

# HETAG: The Houston Earlier Texas Art Group

## Newsletter No 7, September 2016



David Adickes [*Place de la Concorde, Paris, with La Madeleine*] 1950s

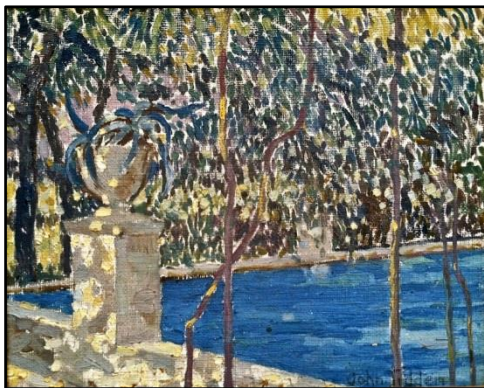
### My European Vacation – Earlier Houston Artist Version:

Summer is drawing to a close and many HETAGers have probably gone somewhere cooler for summer break. Some have even had a trip to Europe, perhaps. Well, going to Europe isn't anything new for Houstonians, including our artists. This month I thought it would be fun to celebrate the end of summer vacation season with images of Europe by Houston artists. Based on these we can all begin planning our HETAG tours of Europe for next year.

#### Houston Artists in Italy:



James Chillman, Jr., [*Fountain in Italy*] 1922 (l); Mildred Wood Dixon *Piazza San Marco [Venice]* 1954 (c); Gene Charlton *House of Desdemona [Venice]* 1938 (r)



John Clark Tidden *Villa D'Este* 1923 (l); Emma Richardson Cherry *Taormina [Sicily]* 1910 (r)

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### **Emma Richardson Cherry and Dawson Dawson-Watson paint side-by-side in Giverny in 1888.**

When Emma Richardson Cherry and Dawson Dawson-Watson made these paintings of the same Giverny street scene in 1888, neither was as yet a Houston artist. Cherry had gone to France from Kansas City to study art at the Académie Julian in Paris (leaving behind her husband of only two months as she embarked on two years in Europe). Dawson-Watson, a young Englishman, was living in Giverny as one of the first artists to adopt the town as an art colony. When Dawson-Watson met and married (within the space of three months!) Cherry's traveling companion, Mary Hoyt Sellar, the couple settled in Giverny, where Cherry visited them at least twice in 1888/89. Cherry would move to Houston in 1896, becoming the founder of Houston art. The Dawson-Watsons lived with the Cherry family for several months in 1916/17, thus qualifying him as an Earlier Houston Artist too. Looking at the two paintings, it appears that Cherry was standing to the right, D-W to the left as they worked. The Cherry is now in a private collection in Houston; the Dawson-Watson is in the Terra Foundation Collection in Chicago.



Emma Richardson Cherry *Rue de Giverny (Street in Giverny)* 1888 watercolor



Dawson Dawson-Watson *Giverny* 1888 oil on canvas, Terra Foundation Collection (l); the street in Giverny painted by Cherry and Dawson-Watson, as it looks today (r)

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## Happening in Houston:

### [This WAS Contemporary Art: Fine and Decorative Arts in Houston 1945-1965 \(The Heritage Society, co-sponsored by HETAG and CASETA\)](#)

Thursday, July 14–Saturday, October 15, 2016  
The Heritage Society Museum Gallery, 10-4, Tue.-Sat.  
Admission is free

## Related lectures:

**Tam Kiehnhoff**, co-curator of the exhibition:

*The Search, Discoveries, the Outtakes, the Necessary Discards and Unfollowed Trails on the Road to the Exhibition*

- Wednesday, September 14, 2016
- 7:00pm - 8:00pm

**Randy Tibbits**, co-curator of the exhibition:

*The Houston Art Scene in Transition and Disruption: Frank Freed's Opening Night at the Contemporary Arts Museum*

- Wednesday, October 5, 2016
- 7:00pm - 8:00pm

The Heritage Society Tea Room  
Free for members, \$5 for non-members

## William Reaves Fine Art

[Abstract Dialogues: The Artful Interactions of Ibsen Espada, Dorothy Hood and Dick Wray](#)  
September 2 - September 24, 2016

