

## **HETAG: The Houston Earlier Texas Art Group**

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**HETAG Newsletter No. 42, May/June 2020**

### **The Everything IS Virtual Issue**



**Erik Sprohge *Arctic* 1972**

**shared by Stan Price, who says**

**“This is my favorite Early Texas Art piece at this time.”**

**In the last issue of the NEWSLETTER we had a virtual symposium of Earlier Houston Art in place of the in-person 2020 CASETA Symposium, which had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. Since we won't be able to have an in-person HETAG Meeting for the foreseeable future, this issue is mostly devoted to a virtual show&tell of favorite works shared from the personal collections of HETAG members. It's no substitute for all of us being there together to see them, of course, but it's another way for us all to share our excitement and appreciation for Earlier Houston Art, even in times of trouble. Many thanks for all who shared their favorites with us.**



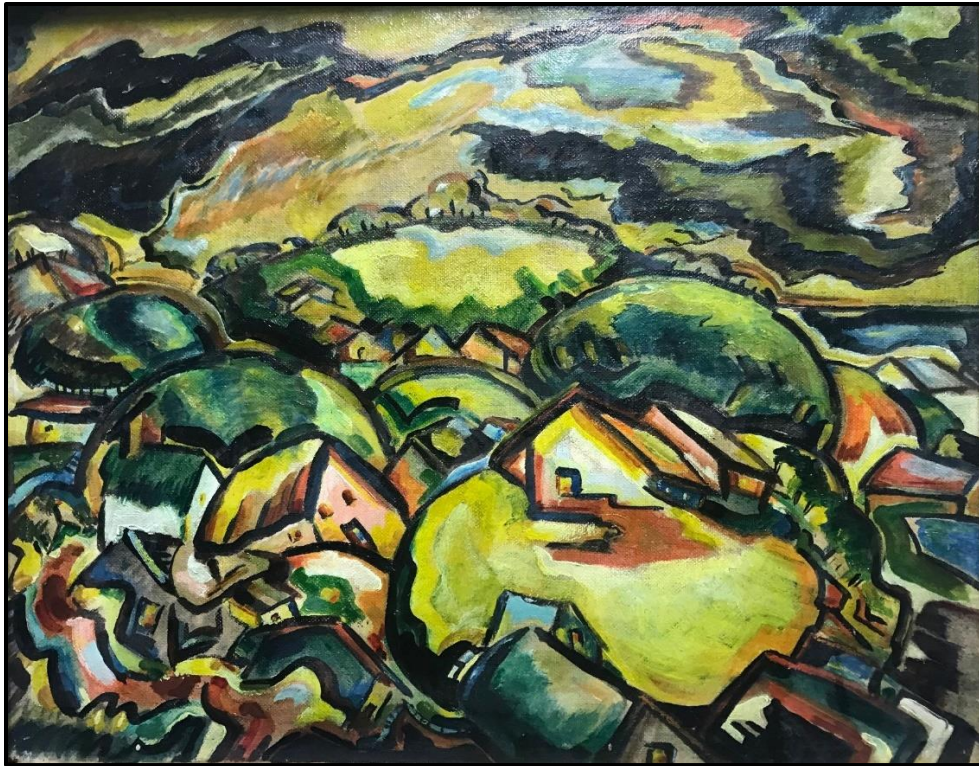
**But first, a last word from the 2020 Casetta Symposium:  
The Casetta Annual Awards for outstanding achievements in  
Early Texas Art**



View the [Casetta Annual Awards Presentation Video](#)  
On YouTube.

## HETAG Virtual Show&Tell

**Some favorites that HETAG members are sharing with all of us virtually, until we can all get together again in person.**



Gene Charlton [Expressionist Landscape] c.1936 Oil on Canvas 10x14 inches.

**Gene Charlton Painting – Story, shared by Greg Fawcett, Fort Worth.**

**The story starts with Margaret Owen Mellott ( born 1923) who died in Fort Worth – Feb 17, 2018. Margaret was an artist – and a very good one. After her death one of her artist friends in Fort Worth took care of handling her Estate Sale. Margaret had many wonderful and interesting items of art (some by her and some by others, art she had collected over the years) that her family wanted sold. Among them – almost cast aside – was a small unusual work that did not look like anything from around here. The painting was on very thin fabric, poorly framed, and unsigned. Scribbled on the back was the name Gene Charlton with a question mark. The name did not mean anything to us or anyone else who looked at it at the time.**

**It was an interesting little (10”x14”) Expressionist piece and we bought it along with a few other items of interest. It sat in a corner for a few weeks until we started really looking at it and began wondering if it might be**

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**“something”. We had nothing remotely like it in our collection and it really needed a good cleaning along with a better frame. But before spending any money on it we needed to know more.**

