

# Tennessee Williams:

## An Inventory of His Art Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

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### Descriptive Summary

- Creator:** Williams, Tennessee, 1911-1983
- Title:** Tennessee Williams Art Collection
- Dates:** circa 1928-1980
- