

Dallas Art News

David Collins: Clearstory at Valley House Gallery & Sculpture Garden

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David Collins: Clearstory
Valley House Gallery & Sculpture Garden
Through September 24, 2011

David Collins: Clearstory is the current show at Valley House Gallery & Sculpture Garden. The show runs through September 24, 2011.

This is the first Dallas exhibition for NYC-based Collins, who grew up in Dallas and graduated from Jesuit High School. You'll find his work very personal and autobiographical. He creates spaces with paint for his viewers to explore – spaces we've never seen before, but may have dreamed about. His works are atmospheric and deep and inhabitable.



Clearstory Blue d by David Collins
(image courtesy Valley House Gallery & Sculpture Garden)

These spaces – I interpreted them as interiors, cityscapes, even rural landscapes – appear to burst out of Collins' interest in design, architecture, flight and public spaces. Evidenced in every work is incredible engineering and architectural drawing skills. Clearstory is a play on the word "clerestory" – those high-up architectural windows especially popular during the mid-twentieth century. Who knew that "clearstory" is also an acceptable spelling?

Do you remember line tape from pre-digital graphic arts days? David does – his work is full of flawlessly rendered lines – some painted, others drawn with ink or pencil. A signature motif is patches of perfectly spaced and drawn parallel lines. His work often includes ladder or derrick-like shapes – often leading to nowhere, sometimes as negative space.

Did you ever use those translucent-green drawing tools that allowed you to draw perfect circles, French curves, and angles? I'll bet David did – perfect circles are everywhere in his work and I saw a French curve or two as well. Vanishing point perspective? He mastered that lesson, too.

These paintings often contain triangular planes and parallelograms, but only some of the works appear fractured or splintered like glass. Some of the triangular plane shapes are like silently smooth stealth bombers, others are stratified layers of clouds.

Collins paints in blues and vibrant yellows – I'd call both signature colors. He knows how to use black – but ever so sparingly, so that when he does use it you feel the gravity or punch of it. Add pink and corals into some of the paintings for a triad that is contemporary but overall reads cool and sophisticated. His use of positive and negative space feels so natural you barely notice the technique.

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David Collins knows when to stop – when a painting is finished. And that's not because he has covered the canvas – far from it. In his work, we often see his behind-the-scenes process: carefully gessoed surface, pencil marks, measuring ticks. An oil wash runs here and there. A drip of medium blooms here or there and there are spatters when he wants them

to be there. He uses the beautiful wood grain in his paintings on round wood tondos.

Collins also flirts with collage – he adds sharply cut bits of newspaper or pieces of vintage wallpaper to the work. In some cases, he also paints or draws the wallpaper pattern as a repeat motif.

I noted with affection his more monochromatic palette when he's painting about his grandmother in Iowa. Here his yellows fade to beiges and browns and his blues are grayed. These paintings often have a patchwork-quilt appearance. Rather than portraits of his grandmother, instead these are sacramental works – sense memories of the spaces she inhabited.



City of Wood by David Collins (image courtesy Valley House Gallery & Sculpture Garden)

City of Wood is a moody atmospheric piece of work in Collins' customary palette. This painting reaches back in time – I'd place it in the decade of the 40s if I didn't know better. Collins' style is more delicate and subtle, but this one puts me to mind of those grand Stuart Davis paintings.

Collins paints with wonderful expressive oil washes – transparent here, translucent there, wiped off over there, brushstrokes scrubbing the surface. His canvas, unbleached and unprimed on the edges of the pictures is that beautiful gray-brown fine Belgian linen with the perfect tight even weave. When he paints solid thick color blocks, these areas of the canvas are as smooth as the museum walls.

Clearstory Blue reads as a marvelous mid-century modern interior done in cool colors. Along with his stunning imagination, Collins uses every technique in his toolbox to wow us with this space. There are washes, block color, clean lines, wood grain, spatters, drips, pencil lines, painted lines, a ladder and even an exhaust trail from the hovermobile!

Collins has included several monotypes in the exhibition. These are large-scale colorful works on Japanese paper and floating beautifully in custom frames. Celebrations of color and texture, many of them look like beautiful Asian silk. *Slip Stream 16* is a dream universe series in reds, blues, and greens. Whorls of white appear where the color was removed before pulling the print – like in finger painting!

