

The vessel or canoe theme keeps appearing over the years in the projects. Canoes, boats, rafts, houseboats and water bound vessels of all kinds were indeed an integral part of growing up in central Texas in the 1950s and 60s.

We dutifully took canoing lessons at The Boy Scout Camp Tom Wooten and earned our “merit” badges. The camp was just outside the Austin city limits on Bull Creek Road right on wonderful Bull Creek. We carefully learned the basics and joys of “feathering” our paddles and how to right an overturned canoe in the middle of a lake. These life instructions seemed very, very important to me and not to be taken lightly. The canoe/ vessel became a symbol of freedom and independence to me. One always yearned to take the great voyage of life as the sole captain of his own ship. However, this meant learning not to paddle against yourself or your mates. Even if it meant starting out in a tiny vessel against all odds. Ah, those were heady and dramatic “goings on” back in the day!

This essay also reminds me of another “camp” boat that I did a painting about. At the summer camp we also took boating or “rowing” classes to prepare for the boating merit badge but for fun mostly! We learned the intricacies of water safety, rowing, feathering the oar and rescue methods, too. I did a smaller realistic painting of one of the tiny green row boats in a secluded lake or grotto. It was shown in a real early gallery exhibition in San Antonio. Several small works were sold and as a favor to a buyer, the gallery owner said he gave him the tiny boat painting. So I lost the painting and was never paid for it. Aren’t art galleries just great... Yikes!

The double paddle canoe work was cut and shaped from old pine planks. I used my “secret” stain and the color is just right! Even the tiny canoe is half wood! Early in its “life” a couple discussed having a similar commission painting made. I allowed as how I would give them \$1,000 off if they would not ask for the tiny vessel to be included in the new work. It was impossible to cut and inset pieces that small. I remember the couple then moving on to request a commission of old wood that would resemble a cross. I had to refuse. But that’s another story.



The Journeyman’s Voyage. A Portrait. ●

- 72 inches x 48” x 2”.
- 2019-20.
- Mixed media: Oil on canvas with actual wood pine plank inset flush with the surface of the painting.
- The plank was found in Montablano’s Lumber Yard on Houston Avenue near Page Piland’s studio.
- In a Cypress, Texas collector’s home.
- Exhibited in Piland’s Spring Street Studio in Houston.
- Piland Biography/ C.R. “Long Book”- *29 Floors* discusses the works in detail.
- See photo of work in *The Longer C.R. Book* written by the artist in Bellaire, Texas. 2021.
- Signed by the artist on the back of canvas and the stretcher bars.

The Houston area flood “Harvey” took the town “by storm” and held the area’s attention for many days and even years. It left a deep and lasting scar. Years later residents were/are still trying to repair their homes and reconstruct their lives.

We watched the waters rise around our home in Bellaire and thought the rain would quit but it was just so steady for so many days. The water stopped rising just as it reached right below our living room floorboards. We were thankful that we had been so lucky. However, a couple of days later our living room floors and baseboards started to show some dis-coloration. The insurance people insisted we replace some of the floor boards. I saved a few of the boards that were barely touched by the water and inset them in art works.

The 72 inch by 48 inch “red” painting does indeed have one of the Piland home floor boards. I guess the red reflected how we felt afterwards.

I love the painting and proposed to Pat that we hang it in our living room. She was polite but insisted that she did not want to be reminded of that “damn” flood every day.

The painting was included in The Lawndales Big Show in 2018. It also appeared on their home page for quite a while. I offered it to The Houston Airport System in 2020 but a collector/dealer beat them to it.



Harvey Took The Floor. A Portrait. ●

72 inches x 48" x 2". ● 2016 ● Mixed media: Oil on canvas with actual pine floor board cut, altered and inset flush with the surface of the painting. The plank was found/from The Piland home. Located In a Houston collection. 2021. ● Exhibited inThe Lawndale Art Center 2018 Big Show in Houston. ● Excellent condition. 2021. ● Piland Biography/ C.R. “Long Book”- *29 Stories* discusses the work in detail. ● See photo of work in that book written by the artist in Bellaire, Texas. 2021. ● Signed by the artist on the back of canvas and the stretcher bars.

The mixed media painting *The Messenger's Voyage* did indeed have a voyage. I had built some art racks in an old studio years before and could only afford the cheapest lumber. The #3(?) yellow pine 2x4s were pretty knarlie. The edges were rough cut and many still had the bark showing. However, the area "under" the bark was fascinating. It looked like hieroglyphics or American Indian markings or a secret alphabet.

Years later, I went back to the same lumberyard, Montablanos(sp?) on Houston Avenue near downtown Houston to look for more similarly marked pine. I carefully explained and the lumberyard counter guy said he knew exactly what I was looking for and asked the yard men to bring out "samples". They were perfect.

I hauled the 1x8 planks back to the studio and begin work. I did many computer "what ifs" and the canoe shape kept coming back. So be it.

The "under bark" area looked "beveled" or rounded and I dutifully rounded out the templates for the painted side to look the same. The markings did really look like some kind of a message from the tree's past. I faithfully reproduced the markings in the oil painting side. It was exhilarating and I felt like I was communicating with the past.

So I was sad when a painting on the wall above the pine painting fell and left a hole in the canvas. My photography artist and friend Syd Moen saw the damage and my distress and brought in several old paddles from her and/or her brother's summer childhood days spent at "Ms. Pickles" Summer Camp in Oklahoma. I split a paddle in half, built a new template and inset it into the canvas. I painted the other side of the paddle and it matches pretty good. Problem solved!

An important benefit of having the studios in The Spring Street Studios was the opportunity to meet and get to know other artists from Houston and all over the world. Many were here with their partners who were with energy or medical companies and were "transferred" to Houston as part of the Companies employment pathways. At one time or another there were artists in the building from London, Norway, France, Germany, Mexico, South America, India, Iran and even the "country" of New York. I was especially happy for this opportunity as I had the chance to meet young students from all over the world at UT in Austin but did not take advantage of that as I was too shy and was indeed a local "homie". We just hung out with the same old crowd as always. I felt like I had been given a second chance.



The Messenger's Voyage. A Portrait. ●

72 inches x 48" x 2". ● 2020 ● Mixed media: Oil on canvas with actual yellow pine plank and paddle inset into the canvas. ● The plank was found at Matablanos lumber yard shop in Houston. ● The painting is in an Austin dealer/collector's home. Purchased in December 2020. ● Made and exhibited in Piland's Spring Street Studio in Houston. ● Piland Biography/ C.R. "Long Book"- *29 Stories* discusses the works in detail. ● See photo of the work in the Longer C.R. Book written by the artist in Bellaire, Texas. 2021. ● Signed by the artist on the back of canvas and the stretcher bars.