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MARIAN HETTNER GRUNBAUM, COLLECTION.

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Hettner Grunbaum, Houston, Texas, June 18, 1980.

MARIAN HETTNER GRUNBAUM COLLECTION

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1. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

*Notes Summer 1979
to May 1980*

MARIAN HEFTNER GRUNBAUM

Born in Germany. Studied Music in Dresden and also Humanities at the University of Heidelberg. Since 1937 she has made her home in Houston, Texas. Studied art at the University of Houston and at the Museum of Fine Arts School.

Collections:

Smith College Museum, Southampton, Mass. *permanent collection*,
Several private collections (Demenil Coll,) *bought by H. Steinhilber*

Exhibitions:

One man shows:

Du Bose Gallery, Houston 1971
Mind's Eye (M.E.) Gallery, Houston 1976 (together with
with weaver Margaret Sheppard)

National:

"New Accessions U.S.A." Colorado Springs 1954
"Contemporary American Paintings" circulated by "American Federation
of Arts" 1954 - 1955
"National Exhibition of Painters in Cascais"; National Arts Club
N.E.P.C. tenth and eleventh Travel Exh., 1967-1971. New York 1967

Texas:

"Texas General" Dallas, San Antonio, Houston 1947, 1952, 1953
"Texas Fine Art Ass." Laguna Gloria, Austin 1955; Travel Show 1955-1956
"Twentieth Century Women Artists in Texas" Laguna Gloria Art Museum
Austin 1974

Houston :

"Houston Artists" Museum of Fine Arts, 1943, 49, 50, 53, 54, 55
Contemporary Arts Museum "Rental Show" 1954, 55, 56, 64, 65
Jewish Comm. Center "Annual Jury Exh." (Juror Emily Genauer) 1969, 1974
"Houston Area Exh." U. of H. 1974
Artist's Equity Group Show A.C. Glassell School of Art, 1979,
and others.

One person show Roberto Malina, March 19 - May 10, 1980

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Notes for interview, May 1980

Dresden
I was born in Dresden, at that time the capital of the Kingdom of Saxony. Dresden has been one of the loveliest cities on earth: centuries had added to its beauty, its gracious living, its love of art and music. I grew up in Dresden; the "Sistine Madonna" in the Dresden Gallery, the performances at the Opera — I heard Richard Strauss conduct his "Salome" — the serene church music I went to hear on Sunday mornings at the "Hofkirche", all this beauty is unforgettable. The D. Gallery contained many of the most famous masterpieces of painting in Europe. A part of the "Royal Collections", splendid and charming items, have been shown pretty recently in, I believe, three cities in the U.S.A. also over TV-P.B.C. — as Communist Propaganda of all things! —

In 1945 Dresden was attacked by Allied Bombers. The city burned seven days and eight nights. 135,000 human beings lost their lives, also part of my family. The bodies were burnt on a pyre erected at the "Altmarkt" (market place). — The city of my youth is gone forever.

* the cathedral where the Royal family attended the service.

My grandfather, Hermann Hellner, was director of the "Antikenkabinett" (Roman and Greek antique, as far as I know), he also was the author of "Kunst- und Literaturgeschichte des 18. Jhd." ("Art and Literature of the 18th century"). The work has become a classic and still is being reprinted today.

Hermann Hellner

H. H. was married to one of the daughters of August Grall, whose miniature portraits painted on ivory with a paint of his own invention (the colors he used lasted longer and were more intense than the watercolors used before him) hang in European Museums: portrait of Napoleon's mother and stepdaughter, the Queen of Spain, Queen Adelaide of England, the sculptor Thorwaldsen,

August Grall

the composer Felix Mendelssohn among others. Grall has assembled a distinguished collection of Renaissance drawings. I have a letter from the Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge, Mass. telling me that drawings having belonged to him turn up on the international Art Market every so often.

Drawings

collection of

The romantic painter Alfred Rethel ("Karl der Grosse in der Gruft zu Aachen", "Hannibals Zug über die Alpen") was

x Hortense Beaumont

© Alfred Hettner

parents
childhood

war
University

his son-in-law; A.D.'s two grandsons were painters (Düsseldorf School), also my father's brother and 2 cousins of mine, one living in Italy, the other in Paris.

