

27^{OR} 29 STORIES?

PAGE N. PILAND
PAINTING & ILLUSTRATING
LIFE ON TEXAS.

This Catalogue Raisonné(CR) book is the comprehensive, annotated listing of all, or nearly all, of the known fine artworks by the Texas artist Page Newton Piland in all media as of 2022. The works are described, and photos presented, in such a way that they may be reliably identified by third parties.

This is an on-going project started in 2021. Over 200 pages are complete in 2022. As this is being prepared about a living and still working artist, it is classified as a Catalogue Raisonné In Preparation.

Early examples of catalogue raisonnés consisted of two distinct parts, a biography and the catalogue itself. Their modern counterpart is the catalogue and biography which may also contain personal views and stories or essays by the author or artist. That would be closer to this presentation.

This is presented as a catalogue raisonné but hopefully presents enough biographical information and personal recollections so as to cast a light on a Texas artist's early life and how it influences his later life and work. It offers a good description of early Austin and University of Texas life and their lifelong influences, too.

Introduction

Recent Work

Early Work

Date Biography, Artist's Notes

Exhibitions, Shows, Bibliography

Shown in this publication.

- Reproduction of each work
- Title and title variations
- Dimension/Size
- Date of the work
- Medium/Media
- Owners names are not shown in this publication
- Provenance (history of ownership) if known is not shown in this publication
- Exhibition history

- Condition of the work
- Bibliography/Literature/Exhibitions that illustrate the work
- Essays by the artist and editors
- Critical assessments and remarks
- Description of the work
- Signatures, Inscriptions and Monograms of the artist are not shown in this publication
- List of works attributed, lost, destroyed and fakes are not shown in this publication

ABOUT TEXAS MEN'S PERSONALITIES, BEHAVIORS, OPINIONS, TALENTS, PREJUDICES &... EXCUSES.

This exercise was started to save my family and art associates the agony and irritation of having to figure out my art work left behind. Gathering images and history was boring so notes, memories, and stories were added. Because of this process, I encourage all artists to start a Catalogue Raisonné during their lifetimes.

Maybe, as the old saw says, artists should stick to what they know best. So please humor me as I am not a gifted writer. However, if any of these ramblings interest or encourage other artists, I will be happy. The work from all those years was for my own enjoyment and, yes, there were disappointments and many setbacks and hardships, but not so many as one might imagine. Additionally, and hopefully, this presentation offers in-sight into why Texas men behave as we do. Thanks are owed to Pat and David Piland for their patience and interest in my art "careers" and for putting up with the endless drama and goings-on.

I want to mention my beliefs as to how and from where, creativity and inspiration spring. Of course, many more complicated explanations of the origins of creativity are recognized and championed by more scholarly experts.

I believe that creativity begins in early childhood feelings and play. How quickly our thoughts and memories are filled with vast instructions, information, and facts so that early thoughts and ideas and play habits are just... lost. Have you ever watched children at play when they are comfortable and happy or even unhappy? This will often bring immense joy and inspiration to an observer. In later life, if one can access his or her own childhood feelings, memories, and behaviors, it may prove to be a secret pathway to unlocking, re-storing, or discovering creativity. I have also found that creativity or an idea often arrives when actually working or playing and "looking about" without plans, instructions, deadlines, or goals.

Having watched children discover secrets in some of my work makes me cherish those moments. At these times, I feel something meaningful has actually been accomplished through all that time spent on the projects. Seeing that "Aha" moment of discovery in children or recognition from an adult is pretty good, too. I remember being most happy when I found myself grinning like a fool or giggling like a child whilst working, playing, or discovering ideas and secrets in the project.

I did love that old University of Texas Library Tower! Still do, in spite of her old age, fickle nature, and silly-sad past.

