

HETAG Newsletter No. 52, November 2021



In case you've been lamenting that you missed it – stop lamenting, you really didn't. The [CASETA: Center for the Advancement and Study of Early Texas Art Fall Forum](#) is now available to stream online. You can watch (or watch again) the compelling talks by scholars, collectors and ETA dealers from around the state, on topics including *Jerry Bywaters: Then...and Now*; *A Magnanimous Gift to Man: The Life and Sculpture of Octavio Medellín*; *The Coming, Going, and Staying of Early Galveston Artists*; among others – and you can even take a virtual tour of the exhibition *African American Artists in Texas: Selections from the John L. Nau III Collection of Texas Art*. These exciting online programs join those already available from [CASETA Annual Symposia](#) of earlier years to make an unparalleled reservoir of information about Texas art from all over the state over the past two centuries.

CASETA is also taking us on another [GREAT CURATORIAL WANDER](#), this time to The Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, for a look at their collection of Early Texas Art – perhaps the largest such collection in the state – in the company of the curator who did so much to build it, the incomparable Michael Grauer. That is guaranteed to be fun and informative.

But, of course, seeing art in person can't be beat, so this issue of the HETAG Newsletter includes information on a number of exhibitions in Houston and beyond in which you can see the actual art on gallery walls. To paraphrase our good friends at [GLASSTIRE](#) –

GO SEE SOME [Early Texas] ART!

HETAG: The Houston Earlier Texas Art Group

The Texas Art Project [The following article, by **Russ Aikman**, detailing a major Early Texas Art initiative spearheaded by HETAGers and former Houstonians, Bill and Linda Reaves, first appeared in the TACO: Texas Art Collectors Organization Newsletter – reprinted with permission.]

Wouldn't it be wonderful to see a series of ongoing, curated exhibitions on **Early Texas Art**, with outstanding examples in a variety of subject matter, styles, and mediums? Up to now such programming did not exist in the Lone Star State. At least, not to my knowledge.

Earlier this year, just such a series was launched at a venue a few hours away in College Station. The **Texas Art Project** (<https://stark.tamu.edu/texasartproject/>) represents a partnership between noted Early Texas Art collectors, researchers, supporters, and authors **Bill and Linda Reaves** and the **Texas A&M University Art Galleries** in College Station.



Bill and Linda Reaves

The Reaves focus on curatorial and documentation duties and the staff at the **J. Wayne Stark Galleries** (<https://stark.tamu.edu/>) handle the myriad logistical activities of putting on each exhibition and host the show. Works for each exhibition are drawn from the TAMU permanent collection, the Reaves' collection – much of which is a promised gift to the university - and private collections and institutions from around the state.



The J. Wayne Stark Galleries

The theme of the first exhibition in the Texas Art Project series was ***Evocative Objects: Still Life Painting in Texas***. It ran from August 12 to October 3. The second show, ***Strokes of Genius: Texas Impressionism*** opened on October 7 and will run through December 17. Full disclosure: I have one painting in the current exhibition. I know of at least five other TACO members who have loaned pieces for one or the other exhibition. The back-to-back programming for these first two exhibitions was not the original plan. The schedule was

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impacted by pandemic concerns. Going forward the plan for Texas Art Project is to have two exhibitions per year, with one in the spring and another in the fall.

Beautiful full-color catalogues are being produced by Linda Reaves in conjunction with each exhibition. Catalogues contain large images of each piece along with related information. An essay on the specific theme of each show is also included, and a gallery talk was held at each opening. For the *Evocative Objects* catalogue the essay was written by **Judy Deaton**, from the **Grace Museum** in Abilene. A recording of her presentation about this show, along with images of the galleries, is available here: [TX.AG/Evocative](https://www.txag.org/evocative).

Michael Grauer penned the essay for the *Strokes of Genius* exhibition. His talk at the opening reception is available here: [TX.AG/Strokes](https://www.txag.org/strokes).



Michael Grauer speaking at the opening reception of "Strokes of Genius" exhibition.

