

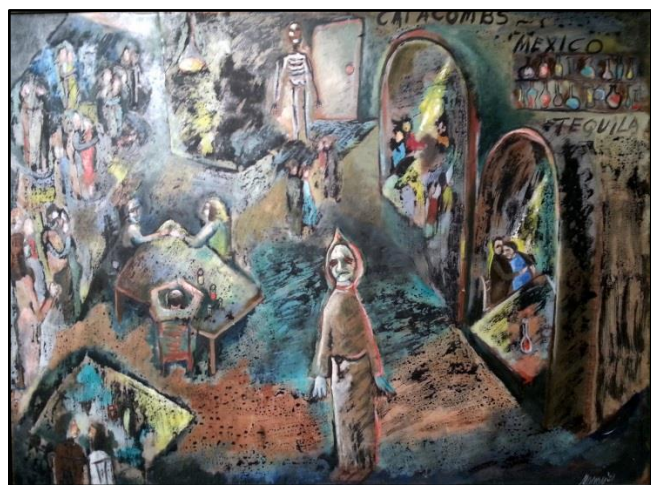
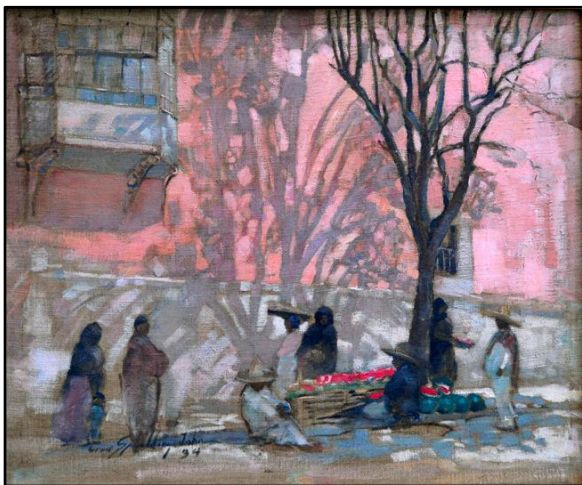
HETAG: The Houston Earlier Texas Art Group Newsletter No 9, December 2016



Herb Mears [Mexico City Cathedral] 1960s

South of the Border:

Back in the days before the wall, when Houston artists could easily go to Mexico, they did – and they depicted it a lot. This month I'm making the theme of the HETAG Newsletter **South of the Border**. At least we'll have some images of what it looked like if we're no longer able to get down there in a year or two.



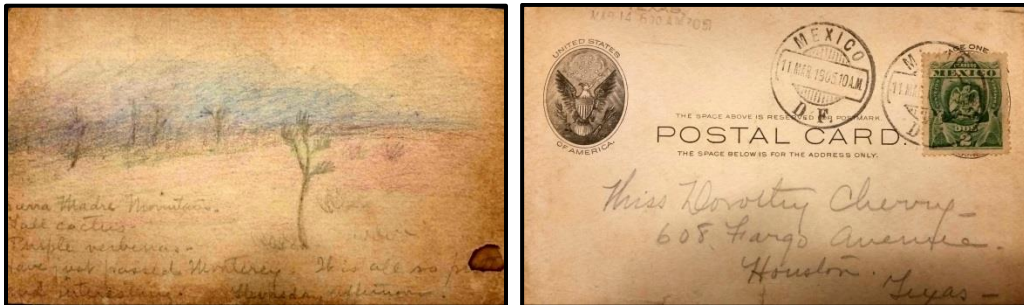
Grace Spaulding *John Watermelon Vendor* 1934 (1); Mildred Wood Dixon *Catacombs [Nightclub, Mexico City]* 1951

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Houston Art History Notes: Down Mexico Way

Name an Earlier Houston Artist and there's a good chance they spent at least a little time in Mexico. These are a few of the ones I know about, along with works they made on Mexican themes (please forgive me in advance for those I've left out):

Emma Richardson Cherry (1859-1954) made a tour of several weeks as far as Monterrey in 1905. She sent this postcard home to her daughter, Dorothy.



Grace Spaulding John (1890-1972) made at least five trips to Mexico in the 1930s. She wrote a series of newspaper articles about her trips that were published in several western newspapers; and she made lots of art, including a series of lino-cuts, one of which (the colorful one) appeared on the magazine cover of a Los Angeles newspaper.



