

## HETAG: The Houston Earlier Texas Art Group

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Henri Gadbois and Leila McConnell accepting their award at the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual CASETA Symposium, flanked by Linda and Bill Reaves.

### HETAG Newsletter No 22, May 2018: The Henri and Leila Issue

**That's Henri Gadbois and Leila McConnell,  
Joint recipients of the  
2018 Bill and Linda Reaves Lifetime Achievement Award  
Presented by CASETA: Center for the Advancement and Study of  
Early Texas Art**

I'm sure that most HETAGers already know Henri Gadbois and Leila McConnell. They've been loyal members of our group since the beginning, and have invited us to their home and studio more than once. Many of us own art they created and all of us wish we did. They have been dynamic, creative members of the Houston art world for nearly eight decades, and they've been a married couple for a pretty big chunk of that time. I won't even attempt to list their accomplishments as artists. You can get an idea of those accomplishments for [Henri](#) and for [Leila](#) on the web. How fitting and exciting that CASETA has recognized their many decades of contributions to Texas art with the 2018 Bill and Linda Reaves Lifetime Achievement Award. Congratulations to both of them, and eternal thanks for making so much beautiful art and sharing it with HETAG friends, and everyone else in Texas and elsewhere. As a tribute, most of the art in this issue of the newsletter is by, or related to, Henri and Leila.



Henri Gadbois *West Beach, Galveston 1954*; Leila McConnell *Refinery at Night 1957*

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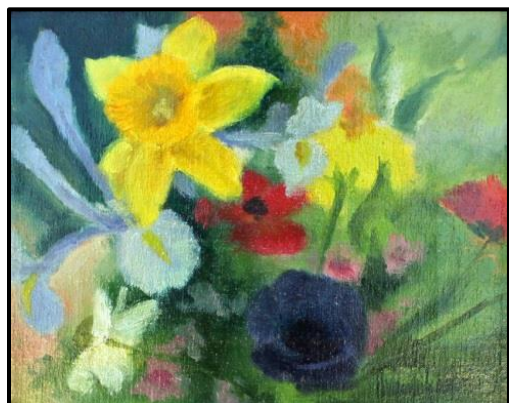
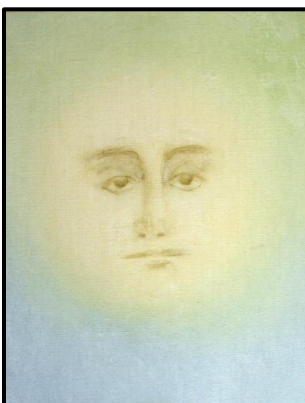


For those HETAGers who were at the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Casetta Symposium at the Witte Museum in San Antonio: Wasn't it an amazing weekend?! For those of you who weren't able to be there: I'm so sorry you missed it!! Every year I think it can't get better, and every year it seems to.

But this year was absolutely MARVELOUS. The venue was outstanding: Many thanks to the Witte for welcoming us and giving us the run of Museum. As usual, the dealers in the Texas Art Fair brought a first-rate exhibition of Early Texas Art to us, but even better than most ETA exhibitions, everything on view was available for us to purchase and take home.

All of our speakers presented knock-your-socks-off talks covering the span of ETA from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century right down to the present. I won't name names, because that would mean name all the names, which you can see on the [Casetta website](#). But we were in the perfect place if we want to know what makes Georgia O'Keeffe a Texas artist, what the outside world thinks of Texas art, what art was like in Texas three hundred years ago, what some of our more recent (and even still working) artists think about what they do, what makes some Texas art controversial, and so much more.

Again this year Houston was well represented at the symposium, both in the audience and on the program. As mentioned above, Henri Gadbois and Leila McConnell were jointly awarded the Bill and Linda Reaves Lifetime Achievement Award. (Note: All four of the folks named are Houstonians.). For a photo of Henri and Leila receiving their award see page one. Here they are at an earlier stage in that lifetime of art.

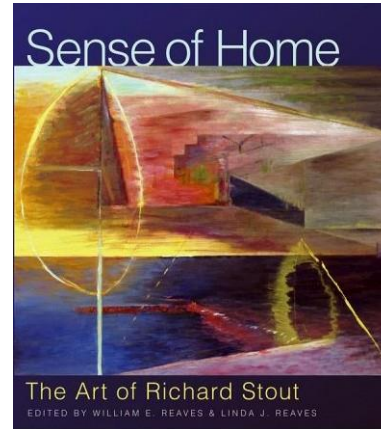
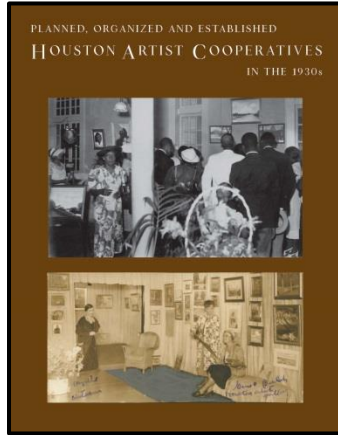