When you see David Collins' work you'll think, "I've never seen anything like this before." And if you look at a lot of art, you know how rare that is. His style is mature and cosmopolitan and unusual. You won't be disappointed.



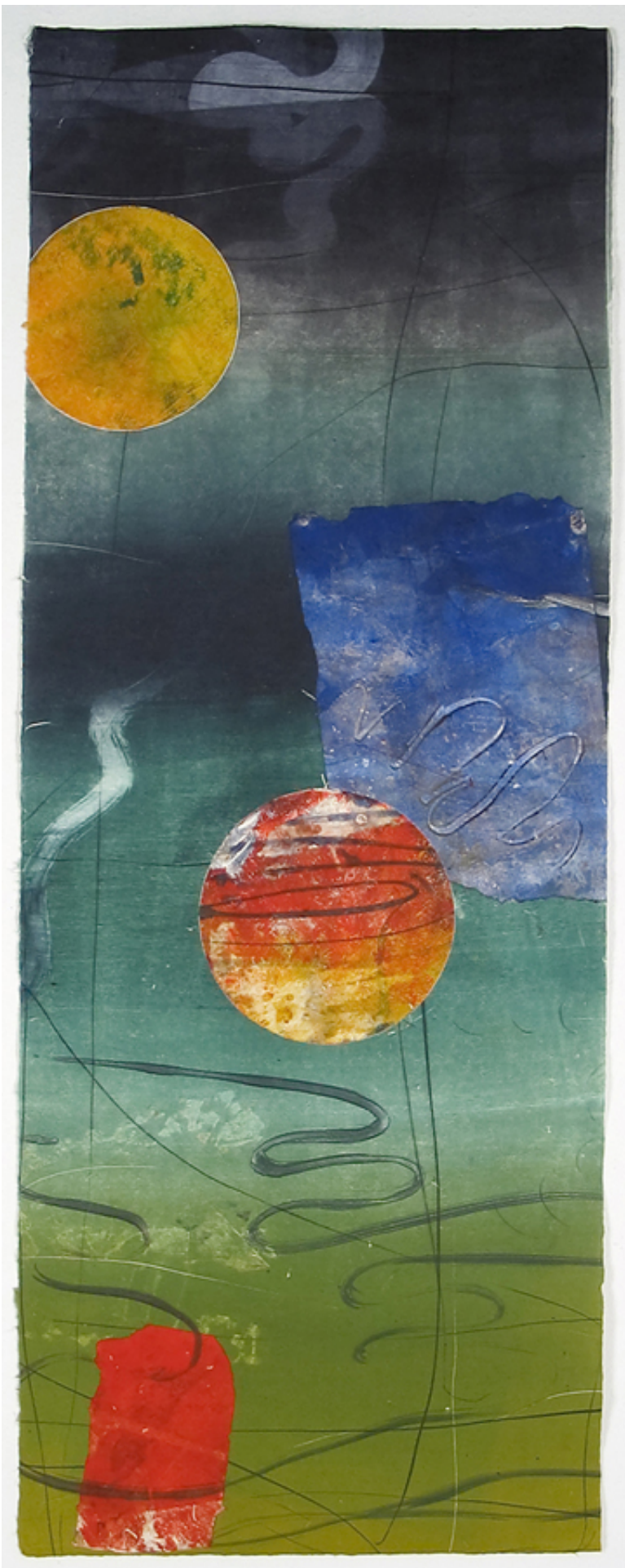
Clearstory Blue by David Collins (image courtesy Valley House Gallery & Sculpture Garden)

Viewing artwork at the Valley House Gallery and Sculpture Garden is like being welcomed into Kevin and Cheryl Vogel's home. The Vogels and gallery staff are friendly and welcoming and the delicious spaces – inside and outside – are constantly changing. It's one of my favorite places to discover a new artist.

In addition to this grand show, I have it on good authority that the sculpture garden will be resplendent with thousands of lilies in the next few days!

Valley House Gallery & Sculpture Garden is located at 6616 Spring Valley Road in

Dallas. The gallery and gardens are open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. till 5 p.m.



Slip Stream 16 by David Collins (image courtesy Valley House Gallery & Sculpture)



Clearstory Blue d by David Collins (image courtesy Valley House Gallery & Sculpture Garden)

ABOUT KENT BOYER

Kent Boyer is an innovative educational programming designer in Dallas. Boyer is also a neighborhood architectural photographer whose photographs can be seen at his Doorknob Studio page on Facebook.

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