Grace Spaulding John *Parasols and Posies*

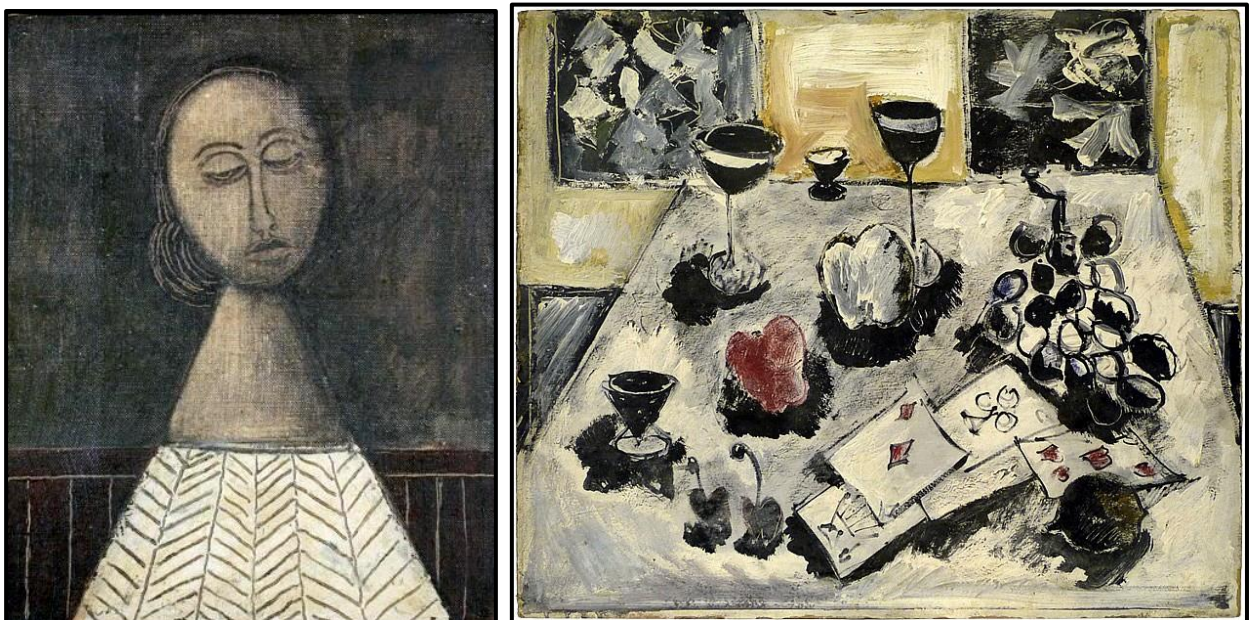
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Forrest Bess (1911-1977) travelled to Mexico in the mid-1930s, long before his “Visionary” days, to look at art and to study.



Forrest Bess [untitled] ca.1930s; *Mexican Boy* 1938; *Acapulco* 1938.

Gene Charlton (1909-1979) went to Cuernavaca late in 1947 and loved it so much that he stayed for a year. According to a review of his first post-Mexico show, the experience had a profound impact on his work, muting the “flamboyance” of his colors and contributing to a sudden “severity of planes, simplicity of line and design.”



Gene Charlton [Woman] and [Table With Playing Cards] both 1948

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Mildred Wood Dixon, in the 1950s, did the Mexico City nightclub painting on page one and a number of other beautiful paintings that are distinctively her own.



Mildred Wood Dixon *Chichicastenango*; *Mexican Afternoon*; [untitled River in Mexico] all 1950s

William J. (Bill) Condon (1923-1998) loved to travel, and he loved to send postcards home, but not just any postcards – he made his own, using the cardboard inserts that came in his laundered shirts back then. He'd cut them into postcard size blanks before he left and then work them up into place-specific cards as he went along. So if you were a friend of this Bill, you might open your mailbox to find a wonderful little work of art greeting you from wherever he was at the moment. For all of these, that place was Mexico. He must have sent thousands of them, and you can still find them around Houston, framed and ready to fill a small space on your wall – or big space if you're lucky enough to get a group – never mind that they're addressed to someone else.



Bill Condon *Taxco, Mexico* 1964; *Cemetery*[sic], *Saltillo* 1960; *Bogota, Colombia* 1971 all mixed media on cardboard

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Dorothy Hood (1918-2000) may take the prize among Earlier Houston Artists for time spent in Mexico. She lived there fulltime for 20 years through the 1940s and 1950s, before returning to Houston, where she grew up. You can see lots of her work in the retrospective currently on view in Corpus Christi (which we can hope will come to Houston in some form before long – I've heard rumors), and you can learn about her in curator Susie Kalil's book, [Color of Being](#), which accompanies the show. Molly Glentzer also did a fab piece on [Hood and the Corpus show](#) in the *Houston Chronicle* recently. Since the works below are undated, it's hard to know whether or not they're from her Mexico period, but Mexico is in them whenever Hood made them.