Leila McConnell *Moon Face* c2008 (l); Henri, Leila, cat and art 1965 (c); Henri Gadbois [*Bouquet*] c1971 (r)

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**Tam Kiehnhoff, who has been just as influential in CASETA as she is in HETAG, received the Distinguished Service Award. Congratulations Tam! Well deserved.**



**Both publication awards this year went to Houston related works. The book award went to *Sense of Home: The Art of Richard Stout*, edited by Bill and Linda Reaves, published by Texas A&M University Press, in the Joe and Betty Moore Texas Art Series, in conjunction with the traveling exhibition of Richard Stout's art (see Exhibitions below). The award for best exhibition catalog went to *Planned, Organized and Established: Houston Artist Cooperatives of the 1930s*, which accompanied the exhibition of the same name mounted in the gallery of the Julia Ideson Building, Houston Public Library, Fall 2017.**

**Houston was also well represented on the program. Richard Stout and Sarah Beth Wilson McKeel treated us to a discussion of the exhibition *Sense of Home: The Art of Richard Stout* (curated by Sarah Beth) and of Richard's career as an artist and his approach to art. Raúl A. Ramos, University of Houston Department of History, joined the provocative and stimulating panel on "Controversial Images in Early Texas Art."**

**William Reaves/Sarah Foltz Fine Art and Robert Alker Fine Art presented spectacular works of Early Texas Art as part of the [Texas Art Fair](#). Thanks to the generosity of many of you, HETAG was a [Gold Level Sponsor](#) of the symposium this year, and many others of you sponsored separately. The entire CASETA Board (and particularly the members of the board who are Houstonians, Tam Kiehnhoff, Christian Kelleher, Sarah Beth Wilson McKeel, board chair, Stan Price and Randy Tibbits) thank you all for your support.**

**The 17<sup>th</sup> Annual CASETA Symposium will be held next year in Austin at about this time, so block your calendar now. You won't want to miss it. Watch symposium sessions from past years (and soon those just presented in San Antonio) via the CASETA website:**

**[CASETA Symposium Presentations, 2014-2017 \(2018 coming soon\)](#)**



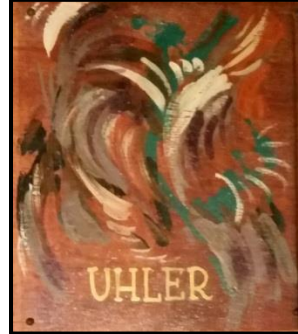
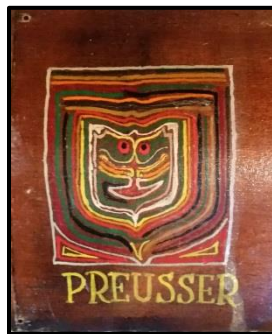
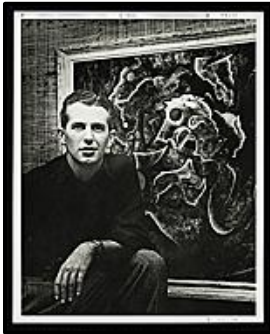
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### Houston Art History Notes: A jug of wine, a dinner guest and art!



Some conventional people make wine the focus of their wine rooms. Not so Houston artists Henri Gadbois and Leila McConnell. In their wine room, the bottles come and go, but the important feature – a very special collection of art – has been mellowing for decades.



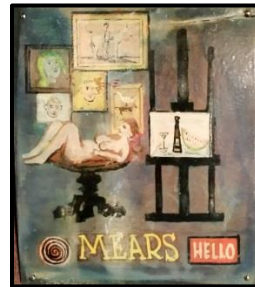
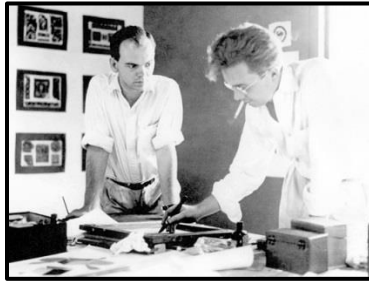
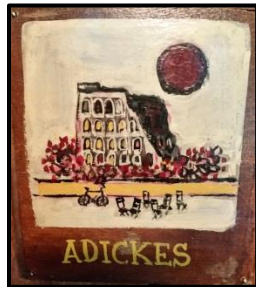
Starting sometime way back in mid-century days – neither Leila nor Henri is quite sure of the exact year now – those lucky enough to get an invitation to dine had to work for their supper. Before the plates were filled, but maybe not before a cork or two had been drawn, each guest had to make a little work of art to join the growing number of others on the wine room wall.