Collector Preview Weekend: Friday-Saturday, September 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10am-5pm  
Opening Reception - Saturday, September 10, 2016 from 6:00 - 8:30pm  
Artist Talk / Gallery Talk: Saturday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2-4pm

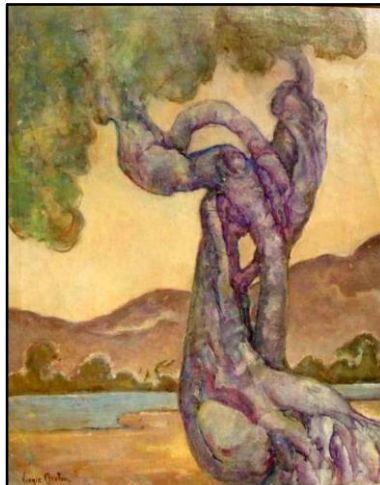
<http://reavesart.com/index.cfm>

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## Houston artists in Spain:



Frank Freed *Toledo Revisited* 1959 (l); Gene Charlton *Majorca* 1949 (r)



Emma Richardson *Cherry Majorcan Spring (Valledemosa)* 1926 (l); Virgie Claxton *Ancient Olive Tree Majorca* 1931 (c); Pat Colville *Spanish Figure* c.1956 (r)



Angela McDonnell *Avila* 1934, one of three PWAP murals done by McDonnell for Houston Public Library

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### Earlier Houston Art history notes: Gene Charlton, Picasso, Degas and the ballet – a Houston Association

Beginning in the mid-1930s, the Ballet Russe came to Houston almost every winter. During their Houston visits, Ballet Russe often performed *Les Sylphides*, a ballet standard and almost a company signature piece. One of the most fervent fans of these annual visits was Houston balletomane, Bennett Black, who later joined in the founding of the Houston Ballet. Black's friend, the Houston artist Gene Charlton made the little painting shown here, working from a publicity still photo used by the company year after year to promote its performances of the ballet. Charlton may have given the painting to Black, or perhaps Black bought it. Either way in 1944, while Charlton was away in military service, Black lent it to the Houston Annual Exhibition, where it won an Honorable Mention.



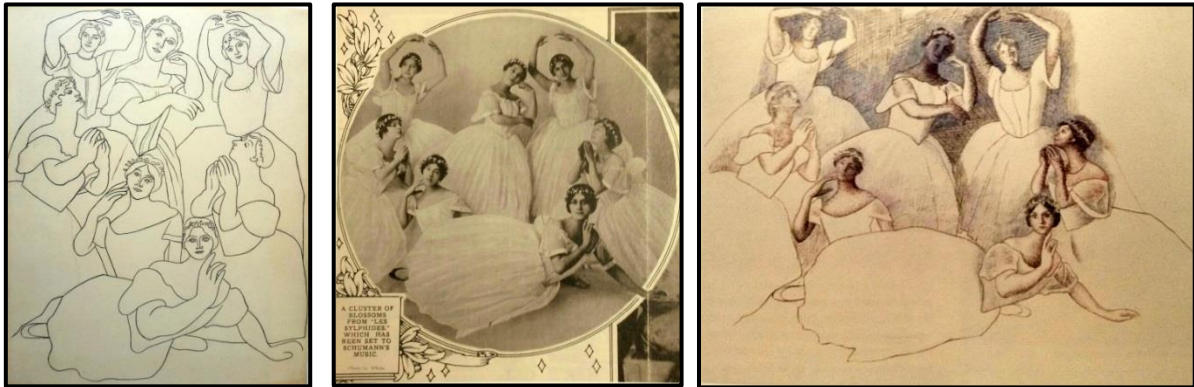
Gene Charlton *Les Sylphides* 1942 (l); publicity still of Ballet Russe dancing *Les Sylphides* ca.1938/40 (r)

Though Charlton may not have known it when he made his *Les Sylphides*, he was working in a distinguished tradition stretching back to Picasso and Degas, and which has a particular (and somewhat delightful) relevance to Houston today as we look forward to major exhibitions of both Picasso and Degas coming up in the fall, at the Menil and MFAH respectively.

