

My Most Recent Life-Altering Art Experience

by [Doug Welsh](#) | January 29, 2025



Anthony Cudahy, "Crowd (Day and Night)," 2020, oil on canvas, 72 x 48 inches. Green Family Art Foundation, courtesy Adam Green Art Advisory. Photo: Evan Sheldon

I count only a handful of art experiences as the most impactful of my life. I saw Michelangelo's *David* when I was eight years old, and I thought nothing could be more beautiful. The terror and torment of Picasso's *Guernica* brought me to tears in high school. It felt like the earth had fallen out from under my feet when I saw the 2008 Cy Twombly retrospective at Tate Modern. Emily Peacock's 2018 exhibition at the Art Museum of South East Texas included a film of the artist snorting her mother's ashes, and I'll never forget feeling intense affection and repulsion all at once. On our first date, I walked into my partner Mitch Pengra's studio and was blown away by photographs and paint skins from his lifelong practice of coating his entire body in paint. My most recent life-altering art experience was with Anthony Cudahy's survey exhibition, *Spinneret*, which was curated by Devon Zimmerman of the Ogunquit Museum of American Art and was on view this winter at the Green Family Art Foundation in Dallas.



Anthony Cudahy, "Against Gardening!," 2023-2024, oil on linen, 96 x 180 inches. Green Family Art Foundation, courtesy Adam Green Art Advisory. Photo: Evan Sheldon

Cudahy's paintings are tender, complex, and compelling — almost beyond belief. It's as if they were made with breath — automatic and effortless. Their apparent ease offsets the care, slowness, and mastery that went into their making. Cudahy's paintings are tangled webs of people, spaces, moments, references, themes, and emotions. Often these vignettes are spliced and woven back together to form intricate compositions that reference our experience of the world with endless streams of images and information. Somehow Cudahy manages to find stillness in all of this complexity. For example, in *Against Gardening!*, Cudahy conjoins multiple spaces and figures into one quietly arresting composition. There is a peaceful sense of solitude and isolation among the figures, balanced by the use of vibrant neon and earthy hues. The figures in this painting, like most in the exhibition, are not transforming or becoming. They are intensely present, in between, as if waiting.



Anthony Cudahy, "open window (blue, blue room)," 2022, oil on linen, 60 x 96 inches. Green Family Art Foundation, courtesy Adam Green Art Advisory. Photo: Evan Sheldon

Cudahy deftly threads together references to Queerness, art history, and autobiography in his body of work, exploring our relationship with self, each other, the natural world, and the constructed environment. The paintings are about life itself, ordinary, messy, and marvelous. *open window (blue, blue room)* features a Queer couple in repose, illuminated by the moon, with acid green and neon pink splashes of light against a quiltlike velvety blue background. The couple is paired with two windows and two flowers, evoking a sense of abundance and love, as the two become one. On the left in the mirror, the artist captures himself, observing the couple, caught in a moment of creation.



Anthony Cudahy, "Tempest (Rooftop)," 2020, oil on linen, 72 x 72 inches. Green Family Art Foundation, courtesy Adam Green Art Advisory. Photo: Evan Sheldon

All art is an illusion, an attempt to recreate something that exists within the mind of an artist. I am interested in the way that Cudahy leans into the illusion of his paintings. By creating amalgamations, with multiple canvases and spaces that are fragmented, recombined, and pieced together, he reveals the constructed web that underpins his paintings. This feels like a more accurate and compelling expression of humanity than shrouding the illusion. Cudahy's paintings are not mirrors held up to the world. They are kaleidoscopic lenses through which we can appreciate the curiosity, banality, and tenderness of daily life. By extension, life, or at least what we make of it, is an illusion too. We are amalgams of experience, image, and information, colliding into each other as we move through the world. In this way, Cudahy offers a stark and penetrating reflection on the human condition, unlike anything I've ever seen.

Anthony Cudahy's Spinneret was organized by the Ogunquit Museum of American Art, Maine, and was on view at the Green Family Art Foundation in Dallas through January 26, 2025. In Dallas, the exhibition ran contemporaneously with *Mighty Real*, an exhibition of work by Anthony Cudahy's partner, Ian Lewandowski.

Correction, January 30, 2025: This article has been updated to clarify that this exhibition was curated by Devon Zimmerman of the Ogunquit Museum of American Art and that the show traveled to the Green Family Art Foundation in Dallas. The image caption for Cudahy's painting Tempest (Rooftop) has also been updated.

