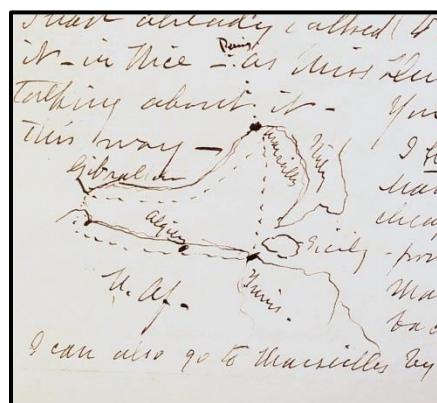


# HETAG: The Houston Earlier Texas Art Group



## HETAG Newsletter No. 37, November 2019 The North Africa Issue!

Why North Africa, you might ask? Well, why not! Houston is now known as a city with arms and eyes open to the world, but that attitude isn't new. Ever since our city became a major port, soon after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, we've been cultivating an international worldview. Our artists have led the way. Remember *Houston Paints Mexico* from last year? By now we all know that many of our Earlier Houston Artists ventured to Europe. Glance through past issues of the HETAG Newsletter, [on the University of Houston Digital Library](#), for reminders of that. But four even went all the way to North Africa between the 1920s and the 1950s – Emma Richardson Cherry, Virgie Claxton, Frederic Browne and Gene Charlton. And, of course, they brought back images of what they saw to share with their fellow Houstonians. I'm hard pressed to think of any other Texas artists who made that trip (though there may be some I haven't tracked down). Just another of those things that make Earlier Houston Art so distinctive and such fun. This seems a perfect time to acknowledge the influence of Houston artists on North Africa, as the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, unveils the major addition to the collection of Eugène Delacroix's [Women of Algiers in Their Apartment \(1833–34\)](#), a recently rediscovered, early version of his famous painting on the same subject in the Louvre. The Delacroix joins other images of North Africa at MFAH, some of which have been in the collection since the founding of the museum, helping shape the vision of our artists, as they help us see the wide world along with them. For more about Houston artists in North Africa, see the article on page 3.



Emma Richardson Cherry in the 1920s, when she made her trip to North Africa, and her map in a letter home showing her family her travel route.



**The 2020 CASETA Symposium**  
and Texas Art Fair  
will take place at The DoubleTree by Hilton in Houston, TX  
Friday, April 24 - Sunday, April 26, 2020

Make your plans now to attend the 2020 CASETA Symposium, which will be right here in Houston in April. You'll be hearing much more about this once-a-year, Early Texas Art extravaganza over the next few months, and you can follow the news at the CASTEA website, but I can tell you now that the program is shaping up to be one of the best ever, with already confirmed talks on Everett Spruce (by Shirley Reece-Hughes, Curator of Painting and Sculpture at the Amon Carter Museum), early women abstractionists in Texas (by Amy Von Lintel, Associate Professor of Art History, Texas A&M University, Canyon), early Galveston art (by Eleanor Barton, Museum Curator at Rosenberg Library), Texas Modernism(s): Houston/Dallas in the 1930s (by yours truly), Texas photographer, Keith Carter of Beaumont, and long-time Houston gallerist, Betty Moody, in conversation with Sarah Beth Wilson McKeel. See you all there!

**Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, adds a Julian Onderdonk to the collection!**



It snowed in San Antonio on January 11, 1918. We know it did because on that day Julian Onderdonk signed and dated his *Snow in the Rock Quarry*, recently added to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, permanent collection, and on view in gallery 108 of the Beck Building. Museum purchase funded by the Lora Jean Kilroy Accession Endowment. *Quarry* joins Onderdonk's splendid *Sunlight and Shadow* from 1910, accession number 2 to the MFAH Collection (but the first real painting, since accession number 1 turned out to be an old master copy). Gift of the Houston Art League, the George M. Dickson Bequest, not currently on view.

## Houston Art History Notes: Houston Artists in North Africa

“Seems ‘wild and wooly’ to be able to write Africa  
at the head of ones letter doesn’t it?”

