

ZEST



Melissa Phillip / Staff photographer

Artist Richard Stout has been a leader of Houston's art scene for more than 60 years.

ART

From page G1

ton, 1972-1985."

Stout is one of the only bridges left between those two eras of Houston's art history. Never one to join cliques, he has maintained lifelong friendships on both sides of the divide.

"I have lived in the big middle of it," he said.

The late 1950s were formative years for Stout's aesthetic, and he was among the kings of the hill in January 1985, when curators Barbara Rose and Susie Kalll chose 44 local artists for the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston's seminal exhibition "Fresh Paint: The Houston School." That show was supposed to launch everybody into the national firmament. It didn't.

"Identifiably Houston," the current show of art from that era at Deborah Colton Gallery, blows a viewer's hair back with its dark, dynamic force.

These artists didn't come to Houston or stay here because it was a good place to sell their work:

They came because studio space was cheap, and they could think big. They were fearless and fiercely ambitious with their subject matter, forging a narrative sensibility inspired by the heady culture of nearby Mexico and the psychological depths of Surrealism. Mortality was their playground. Skulls and references to Greek tragedy abound in the works Colton chose.

Stout's "Fresh Paint" piece was 1984's "Oedipus," a large canvas whose imagery depicted dismembered nude torsos. His wife, Anne Winkler Stout, was succumbing to alcoholism and depression. For several years, he said, he knew all hell was going to break loose in his life. "I was angry." His wife died in 1985.

A native of Beaumont, Stout showed promise from the age of 12 and earned a full, four-year scholarship to the Art Institute of Chicago, where he worked with some of the best painting teachers in the world. He headed toward home after graduation because he believed New York was a closed circle. Trying to decide where to settle, he felt something in the air he liked in Houston — it had nice people, a symphony, an opera and not much artistic competition.

He tells that story often, but Stout also was moored to the coastal landscape around his family's primitive getaway at remote Rollover Bay, on



Molly Glentzer / Staff

Artist Sharon Kopriva's "Early Works" show is on view at the Jung Center through Oct. 30. The sculpture in the foreground, made in 2009, depicts her Peruvian hairless dog Pluto, who died in August. Behind her are the 1986 sculpture "Penitent Woman" and a painting from the 1980s.

Bolivar Peninsula near Galveston. When he points out the exact spot of land where it stood on a Google map, his paintings begin to look less abstract.

Stout tells one of his most poignant stories about his 2004 painting "Night Fishing," enabling a viewer to discern in its layers a fishing pole, a long pier and a deep sense of longing: This is where his mother retreated to fish, alone, at night, when his father was drinking.

Hurricanes destroyed the house twice. Stout didn't rebuild it after Ike, but the landscape still shows up in his paintings, usually interrupted by prismlike lines that suggest layers of windows or the outlines of walls. Interior scenes began inserting themselves into his compositions after Anne died, he said.

"All of my paintings have to do with where I am right now," he said. And right now, he's thrilled to be in the limelight again.

So are many other artists who were included in "Fresh Paint."

Basilios Poulos rushed to see his 1982 painting "Ivion" when Gershon pulled it from the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston's "mausoleum" for a current show at the Glassell School of Art that also draws from the collection of the late William J. Hill. All of the works there are by artists who appear in Gershon's book and have connections to the Glassell.

"When I heard the painting was out, I came the same day. It was a joy to see it," Poulos said last week, during a talk with Gershon's book-related

class at the Glassell.

Similar to the piece he had in "Fresh Paint," "Ivion" features three squeegee-rendered panels that could be construed as a standing figure with outstretched arms, layered over a field of white splashes on a brown background that floats within a larger field of brown with swipes of purple. It's about mark-making and automatic process, in the vein of Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko.

"I'm not one of the regionalists," Poulos said. "I'm not dealing with a personal narrative of being here."

A native of South Carolina and the son of Greek immigrants, Poulos came to Rice University from Manhattan in 1975 as an artist in residence. Seven years younger than Stout, he was already moderately successful, with a studio across the street from Frank Stella's and dealers in New York, San Francisco and Atlanta. He expected to stay in Houston a year, partly to get through a divorce.