I grew up in Austin, Texas, always living near the University of Texas campus. As kids we'd ride our bikes to the tower and run up the 29 staircases (or 27 depending on who was counting) – that went all the way to the top windows that we could barely see out of. My brothers and I and our buddies loved to perch on that outside top deck peering out between the balustrades of the wall. We could see forever. And sailing paper airplanes from the very top deck was exhilarating! Why, we could sail them as far as the “Drag” (Guadalupe Street). Or so we remember and brag about.

Later I lucked into a summer job working for The Humanities Research Center in the secret tower basement. I toiled in my lil' brown smock sitting on a tiny stool in the basement “oiling” (from tiny bowls of hot oil) parchment covers of rare and antique books. The books and art collections came from donors and collectors from all around the world. I was 15 or 16 at that time. They even let me catalog a vast American Indian collection that came packed in old cardboard boxes. Priceless artifacts were piled in stacks in the boxes. I bet they had to re-catalog everything later, but I was enthusiastic and welcomed the tasks. I learned a lot about Native Americans during my Scouting “Indian Dancing” days!

Later my mom became registrar of the UT Library. My wife Pat and some of her friends worked for “Ms. Caffey” as they called her.

The Tower shooting tragedy occurred in August 1966. I watched from the Art Building. Pat and Mom were in the Tower building. I was listening on the radio and saw tiny puffs of smoke and heard rifle reports coming from my old lookout perch. Many students and Austinites grabbed rifles, pistols, and shotguns and rushed to join in returning fire. Police on the radio kept asking the folks to “Please stop shooting at the Tower”. A report published later said the police were urging participation in the shooting. A horrible day. A sad memory of my beloved old Tower.

I graduated that same, hot, August month. Pat and I gathered up baby David, packed our meager belongings in a U-Haul Trailer and left Austin in an old Hillman Minx. We did not return to Austin for quite some time.

The painting features an ancient long-leaf pine plank with old, black nail holes. It reminds me of the Tower's bullet holes/scars/smoke. The other half of the Tower is oil on canvas painted as new pine would appear. I burned the top of the plank outside of my studio in the Spring Street Studio parking lot in Houston in 2018.

My question is, how do we choose to remember, or forget, that Tower tragedy and that old, too hot day, not so long ago.

Choosing Sides of The Tower. A Portrait.

72" x 48" x 2". 2019.

- Mixed media: Oil on canvas with actual longleaf pine wooden plank inset flush with the surface of the painting.
- The plank was burned in Houston at 1824 Spring Street outside Page Piland's studio in the parking lot.
- The plank was purchased at Clarks Hardwood Lumber Co. in Houston, TX.
- Owned by Page Newton Piland. 2021. • Located in Piland home in Bellaire, TX.
- Exhibited in Piland's Spring Street Studio in Houston. • Excellent condition. 2021.
- Piland Catalogue Raisonné In Preparation(CR) book - *27 or 29 Stories* discusses the works in detail.
- Mentioned and discussed in the publication: *ArtHouston*, Issue 11, 2020.
- See photo of work in The CR book written by the artist in Bellaire, Texas. 2021.
- Signed by the artist on the back of canvas and stretcher bars.



This mixed media painting for a Houston family has a long history. The story traces back to Austin, Texas, from the early 1960s.

In 1962, I got a part-time job with a design firm that made all kinds of displays for local businesses, city events, and parades. The display company was located in the downtown warehouse area near the Colorado River (now called Town Lake). My job included tasks such as going to downtown movie theaters to decorate the street display windows and set up tables inside with photos of the “stars” and information about the current movie. Also, I helped with store displays which were made of paper mache’ and airbrushed by incredible, Hispanic artisans. I was expected to cut templates and “box up” small displays to ship. I had no idea what I was doing; I was cutting my hands to ribbons on sharp cardboard edges. Yikes! The owner was not pleased with my lack of expertise. I quit by saying the work was ruining my hands. He was probably glad to see me go.

