

# HETAG: The Houston Earlier Texas Art Group



Frank Freed (1906-1975) *Opening Night—Contemporary Arts Museum*, 1953, Oil on canvas, 18 x 25 inches. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Gift of the Eleanor and Frank Freed Foundation, 93.260 © Estate of Frank Freed.

**July 2016**

## THE HOUSTON MIDCENTURY ISSUE

In honor of the exhibition **This WAS Contemporary Art: Fine and Decorative Arts in Houston 1945-1965**, which opens at **The Heritage Society** on Thursday, July 14, 2016 (opening reception, Wednesday, July 13), this is going to be the **Houston Midcentury** issue of the HETAG newsletter. Thanks to the many **HETAGers** who are lending works to the show and donating to make the catalog possible, **HETAG** is one of the sponsors of the exhibition. All the illustrations in this issue are items from the period that are in the show.



Isaac and Sam Brochstein, *Landing/Hall Table*, c. 1951, wood and glass (l);  
Ruth Laird, *Untitled (Owls and Mushrooms)*, c. 1950s, fired clay and **Stella Sullivan** *Owls, Owls, Owls*, 1964 woodblock print (r).

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HETAG is happy to be working with **The Heritage Society** on this exhibition:

## **This WAS Contemporary Art: Fine and Decorative Arts in Houston 1945–1965**

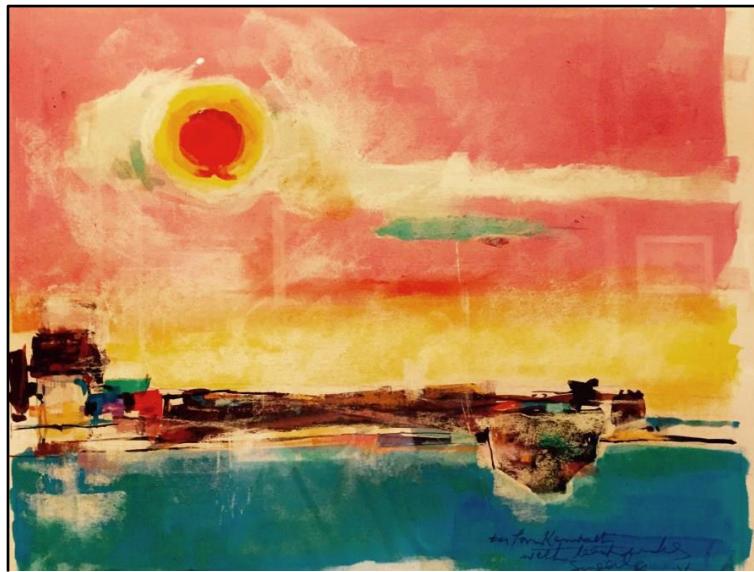
Thursday, July 14–Saturday, October 15, 2016  
The Heritage Society Museum Gallery

The inaugural exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Museum in 1948 was a show called “This Is Contemporary Art”. It was based on the concept, perhaps growing out of a Bauhaus approach brought to Houston by Robert Preusser after study in Chicago with Maholy-Nagy, emphasizing that art had impact in all aspects of life. The 1948 show included painting, sculpture, fabric, jewelry, furniture and many other categories of objects. The current exhibition will use the 1948 show as a model for a look back at a time when Houston and the Houston art world were in transition from regional to national – even international – significance. Though the art and decorative items in the original show were not Houston made, the current edition showcases art, decorative arts and furniture made and/or designed in Houston. The exhibition is curated by **Ginger Berni** at The Heritage Society, and HETAGers **Tam Kiehnhoff** and **Randy Tibbits**. A fully illustrated catalog, designed by **Linda Reaves**, is being published with funding provided by **CASETA: The Center for the Advancement and Study of Early Texas Art**, the **Gayden Family Foundation**, and contributions from individuals, including many HETAGers.

**Opening lender/donor/member reception:** Wednesday, July 13, 2016, 6-8 pm  
**RSVP to Randy Tibbits at** [tibbits@rice.edu](mailto:tibbits@rice.edu) **if you plan to attend.**

**And mark your calendar now: Saturday, August 13, 2016, 10am, HETAG meeting for a gallery tour of the show with the curators.**