My father, being a judge, was more pedestrian; my mother came from an old-established Dresden family, very protestant. I was raised in the Victorian tradition... I remember the day when Queen Victoria died.

As a child I loved to paint and to sing and was very shy. As a young girl I had nothing in mind but to be an accomplished violinist and I studied very hard.

We were not prepared for what the First World War was to bring: the ruin of our world. I lost my only brother under particularly tragic circumstances; most of the young people I had been dancing with never came home again. We were cold and unbelievably hungry. — I studied for admission to a University and left home for Heidelberg in the summer of 1918; this gave me my first taste of freedom. And I also committed my first act of non-conformity in marrying a

1.) Otto Hettner, 2.) Rolando Hettner 3.) Sabine Hettner

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Marriage

Last years in Europe

U.S.A.

Houston

young Jewish doctor, still in uniform, having served as physician in the army. I knew he would have less prejudice and more compassion than the people I had known in my past.

Revolution and inflation caused by the lost war, hunger and poverty left no room other than to keep alive. We recovered economically after some years, but the humiliation and intimidation of the Jews already had started. Our daily life was full of anxiety and fear. Our last two European winters we spent in Barcelona, Spain.

We loved to live there and had hoped to be able to stay. But the Spanish Civil War broke out.

We left Germany in the spring of 1937, after Hitler had come to power in 1933. We were lucky to get visas for U.S.A.

We decided to try our luck in Houston, mostly for practical reasons. Houston at that time was a friendly city. You could leave your backdoor open without fear of being burglarized. Newly met friends and neighbors tried to be helpful. The American way of life gave me an unaccustomed

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freedom: daytime belonged to me mostly, my husband spending his time at his Doctor's office downtown. For three years I played the violin with the Houston Symphony Orchestra which was just emerging out of nothing. The players still were only partly professional musicians, partly amateurs. But we played the usual full repertoire of a Symphony Orchestra. The concerts took place in the dilapidated old City Auditorium, next door to the location of the Fatstock show. The latter, of course, took precedence; whenever it was going on people who wished to attend the concert were unable to park their cars. - Houston at present is proud of Goussier Hall; a line of famous and not so famous conductors were here in turn, but I think the "Maestros" stay was always dependant on the moneyed and conservative people who provided the funds. The H. Orchestra under Stokowski was equal to the best in the country. I do not think this can be said today. "Can art be bought with money?" X I say no.

Houston
Symphony

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Alley Theatre

Soon after we came to H. we very much liked to attend the performances of the little theatre Minor Vance had created. The plays were interesting, modern and nicely played. The "Alley Theatre" got its name because of its very modest location in a small backstreet.

* This little theatre we liked much better because of its more intimate atmosphere, a little bit like the "Kammerspiele" in Berlin at Max Reinhardt's time.

The de Menils

The de Menils arrival brought a breath of fresh air to the pretty dull city. We knew them when they were young and charming, not yet imperial. They lived in a comparatively modest home in River Oaks, the children were still small. John de M. showed with fatherly pride the paintings of one of his little sons. He also showed us with pride his desk, which consisted of a huge board supported by two trestles. From their beginnings ^{they} they were full of enthusiasm to change H.'s provincial outlook, to further spiritual life, and also tolerance. I don't

* think they anticipated that much resistance on the part of their fellow citizens, who than the much more elaborate new theatre

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resented to have the order of things disturbed by "foreigners". It is common knowledge, however, in what immeasurable way these gifted and devoted people changed life in Houston.

I personally remember the receptions at their home, outstanding in many ways, a fantastically beautiful house with still more fantastically beautiful paintings on the walls, a large selected number of guests, the guests of honor people like Max Scmit, Marcel Duchamp, Rosselini.

I vividly remember the first show of really distinguished contemporary art they had arranged in an old Movietheater, the "De Luxe", situated in the fifth ward, a black ghetto. Clement Greenberg was here for the occasion and we talked about some of the paintings in the show: an Olszky, a Kelley. I did not tell him that I painted myself, I was too shy.

Several years I worked for Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organisation; The State of Israel was not yet established and I passionately wanted to help the

at the reception

De Luxe shows

Hadassah

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Judith Cook

Jewish people find their own home. I had
learned the monstrous persecution in
Germany. - For fundraising I arranged a
concert with Fiddell back donating her
performance.