But that’s just what Emma Richardson Cherry (1859-1954) and a few other Houston artists did at various times through the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In addition to Cherry, Frederic Browne, Virgie Claxton and Gene Charlton also ventured to North Africa in the 1920s, 30s and 40s – a somewhat surprising number perhaps, since there is no compelling reason why they should have been drawn to that exotic part of the world.

The 19<sup>th</sup> Century Orientalism exemplified by the Eugène Delacroix painting recently added to the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (pictured here with the later version in the Louvre) had faded somewhat by 1925/26 when Cherry made her visit to Algeria.



Eugène Delacroix *Women of Algiers: Study for Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* c1832-34  
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (l); *Women of Algiers in their Apartment* 1834 Louvre (r).

True, one of the earliest paintings of note in the MFAH collection, and one all these artists would have known, was this splendid view of North Africa by Jean-Léon Gérôme. That might have



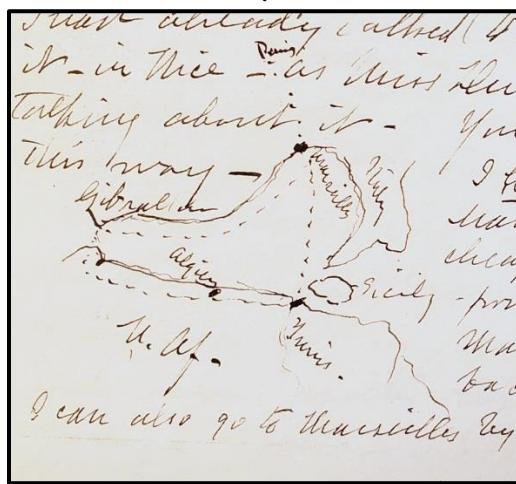
Jean-Léon Gérôme *Tiger on the Watch* c1888, MFAH, Gift of the Houston Art League, the George M. Dickson Bequest

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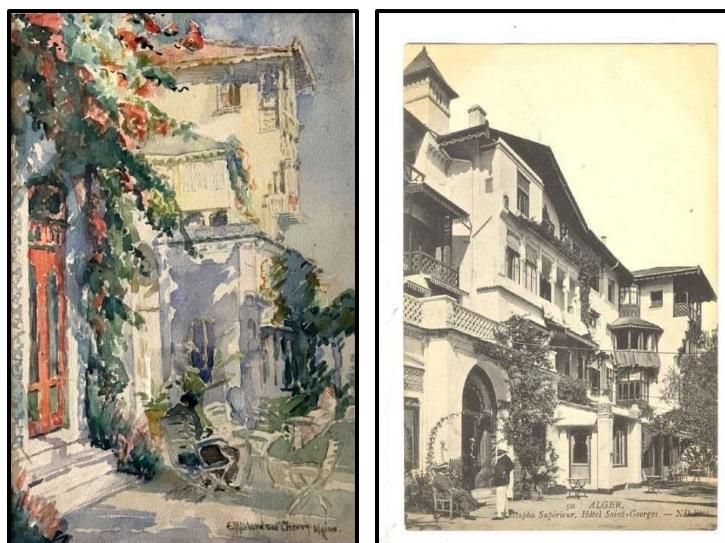
been what inspired them. But more likely it was just right time/right place coupled with the little desire for some exotic adventure. Cherry herself had not intended to go to Africa as she completed a tour of Spain during her year-long 1925/26 sojourn in Europe. But it was so close – just across the Strait of Gibraltar – and some of her traveling companions were going – and the tour operator offered it to her at cost. Only \$100. Such an opportunity. Why not?

And so on December 28, 1925, she wrote to her “Dear ones at home – I know you will feel I am lost over here – But I’m not.” And she drew them a map to let them see where she where their dear one in Europe had got to – and would soon be getting to.



Letter from ERC to Dear Ones at Home, December 28, 1925, detail.

