford**, **Melinda Laszczynski**, and more.

Downstairs, the Zilkha Gallery was transformed into a disco lounge and light show for the after-party chaired by **Taylor E. Landry**. **DJ John Tran** manned the turntable, while the dance floor was packed with an intergenerational mix of patrons, collectors and influencers.

Painting the Town:

CAMH interim museum director **Christina Brungardt** with curators **Dean Daderko**, **Rebecca Matalon**, and **Patricia Restrepo**; Christie's **Jessica Phifer**; **Candace Baggett** and **Ron Restrepo**; museum board chair **Jereann Chaney** and daughter **Holland Chaney**; **Beverly** and **Howard Robinson**; **Leslie** and **Russ Robinson**; **Liz** and **David Anders**, hosting a lively table; stalwart museum supporters **Sissy** and **Denny Kempner**, **Leigh** and **Reggie Smith**, and **Heidi** and **David Gerger**; **Dillon Kyle** and **Sam Lasseter**; **Ruth Dreesen**; **Louise Jamail**; **Diane Lokey Farb**, escorted by **Ceron**; **Rania Daniel**; **Natasha Parvizian Gorgue**; **Claudia** and **Roberto Contreras**; **Greg Fourticq** and **John Cone**; **Blakely** and **Trey Griggs**; **Katherine** and **Bill Phelps**; **Cali Alvarado Pettigrew**; and **Lucinda** and **Javier Loya**.

Also making the scene: **Menil** director **Rebecca Rabinow** and husband, music man **Matt Ringel**; gallerists **Kerry Inman**, **Bryn Larsen**, and **Laura Rathe**; **Harry Winston's Petra Martinez** and husband, **Fabian Martinez**; **Elizabeth Esfahani Willey** of Matt Camron and husband, **Robert Willey** of Galerie Novella; **Monsour Taghdisi**; **Alisha** and **Alex Criner**; **Erica** and **Benjy Levit**; **Kelley** and **Stephen Lubanko**; **Mary** and **Marcel Barone**; **Johanne** and **Joe Gatto**; and artists including **Libbie Masterson**, **Gil Bruvel** (contributing to the silent auction), **Thedra Cullar-Ledford**, **Sebastien "Mr. D" Boileau** of Biscuit Paint Wall fame, and, in from Los Angeles, live-auction talent **Will Boone** (a former Houstonian who will solo at the CAMH this fall), whose minimalist blue text-based canvas *Threat* generated a phone bidding war, which added considerably to the evening's bottom line of \$550,000.