Fifty-five years later a young couple came to my Spring Street Studio for the monthly Second Saturday Open House. They said they were interested in a large painting that would go in their new home. They liked some of the bois d’arc wood planks, and we made a plan, but nothing was set in stone. For fun, I moved forward with the painting which was exhibited in a couple of galley shows. About 3-4 years later, the young couple who had married, had a child, and bought their first home, showed up again. They liked the painting and were still interested. Turns out the guy’s granddad was my boss 55 years earlier at that display shop in Austin. The couple planned to decorate their new living room with one of his granddad’s paintings plus mine. How thoughtful and flattering! (His granddad’s paintings remind me of of the old Dallas Nine Group’s paintings and drawings.)

My painting has half of a broken plank inset into the canvas and the other half is painted to match. I cut out and shaped the knotholes in the painted side, too. I felt I had repaired something that had been irreparably broken.

This was, indeed, the last painting completed in the Spring Street Studio #109. That was December 2020. The pandemic was still a concern. After 10 years at Spring Street, I had an “*Annual* Going Out-Of Business Sale” and moved on. The paintings are in a climate controlled storage unit near our home in Bellaire.

Family Commission. A Portrait. •
72" x 38". 2015-2020.

- Mixed media: Oil on canvas with 1/2 of the actual plank inset into the canvas.
- The plank was found at Clark’s Hardwood Lumberyard Co. in Houston.
- The painting is in the collector’s home in the Houston Heights.
- Made and exhibited in Piland’s Spring Street Studio and in several gallery events in Houston.
- Piland C.R. book - *29 Stories* discusses the works in detail.
- See photo of the work in the book written by the artist in Bellaire, Texas. 2021.
- Signed by the artist on the back of canvas and the stretcher bars.



1990s

Large format work has always interested me. In school, as students, we tried to outdo each other by working as large as we could manage. Our professors were working large with their personal projects. I vaguely remember doing a couple of oversize paintings in class that the department retained. I wonder if those paintings still exist. We always figured that they were hoping some student artist would become famous, and the work would then be of interest or value. Most of our work was just awful but enthusiastically thought up and worked out.

Much later I remember doing large-format work and hauling them about Texas to juried shows. Most were summarily dismissed. However a few were accepted. One of my favorites as shown here was the 130-inch, *(Not) Dr. Cleveland's Yellow Canoe*. It was shown with The University of Houston's Baffler Gallery Annual Juried Exhibition in the early 2000s. I still have it and could never part with it. I created the painting at our home in Southside Place. We had tall walls to display the large-format works there. The art handlers at the Baffler allowed as how the painting was impossible to hang. It won an award, and I was thrilled.

It took two to three years to complete. I remember painting and rubbing off the paint to expose the yellow highlights over and over again. The fishing poles are like the ones we used as kids with yellow cane poles and fishing line tied at the top. We used red and white plastic floats and wood corks. I included the long "push" poles as an art composition balancing idea. The complete canoe is painted in the artwork and hidden towards the bottom. Many coats of varnish mixed with damar varnish, linseed oil, and turpentine were applied. It was by far the best work I had done to that date. Later, that home studio caught on fire, we were lucky to salvage everything, but there was some smoke damage. Only the exposed pages of books that were open were damaged. Occasionally, I open one damaged book to the "smoked" pages to remind me to be careful when disposing of oil and turpentine rags.

The story behind that painting was about my Granddad and his boat-building and fishing friend - Dr. Cleveland. In the 1950s, Dr. C. gave an old handmade boat to our Granddad that he, in turn, gave to Ted and me. Years later, when showing the canoe painting to Ted, he reminded me my story was not true. The canvas canoe was given to our Explorer Sea Scout Group by who-knows-who. It hung in our garage on Cherrywood in Austin until I left town. It was too late to change the painting's name.

(Not) Dr. Cleveland's Yellow Canoe.

130" x 44" x 2". 1996-2000.

- Mixed media: Oil on canvas. • In artist's collection in 2022 and located in Piland home/storage.
- Exhibited in Piland's Spring Street Studio in Houston and in a U of H Blaffer Gallery and Museum show.
- Excellent condition in 2022.
- Piland C.R. book - *29 Stories* discusses the works in detail.
- See photo of work in the Book written by the artist in Bellaire, Texas. 2021.
- Signed by the artist on the back of the canvas and the stretcher bars.