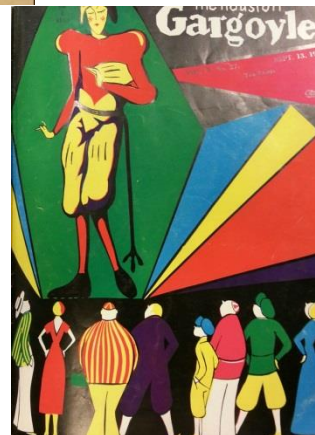
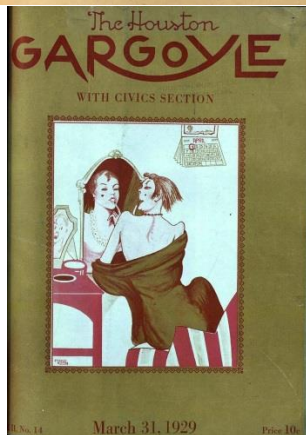
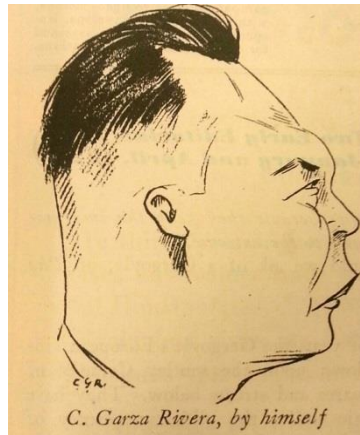
Dorothy Hood Watercolor, Ink Drawing and Oil on Canvas

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A Mexican Artist in Houston: Crescenciano Garza Rivera (1895-1958)

Though I know there must have been some, finding information and artwork by Houston artists of Mexican descent from earlier days is difficult. In fact the only one I've identified is Crescencino Garze Rivera. A while ago I wrote this paragraph about him:

Back in the 1920s and 30s the smart set in New York had "Vanity Fair" to follow its comings and goings, and to tell it what was au courant. Not to be outdone, Houston had "The Gargoyle", published from 1928 to 1932. With such publications the art is as important as the writing, and for its art director "The Gargoyle" chose the Mexican artist, C. Garza Rivera (1895-1958). Originally from Monterrey, he came to Houston by way of Madrid, Paris, Los Angeles and San Antonio; and he returned to Monterrey in the late 30s, where he spent the remainder of his life. He's one of the few (or should I say just about the only) artists of Hispanic heritage in Houston in the period. Since his art was some of the most visible of any made by a Houston artist at the time – on every news stand every month for years – his distinctive Mexican-infused aesthetic undoubtedly had a huge impact by educating the way Houstonians were able to see. I'm pretty sure, based on the look of her own later work, that the young Dorothy Hood saw a lot of his work. Here is a selection of his drawings from "The Gargoyle". If you read Spanish, you can find out more about him here: http://www.analesiie.unam.mx/pdf/63_137-139.pdf



C. Garza Rivers *Self-portrait* ca.1930; *The Houston Gargoyle* March 27, 1928; March 31, 1929; September 13, 1931

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Exhibitions in Houston:

Museum of Fine Arts Houston

[Julian Onderdonk and the Texas Landscape](#)

An exhibition of more than 25 works by Onderdonk, on the occasion of the publication of *Julian Onderdonk: A Catalogue Raisonné*.

October 2, 2016 – January 2, 2017

[A Texas Legacy: Selections from the William J. Hill Collection](#)

A selection of furniture, drawings, paintings, pottery, silver, and other goods made in Texas between the mid-19th and early 20th centuries.

October 2, 2016 – January 2, 2017

Exhibitions around the state:

Art Museum of South Texas

Corpus Christi

[The Color of Being/ El Color del Ser : DOROTHY HOOD \(1918-2000\)](#)

September 30, 2016 - January 8, 2017

A major retrospective of one the most important Houston artists ever – which isn't coming to Houston. Thanks, Art Museum of South Texas, for showing one of our best. We'll be visiting Corpus Christi to see it.

<http://www.artmuseumofsouthtexas.org/>

Old Jail Art Center

Albany

[TEXAS MODERNS: Sallie Gillespie, Wade Jolly, Blanche McVeigh, and Evaline Sellors](#)

September 17, 2016 – February 11, 2017

<http://theojac.org/#about>

Amon Carter Museum of American Art

Fort Worth

[Abstract Texas: Midcentury Modern Painting](#)

October 1, 2016–October 8, 2017

<http://www.cartermuseum.org/>

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In the galleries:

[William Reaves / Sarah Foltz Fine Art](#)

[Contemporary Texas Regionalism: A Holiday Show](#)

December 2 - December 23, 2016

2143 Westheimer Road

[Deborah Colton Gallery](#)

2445 North Blvd.

[Looking for the Right Time: Bert Long](#)

November 19, 2016 - January 28, 2017

[Select Paintings: Dorothy Hood](#)

November 19, 2016 - January 28, 2017

Destination Guanajuato:



Henri Gadbois [*Guanajuato Square*] 1950s (l); Bill Condon [*Guanajuato*] 1960s (r)

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