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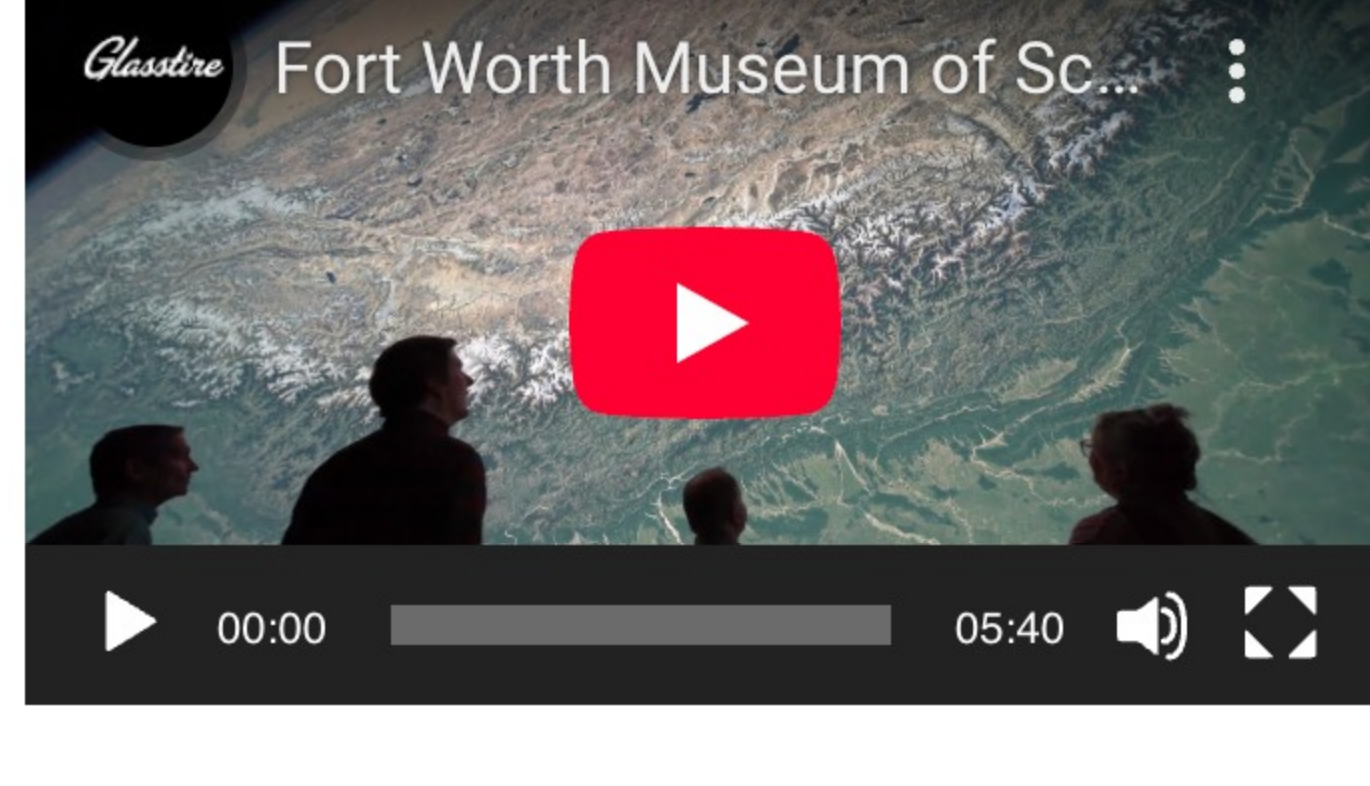
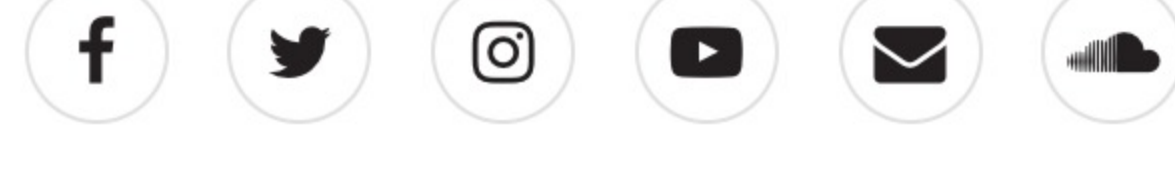
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