

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 are 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 any of 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/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 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 - 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.



One of the first works produced after graduation was in the series of "Leaving Home" drawings and paintings. This drawing was done in Houston around 1968. It was selected for The Dallas Museum of Fine Arts 69th Southwestern Drawing Exhibition. I was fond of drawing turtles, and several more drawings were produced. This one was titled *Home Stretch*.

I studied turtles. Fascinating history and folklore stories appear to be told and re-told. My interest was not so erudite however. This drawing was in remembrance of a family member... well, almost a family member. We had a tiny green turtle as a pet that we kept in a Pyrex dish and fed lettuce and turtle food. We were heart broken when the little turtle disappeared. I did the drawing from memory and took it to Dallas in my old Austin Healy for the big exhibition. Time proved that many art stars emerged from that show and became familiar names in Texas art circles. The show also toured for a couple of seasons.

The little turtle drawing is a favorite, and we still have it. Eventually, the real turtle DID return. He had lived under the refrigerator for six months.

In 1966, we moved to Dallas where I worked in a big fancy ad agency - Wyatt & Williams, Inc. I learned a lot there, but it was a little too advanced and sophisticated for me at the time. Great designers and art directors worked there, and, as I was "bottom man on the totem pole", I accepted a lead-design position in Houston at Middaugh Associates. My original plan was to become a free-lance graphic designer, and in 8-10 months, I did just that. I now had time and a place to pursue my fine art and design work. It was the perfect set-up for a good while.



In 1969, I rented the studio space on Richmond Avenue at Lake Street. I learned years later that the tiny building was an early office of the Houston ad agency Weekley & Valenti. Of course, P. R. man Jack Valenti left home for Washington, DC and was with LBJ on that plane from Dallas in 1963 and did NOT return to Houston anytime soon after that infamous, too hot, too sad, day so long ago.

In the famous photo Jack Valenti is the crouching man on the left.

Home Stretch.

8" x 10". 1968.

- Mixed Media. Markers on parchment paper cut out and fixed/glued to Strathmore Drawing Paper.
- The drawing was made in Page's studio on Richmond Avenue in Houston.
- Located in Piland home in Bellaire, TX.
- Dallas Museum of Fine Art 69th Southwestern Drawing Exhibition.
- Excellent condition. 2021.
- Piland C.R. book - *29 Stories* discusses the works in detail.
- The DMFA Press Release of 1969 was typed on an old typewriter and corrections can be seen.
- See photo of work in The CR book written by the artist in Bellaire, Texas. 2021.
- Signed by the artist.



Driving around the First Ward neighborhood near the Spring Street Studio in Houston was a fascinating experience. I would get on Silver Street at Washington Ave. and take it all the way to Spring Street. A block north of Washington was a warehouse complex that appeared to have been an old-time car repair shop that had been torn down. The remnants were abandoned, and I watched as the planks were weathered by the sun and rain. When satisfied with their colors, I quickly hauled off the best pieces. Long 2x12 inch planks originally painted dark blue had faded to light, robin-egg blue with the grain showing through in tones of gray. I used the planks in several works. One of my favorites is the 72x48 inch *Silver Street Warehouse Remnant. A Portrait*.

The old plank was carefully cut and shaped, at the top corner, then inset into the canvas flush with its surface. I devised a method of cutting templates or “cradles” for the backside of the canvas to hold planks in place. (I always thought the backside was as interesting as the front.) Then an oil portrait of the plank was painted next to it on the primed canvas. I love the duality of the work’s presentation and the challenge of the matching painting.

The simplicity and beauty of the unpretentious, old planks/limbs/twigs appeals to me. I’m afraid I spent too many years over-thinking and trying too hard to make “important” works. Natural beauty was always there and always will be – and, now I see that.

This work is presented without editorial comment except that the top corners are cut/painted with just a hint of a vase shape. We had recently visited New York City staying at the Library Hotel that is down the street from the NYC Public Library. I love the big ornamental vases that flank the front steps of the library. It seems this theme repeats in other works.

Silver Street Warehouse Remnant. A Portrait.

72" x 48". 2016-18.

- Mixed media: Oil on canvas with actual wood pine plank inset flush with the surface of the painting.
- The plank was found in Houston near Page Piland’s studio.
- 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 C.R. book - *29 Stories* discusses the work 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.



Instructional Texas road signs have always amused me. As teenagers we constantly made fun of the signs' texts. Ala: Stop a-HEAD in the road. The Burma Shave Signs were always a wonderful treat to discover along the back roads in central Texas. Yep, I admit we were often bored and at loose ends as we drove aimlessly about the hills and back roads. Good thing gas was cheap in those days!

This original sign was broken as the result of a train colliding with a yardman's trailer being stuck on the track near our home in Bellaire. Again, I watched it lay in a ditch for a couple of months as I planned how to rescue it. After convincing myself that the city would not re-claim it, I twisted the broken bolt and nut loose from the post and hauled it home. I did not know how the message would change until after repeated sketches and trials in the computer. At that time (2019-20) there was indeed a lot of social unrest, and I convinced myself that this activity was doing something for the betterment of civilization. Actually I just like playing around with type, burning things and doing trompe l'oeil paintings. (Fooling myself into action seemed to be an integral part of my programs.)

I hauled the painted canvas with the inset/alterd sign outside to the Spring Street Studio parking lot and proceeded to burn it. This I figured would be a piece of cake. Until, I found I could not extinguish the fire. Turning the work over and stomping on it, applying water, and using the last of the contents of two old fire extinguisher's would not do it. The heavy cardboard the sign was attached to refused to go out. Finally, after rushing inside in a panic and bringing out more water in a large pail and dousing the sign, the fire was out. The effect could not have been better if I had planned it that way!

Jon Deal, the studio land-lord, would have run me off if he had heard about this episode. Yikes!



Now. Or Not.

72" x 48" x 2.5". 2018.

- Mixed media: Oil on canvas with actual street sign cut, altered and inset flush with the surface of the painting.
- The sign was found on Bellaire Blvd. near the Piland home.
- In the artists collection in 2021 and located in Piland home or storage in Bellaire, TX.
- Exhibited in Piland's Spring Street Studio in Houston.
- Excellent condition. 2021.
- Piland C.R. book - *29 Stories* discusses the work 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 canvas and the stretcher bars.