Then the New York studio burned and Rice offered him tenure. Poulos considered it fate. He is grateful to have taught at Rice for 31 years, although he proudly calculates that he spent seven of them painting, on sabbaticals or leaves. With great conviction, he calls himself "an artist of the world."

A few of the "Fresh Paint" artists were already famous in the early 1980's, including John Alexander and James Surls. But the show did raise a few profiles — notably that of Sharon Kopriva, a painter and sculptor who taught high school art for nine years

going. She toiled nearly two years on "The Bad, Ugly, Proud, and Disconcerned," a huge mixed-media composition of four broken mummy figures whose layers included anchovies and strips of Alexander's drawings. Then the curators chose it for "Fresh Paint," and Allan Stone, a respected New York dealer, bought the canvas even before it went up at the museum.

Kopriva quickly became one of the region's most sought-after talents.

When Gershon invited her to hang a show of her early works at the Jung Center that's up this month, she had to dig through drawers to find some that she still owned. Revisiting them has been amazing, she said, sure that some of the old imagery will find its way back into new drawings.

Kopriva still feels bad for artists who didn't make the "Fresh Paint" cut years ago. Julian Schnabel, a former Stout student, obviously didn't need the push. But a lot of good people were left out, she said. And now, even the youngest "Fresh Paint" talents are near or over 60 years old. Many are still working but up against a vastly changed and larger scene that produces new MFA's every year like clockwork.

"It's hard to stay on the radar," Kopriva said. "I was a lucky one. I had this incredible drive."

Poulos still wonders what his career might have become if he had

gone back to New York. His first Houston gallery show sold out, but not at New York prices. "I just wanted to sell paintings," he said. "I was in an active situation."

Stout, who taught at the Glassell for nine years and the University of Houston for 30, said he has never broken even with his art sales. "People like a signature style. But I don't have a signature style," he said. "I have a manner. I'm proud of what I've done. It's original." He keeps things in perspective thinking about his late friend Irving Petlin, a classmate from Chicago. A prize-winning genius who earned an MFA at Yale University, where he studied with Josef Albers, Petlin had modest success in Europe but "was a total zero in New York," Stout said.

Petlin died Sept. 1. One of Stout's longtime Houston friends, midcentury modernist Henri Gadbais, died Oct. 13. His memorial reception took place Saturday at Reaves|Foltz Fine Art, where works from the estate of Stella Sullivan, a contemporary who died last year, fill the walls. There's also a small show of sculptures by Stout and painted envelopes by his first Houston studio mate, the late Jack Boynton.

Lucas Johnson and Virgil Grotfeldt are gone now, too. And Gershon launched his book project five years ago because of another death: He'd spent a year working alongside Bert Long, helping to organize the artist's archives, before Long died in February 2013. In the weeks and months that followed, Gershon heard too many other heart stories to ignore — enough to build several books.

So there's an urgency to every one of these fall shows.

Stout said he has begun "final preparations," making sure his work is archived, but his studio holds hundreds of unsold canvases. And he's not ready to stop. He always urged his students to move forward.

It takes him about two weeks to complete each new canvas and recent one in four of his most recent works draws on the darkening landscape around the Montrose home he has owned since 1960, now dense with townhomes.

He paints as he always has, because he must. "Things start to roar, you don't want it to kill you," he said.

That's worth more fame or money.



Molly Glentzer / Staff

Jesse Lott made "Big Girl (A tribute to Eula Love)" in 1980, not long after Love was killed.

ART

Houston's art scene is as diverse and colorful as the city itself, with galleries and museums that feature works by local, national and international talents. All shows are free unless otherwise noted.

GALLERIES

Anya Tish Gallery

"Eduardo Portillo: Close Encounters," through Nov. 10; 4411 Montrose; 713-524-2299, anyatishgallery.com.

Archway Gallery

"Deep Space Communication," recent works by Kevin Cromwell, through Nov. 1; 2305 Dunlavy; 713-522-2409, archwaygallery.com.