<http://www.heritagesociety.org/current-exhibition/>

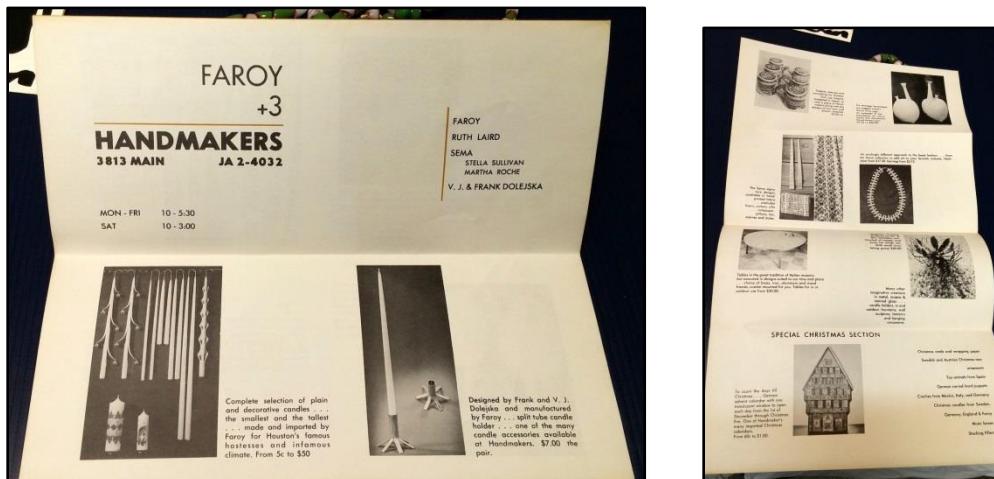


Buck Schiwetz, *Abstract Study (1)*, 1963, watercolor/mixed media, 14½ x 17½ inches.

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## Earlier Houston Art history notes: Handmakers in the 1950s

**Handmakers** was a shop opened in Houston at 3813 Main Street in the late 1950s where a collection of local artists sold things-for-use-in-the-home that they made themselves, like ceramics, jewelry, silk-screened fabrics, and decorative metal items. Among the artists involved in the early days were Ruth Laird, Frank Dolejska, VJ Tate-Dolejska and Stella Sullivan. In the 1960s Handmakers changed somewhat and moved to the Galleria. The full Handmakers history has yet to be written, but you will be able to see examples of many Handmakers objects in **This Was Contemporary Art**.



Handmakers product brochure, late 1950s.



Stella Sullivan Silkscreened fabric, late 1950s (l); Frank Dolejska Mixed Metal Decorative Objects, 1950s/60s (r).

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## Houston Art History Reference Bookshelf:

Looking at art is the best way to learn about it, but sometimes you want to read about it too. When it comes to Texas art from the CASETA era (40 or more years before the current year), you can find a good starter list of books (and lots of other things too) at the Reference tab at the CASETA website (click the link at the bottom of the page). Here are a few titles to consult if you want to read more about earlier Houston art:

**Midcentury Modern Art in Texas by Katie Robinson Edwards** (Univ of Texas, 2014). It doesn't get any better than this. Katie has said that the first image in her book, and the last, are both works by Houston Artist, Robert Preusser, and she gives us two full chapters, because Houston was so prominent in bringing modern art to Texas. We're grateful to her for saying so (but we're not surprised!).

**Texas: 150 Works from the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston** by Alison de Lima Greene (Houston: MFAH, 2000). As is clear from the title, this one covers the whole state, but there is also lots of valuable information specifically on Houston – and lots of images of art and people of interest. Plus, there are useful biographies and a comprehensive list of exhibitions of Texas art that were mounted at MFAH from even before it had its own building.

**Fresh Paint: the Houston School** by Barbara Rose and Susie Kalil (Texas Monthly Press, 1985). This is the catalog of an exhibition held at MFAH, which was a point-in-time selection of some of the artists working in the city in the 1980s. The introductory essays by Rose and Kalil still provide a useful overview of art and the art scene in Houston to 1985.

**Emma Richardson Cherry: Houston's First Modern Artist** by Danielle Burns, Loraine Stuart and Randy Tibbits (Houston Public Library, 2013). The catalog for a retrospective of the work of Emma Richardson Cherry, with essays on her careers as an artist and civic leader.

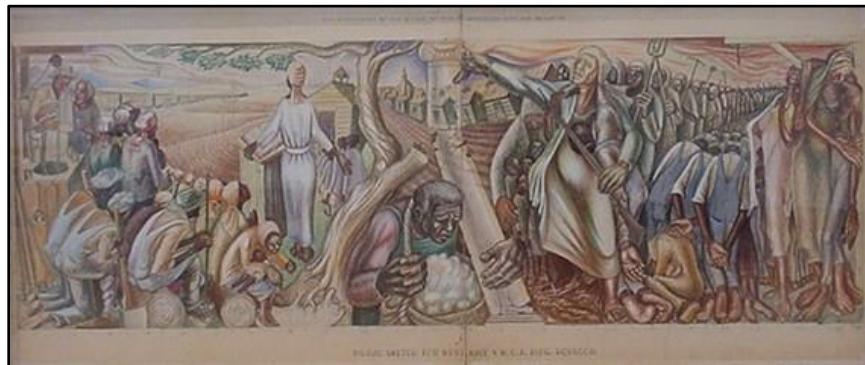
**Left Bank on the Bayou: Houston Avant-garde Art and Theatre in the 1930s** by Mark Cervenka, Susan J. Baker and Randy Tibbits (University of Houston Downtown, 2014). Another exhibition catalog that focuses on a group of Houston modernist artists, including Gene Charlton, Carden Bailey, Nione Carlson, Robert Preusser, Frank Dolejska and Forrest Bess, associated with the innovative theatre director and producer, Margo Jones, in the late 1930s.