Ever the artist, of course, she made art to record the amazing things she saw on her journey. The travel wasn’t easy, but it was also not all hardship. In Algiers her party stayed at the posh Hotel St. George, and she took time to paint a watercolor of it.



Emma Richardson Cherry *Hotel St. George, Algiers* 1926 (l); contemporary postcard (r)

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She also found time to paint (or at least make preliminary sketches for a later painting of) a magnificent garden – a painting that may have inspired her good friend and fellow artist Dawson Dawson-Watson's equally striking garden painting set in the somewhat less exotic San Antonio.



Emma Richardson Cherry *Garden in Algiers* c1926 (l); Dawson Dawson-Watson *Entrance to the Governor's Palace, San Antonio* 1938 (r)

It wasn't all posh hotels, however. Her party ventured into the desert to rough it at Biskra, a journey taking hours.



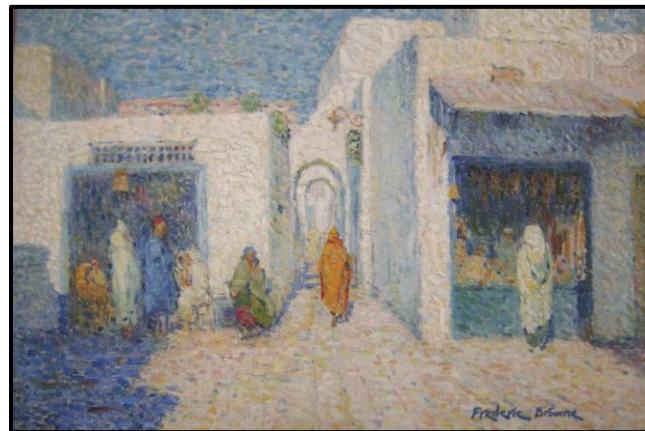
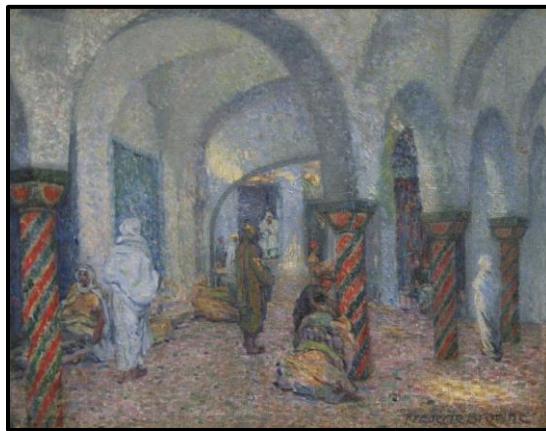
Emma Richardson Cherry *Travel Notes: Algiers, Constanine, Biskra Camp* c1926

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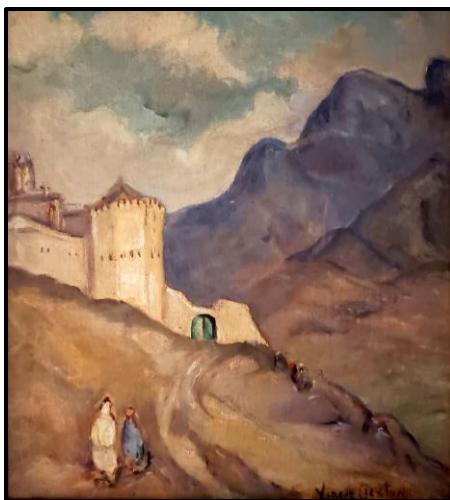
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Though Cherry was fascinated by what she saw, she didn't necessarily embrace everything she encountered – for instance, the veiled women, deprived of education, because “it is against our religion,” that she met along the way, and of whom she wrote: “It would be difficult to make any changes among such people – and I have no desire to try. If they like it – that's their affair. But it's a comfort to not be of – or in it – especially in this day & age of progress.”