**Nothing came up when internet searching for local artists in the DFW area named Gene Charlton. Expanding the search area to Texas an interesting name did appear– an article about a Houston art collector named Randy Tibbits. He is a collector of Houston art and had some Gene Charltons in his collection – maybe you have heard of him. At the time this is all we knew about Randy. We also found a few images of works by Gene Charlton but nothing that looked anything like ours.**

**On a whim I sent an email to Randy with a picture of our painting inquiring if this might be by Gene Charlton – Randy responded back immediately – and I could tell by the excitement in his words that yes indeed – there was no doubt – this was an early work by Gene Charlton. As we would later learn – Randy knows his stuff.**

**With that we took the painting in for cleaning and framing and were told that the “Canvas” was a very thin material – like they used in old roll down window shades. Amazingly it was actually in very good condition.**

**Wondering how and where Margaret Mellott came into possession of this painting we started delving into her past – and found that she began her serious art studies at the Museum School at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston in 1942. By 1945 she was at UT in Austin where she earned her BFA. We wonder if perhaps while studying in Houston she met and associated with the art group that Gene was part of. I recently found a reference where Gene Charlton won the Houston Museum of Fine Arts purchase prize in 1942 – the same year Margaret was at the Museum School having won a Faculty Scholarship. Margaret returned to Houston several times from 1949 through 1953 where she exhibited her art in local group (Houston Artists Annual Exhibit) and solo shows (Gregory Gaines Gallery). She could have connected with Gene during any of these times. Margaret obviously had strong ties to the Houston art scene in the late 40’s and early 50’s. Is it possible that she should be considered an Early Houston Artist? Food for thought.**

**Our Gene Charlton painting is oil on canvas -10”x14” - and we believe it to be one of his early works from the mid to late 1930’s. The painting is a landscape of a neighborhood from an elevated perspective – looking down from perhaps a hill or building. Roofs, hills, trees, and clouds all painted in an Expressionist style.**

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**Richard Stout [Beaumont Landscape] 1962.**



**Wade Mayberry says:**

**My last acquisition was last August at the Foltz Gallery. Richard kindly posed with this small oil.**

**He said that he painted the Beaumont landscape in 1962.**



**Dwayne Fuller [Woman in a Yellow Dress] early 1980's Oil or Acrylic on Canvas 46x23 inches**

**Kay Sheffield includes this about her painting:**

**Lacking an official name, I call this painting *Woman in a Yellow Dress*. I acquired it at a Houston auction, about five years ago. The name of the artist was listed as Dwayne Fuller; there was no other information. Later, I set about trying to find, or find out about, Mr. Fuller. I found him in Navasota, (between Houston and College Station), where he is an innkeeper. His inn is called Bogart's Casa Blanca. It features rooms named after Hollywood stars of a bygone era, and it hosts special events.**

**I sent an email to the inn addressed to him. I asked if this were his painting and, if so, for some information about it. He replied with a strange little message, confirming it is his work. He said he painted it about 35 years ago, when he used to go often to New Orleans and paint there. He ended his message with "thanks for calling."**

**I found photos of Bogart's Casa Blanca, including the photo above. I think the gentleman in the chair may be Dwayne Fuller, since the same man appears in one other photo I saw.**

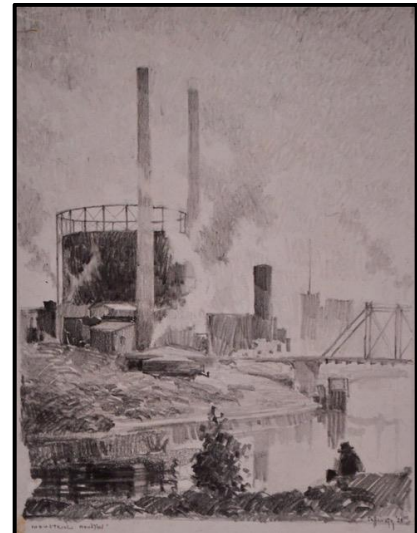
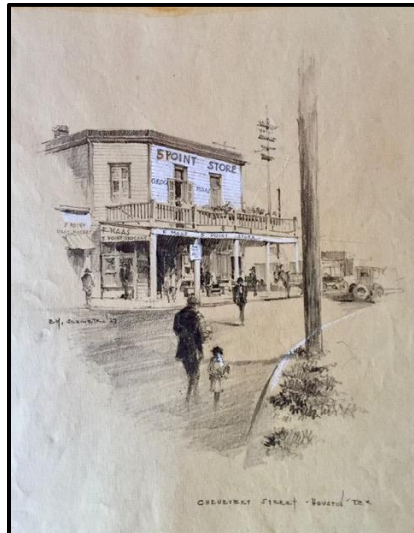
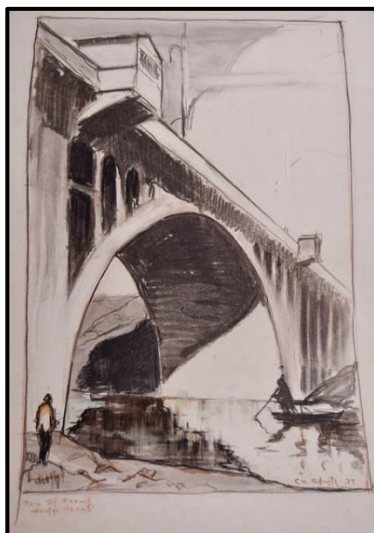
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**Emma Richardson Cherry *Portrait of Billy Kolter* 1934 Oil on Canvas  
shared by The Heritage Society in Sam Houston Park**