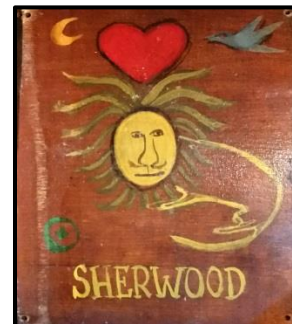
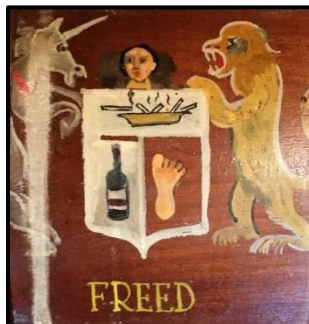
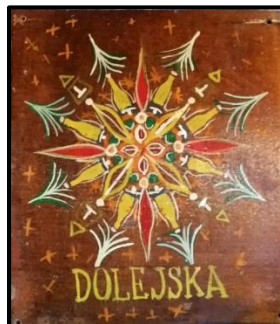
Each lucky diner received a little 5 ½ x 4 ¾ inch wooden plaque lettered with their name, a variety of art supplies and free rein to make use of the two as the creative spirit (and hunger pangs) moved them. Anyone could decline, of course, if they didn't want to eat. But almost no one ever did decline, and only one broke into tears, that H&L recall. The result is a treasure trove of tiny masterpieces by some of the storied names of Houston art from mid-century on.

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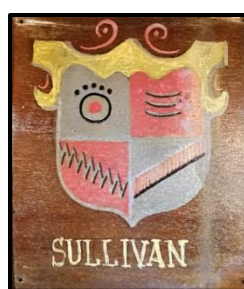
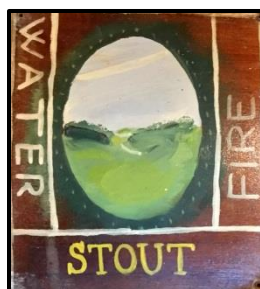
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A plaque by Albrecht Dürer that Henri saw in a Nuremberg café, inspired the tradition. The wooden plaques had been the dividers in what had been the cubby holes of an old post office. The Gadboises bought it somewhere (not now sure exactly where) and installed it first in the little house on Bingle they moved into after Robert Preusser moved out when he left Houston for MIT in the mid-1950s. When they themselves moved on in the mid-1960s, the wine room – post office cubbies, vintage bottles, art and all – moved with them to their current home, where it has been ever since.



(Note: Due to a scarcity of wall space and wooden plaques, the collection isn't growing much these days; though, of course, the dinners continue and the wine still flows.)



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### Exhibitions around Texas:

#### Corpus Christi (and Houston):

*Sense of Home: The Art of Richard Stout*

[Art Museum of South Texas \(AMST\)](#)

Open to the public May 18, 2018

(This exhibition of the art of Houston artist Richard Stout, and curated by HETAGer Sarah Beth Wilson McKeel, Curator of Exhibitions and Collections at the Art Museum of Southeast Texas, opened in Beaumont last year, and will travel to the O’Kane Gallery, University of Houston Downtown, in Fall, 2018,.)

#### Waxahachie:

[Lone Stars – a celebration of Texas culture](#)

Webb Gallery

Opening celebration Sunday, May 6, 4-7pm

(Co-curated by Houston collector/author Jay Wehnert, whose book *Outsider Art in Texas: Lone Stars* was published recently by Texas A&M University Press.)

#### Galveston:

["Never a Dull Moment: The Art of Grace Spaulding John"](#)

Rosenberg Library

JAN 20, 2018 - JUL 20, 2018

(The work of one of the most important Houston artists, drawn from the collection of the Rosenberg Library, and from private collections.)

#### Houston – coming in August:

*South and North of the Border* – two separate, but linked exhibitions focusing on Houston art before 1978.

*Houston Paints Mexico*

Ideson Gallery, Houston Public Library

August 25 – November 10, 2018

And

[Houston Paints Houston](#)

The Heritage Society Museum

August 16 – November 24, 2018

(If you would like to contribute toward the publication of a joint catalog for these two shows, please email Randy Tibbits at [tibbits@rice.edu](mailto:tibbits@rice.edu))



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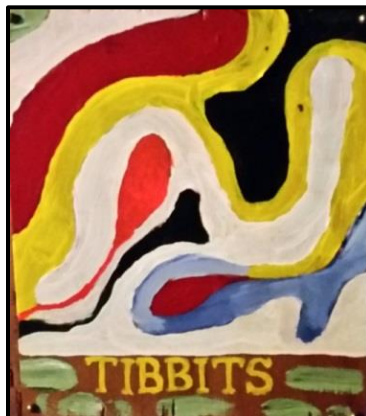
Henri Gadbois *Lunch at Tepoztlan* 1998 (l) and Leila McConnell *The River Styx* 1961 (r)

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

<https://digital.lib.uh.edu/collection/hetag>

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Randy Tibbits *[Plaque On the Wine Room Wall]* c2005