When Cherry returned home, she brought back word of her adventures, perhaps spurring some of her fellow Houston artists to make the journey too. Sometime in the late 1920s, Frederic Browne (1877-1966), who came to Houston to teach at Rice Institute, ventured to Tunis. Browne's wife was French, so they went to France almost every summer, and as Cherry had already found, it really wasn't difficult to get a boat from Marseille or other ports in the South of France across the Mediterranean – and the painting potential repaid the voyage handsomely.



Frederic Browne [*Tunis market?*] c. later 1920s



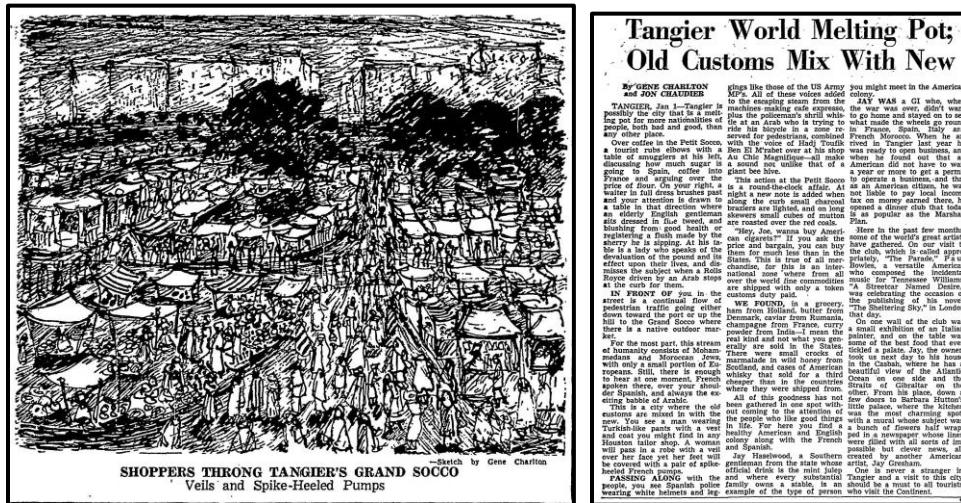
Virgie Claxton *Tetuan [Morocco], 1 & 2* c.1931

In 1931, Virgie Claxton (1876-1953) spent the summer and fall touring and painting in Spain and

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the Balearic Islands. Mrs. Cherry had made the same journey in 1925/26 and may have inspired Claxton to follow in her path. Since Morocco is just across the strait from Gibraltar, Claxton took the opportunity to run over for a visit and add North Africa to her itinerary. She brought back these two views of Tétouan (she called it Tetuan), an old fortified port city which justified its nickname, The White Dove, in her depictions.

The following decades brought the depression and World War II, so it was quite a while till the next Houston artist made it to North Africa. But in 1949, Gene Charlton (1909-1979) and his partner and fellow Houstonian, Jon Chaudier, ventured to Tangier. They wrote about and illustrated their visit for readers of the *Houston Post* as part of their series *Artists Abroad*. The heiresses, smugglers, Arabs and artists (including American novelist, Paul Bowles) they encountered fascinated them. To be honest, they might also have been attracted by the reputation Tangier already had as a place where “anything goes” – a reputation that would be burnished in the next decade by the likes of William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg.



Gene Charlton and Jon Chaudier "Tangier World Melting Pot," *Houston Post* January 2, 1950.

It was quite a quarter century of adventure for Houston artists, drawn to the “other-ness” that North Africa represented. Part of the attraction was the chance to see a world so different from the one they knew. But that so many were ready to go so far suggests that Houston’s artists were already open to that “melting pot” quality which Houston so abundantly embraces today.

## **Research support opportunity:**

**The William J. Hill Texas Artisans & Artists Archive**, at the Kitty King Powell Library and Study Center at the Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens, is offering a research award of \$500 to encourage awareness and use of the Hill Archive. The application due date is December 16, 2019. Further information is available on the grant webpage is here: <https://texasartisans.mfah.org/digital/custom/grant/>

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## EXHIBITIONS, CURRENT AND FUTURE:

### **Riding the Tiger: The Art of Bert Long Jr.**



#### **HMAAC: Houston Museum of African American Culture**

**In conjunction with Deborah Colton Gallery  
until November 9, 2019**

**BERT FILM: SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2ND, 4:30 - 6:00 PM**

Houston artist Bert Long (1940-2014) said: "Every day we wake up and we get on this tiger. It's on fire. There is no ground below it. The ocean is above it...The tiger has ferocious claws and a mouth full of teeth that will hurt you. Life is not easy. Life will chew you up, claw you up, set you on fire, toss you off a ravine and pound your ass. And what you have to do every day is wake up and say okay, I'm ready to get on that tiger!"