The yellow canoe painting was made in Southside Place in Houston. Our garage was converted into a spray booth for several of the spray procedures. The brush painting was done inside and took a couple of years, on and off, to get just right.

1980s



The Figaro art was one of many illustrations done for posters in the 1970s and 1980s. This one was made in the early 1980s for The Houston Grand Opera.

I called the Opera folks and asked for photos of the performers to use as go bys. They said, "We never know who will show up until the very last day so draw in whoever you like." Well, OK. I took Polaroids of the studio personnel and airbrushed them in using prisma color pencils on the cold pressed board to accent and complete the art. I drew myself in as Figaro. Valerie became Rosine. Don was drawn as Dr. Bartolo. All the characters shown were studio folks portraits. The art was also used as the cover of the program and magazine and when friends saw it they would call up and say, "What the heck in going on over there now?" We did amuse ourselves.

These were the sweet innocent days before we took ourselves so very seriously. Then as the years went on we had to face real life business decisions and deadlines and accounts payable and receivable and payrolls and taxes. I yearned to return to free-lancing and working alone.

Figaro. Poster Illustration.
10" x 16". 1980s.

- Dr. Martins water colors with prisma color pencils on cold pressed illustration board.
- In the artists collection as of 2021. • For Houston Grand Opera poster and program cover.
- Good condition in 2021. • Piland CR book - *29 Stories* discusses the works in detail.
- See photo of work in the CR book written by the artist in Bellaire, Texas. 2021. • Signed by the artist.



Theater Under The Stars was a summertime presentation in Hermann Park in the Miller Outdoor Theater. Houston Ballet staged a production series called *Giants In The Park* which this illustration was commissioned for. The ad agency Olgilvy and Mather asked me to do this for their client. It probably was a pro bono project by the agency. I think I was paid about \$300.

The *Giants* referred to the famous performances and the well known performers. I turned the meaning around to include the audience as being giants, too. I drew Pat Piland and I as giant viewers lounging on a quilt that becomes the lawn of the park. The famous theater structure has an open air "V" shaped canopy, a large stage and some permanent seating. Most of the crowd prefers stretching out on the hillside.

We went to many events there over the years and always loved the performances. The park is a treat during the daytime, too. It is the home to many sculptures, a fishing pond, the Houston Zoo and a miniature rail road with rideable cars and a tunnel. There was a real train engine there in the early days. The Hermann Park Golf Course is on the grounds, too. The big Sam Houston Statue and the long "pond" grace the entrance to the park. And the Mecom Fountain is nearby.

It is a Houston institution. We have been to weddings and memorial services in the Park.

Giants In The Park. Poster Illustration.
10" x 18". 1980s.

- Dr. Martins water colors with prisma color pencils on cold pressed illustration board. • In the artists collection in 2021.
- For Houston Ballet poster and program cover. • Piland CR book - *29 Stories* discusses the works in detail.
- Good condition in 2021. • See photo of work in the CR book written by the artist in Bellaire, Texas. 2021.
- Signed by the artist on the front.

1970s

The Weather Man was from the very early painting series made in our old garage on Sewanee Street in Houston. The tiny garage from the 1930s was too small to accommodate a newer car although it had an “extension” built onto the back. Perfect. (1970-1990)

I used the garage as a painting studio. The broken concrete floor had sunk and filled with water every time it rained. Previous owners had constructed an old work bench with a heavy duty bench clamp that was happily used. I fell into doing very large spray paintings. This would be related to all the airbrush work done over the years at work. I found that Wagoner plug-in spray guns worked best for covering large areas quickly. I used acrylic enamel paints found first at The Napko Paint Store in Bellaire. I did many ads and brochures throughout the 70s for Napko’s Houston ad agency so it seemed appropriate.