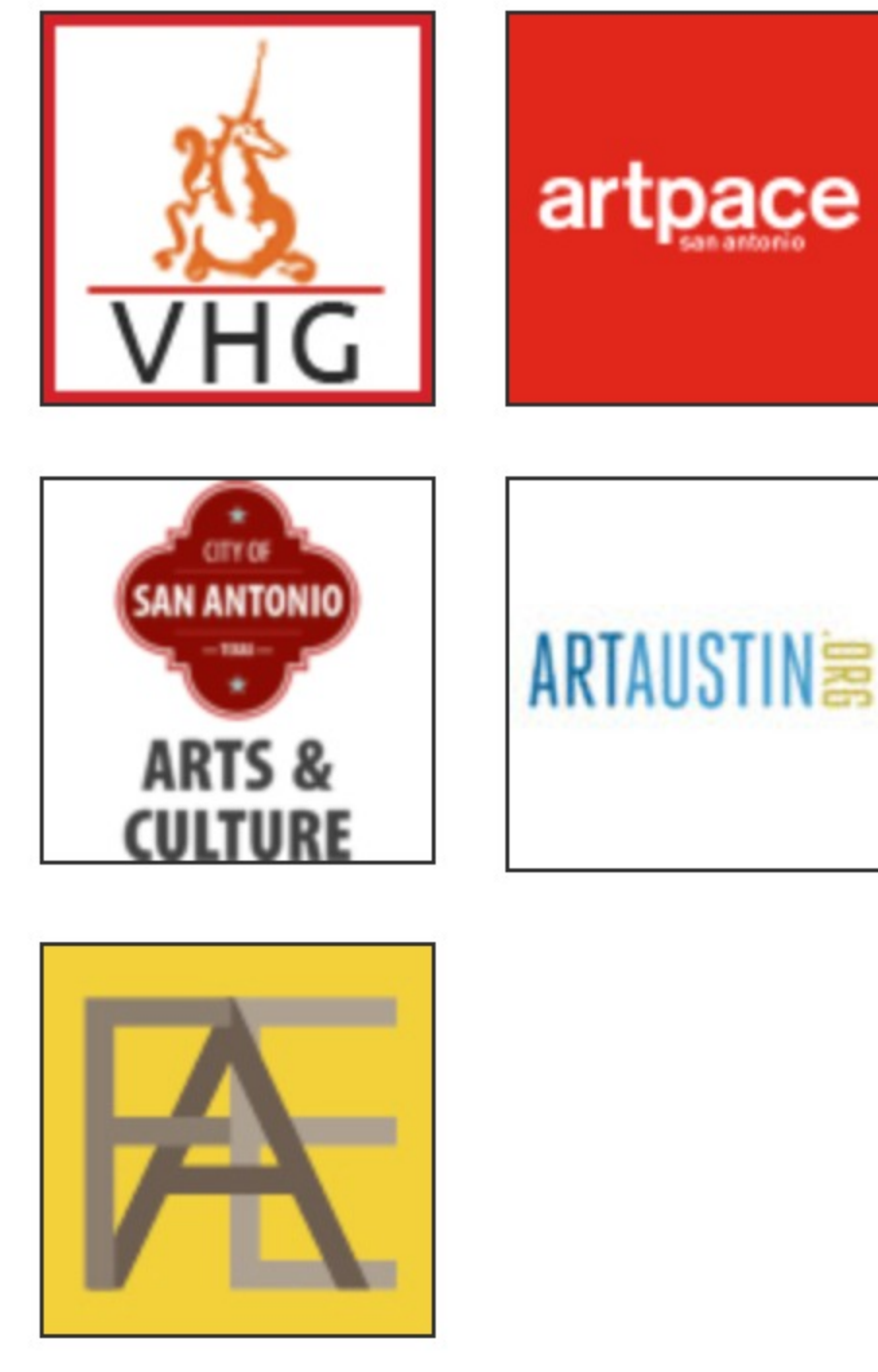
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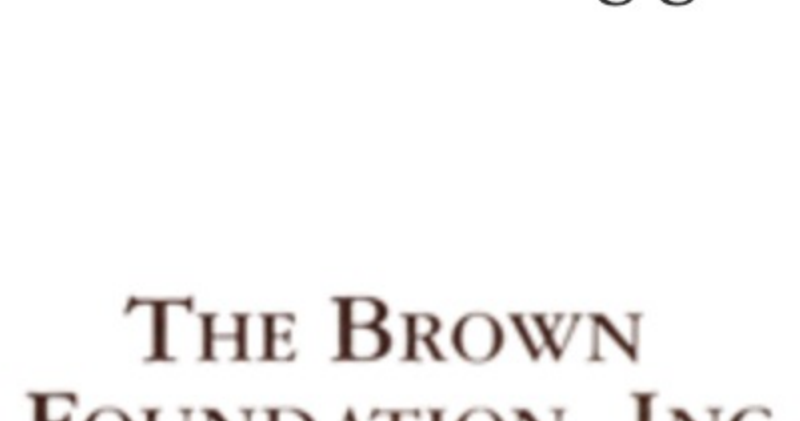
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