#### **Foltz Fine Art Storied Lands**

November 9 – December 21, 2019,  
opening reception Saturday, November 16<sup>th</sup> from 6-8pm

Within the *Storied Lands* theme are recent works by Contemporary Landscape Painters, including Mallory Agerton (Houston), Mary Baxter (Marfa), David Caton (Utopia), Malou Flato (Austin), Pat Gabriel (Fort Worth), E. Dan Klepper (Marathon), Ken Mazzu (Houston), Susu Meyer (Houston), Noe Perez (Corpus Christi), and Jeri Salter (Lago Vista). These works, with their more traditional approach to capturing the Texas landscape will contrast stylistically with the second grouping of works in *Modernist Visions of the Southwest*, which will include more abstract works by Houston Modernists **Jack Boynton, Herb Mears, Earl Staley, Richard Stout, and Dick Wray**. Rounding out the shows with a third vignette exhibition, *James Evans: Borderlands*, featuring a powerful group of photographs of the people and places of our Southern Border taken by renowned photographer of the Big Bend region, James Evans (Marathon).

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### **The Glassell School, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston** **Prints and Ceramics from Little Egypt Enterprises and Related** **Studios until November 17, 2019**

In the 1970s and 1980s, the expertise and equipment supplied by master printer David Folkman and his colleagues at the Little Egypt Enterprises print shop provided a transformative opportunity for Houston's artists to explore the medium during a period of rediscovery and reinvention. Decades later, Little Egypt's collected output is deserving of greater recognition as one of the city's most significant, imaginative, and longstanding collaborative art projects. *Prints and Ceramics from Little Egypt Enterprises and Related Studios* presents lithographs, serigraphs, etchings, and ceramics produced by Little Egypt Enterprises and its descendants: the Cerling Etching Studio and Tembo/Cerling Collaborative Studio.

### **McClain Gallery** **Dorothy Hood: Illuminated** **Earth until December 21, 2019**

A career-spanning exhibition of the work of Dorothy Hood (1918-2000), who was and is one of the giants of Houston art.

### **The Grace Museum, Abilene** **Up Close and Personal: Portraits from the Reaves Collection of Texas Art** **September 7, 2019 – January 18, 2020**

This exhibition features a selection of artworks from the private collection of HETAGers, Bill and Linda Reaves, focusing on the human figure by well-known artists such as Kathleen Blackshear, Dixon Reeder, Stella Sullivan, Donald Vogel, Flora Reeder, Harold Bugbee, Cecil Casebier, Henry Gadbois, Edmund Kinzinger, Florence McClung, Leila McConnell, Kermit Oliver, and others.

### **El Paso Museum of Art** **Tom Lea and World War II** **until January 5, 2020**

From 1941 to 1946, El Paso native **Tom Lea** (1907-2001) served as a World War II eyewitness artist correspondent for Life magazine, becoming the only artist to provide American audiences with vividly painted accounts from the war's frontlines. Central to the exhibition are Lea's nine eyewitness paintings from the infamous 1944 **Battle of Peleliu**, which are presented in the exhibition alongside over twenty other war illustrations by Lea, as well as mural studies and ink-wash illustrations from the El Paso Museum of Art's significant collection of the artist's work.

