

HETAG: The Houston Earlier Texas Art Group

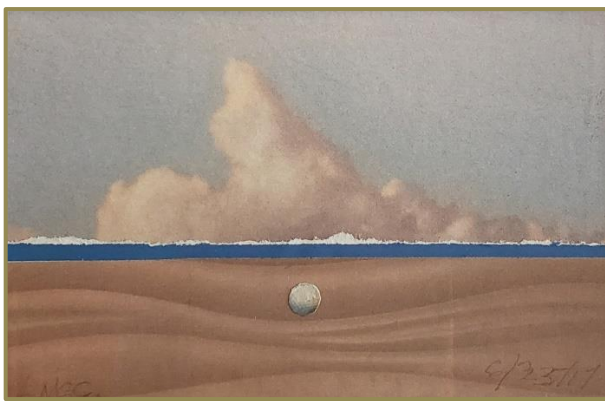


Glow: Vintage Blacklight Posters from the 60s and 70s, The Printing Museum, Houston – Installation view.

HETAG Newsletter No. 44, September 2020

The "Something A Little Different" Issue

It seems these days that just about everything is a little – no, make that A LOT – different than it was just a few short months ago. For this issue of the HETAG Newsletter we're looking at art that's a little different too (some of it A LOT different!), and some of it viewed in different ways. On this page we're seeing tiny little works instead of big, grand paintings, but they're no less fab for being small. Inside you'll find a fascinating article on Blacklight Posters – yes, they're Earlier Houston Art now. And you'll find the opportunity to Zoom to an exhibition of a major Texas artist with no connection to Houston, in a different Texas city, but then we're doing some different things, remember? One of these days (no, unfortunately, make that one of these months/years) we'll be back to enjoying our Earlier Houston Art, the usual and the unusual both, in that old fashioned, usual way, in person and in groups. Until then, I hope you all enjoy "something a little different" for September.



Leila McConnell *Many Happy Returns* 2017 Collage on Card 2 7/8 x 4 3/8 inches (l); Harry Worthman *Untitled beach scene* c1988 Oil on Canvas 6x8 inches (r).

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Artist unknown *Speak* 1971 (l); George F. Goode *Going West* 1971 (r).

Glow: Vintage Blacklight Posters from the 60s and 70s

by Christian Kelleher

Head of Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries

Looking for some far out earlier Houston art? Between 1969 and 1974, Houston was home to one of the country's most influential makers of the blacklight poster art that graced the shag carpet walls of basements, teenager bedrooms, and head shops, and portrayed the psychedelic dreams and social justice fantasies of a generation.

The Houston Blacklight & Poster Dist. Co. was established by local agent provocateur Jerry Jones in the historic Coffee Pot Building at 102 San Jacinto Street, downtown at Allen's Landing where hippies, bikers, and counter-culture freaks and hangers-on of all types hung out near the [David Adickes](#)-founded [Love Street Light Circus Feel Good Machine](#) with its famous Zonk Out. From this unassuming warehouse, Jones and his artists, printers, and poster-rollers created some of the most iconic popular culture art of the era.

Nearly two dozen of Houston Blacklight's posters radiated in the recent exhibition, *Glow: Vintage Blacklight Posters from the 60s and 70s* at The Printing Museum.

While the poster art can be appreciated in normal light, it is under the long-wave ultraviolet light of blacklight lamps that the works truly fluoresce. *Glow* welcomed visitors with a lava lamp, beanbag chairs, and a beaded curtain to a dark gallery illuminated by the artworks on the walls. Music and poster art historian David Esminger writes in the exhibition brochure, "Blacklight posters embody a tactile quality that other posters lack: instead of being mass-produced with glossy shimmering sheen or as small workshop, four-color screens with imperfect paint daubs, blacklight posters combine industrial production techniques and consciousness altering intent to project an aura, a holographic-like surface, witnessed when paint is placed under a blacklight glare." These posters embody much of what Walter Benjamin described in his "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility," with technology emancipating the artwork from its cult status to democratic, mass exhibition and the resulting "qualitative transformation in its nature" and revolutionary politicization of the art.

Houston Blacklight's first work (HB1) was Jerry Jones' portrait of his wife, "[Mecky](#)," and while that work was not part of *Glow*, Jones' kaleidoscopic "[Op-sun](#)" beckoned visitors into the gallery. Inside, works by artists Horace Mitchell, Gayle P. Morgan, and Lloyd Sepulvado transported viewers with psychedelic landscapes and mythological beings.

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Lloyd Supelvado *East Meets West* 1971 (l); George F. Goode *Johnny Potseed* 1969 (r).

