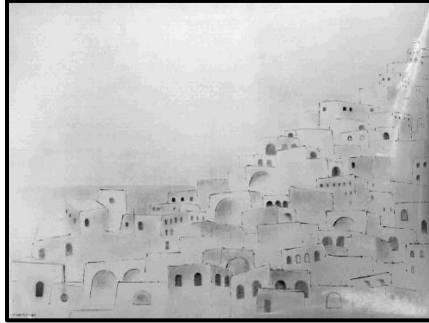


Gene Charlton The Houston-Rome Connection

In 1957, Houston artist Gene Charlton (1909-1979) moved to Italy. He found home there, and stayed for the rest of his life. In the summers, he taught at the Positano Art Workshop on the magical Amalfi Coast, making paintings he called "Cristallizzazioni" (Crystallizations), in which he tried to distill the gorgeous light of the place. He's buried there, overlooking the glorious, glistening Tyrrhenian Sea.



Gene Charlton in 1963 (l) and teaching in Positano 1970s (r); his drawing of the town (c).

The winters he spent in Rome, part of the electrifying art scene in the city at the time, which included other American artists and writers drawn by the more worldly look-the-other-way Felliniesque milieu than the one they left back home, even if "home" had been cosmopolitan New York – people like Cy Twombly, Tennessee Williams and Gore Vidal, all of whom Charlton knew. He showed his work often in the galleries of the city – Galleria La Medusa, Galleria 88, Galleria Trastevere – and had his studio in Palazzo Pio, overlooking Piazza Campo de' Fiori, the same building where Twombly worked.



Gene Charlton *Roman Festival* 1969.

HETAG: The Houston Earlier Texas Art Group



Gene Charlton collages 1958 and 1959.

Now is a perfect time to explore the Italian world in which Charlton and the others worked, in conjunction with the first comprehensive US exhibition of 20th Century Italian drawings, at the Menil Drawing Institute thru April 11:

[Silent Revolutions: Italian Drawings from the Twentieth Century](#)

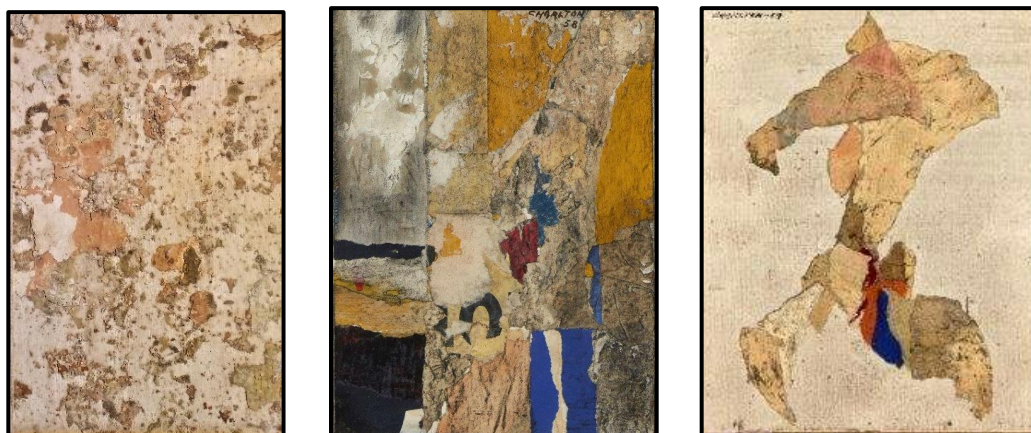
Charlton's own work is not included in the exhibition, but Kelly Montana, Assistant Curator of the Drawing Institute, has written a fascinating history of Charlton's work and life in Rome in the period. Montana focuses on, and expanding from, Charlton collages in the Menil Collection, purchased by the de Menils from his 1961 exhibition at New Arts Gallery in Houston. You may recall that these collages were featured in the exhibitions *The Precarious* (Menil Collection 2015/16) and *The Art of Texas* (Witte Museum 2019):

[Torn Papers: Gene Charlton in Rome](#)

by Kelly Montana, Assistant Curator, Menil Drawing Institute

Also sure to be of interest is the three-day virtual symposium relating to the exhibition, April 7, 8 & 9, including a session looking specifically at:

[Interconnections Between American and Italian Artists](#) (April 9)



Gene Charlton collages 1958 and 1959.