**Ginger Berni, Curator of The Heritage Society, shares a favorite painting from the THS collection – and the horrifying story of a terrorist bombing in 1950s Houston that goes with it, via YouTube: [Every Painting Has a Story](#).**



**E.M. “Buck” Schiwetz [Three Drawings] c.1920s & 1930s  
shared by Pamela Harte, Fort Davis, Texas.**



**Earl Staley *St. George and the Dragon* c.1980 Oil on Canvas 48x72 inches.**

**Stephen Alton, Fort Worth, tells the story of how he and Judy Alton became collectors of Earlier Houston Art:**

**In response to your recent call for images of earlier Houston art, I am sending you two images (below) of a large Houston work in our collection. It was so big that I couldn't take it off our wall to photograph it, and because of where it is hanging above our staircase, I couldn't get a good angle to shoot it.**

**This oil on canvas painting, c. 1980, is by Earl Staley. Entitled, *St. George and the Dragon*," it measures 48" x 72". The work has a certain surreal quality, as St. George looks more like one of the four horseman of the Apocalypse, with a flowing black robe and a hood enshrouding his face, than he does an early Christian saint. The horse, which itself bears a rather demonic grin, bisects the painting, neatly dividing it between the dark side on the left (in the form of the dragon's cave) and the light side on the right (in the form of the castle with a Greek cross above the door).**

**We purchased this painting from the estate of our late friend, former Houston art dealer Marvin Watson. For many years, we had admired this brooding, complex painting, which hung in Marvin's living room in Fort Davis, Texas. After Marvin passed away in 2018, Judy and I made a special trip to Alpine (where his estate sale was held) in order to purchase this painting.**



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**Incidentally, at Marvin's estate sale, we also bought two other (much smaller) works by Houston artists. One is a 2004 photogravure by the late Richard Stout entitled "Celtic;" it depicts one of his abstract sculptures and is inscribed "For Marvin." The other work is a small, dark, abstract 1982 charcoal drawing by Robin Utterback, entitled simply "#60."**

**So, Judy and I have now developed a (very) small Houston art collection.**

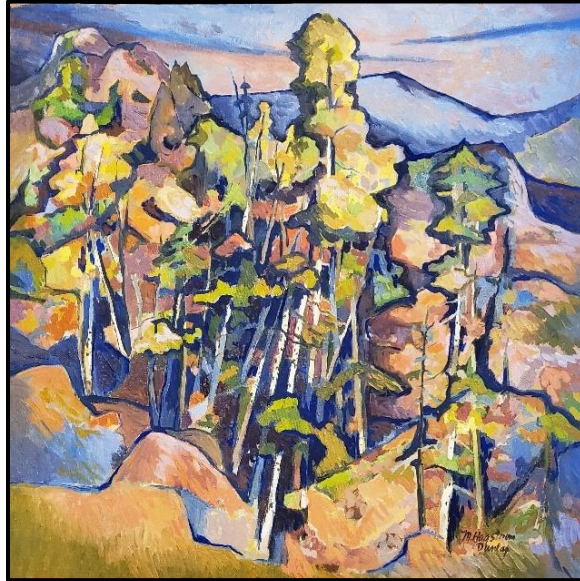


**Tam Kiehnhoff shared this painting by the Beaumont artist, Robert Madden, saying:**

**I love this one partly because after the Lorene Davids it is one of the earliest Southeast Texas works that I found and bought and it is still, many paintings later, a favorite. I think Madden was a good painter.**

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Margaret Hagstrom Dunlap *Forest Grove* Oil on Canvas 24x24 inches.

Of her share, Stephanie Reeves says:

I think my favorite find lately is the modernist work that you helped me research not too long ago... exhibited in the Texas Artist Association Exhibit (date uncertain) maybe 1965 - earlier 70's?



