

BY PEGGY LEVINSON

SHOW OFFS

Dallas Design Center's Culp Associates and George Cameron Nash offer exciting contemporary art by Brad Ellis and Cole Morgan.



Back in the day, the high-end design showrooms that sold hand-carved, exquisitely finished chairs, plush down-filled sofas, and European-milled, hand-printed fabrics also sold paint-by-number art. Yes, a client would come in with fabric samples and choose a “sofa painting” based on what went with the fabrics. Thankfully, that’s all different now. These showrooms now mostly sell fine art in keeping with the furnishings they offer. But, they can take all different approaches to the art they sell. One owner, George Cameron Nash, buys art that he and his husband, Mark Williams, like. Mostly bright, involved abstracts appeal to them. And judging from client responses, others like them, too. Kelly Hardage, owner of Culp Associates, began showing art in his showroom from Craighead-Green Gallery. Currently the encaustic works of Dallas artist, Brad Ellis, are on display.

Ellis was recently selected for inclusion in the U.S. State Department’s Art in Embassies Program. His encaustic and collage painting, *Dash #2*, is displayed in the Ambassador’s residence in Kampala, Uganda, and is featured on the cover



Above: Brad Ellis, *Translations Red*, and *Translations Green* installed at Culp Associates in Dallas Design Center. Right: Brad Ellis, *Fragments from Earth #1*, encaustic, oil, and rocks on panel, 58 x 46 in. Both courtesy of Craighead Green Gallery. Photography by John Oakley.



of the exhibition catalogue. “I approach each new painting with the same consistency that I’ve employed for many years now, which I refer to as *“Pattern, Rhythm, and Process,”* Ellis describes of his multi-step method. “The unpredictability and potential sense of discovery is very exciting and one of the main reasons why I do what I do.”

In 1990, Nash and Williams were walking up Canyon Road in Santa Fe when a painting caught their eye. “Chinese red being my favorite color, I was taken in,” says George. We looked at it for three days and finally bought it on lay-away.” That was the basis for a long and profitable friendship with Cole Morgan and his wife Rina. They soon went to Antwerp to visit the artist, and a showroom exhibition was planned. “I find Cole Morgan’s work to be wonderfully abstract, full of mystery, tension, and striking, dramatic color—all waiting to get discovered.” Cole Morgan’s take on his work, “From the realist drawings of cowboys and landscapes in the ‘70’s and ‘80’s, to the abstract paint and mixed media works since then, I have yet to find the shoe that fits. I suppose this natural curiosity is what helps me to maintain my investigative edge.” Santa Fe artist Kathleen McCloud explains his work this way, “It is as if Morgan, after many years in a black-and-white realist world of tell-all images, is relishing both color and the question. Like all urgent notes and brilliant doodles, his works capture ideas at their inception.”

Kenneth Craighead absolutely sees the benefit of showing fine art in a showroom. “It is a true reflection of what the art might look like in an actual home. The art is being viewed in this professional setting many times by the homeowner and their designer, offering a great opportunity to show the diversity of hanging contemporary art both in traditional and more modern environments.” For Hardage, showing fine art in his classic modern showroom makes all the sense in the world. “Fine furniture deserves fine art—anything less is a disservice to the client and to the home.” **P**



Above: The venerable George Cameron Nash showroom displays the work of Antwerp-based artist Cole Morgan. Above left: Cole Morgan, *ABC Blue*, 2017, 25.59 x 25.59 in. Courtesy of the artist. Photography by Anthony Chiang.