**This WAS Contemporary Art: Fine and Decorative Arts in Houston 1945-1965** by Ginger Berni, Tam Kiehnhoff, Ben Koush, Randy Tibbits and Linda Reaves (The Heritage Society, 2016 forthcoming). The latest addition to the bookshelf will be this fully illustrated exhibition catalog, with essays, looking at the richness of Houston art and design at midcentury.

Here's the CASETA link to more books on early Texas art. While you're there check out the other research resources listed at the newly redesigned and enhanced CASETA website:

<http://www.caseta.org/history-reference>

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John Biggers, *Contributions of Negro Women to American Life and Education*, 1952-53, tempera on paper, 25½ x 59½ inches.  
Collection of The University Museum at Texas Southern.

## Exhibition of interest:

### "Statements: African American Art from the Museum's Collection"

The Museum of Fine Arts Houston  
Until September 25, 2016

Many of you joined the HETAG tour of this show, conducted by MFAH curatorial assistant Althea Ruoppo, but new pieces have been rotated into the gallery, so it's worth another visit to see what's new and to have another look at all the Houston pieces that are included.

<https://www.mfah.org/exhibitions/statements-african-american-art-mfah-collection/>

If you'd like to read more about the show you can click to my review in *Houston Press*:

<http://www.houstonpress.com/arts/statements-at-mfah-is-a-remarkable-exhibit-of-artistic-steps-forward-8141569>

## William Reaves/Sarah Foltz Fine Art

Summer Encore  
& Inventory Sale  
July 6 - July 30, 2016  
Afternoon Reception - Saturday, July 9, 2016 from 1 - 4 PM

"Come by the gallery for our Summer Encore Sale! This exhibition offers the opportunity to acquire superb works of art that somehow escaped buyers during their previous showing. Our summer inventory sale gives patrons a final chance to take home these great Texas finds at very favorable values!"

[http://reavesart.com/Exhibit\\_Detail.cfm?ShowsID=168](http://reavesart.com/Exhibit_Detail.cfm?ShowsID=168)

(If you know of exhibitions of earlier Houston art that I've missed, please email me at [tibbits@rice.edu](mailto:tibbits@rice.edu) to let me know so that I can include them in the next HETAG newsletter.)

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Frances Skinner, *Untitled*, 1957, oil on board, 7 x 14 inches.

## Artist websites:

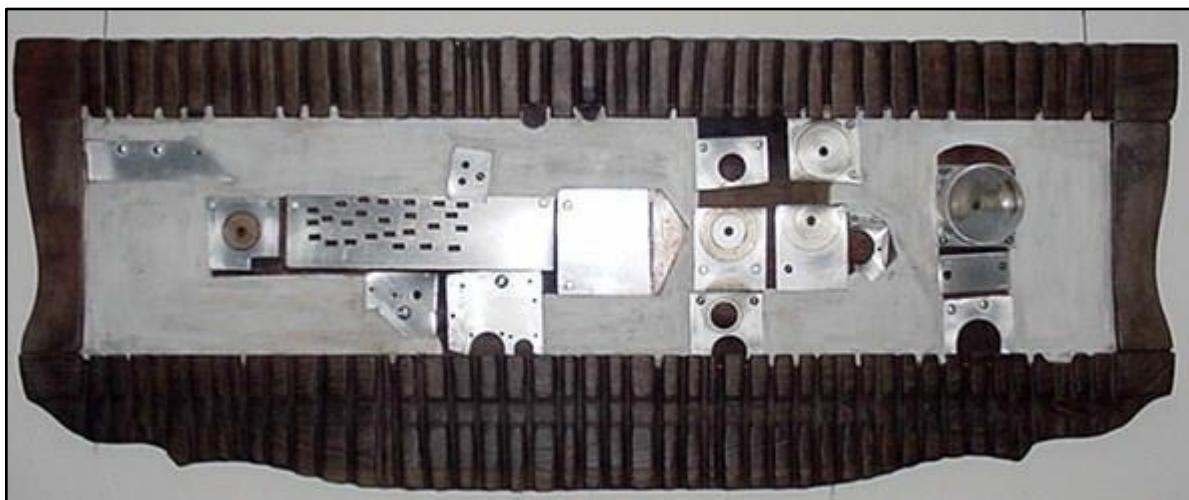
Here are websites for some earlier Houston artists. The list is undoubtedly incomplete, since these are just the ones I know about. If you know of others, please let me know so that I can include them in future listings. Since there are many fab Houston artists who have their own websites, I plan to keep this list focused on the “earlier” aspect of our name – that is to say, artists who were active in Houston 40 years or more before the current year. So this year that would be 1976 and before. For you younger Houston artists who don’t quite make that cut now: keep working and one day you will! (And be sure to let me know when you do.)

