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A Lone Star State No More: Three Major Solo Shows at the Dallas Contemporary

Exhibits from art stars Helmut Lang, Dan Colen, and Paola Pivi open under one roof in Dallas.

Allyson Shiffman



Photo by Kristi + Scot Redman.

It was hard to miss the 6'6" Dan Colen at last night's opening of the artist's solo exhibition at the Dallas Contemporary museum. Still, he opted to wear the small "DC" sticker given to VIP guests at check-in. "Well, it's my initials," he said matter-of-factly.

Just as plainspoken is the title of the show, "Oil Painting," which surveys Colen's 15-year exploration of oil on canvas. "It was time to remind people that the heart of the work is based in paint," he said, referring to the gum and bird-shit experiments on canvas—not to mention his own hard-partying past alongside fellow aughts *enfants terribles* Ryan McGinley and the late Dash Snow—that have co-opted the artist's image in the popular imagination. It's easy to forget that, at the end of the day, Colen is a painter.

“These works just seemed to be the right mix of wildness and precision,” he added. The former was visible in the monstrous, thickly painted works that feature stools and brushes affixed to the canvas; the latter was evident in his famed, meticulously made candle paintings. Meanwhile, also opening were shows by Paola Pivi and Helmut Lang, who was notably absent from his solo exhibit located in a more understated room at the museum. Like his work as a fashion designer, Lang’s “Berry,” which features monochromatic sculptures made from sheepskin soaked in tar, is chic, stark, and impossibly cool, and make use of materials left over from his designer days. Even in Dallas, less is sometimes more.