By far Houston Blacklight's most prolific artist George F. Goode's work dominated the show. Though not yet 20 years old and perhaps barely out of Phillis Wheatley High School when he produced his first poster "Beauty and Her Beast" (HB2), Houston's Fifth Ward native Goode's work includes, as David Esminger writes, "intensely colorful posters of the cosmos, molten portraits of the devil, repurposed folklore ('Johnny Potseed'), peacenik symbolism, troll warriors and buccaneers, and Black Nubian conquerors [that] became a vital portion of the global scene." In the early 1970s, Goode moved to Los Angeles where he had a career as an animation artist and model designer working on shows like *Star Trek: The Animated Series*, *Fat Albert*, *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Space Sentinels*, and *Muppet Babies*.

Unfortunately, *Glow: Vintage Blacklight Posters from the 60s and 70s* has closed, but the posters glow on. Over sixty Houston Blacklight & Poster Dist. Co. works are held in the permanent collection of the [University of Houston Libraries Special Collections](#) and can be viewed online in both natural light and blacklight glory.



George F. Goode *Satan's Child* 1970 (l); Gayle P. Morgan *Boom* 1971 (r).

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Everett Spruce (1908–2002), *Southwest Texas Landscape* 1936

**The Center for the Advancement
and Study of Early Texas Art (CASETA)**

&

Texas Art Collectors Organization (TACO)

invite you to join us for

***Texas Made Modern:
The Art of Everett Spruce***

a virtual talk with

Shirley Reece-Hughes
Curator of Paintings, Sculpture, and Works on Paper
at the Amon Carter Museum of American Art

***4 p.m. on
Sunday, September 6, 2020***

[Click here to register via Zoom!](#)

Have a question for Shirley Reece-Hughes?
Email CASETA Board Member Sarah Beth Wilson at
sarah@artleaguehouston.org and we will
do our best to include it during the Q&A as time allows!

Registration via Zoom is required to attend this virtual event.
This talk will be recorded and available through the CASETA website
after the event.

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Frederic Browne Etches Paris

Talk about something a little different for the Houston Earlier Texas Art Group Newsletter – this piece was done by an artist before he's ever thought of coming to Houston, in a city far away, and it's not by any stretch a Texas scene. It's tiny, it's on questionable paper and it's backwards! But here so many Houston connections shout from the image that they just can't be ignored.



Frederic Browne *Paris* 1920 etching, left, image orientation; right, image flipped to show actual street orientation; center, Eugène Atget *Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Genève* 1898 albumen print.

Frederic Browne, 1877-1966, became a mainstay of Houston art, with strong connections to art education at Rice University (then Rice Institute), the Museum of Fine Arts School (not the Glassell School) and the University of Houston art program. But that didn't start until he got to Houston in 1925. When he made this etching of a street in Paris, in 1920, he was still living back East, where he'd relocated early in life from his native Ireland. He had it printed by the Radio Picture Frame Co., Inc, Brooklyn, a company which published prints for a mass market, as well as doing some more refined etching work, as with this piece.

Browne's etching shows Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Genève, from the intersection with Rue Laplace, on the Left Bank in Paris – but flipped from the actual orientation of the street, as shown in the images above. That flip happens as a drawing is transferred to an etching plate.

So what makes this an image worthy of inclusion in the hallowed canon of Earlier Houston Art? The Browne connection, of course, since he would become so significant here. But also, the church shown in a side view at the end of the street - Saint-Étienne-du-Mont – was, in her own words, Emma Richardson Cherry's "favorite church in Paris." Situated just behind the iconic Pantheon, Saint-Étienne is a spectacular example of French Gothic transitioning into French Renaissance architecture, with the only surviving Rood Screen in Paris.



Saint-Étienne-du-Mont, main façade and rood screen (l and c); Eugène Atget *Saint-Étienne-du-Mont, Pantheon, Paris* 1898 (r).

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And as though that weren't enough, half way up the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Genève, on the left side of the street shown in Browne's etching, flipped version, sits Cafe Gaudeamus, a Russian Restaurant that intrigued Houston artist Gene Charlton so thoroughly that he did a painting of it on his first trip to Paris in 1937. Perhaps he was in search of some connections to his Slavic roots. He was born Eugene Rafalsky, became Gene Charlton when his mother re-married, and returned to Rafalsky late in life. Or maybe he was just yearning for a good bowl of borscht, which was still on the menu at Gaudeamus the last time I looked. Yes, Gaudeamus is still there, though Charlton/Rafalsky's painting is now known only from a newspaper photo.



Gene Charlton *Café Gaudeamus* c1937 Oil on Canvas (l); Café Gaudeamus as it is today.

