



Page Piland in his Houston studio. Photo courtesy of Gary Watson.

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 250 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 detail 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 as 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 tedious 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.

2019

I did love that old University of Texas Tower. Still do, in spite of her old age, fickle nature, tragedies 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 over 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! Shoot, we could sail 'em 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 just casually 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 and 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 reminded me of the Tower's bullet holes/scars/smoke. The other half of the Tower is oil on canvas painted as new pine and as an ivory tower might 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.



Whenever we drive through the Bastrop State Park area on the way to Austin, I recall my childhood days spent in that secret, pristine, old state park. It is referred to as the Lost Pines Park. It seems to have the only old-growth of tall pines on the Austin side of Houston.

As scouts, we spent days and nights camping, swimming, and hiking in the park. Later the Scout Camp Tom Wooten relocated to near the park.

In 2015 an awful forest fire destroyed much of the area. It left behind heart-breaking tall, black pine tree trunks with no leaves, no branches, no bark.

As I watched the charred tree trunks age and stabilize, I longed to do a painting in memory of the park. So I made plans to salvage a tree trunk and bring it back to the studio. I packed a skill saw, a saber saw and other hand tools. Then I located the perfect tree trunk. It was about 20-30 yards off the road. I began to cut the 9-foot-tall trunk into three parts so they would fit in my trunk. When the park rangers drove by, I simply dropped the saw in the tall grass and pretended to be "relieving myself". They waved and moved on. I was fearless and reckless and still stubborn in those days.

In the studio, I re-joined the parts and inset them into a 130-inch canvas. A messy job. I reasoned that a doctor would first x-ray a patient with broken parts and then go from there. I dutifully painted an x-ray of the tree beside the real trunk. Then, I carefully rubbed the blackest charcoal I could find all over the surrounding background. It took weeks just to do the rub. I loved the finished product. It was shown around the area and won some cash awards as I remember.

When I moved out of the Spring Street Studio in December, 2020, I took the work apart and carefully wrapped each piece in plastic and stored it in the storage unit. I just waved and moved on.

Bastrop Burn Victim. Attempted Repairs.

130" x 48". 2017.

- Mixed media: Oil on canvas with actual charred tree trunk inset flush with the surface of the painting.
- The remnant was found near Bastrop, Texas.
- In the artist's collection in 2021 and located in the Piland home or storage in Bellaire, TX.
- Exhibited in Piland's Spring Street Studio in Houston and curated Exhibitions in about 2017-2019.
- Excellent condition in 2021 although stored in parts.
- Piland C.R. book - *27 or 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.



This homage painting was done in about 2014. The painting was a finalist in one of the Texas Art Prize Hunting Shows. It was all about my older brother Ted and some of his early favorite happy times.

We spent many sweet years as campers, and later as staff members, at the old scout camp Tom Wooten located on Bull Creek just outside Austin. Later the camp was moved to be near Bastrop State Park. Some of our best times were spent at the swimming pool by the creek. It was little beat up and crooked and leaky even way back then. We never noticed.

The lifeguards were our heroes. Later Ted became Head Lifeguard during summers and between semesters at Sam Houston State College where he studied Printing Management. He was short and ordinary until he went off to college. I guess he worked out lifting weights while in school because he came back a muscle-man with quite the physique. This was absolutely necessary and most appropriate for the camp Head Lifeguard position.

Many stories emerged about Ted who was well liked by all and was indeed fearless. (Maybe reckless might be a better term). "Rat's" exploits were reported far and wide and way too often and with too much detail. Some too risqué to write down. Nevertheless, he became the camp hero as that pool position almost always guaranteed.

I bet those wonderful summer days and nights were his favorite times. He was also a leader in the Tonkawa Order of The Arrow Lodge(OA) #99. Ted really did the Lodge's hard work while I was off indian dancing. We both loved the OA and were honored with the highest rank of Vigil. Our younger brothers, David and John, followed later and became members of the Lodge and Indian dancers, too! Sadly, Ted had a rare form of cancer that finally did him in. He treaded water way past all odds. He loved his nickname "Rat"! (Yet another untold story). Our Stepdad's early nickname was "Rags".