Robin Curtis [Two Prints]

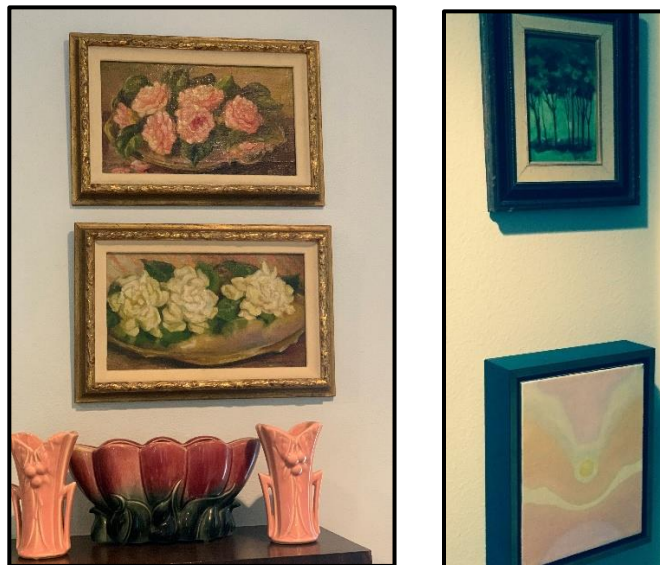
Mary Ellen Whitworth shares these: We probably purchased them in the late 1970s or early 1980s from the Glassell School. She was an instructor there and I believe the school had sales of student and teacher art once a year.

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**Lisa Lipscomb shares: Mary Heisler, painter, from Anahuac and associated mostly with Beaumont. Studied with Ellsworth Stevens in Gatlinburg Tennessee in 1940. Exhibited in Annual South East Texas Exhibition Houston 1937, Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs 1931, Beaumont Women’s Club (one-woman) 1941. Liberty Vindicator 18 March 48 “Miss Mary Heisler well known Beaumont artist is staying at the home of Dr. George L. Morgan in Hankamer, while doing a portrait study of Dr. Morgan”**



**Scott Chase, of Dallas, shares two Emma Richardson Cherry flower paintings from the 1910s or 1920s (l); and a Henri Gadbois form the 1960s together with a Leila McConnell from 2018 (r).**

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**And last, but not least (since that word doesn't apply to any of the wonderful works our HETAG friends have shared with us), four paintings shared by Sarah Beth Wilson McKeel with no accompanying details – no doubt to keep us on our toes and to tantalize us with the fabulous discoveries that lie ahead, when we can once again gather together for actual visits to collections and exhibitions. That day will come! But for now, many thanks to all who have shared some of their favorite Early Texas art with us.**



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**Richard Stout 1934 – April 5, 2020**

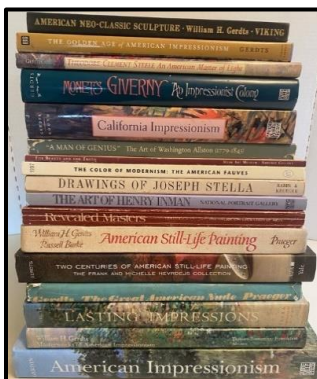
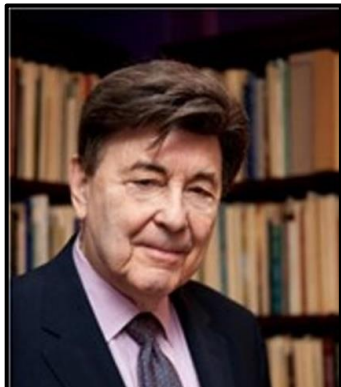
**One of the greats of Houston art – and of art anywhere.**



**BLUE GIBRALTAR 1957 (l) and Untitled March 2020 (r).**

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We are sad to learn that **William H. Gerdts**, distinguished scholar of American art history, died on April 14, 2020, from complications of COVID-19. Some of us will remember Prof. Gerdts from his fascinating talk at the CASETA Symposium in Dallas in 2007. Over the years he conducted extensive research on Dawson Dawson-Watson, an artist he considered undervalued among American Impressionists. We in Houston are especially indebted to him for his discovery that Emma Richardson Cherry was the first woman to paint at Giverny. I never got to meet him in person (though I did hear his CASETA talk), but for some years we had a lively, sometimes gossipy (oh that story about Bernard Berenson and the male brothels of Florence!), always fascinating email exchange focusing on DD-W, Mrs. Cherry and their place in the broader story of American art. It was always a joy to see in my inbox an email from “henryinman@”, his nom de email and one of the countless American artists from the past that he helped us see anew. His breadth of knowledge was astounding, his dedication to what some considered a lost cause before he proved them wrong was inspiring, and his intellectual generosity was appreciated. Thanks for all, Prof. Gerdts.

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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