For a period in the 1910s and 1920s, Picasso had an intimate connection with Sergei Diaghilev's Ballet Russes, an earlier iteration of the company that came to Houston, designing sets and/or costumes for a number of productions, including *Parade*, *The Three-Cornered Hat* and *Pulcinella*, among others. His connection became very personal when he married Olga Khokhlova, one of the company ballerinas, in 1918.

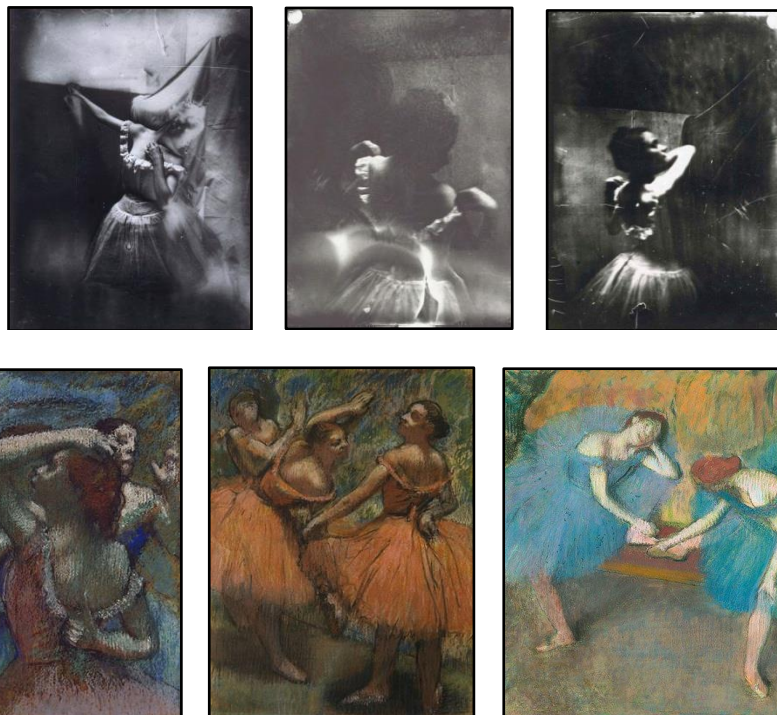
Picasso took Olga as the subject of many works during the early years of their marriage, but of particular interest for us are a number of drawings he made of his new wife as one of the sylphs in *Les Sylphides*, costumed in a gossamer white ballet skirt much like the ones still adorning the ballerinas on the stage in Houston twenty years later. And even more on point in the current context: Picasso worked from publicity stills used by the company to promote performances. An example published in *The Sun* [New York] in 1916 appears below, along with Picasso's drawing from the photo and a somewhat more finished work from the same source. Olga is the reclining figure in front.

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Drawing and watercolor taken from a publicity still of Sergei Diaghilev's Ballet Russes costumed for a performance of *Les Sylphides* ca. 1920/21.

Picasso was looking back to the great painter and draftsman of the ballet, Edgar Degas. Though there seems to be no evidence that the two ever met, they were neighbors for years in Montmartre and the young Picasso sometimes quoted and often took inspiration from the work of the elder, Degas (see: Cowling, Elizabeth; Kendall, Richard. *Picasso Looks At Degas*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). Degas himself became a devoted photographer later in life and seems to have used photographs in creating some of his ballet works from much earlier (see: Gordon, Robert; Forge, Andrew. *Degas*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1988. P.34). It's certain that Picasso was looking at Degas. It's almost certain that Charlton was looking at both Picasso and Degas – though he probably didn't see the Picasso ballet drawings above. But whether or not the young Houston artists saw specific works by the other two, they were all clearly moved by ballet as an art form that they could draw on in making their own art, and they were all using photographs, sometimes photographs of the same ballets and companies, to capture a still moment from the continuum of motion that is ballet.