I like a challenge, so I did the oil and acrylic painting on unprimed canvas. The actual pool area was painted and airbrushed over a gesso-primed shape with oil paints and varnishes. I loved painting images of the moon and in this painting the moon is pristine. It is very detailed and glows. "After" images will appear if you stare at it and then look at another dark, deep part of the pool. We dearly loved hanging out by that old pool late at night. Many a plan was made as we sat about the pool and the creek and stared into the night and sometimes the dawn, too.

In this painting I am seeing the old pool as finally closed down and emptying out at the end of the last summer. Ted's diving board is broken and washed to the shallow end. The walkways and pool walls are broken, scarred, and cracked. The moon probably would not come out the night of this imagined vigil. However, the moon is reflected, still, in that old pool by that old creek in that old camp... in my mind.

Vigil For The Old Lifeguard.

72" x 48". 2014.

- Oil and acrylic on canvas. • Made in Piland's Spring Street Studio. • Exhibited in the Texas Hunting Art Show.
- Stored in Page Piland home or storage in Bellaire, Texas in 2022.
- Piland C.R. book *27 or 29 Stories* discusses the work in detail.
- See photo of the work in that book written by the artist, Page Newton Piland, in Bellaire, Texas. 2021.
- Signed by the artist on the back of the canvas and the stretcher bars.



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 1960s.

We dutifully took canoeing lessons at the Boy Scout camp Tom Wooten where we earned our merit badges. The camp was just outside the Austin city limits on Bull Creek Road on wonderful Bull Creek. We learned the basics and joys of feathering our paddles and strokes 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 we took it mostly for fun! 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 rowboats in a secluded lake or grotto. It was shown in an 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 a similar painting or commission 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 moved 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" x 48" x 2". 2019-20.

- Mixed media: Oil on canvas with actual pine plank inset flush with the surface of the painting.
- The plank was found in Montalbano's Lumber on Houston Avenue near Page Piland's studio.
- In a Cypress, Texas collector's home.
- Exhibited in Piland's Spring Street Studio in Houston and the Galveston Art Center.
- Piland C.R. book - *29 Floors* 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 canvas and the stretcher bars.

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. Some of 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 or 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 or 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 a 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 - *27 or 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.

The mixed media painting *The Messenger's Voyage* did indeed have a voyage. When building art racks years ago, I could only afford the cheapest lumber. The #3 yellow pine 2x4s were pretty gnarly. The edges were rough and many still had the bark showing. However, the areas under the bark were fascinating. The markings looked like hieroglyphics, American Indian symbols, or a secret alphabet.

Years later, I went back to the same lumberyard, Montalbano's, on Houston Avenue to look for similarly marked pine. I carefully explained what I wanted to the guy at the counter, and he knew exactly what I was looking for. What he called samples were brought out and were perfect!

I hauled the 1" x 8" planks back to the studio and began work. I did many computer "what ifs", but the canoe shape kept coming back. So be it.

The "under bark" area was beveled or rounded, and I dutifully rounded out the templates for the painted side to look the same. The markings really did look like 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.

I was very sad when a painting on the wall above the pine painting fell and punched a hole in the canvas. My friend Syd Moen who is an artist/photographer saw the damage and my distress and brought in several old paddles from her 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!

While having a studio at Spring Street, I had the opportunity to get to know not only local artists, but artists from all over the world. Many were here with their spouses who were in the energy or medical field and they were transferred to Houston with their companies. At one time or another there were artists in the building from the UK, Norway, France, Germany, Mexico, South America, India, and Iran. I was especially happy for this opportunity because when I was a student at UT, Austin, there were students from all over the world, but I was too shy to introduce myself. Instead I hung out with my high-school crowd, as always. At Spring Street, I felt like I had been given a second chance at a lifetime goal.

The Messenger's Voyage. A Portrait. ●
72" 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 Montalbano's Lumber Yard in Houston.
- The painting is in an Austin, Texas collector's home who purchased it in December 2020.
- Made and exhibited only in Piland's Spring Street Studio in Houston.
- Piland C.R. book - *29 Stories* discusses the work in detail.
- See photo of the work in the C.R. book written by the artist in Bellaire, Texas. 2021.
- Signed by the artist on the back of canvas and the stretcher bars.