## The Dorothy Hood Archive comes home!

### University of Houston Libraries

#### AMST Donates Hood-Velasco Maidana Papers to UH Special Collections

University of Houston Libraries is pleased to announce receipt of the personal papers of noted Houston artist Dorothy Hood and her husband, José María Velasco Maidana from the [Art Museum of South Texas \(AMST\)](#). Located in Corpus Christi and affiliated with Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, AMST advances the awareness, knowledge, appreciation and enjoyment of the visual arts for the residents and visitors of South Texas. The archives will be cataloged, preserved, digitized, and made available to students, scholars, and the public through [UH Special Collections](#).

Hood (1918 – 2000) was a Texas painter best known for her Modernist works. Velasco Maidana (1899-1989), was a Bolivian composer and filmmaker. Donated materials include personal papers, correspondence, scrapbooks, photographs, journals, catalogs, artifacts, audio/video recordings, and ephemera documenting the lives and careers of the two artists. AMST acquired a major collection of Hood's works in 2001, along with the personal papers of Hood and Velasco Maidana.

Christian Kelleher, head of Special Collections, noted, "UH Libraries is excited to join in the efforts of AMST and other leaders in the arts community to preserve and promote the international legacies of Dorothy Hood and Velasco Maidana. These archives are unique primary source documentation of two remarkable, creative people, and will provide new insights into their works, careers, and lives."

Sara Morgan, interim director of AMST, reflected on the significance of Hood's contributions to the arts. "Dorothy Hood was a Texas artist who lived an exploratory life that took her from her birth city of Bryan, Texas, to Houston, Providence, Rhode Island, New York City, Mexico City and eventually back to Texas where she resettled in Houston," Morgan said. "Her work, much like her life, abandoned conventionality and explored big themes such as space, presence, spirituality, emotion and color. Hood was considered the sole female representative of the artist pack that commanded Houston's art scene in the 1960s and 1970s. We feel it is fitting that her treasury of papers return to the city that embraced her art and her talent."

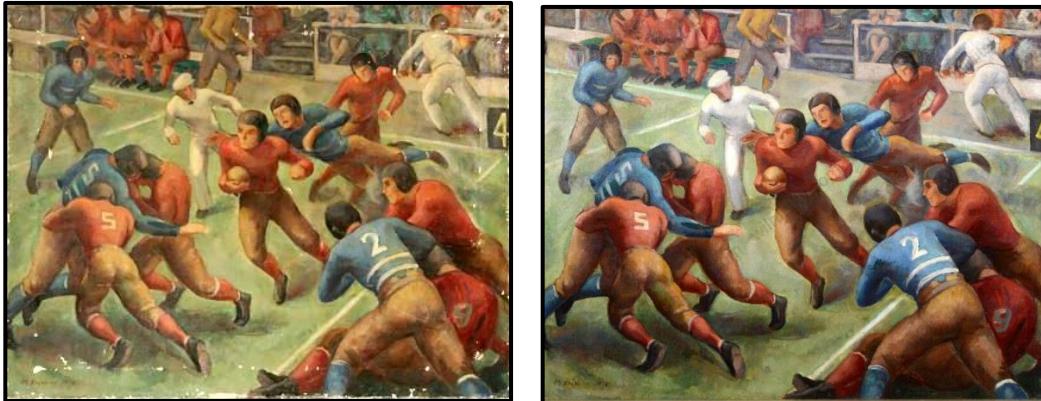


Dorothy Hood

Dorothy Hood, nacida en Inglaterra, nació para ser modernista, pero se dedicó a la más lejana generación de pintores, valientes pioneros, que no se arriesgaron con la UAMA.

## Before and After - Bringing Earlier Houston Art back to life:

We HETAGers always want to encourage folks to have a look at our home-town art from the past. It's still good; it's still relevant; it still has something to show us about who we are and how we got to today. But it always helps for the art to look its best, so smoothing off the hard knocks often administered by life is sometimes called for. As was the case for this painting by Margaret Brisbene (1901-1970), which came to light recently, and got a little loving attention.



Margaret Brisbene *Football Game* 1938 Oil on Canvas

**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  
Now including issues 1-31, March 2016 – March 2019  
<https://digital.lib.uh.edu/collection/hetag>**

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