H. Artists' Show

I never really had ceased to paint, if
only when we went on vacation. I exhibited
some of what I had done at the "Houston
Artists' Show" at the Museum of Fine Arts,
which each year the benevolent Mr. Chellman
offered the H. art community. Professionals
and amateurs alike were welcome; it was
a juried show but any style was considered.
Unfortunately this is not true today. It is
mostly the special taste of the juror of the
moment who determines what is shown
in any of the few shows where local
artists as a group can participate.

U. of H.
Preusser

After my children had left home
for marriage and college, around 1950,
I enrolled as a student at the U. of H. Art Dept.
The design course, taught by Robert Preusser,
was an exciting experience. He came from
the "New Bauhaus" in Chicago where he
had studied with Moholy Nagy. It was
perhaps one of the most fulfilled times
in my life, my eyes

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first paintings

being opened to the many possibilities of painting, different techniques, different ways of presentation. I tried quite a few ways of approach, as many students do, I suppose. The paintings are all very personal, though: of destruction and fire, concentration camp, and H. Bomb!

Preusser was involved at the time in the founding of the C. G. A.; he and other local painters hoped to find an outlet for their creations. But John de Menil took over and exposed H. to real splendid modern art.

I remember a wonderful Van Gogh show and another of Miro's. I did a little easel painting of my impression of Miro's magic world; it was sold later at the auction to help raise funds for the new C. G. A., after a flood had inundated its entire basement with all its contents. The first C. G. A. was just a little shack, hot as blazes in summer, located downtown, somewhere near the Bayou. A little later the building was moved with great fanfare all through

C. G. A.

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F. A. A.

town, to the ground owned by an Insurance Co, the Prudential, on South Main. Dynamic Gernoyne Mc. Agy installed 25 shows there, later at the U. of St. Thomas. - To local artists the C. A. A. also offered a "Rental Show" (1954-65); juried exhibits, where people could rent a painting that pleased them and eventually buy it.

I forgot to mention

Foley's Townhall. offered little exhibits, at the beginning of the 50th, I believe, of contemporary art, together with a lecture by Breusser: "What is Modern Art?"

Town:
Foley's
"Not there he
Apathy"

My first success came when Henry Hitchcock bought my painting "Let there be Apathy" for the permanent collection of Smith College in Mass. It had been exhibited in the "Texas General" 1953. It is an oil painting in a style very different from what I do now, developed from the subconscious interpretation of a painted surface having a ruined city with moonlight ^{dried over-} _{night:} shining through gaping holes where once windows had been. Probably this success came too early and scared me. Nevertheless I think the painting can stand

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on its own merit, even done in a manner I later abandoned.

Many years later, 1971, I stated my belief in a nonrepresentational art, "immaterial" I called it. I had come to use an anonymous and uncommon, promisingly hard-edge style, using squares and circles: "ideal shapes of geometry". I intended to be unemotional, but some meanings suggested themselves nevertheless; I called one "Vietnam", another one "Fins Terrarum". The paintings were shown at the Du Bose Gallery, one year before Ben Du Bose's death. He also showed a series of small collages^x which I regarded as my "painterly sins":

They reflected fantasies, irony and sorrow. - After I had seen and digested the show I knew it was the end of a chapter for me.

After several months had passed I came upon a Japanese design book and was delighted. I loved the serene simplicity, the peacefulness the designs seemed to convey. I did five screen-paintings, suggested by the Japanese

^x The "Whimsy" Series.

Du Bose Shows

Japanese
design

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M. G. Non

paperwork. They were shown in 1976 at the M. G. (Mind's Eye) Gallery.

My latest work has been shown a few weeks ago at Roberto Malina Gallery. (April 19 - May 10, 1980).

My designs are suggested by Oriental art, my use of color influenced by Bauhaus color theories. I do not use color for "color's sake", however, and I don't paint to achieve "optical sensation". Intuition takes over in lucky moments. I believe that a painting should be like music, abstract, and its appeal inexplicable.

It is for the viewer to decide whether I reached this ideal to any degree.

I have painted for my own satisfaction and fulfillment in the limited time available to me. I find life very difficult. My painting is my own, I created a life that only belongs to me.

My philosophy of painting.

My new address

1899-

1889

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