Recently, I had a lengthy call with Bill Reaves about the Texas Art Project. Any chance to chat with Bill is a treat due to his deep knowledge and enthusiasm for Texas art, his many collecting stories, and his always affable nature. Here are some of the key points I gleaned from our conversation:

- After 40+ years of collecting, he and Linda were trying to decide the best way to move forward with their art. A move to a new, smaller home gave them an opportunity to step back and reassess their goals.
- In looking for an organization to partner with they found a natural fit with the Stark Galleries. Both Linda and Bill worked previously at TAMU in different capacities. And they have been deeply involved in the **Texas Art** Series produced by **Texas A&M Press** for decades.
- A key goal was to share the breadth and depth of Early Texas Art.
- Another goal was to introduce Texas art to the next generation of Texans among the students at TAMU.
- A final goal was to encourage other collectors to consider similar endeavors with their own collections.

What's up next for the Texas Art Project?

For the Spring of 2022 the theme will be works on paper. In the Fall the focus will be on Texas regionalism. And in 2023 the plan is to have a retrospective on **Buck Schiwetz** who worked as an instructor at TAMU. A book on Schiwetz, co-authored by Linda and Bill, is also in the works for this latter show.

A final tip: If you make the trip to the Stark Galleries be sure to stop by the **Forsyth Galleries** which are located one flight up in the MSC. They always have interesting exhibitions. Visit the University Art Galleries website to view updated gallery hours or call [979-845-8501](tel:979-845-8501) to learn more.

Sounds like a road trip opportunity for TACO [and HETAG] members!

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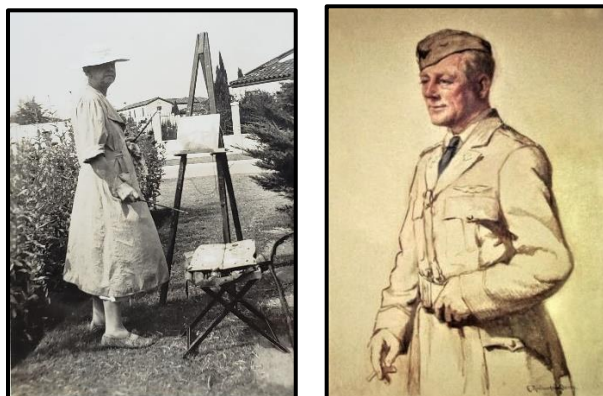
Houston Art History Notes: Houston Art in the Texas Centennial Exposition, 1936



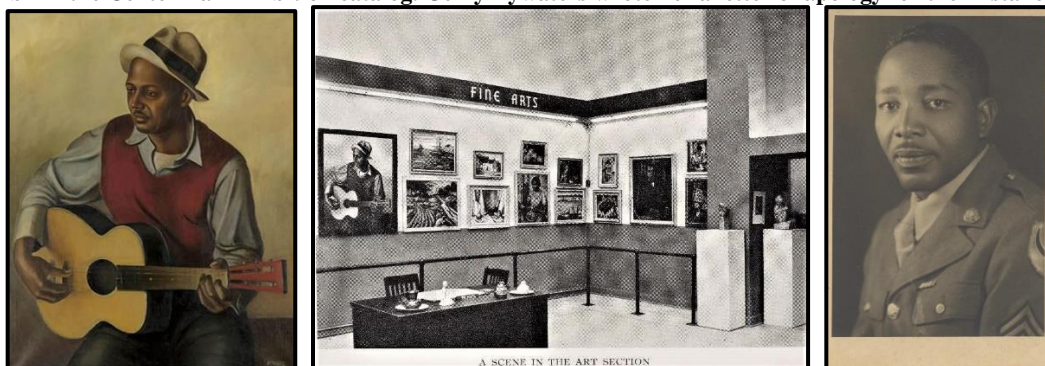
This year marks the 85th anniversary of the Texas Centennial Exposition, held in Dallas from June to November, 1936. It was a big deal that we're still talking about today. One of its many aspects was an exhibition of art from around the world – perhaps the largest exhibition of art held in Texas to that point. As you might expect, a section of the show featured the work of Texas artists, including many from Houston. Though not all the works by Houston artists can be identified (“Portrait” or “Still Life” are pretty hard to pin down even when you know the artist's name), here are a few of the paintings that were definitely exhibited. Click these links to find out more about the Exposition, and to see a list of all the Texas art on show.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Texas_Centennial_Exposition

<http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph183290/>



Emma Richardson Cherry, *Portrait of Major Walter H. Reid*, c1931. Cherry is pictured here in 1937 painting at Randolph Field in San Antonio, where Reid, her son-in-law, was stationed. Her portrait of him was mistakenly identified as Major "Newcomb" in the Centennial Exhibition catalog. Jerry Bywaters wrote her a letter of apology for the mistake.

