



**Smithsonian Institution**

*Archives of American Art*

## **Celebrating 175: Mel Casas, Clippings, 1980-1987**

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[[image - painting]]  
COURTESY WATSON/DE NAGY

[[image - sculpture]]  
PRIVATE COLLECTION, HOUSTON

OPPOSITE PAGE: Jack Boynton, Texas Sunset, 1979, poster, 22 by 22 inches. ABOVE Earl Staley, The Judgement of Paris, 1980, acrylic on canvas, 60 by 108 inches, LEFT Jim Love, Small Hammer, 1978, welded steel, 5 1/4 inches long.

sity of Houston's Blaffer Gallery. "We're already seeing the beginning alternative art spaces."

The growth of Houston's scene has been rapid. In 1973-74, the number of art galleries in Houston skyrocketed to more than 60, up from 40 just a few years earlier. Of these, fewer than ten operated at a highly sophisticated level, with the rest dealing in an assortment of style ranging from Texas "bluebonnet paintings" to primitive art of questionable authenticity. Janie C. Lee, Meredith Long, Marjorie Kauffman, Watson/de Nagy, Moody, Texas, Cronin, Hooks-Epstein and DuBose are the galleries that form the backbone of Houston's art scene. The Houston Art Dealers Association (HADA) was formed in the mid-70's with a membership drawn from this group to encourage higher-quality galleries. Today, HADA sponsors a number of programs, including the annual summer "Introduction" shows featuring the work of artists new to Houstonians.

As different as they were at the beginning of the decade, the city's two main art museums, the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) and the Contemporary Arts Museum (CAM), located across the street from each other, have weathered administrative crises in recent years and today are characterized by their quite similar exhibition philosophies. Despite the glamorous 1972 opening of the new Brown Pavilion designed by Mies van der Rohe, the major developments at the MFA have been behind the scenes. A recognized scholar of the early 20th century American art and contemporary minimal art, Agee has devoted most of his exhibition activity to a few historically significant shows, notably retrospectives of Patrick Henry Bruce and Gustave Caillebotte and the survey of Cézanne's late work the originated in New York at the Museum of Modern Art. Agee has also concentrated on developing the museum's collection and reconstructing its administration. Between 1978 and March 1980, former board chairman Alexander McLanahan, a stockbroker, served as the museum's president, concentrating on business matters while Agee was in charge of curatorial affairs. But this arrangement was eventually abandoned when McLanahan returned to private business, saying that he had confidence in the administrative abilities of the chairman and the board of trustees. Moreover, the MFA has expanded its physical plant with the addition of the new Glassell School of Art. There are also plans for a sculpture garden by Isamu Noguchi, scheduled for completion in 1982, to be located between the MFA and the CAM.

Agee says the most significant advance the museum has made in the 70's has been in the development of the collection. A major photography collection, curated by Anne Tucker, has been assembled at the MFA, and the museum's holdings in early 20th-century American painting have been expanded to 40 works from the previous three. Begun in the



late '60's, the first Hand-book of the museum collection appeared recently. Moreover, the museum's curatorial

December 1980  
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