And one more Houston connection – those steps at the end of the street in Browne's etching and Atget's photos – they're the ones made even more famous by Woody Allen in his movie *Midnight in Paris*. The street Allen's time transporting taxi drives up is Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Genève from the other direction. And at least one contemporary Houstonian has been transported back to these Earlier Houston Art scenes and memories by visiting them, just as happened for Allen's movie characters. Ah, the power of Houston art, and Paris!



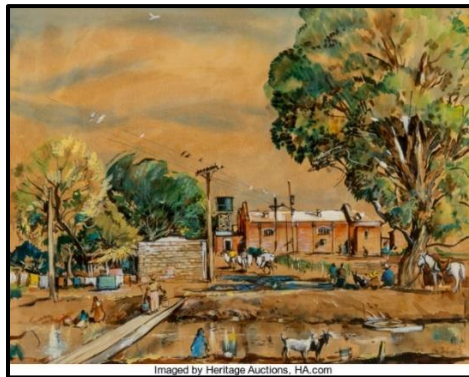
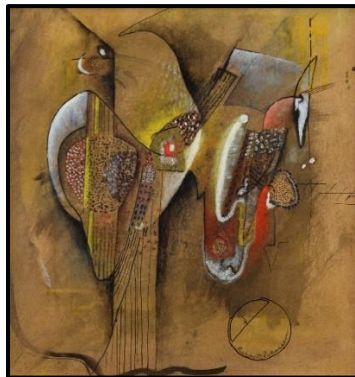
Woody Allen Movie Stills from *Midnight in Paris* 2011.



A Houstonian on the steps of Saint-Étienne, not so many years ago.

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The Auction Season Is Almost Here!



Robert Preusser *Untitled #1*, 1939, David Dike Fine Art, Texas Art Auction (l);
Buck Schiwetz *Ranch Life* 1949, Heritage Auctions, Texas Art Signature Auction (r).

Among the most anticipated Early Texas Art events of the year are Texas Art Auctions. What a treat perusing the catalogs, looking over the previews, dreaming about the pieces we'd like to own. As with everything, some aspects of Texas Art Auctions are likely to be a little different this year. Even though most of are already used to online bidding, there's something special about going to the auction rooms on the designated days, getting caught up in the in-person excitement and the socializing – and that we're likely not going to have with the upcoming crop of auctions. Even so, the fact that the auctions will still take place may give us some comfort, as well as the chance to spend some the money we save not going out to eat, not going to the theater, not going on trips, and all the other "not goings" this year.

Here are some links to upcoming Texas Art Auctions to track in the next few weeks:

[David Dike Fine Art, Texas Art Auction](#)

October 3, 2020

9:30 am, Auction online only

Auction Preview Open Daily Sept. 14-Oct. 2, 2020; Mon.-Fri.: 10am-5pm and Sat.: 12 noon-5 pm at 214 Projects, 150 Manufacturing, Ste. 214; Dallas, TX 75207

[Heritage Auction, Texas Art Signature Auction](#)

September 26, 2020

[Vogt Auction, Texas Art Auction](#)

Saturday, October 24, 2020

12 pm

And though they aren't currently listing dedicated Texas Art Auctions, [Austin Auction Gallery](#) and [Simpson Galleries](#) often include Texas art, so it's a good idea to keep an eye on them too. Happy bidding and Good Luck!



Paul Maxwell *Fish* 1960, David Dike Fine Art, Texas Art Auction.

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Bill Arning, Houston art curator/consultant, and founder of [Bill Arning Exhibitions](#), has recently published an article on the career and complications of the ever fascinating [Forrest Bess](#). (NOTE: Bill's article, with many Bess painting images, appears in GAYLETTER.COM – some may not want to view some of the other images published on the website, SO DON'T CLICK THE LINK IF YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE!)

Some exhibitions of interest:

[David McManaway: Cult of the Commonplace](#)

The Grace Museum, Abilene

Thru January 9, 2021

“This exhibition presents a long overdue review of important work from artist, David McManaway’s prodigious 50 year career to reexamine his role as a major artist and influencer in Texas and beyond.”

[Texas Made Modern: The Art of Everett Spruce](#)

Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth

August 18 – November 1, 2020

“Experience the Texas landscape like you’ve never seen it before. The most celebrated painter from Texas in the first half of the twentieth century, Everett Spruce (1908–2002) was widely collected by museums across the country, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and more. His modern, visionary landscapes countered the mythic images of Texas as only a land of cattle and cowboys. Over time, however, with the rise of Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art, Spruce and his work fell into obscurity. This exhibition resurrects Spruce’s career and returns it to its place in the history of American art.”

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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Texas Art Group
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Frank Dolejska *Tempest-Sea-Wind-Sky*, 1953
casein on paper 7x12 ½ inches