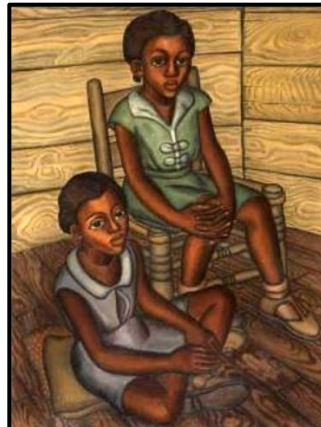


Samuel Countee *My Guitar* 1936. Countee's painting was displayed in the Hall of Negro Life (see center photo), rather than the main art exhibition, since Exposition was segregated. On the right, Staff Sergeant Countee in 1942.

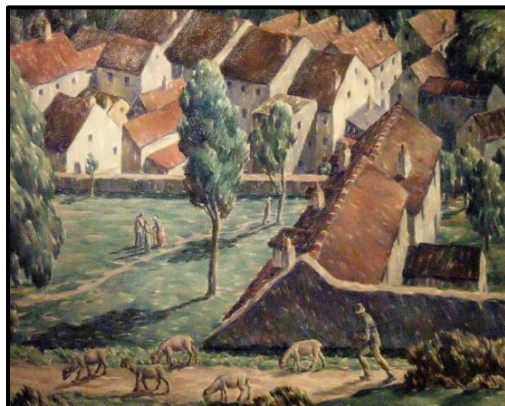
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Elizabeth Morris *Texas Magnolias* c1936. Morris wasn't a prolific painter, but for much of the 1930s she was president of the Houston Artists Gallery, the cooperative which showed and tried to sell work by Houston artists from 1930-1939.



Kathleen Blackshear *Ruby Lee and Lula May* c1932. Blackshear was from Navasota, but she spent most of her career teaching at the Art Institute of Chicago, where she influenced generations of artists, including Houston's own Richard Stout and Abstract Expressionist, Joan Mitchell. She always maintained her ties to Texas, however, returning for summers – and she and her life-partner, Ethel Spears, retired to the family home in Navasota.



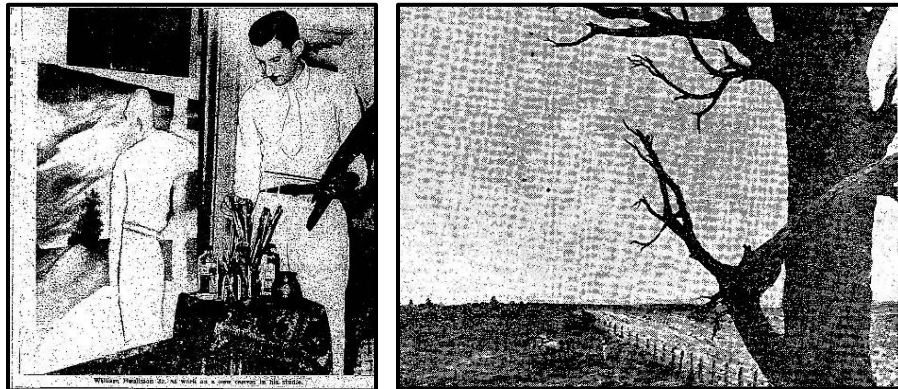
Frederic Browne *Chauvigny, France* c1930. Browne emigrated to the United States from Ireland, making it to Houston in the 1920s to teach at Rice Institute. Over the course of his long career here he also taught at the Museum School (MFAH) and University of Houston. His wife was French and they often traveled to France during the summers, so many of his paintings, done as a Texan, are scenes of France.

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Some of the identifiable works by Houston artists in the 1936 exhibition are now known only from newspaper photos:



Margaret Brisbine *Rita and T.P.* c1935. Brisbine's dual portrait depicts the wife and son of Thomas Hart Benton, with whom Brisbine had studied and worked, and arguably the most famous American artist at the time. The work – whereabouts now unknown – was lent for the exhibition by Mrs. Benton.



