

The Melton Art Reference Library's latest exhibition, "Oklahoma Pride: the Second Half of the First 50 Years of Art in Oklahoma", yep, that's the title. It's a mouth full, but it states forthrightly what the exhibition is about. This exhibit is without doubt a continuation of the "First 50 Years of Art in Oklahoma" exhibition that I curated in 2015. For such a young state, Oklahoma's art history is vast, and I wanted to touch on certain areas of Oklahoma's art history.

I started doing research for the Oklahoma Pride exhibit in the Spring of 2016. As I have worked on this exhibit researching, writing, editing, and rewriting for a better part of a year, a lot of the information that I wrote started to get jumbled in my head and I started seeing stars. So when I think about these artists, all whom were educators, or historians of their tribe, and experimenters of modern art, whose influence I see still has a ripple effect on today's Oklahoma art history. That being said, most, if not all of the artists being represented in this exhibit lives and art were affected by World War II.

It was only after World War II that the United States became a focus for new artistic movements. Like the term "Post-Impressionism", "Post-Modernism" refers not to a single specific style, but to a period. The period after the First 50 years of art in Oklahoma. World War II also brought a change in perspective, art appreciation and individual perception.



Blackbear Bosin

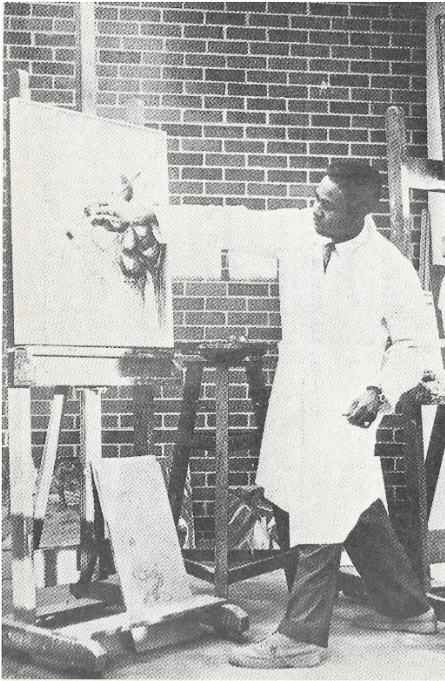


George Bogart

With an emphasis on self-expression, artists experimented with new ways of seeing things and new concepts around the nature of materials and the utility that art could have. Oklahoma artists like Eugene Bavinger, Paul Maxwell, Wallace Owens, and Derald

Swineford experimented with materials and modern concepts to express their individual artistic nuances.

Bavinger's art education was interrupted by his military involvement in 1942, which he said directly affected his outlook on the world and his art. Maxwell developed and patented an artistic technique of stencil casting, which became known as the "Maxwell Pochoir". Mr. Owens, did not only serve in the war but also was able to apply his G.I. Bill to his art education. Owens continues to express himself with his art and support of other Oklahoma artists through his nonprofit, Owens Art Place Museum in Guthrie, OK. Swineford a regionalist artist, served in Africa during the war. Swineford who believed "use what can be found", made most of his own tools, in fact he used left over guns from the war in some of his sculptures.



Wallace Owens teaching.

These Modern Oklahoma Artists were fantastic to research and learn from, sadly most are not living artists, but those who are Joan Hill, Wallace Owens, and Harold Stevenson are living treasures. Their students some who have gone on to make a name for themselves in the arts, like Sherri McGraw, Ed Ruscha, and Leon Polk Smith, others continue the "Oklahoma Pride" artists' legacy and have become art educators themselves.



George Calvert and students.