I came upon a method of stretching canvas tightly over fomecore panels which would warp as I stretched and taped the canvas around the edges. Then I would tear or cut random large patterns of brown kraft paper from 36 inch rolls to use as templates. I learned to use torn cardboard as patterns, too. Later I started using everything I could find to “spray over” and then remove. I hand made stretcher bars and re-stretched the then painted canvas, often working some more on the canvas. It was exhilarating.

I entered many early examples in the local shows. This one was shown in The Houston Center downtown in the mid 1970s. The show was what is now The Texas Celebration sponsored by The Assistance League. I think it was then called Dimensions Houston or was that the Jewish Community Center Annual Exhibition’s name?

I especially love this early canvas and have it hanging in our home in 2021. I think I see a news weatherman’s pointer and a dancer’s legs. Pat was involved in ballet dancing and performances at that time. My knees hurt when it rained a lot. I clearly remember and loved every minute of making the painting back in that old garage on Sewanee.

At that time I was infatuated with work by Lamar Briggs, Paul Jenkins, Kenneth Nolan and Jules Olinsky and my early work was indeed influenced by those artists. Paul Jenkins had a terrific Exhibition in The Houston Fine Arts Museum in the 1980s which I was lucky to see in person and Lamar Briggs had many shows with Moody Gallery about that same time era. Other early faves were Clifford Still, Mark Rothco and William Dekooning and several of my early professors and teachers.



The Weather Man. 1973.
48" x 66". 1973.

- Acrylic enamel with oil paint on canvas • In the artists collection as of 2021.
- Located in Piland home or storage in Bellaire, TX. • Exhibited in 1976 Assistance League show in Houston.
- Excellent condition in 2021. • Piland CR book - *29 Stories* discusses the works in detail.
- See photo of work in the CR book written by the artist in Bellaire, Texas. 2021.
- Signed by the artist on the back stretcher bars and canvas.

1960s

When I was 12, I was lucky enough to be invited to start classes at the UT Art Department on Saturdays – I could walk there from my home on Cherrywood Street. Many of the Saturday morning instructors were early Texas artists who became known as the “Dallas Nine.” William Lester, Loren Mosley, Everett Spruce, and Kelly Fearing were my heroes and members, or associates, of that group. We didn’t realize that these teachers were so important in early Texas art history. I was offered a small scholarship if I would enroll at UT after high school. What luck! Living in Austin, where else would I go?

At UT, other art professors were Michael Frary, Charles Umlauf, and Ralph White. They put up with me, and my associates, often without much reason to do so. When I started at UT, the art department was housed in old army barracks. The old, wooden buildings were cold in winter and hot in summer, but we loved them. A couple of early professors in the 1930s put their jobs on the line when they insisted on having nude models for the drawing classes. The janitors and service people had a great time pretending to accidentally walk in on the classes. By the time I took my last class, the art department had a new building. What fun we had!

This story is an example of the department’s support and sweetness toward me. When it was time for me to graduate in the summer of 1966, I realized that, after 5 years, I would be a couple of credits short. I was devastated. I could not tell Pat or our friends. I went to my favorite professor, Ralph White, and confessed that I would not have enough credits to graduate. He said, without hesitation, “Son, you are going to graduate”. He later said he simply counted a few of those after-school jobs, like my brief job with the old Austin Custom Records Studio, as class credits. Whew!

This watercolor painting was one of the first paintings I made during freshman art classes at The University of Texas in 1961. As I recall, either Loren Mosley or William Lester was the instructor.



Class Room Still Life.

16" x 20". 1961.

- Opaque water color on pasteboard. • In the artists collection as of 2021.
- Located in Piland home in Bellaire, TX.
- Excellent condition in 2021. • Piland C.R. book - *29 Stories* discusses the works in detail.
- See photo of work in that book written by the artist in Bellaire, Texas in 2021.
- Signed by the artist on the front lower right.
- Page still has the original letter from Kelly Fearing inviting him to continue at UT and offering a small reward to do that. The reward or scholarship was a \$35 gift certificate to the campus Co-op Store for art supplies.