William Houlston *Thunderheads* c1935. Houlston was a crowd pleaser. This painting was voted audience favorite in the Houston Annual Exhibition of 1936, even though the jury of selection awarded the 1st Prize to Ruth Pershing Uhler's now-famous *Earth Rhythms #3*.



Benjamin Ploger *The Battle Royal* c1935. Ploger was a dashing, flamboyant New Orleans native who came to Houston to teach at the Museum School of MFAH through the late 1930s and early 1940s. Then he went back to New Orleans.

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Exhibitions of interest: This is the season of new exhibitions and there are many in Houston, and around the Texas (and the World!) of interest to those of us interested in seeing Earlier Houston (and Texas) Art. These are some of them:



[Georgia O'Keeffe, Photographer](#), Through January 17, 2022 Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Almost incredibly, this is the first exhibition ever to focus on the photography of O'Keeffe, surely one of the most focused on artists ever. And, of course, O'Keeffe was a TEXAS artist - as those of us who remember the fascinating 2018 CASETA Symposium presentation given by Amy Von Lintel, [The Young O'Keeffe – and American Identity](#), as well as her book of O'Keeffe letters, [Georgia O'Keeffe's Wartime Texas Letters](#). O'Keeffe didn't begin to photograph with an artist's eye until she had already left our state, but the exhibition does include two Texas drawings of Palo Duro Canyon, made while the artist lived and taught nearby, and serving as a prelude to the "refocusing" technique that she developed later in her career, in her paintings, drawings and photographs.



And if you should find yourself in Paris, France, before December 6, 2021, (you never know – it could happen), you can see more of her Texas art in [GEORGIA O'KEEFFE](#), at Centre Pompidou – the first retrospective of the artist's work in France – huge, as exhibitions tend to be at the Pompidou, and including work from her crucial Texas period, including one you may recognize from the Menil Collection (left below).

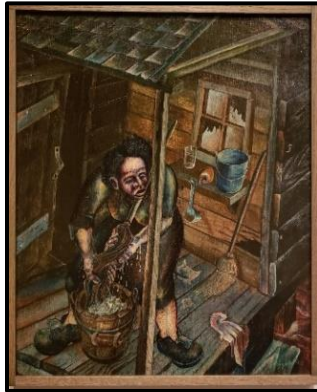


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And staying at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston – which is easy to do, since there's so much there these days – keep an eye out for the work of Houston artists, including John Biggers and Kermit Oliver, as you visit the groundbreaking (really NOT TO BE MISSED) exhibition:

[Afro-Atlantic Histories](#), through January 17, 2022

Exploring the history and legacy of the transatlantic slave trade. The exhibition comprises more than 130 works of art and documents made in Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean, and Europe across 500 years, from the 17th century to the 21st century.



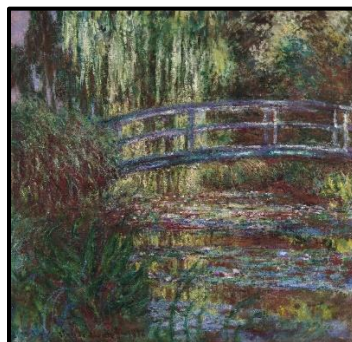
John Biggers
American, 1914–2001
Untitled (Washerwoman), 1941
Oil on panel
*The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Museum purchase funded by the Caroline Weiss
Law Accessions Endowment Fund, 2020.147*
Painted shortly after John Biggers completed his service in the U.S. Navy during World War II, *Untitled (Washerwoman)* reveals the physical toll of labor in an era of legalized racial segregation. Biggers explained, "I knew the characteristics of hard-working people. Get a joy out of making hands and feet large, even more than faces. Workers have strong hands and bad feet. That's why my work emphasizes backs, hands, and feet. I spend a good deal of time looking at the physiques of people who had been doing hard labor."
Please visit the Prints and Drawings gallery in the Nancy and Rich Kinder Building to see the related sketchbook.