Art of the World Gallery

"Carlos Luna: Flower Power," through Dec. 22; 2201 Westheimer; 713-526-1201, artoftheworldgallery.com.

Barbara Davis Gallery

"Paul Fleming: Carefully Wrapped" and "Joe Mancuso: Not Obvious as Songs," through Nov. 10; 4411 Montrose; 713-520-9200, barbaradavisgallery.com.

Catherine Couturier Gallery

"Renate Aller: Mountain Interval," through Nov. 2; 2635 Colquitt; 713-524-5070, catherinecouturier.com.

Cindy Lisica Gallery

"Touchstones," group show by Jae Ko, Atticus Adams and Rachel Fischer, through Nov. 1; 4411 Montrose; 713-807-7760, cindylisicagallery.com.

Czech Center Museum Houston

"Vietnamese Art: From the Charalampus Collection," through Wednesday; 4920 San Jacinto; 713-528-2060, czechcenter.org.

David Shelton Gallery

"Vincent Valdez: Dream Baby Dream," through Nov. 10; 4411 Montrose; 713-393-7389, davidsheltongallery.com.

Deborah Colton Gallery

"Identifiably Houston: Foundations II," group show, through Saturday; 2445 North Blvd.; 713-869-5151, deborahcoltongallery.com.

Devin Borden Gallery

"Daryl Lauster: Union," sculpture, through Thursday; 3909 Main; 713-256-0225, devinborden-gallery.com.

FotoFest

"Seeing Harvey: Personal Stories, Public Responses" and "Gideon Mendel: Deluge," through Nov. 3; 2000 Edwards; 713-223-5522, fotofest.org.

G Spot Contemporary Art Space

"Bill Hailey: Ornamental Desire," through Sunday; 310 E. 9th; 832-807-6988, gspotgallery.com.

Gallery Sonja Roesch

"John Clement: Tusk," through Saturday; 2309 Caroline; 713-659-5424, gallerysonjaroesch.com.

Gray Contemporary

"Deborah Dancy: Un/Natural Occurrence" and "Austin Turley: Correspondence," through Nov. 24; 3508 Lake; 713-862-4425, graycontemporary.com.

Hooks-Epstein Galleries

"Mark Greenwalt: Familiar Anomalies" and "Ward Sanders: Nightboxes," through Nov. 21; 2631 Colquitt; 713-522-0788, hooks-epsteingalleries.com.

Inman Gallery

"Francesca Fuchs: How to Tell the Truth and Painting," through Saturday; 3901 Main; 713-526-7800, inmangallery.com.

Jonathan Hopson

"Bradley Kerl," through Dec. 4;



Molly Glentzer / Staff

1982's "Icarus" is among works by Earl Staley on view through Saturday at Deborah Colton Gallery.



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Deborah Colton Gallery presents "Identifiably Houston: Foundations III" opening reception



Image courtesy of Deborah Colton Gallery

Deborah Colton Gallery will present "Identifiably Houston: Foundations III," a group exhibition of courageous and spirited artists who have made a major impact and have conveyed the pioneering spirit that Houston was founded with over 180 years ago. The exhibition is also paying tribute to Houston's Heritage Society and their related events this season.

Although this is just a small sampling of Houston artists, they reveal their strong individualism and brave representational type art that has a narrative, often with an aspect of abstraction. As viewers enter the gallery, they will instantly feel and see the connection within this genre or “School” that is something special and unique to Houston.

Following the opening reception, the exhibit will be on display through October 27.

EVENT DETAILS

WHEN

9.15.18 | 4:00 pm

WHERE

Deborah Colton Gallery

2445 North Blvd.

Houston, TX 77098

Get Directions >(<https://maps.google.com/?q=2445>

North Blvd. Houston, TX 77098)

WEBSITE >

([HTTP://WWW.DEBORAHCOLTONGALLERY.COM/INTERNATIONAL/EDIT-EXHIBITION-IDENTIFIABLY-HOUSTON-%E2%80%93-FOUNDATIONS-III](http://www.deborahcoltongallery.com/international/edit-exhibition-identifiably-houston-%E2%80%93-foundations-iii))

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