



David Bates at Dunn and Brown Contemporary

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Detail from Irises in a Pitcher

Guest blogger [Brad Ford Smith](#) is a Dallas artist and arts conservationist.

[Dunn and Brown Contemporary](#) has a new show of paintings by David Bates, "Themes and Variation." Of the 24 works on view, only three paintings are not of flowers. So it's safe to say that the theme of the show is floral still lives. This show is not breaking any new ground in the world of painting – in fact, it is looking back into the history of painting, one of the things that Bates does with skill and passion. That is where the variation comes in.



Detail from Lilies by David Bates

Bates has always demonstrated a strong connection with artists of the past. In this show, he has removed the strong narratives often found in his work and focuses solely on the genre of still lives and the study of artists that have worked in that genre. Here you will see elements of the stone solid flowers of [Marsden Hartley](#), [Picasso's](#) late decorative work, [Matisse's](#) light fractured goldfish and [Manet's](#) late paintings of cut flowers. All these artists demonstrate an obvious love for manipulating the medium of oil paint.



Detail of oil on canvas by David Bates

The paintings in this show are thick and goeey with oil paint, rich with deep color, and bold with playful mark making. This show has some of the best examples of Bates simply enjoying painting for painting sake. When all combined, *Themes and Variations* is a strong must see for people who love art history and painting in oils.

If you miss this show at Dunn and Brown Contemporary, you will probably have a chance to see a lot more of his work at the upcoming [Dallas Art Fair](#) Feb. 5-7.