Kermit Oliver
American, born 1943
Madonna, 1967
Conté crayon on wove paper laid down on paper board
*The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Museum purchase funded by the African
American Art Advisory Association, 2006.7*

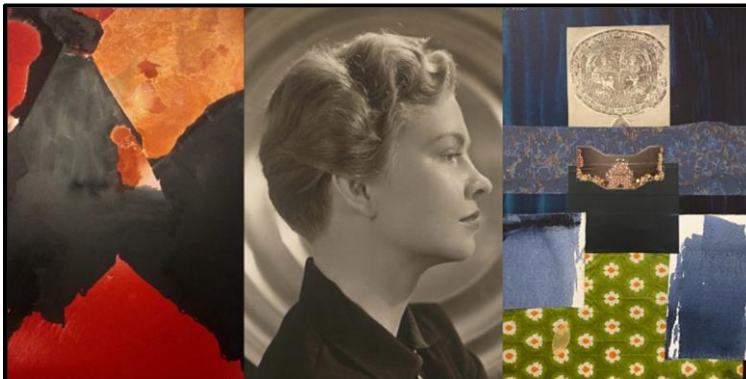
And, though you won't find their work in the galleries when you tour the once-in-a-lifetime (so many over-the-top figures of speech these days for MFAH offerings) exhibition, keep in mind that our own Emma Richardson Cherry and Dawson Dawson-Watson were among the earliest Americans to embrace that revolutionary technique, IMPRESSIONISM, and to bring it to Texas,:

[Incomparable Impressionism from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston](#), through March 27, 2022



Emma Richardson Cherry *Rainy Afternoon, Giverny* 1888/89 (l); Claude Monet *Water Lily Pond* 1900, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (c); Dawson Dawson-Watson *Giverny* 1888, Terra Foundation Collection (r)

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[Dorothy Hood: The Edge of Being](#), October 14th, 2021 – March 2023

University of Houston

Various Locations, see website for venues and times

The University of Houston is fast becoming the premier destination for scholars, students and others interested in the work of Dorothy Hood (1918-2000). This a chance to see selections of that material on view at multiple locations on University of Houston campuses.

[Ibsen Espada: Abrasive Silence](#), on view October 29 - November 27, 2021

and, [Vignette: Ibsen Espada Early Works](#)

Foltz Gallery, Houston

Recent and earlier paintings by this Houston artist who has established himself as one of the most important contemporary Texas painters, working in a personal mode of gestural abstraction.

[HJ BOTT: a Baroque Minimalist](#), through November 27, 2021

Anya Tish Gallery, Houston

The gallery's fifth solo exhibition of legendary Texas artist, HJ Bott, whose career stretches over six decades. The exhibition will feature selected paintings and sculptures created between the 1970s and 2000s.

[Bert L. Long, Jr.: The Strength is from Within](#)

[Jesse Lott: Sense of Spirit](#)

Deborah Colton Gallery

September 25, 2021 to November 20, 2021

Two legendary Houston Artists whose work bursts with energy and color.

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[African American Artists in Texas:](#)

**Selections from the John L. Nau III Collection of Texas Art
On view at the African American Library at the Gregory School
September 9, 2021 - March 12, 2022**

Spanning over six decades of cultural production, this exhibition presents paintings, drawings and prints of works by African Americans in Texas with a combination of portraiture, landscape and abstraction on display. In collaboration with the John L. Nau III Collection of Texas Art, this exhibition features works from Texan artists including John Willard Banks, John Biggers, Sedrick Huckaby, and Kermit Oliver, supplemented with special collection materials from the African American Library at the Gregory School.

[Kermit Oliver: New Narratives, New Beginnings,](#) through December 17, 2021

Art Center Waco

Featuring forty paintings and works on paper - spanning from 1970 to 2021- the exhibition offers the opportunity to examine Oliver's art through a larger lens.

Looking ahead: Some Early Texas Art events are already on the calendar for 2022:

[CASETA's 2022 Symposium](#)

& [Art Fair](#) to be held *live* at the

Hilton Dallas Lincoln Centre, Dallas, Texas, June 10-11, 2022

Texas Modernism(s): Houston/Dallas in the 1930s

An Exhibition at the Julia Ideson Building of Houston Public Library

Opening August 2022

The mission of HETAG is to illuminate Houston's art history by providing viewing opportunities for art, by supporting and doing research on the artists and art communities working in Houston through the years, and by spreading the word.

Back issues of the HETAG Newsletter are available via the

[University of Houston Libraries Digital Library](#)

and

[The Portal to Texas History](#)

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