Herni Gadbois <http://www.henrigadbois.com/>

Hunter George <http://watercolorsbyhunter.com/>

Leila McConnell <http://www.leilamcconnell.com/index.htm>

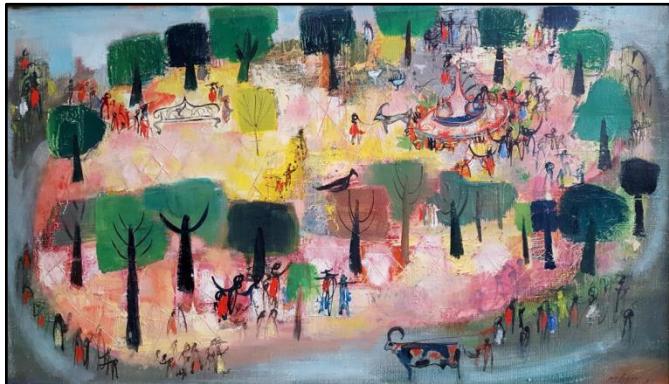
Richard Stout <http://www.rstoutart.com/>



Charles Pebworth, *Untitled (Wall Sculpture)*, c. 1964, wood and metal, 18 x 46 inches.

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And since I seem to have an extra page, here are a few more images from This Was Contemporary Art



**Mildred Dixon**, *Mexican Afternoon*, 1955, oil on canvas, 14½ x 24 inches; **David Adickes**, *Untitled (Bronze Rider)*, n. d., bronze and wood, 4 inches high.



**Dick Wray**, *Untitled*, 1961, oil, sand and mixed media on canvas, 19½ x 35½ inches;  
**Jim Culberson**, *Untitled (Cover of Dick Wray Brochure)*, 1953, silver gelatin print, 10 x 10 inches.



**Elwood M. Payne**, Photographs of Interiors Designed by Brochsteins Inc., c. 1949-1951, color photography: Sakowitz Fabric Shop;  
**Don Edelman**, *Untitled*, 1950, oil on canvas, 24 x 34 inches.

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## Out of Town:

### JOSE ARPA SPANISH PAINTER IN TEXAS

Apr 9, 2016 - Monday Sep 5, 2016

**Panhandle Plains Historical Museum**, Canyon, TX

A special related event:

On the weekend of **26-27 August 2016**, PPHM will host a **"Heart of Texas Art"** extravangza built around the Jose Arpa exhibition and PPHM's permanent Texas collection.

"Beginning Friday we will host a reception for all the lenders and funders of "Jose Arpa: Spanish Painter in Texas," followed by tours of our Texas, Frank Reaugh, and H. D. Bugbee galleries, the Bugbee Studio installation, the murals in our Pioneer Hall painted by Mr. Bugbee and Ben Carlton Mead, and PPHM's vault. On Saturday, 27 August, PPHM host a brunch after which we will offer to you a guided tour of the Jose Arpa exhibition. We also strongly encourage you to allow time to see Palo Duro Canyon (twelve miles from our front door). Many of you have never visited PPHM and/or Palo Duro, and we offer an opportunity to bask in early Texas art for a couple of days and wish a *fond buen viaje* (bon voyage) for the Arpa exhibition."

<http://panhandleplains.org/gallery.asp?pageid=7&galid=481>



Perspective drawing of the Contemporary Arts Association building by **Karl Kamrath**. 1949 MSS 0422-2133-CAAH Building Proposal, Houston Public Library, HMRC.

PS – Keep an eye on the *Houston Chronicle* for an article in their history series (perhaps as soon as Thursday, July 7) on Houston Art Innovators. I think It may include the names and images of some artists you know.

**Randy Tibbits, coordinator  
HETAG:  
Houston Earlier Texas Art Group  
tibbits@rice.edu**