Photographs and pastels of ballerinas, by Edgar Degas, late 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

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## **CASETA SYMPOSIUM followup:**

I'm happy to report that the presentations from the 2016, 14<sup>th</sup> Annual CASETA Symposium, held this past spring in Dallas, are now available for viewing. You can get to them via the CASETA Website by going to the [Symposium tab > Symposium videos](#). All the speakers were outstanding, but once again Houston had a particularly strong presence on the program. These are the Houston speakers/topics. Click the title to link to the video, or see the entire playlist at the link at the bottom of the page.

**Bonnie Campbell, moderator:** [\*A Conversation with Dr. Olivier Meslay and Dr. Andrew Walker\*](#)

**Rex Koontz and Carmen Champion:** [\*The Past That Almost Was: The Place of Texas Art in the 1937 Greater Texas and Panamerican Exposition in Dallas\*](#)

**Jay Wehnert:** [\*Outside the Lines: Three Texas Artists and the World of Outsider Art\*](#)

**Sarah Beth Wilson:** [\*Golden Triangle Greats: A History of the Arts in Southeast Texas\*](#)

Mark your calendar now for the  
[15<sup>th</sup> CASETA SYMPOSIUM](#)  
April 28-30, 2017  
Fort Worth

## **CASETA and HETAG in the news:**

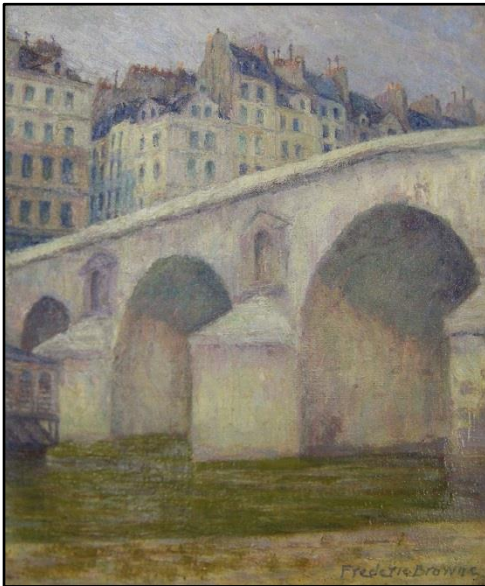
**HETAGers Leila McConnell and Henri Gadbois** were the subjects of a great feature article by Molly Glentzer in the *Houston Chronicle* for Sunday, August 14, 2017:

[\*\*Decades' worth of couple's contemporary pieces featured at Heritage Society Museum\*\*](#)

The exhibition [\*This WAS Contemporary Art: Fine and Decorative Arts in Houston 1945-1965\*](#) was picked as one of the [Top Five in Texas by Glasstire](#), the online Texas arts website, for August 18, 2017 – with a very nice mention of CASETA in the video.

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## Houston artists in France:



Frederic Browne *Pont Marie [Paris]* c.1927 (l); Carden Bailey *Chartres Cathedral* 1938 (r)



Herb Mears *Antibes* 1966 (l); David Adickes *Mont Saint Michel* c.1950s



Watson Neyland *Marne Valley* c.1920s



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## Some recent books of interest:

[Rounded Up in Glory: Frank Reaugh, Texas Renaissance Man](#), by Michael Grauer  
(University of North Texas Press, 2016)

[Allie Victoria Tennant and the Visual Arts in Dallas](#), by Light Cummins (Texas A&M University Press, 2015, Women in Texas History Series)

## Around Texas:

### San Angelo Museum of Fine Art

September 15, 2016 - November 27, 2016

#### [Frank Reaugh \(1860 - 1945\): Master of the Texas Landscape](#)

Featuring a hallmark selection of pastel landscapes from the collection of the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum.

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

### 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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## Houston artists around Europe:



Henri Gadbois *Fieldpattern Wurzburg* 1960 (l); Frank Freed *Istanbul* nd (r)



Bill Condon *Zurich, Switzerland* 1960s (l); Robert Humbles *Blue City* c.1958/60 (r)

**Randy Tibbits, coordinator**  
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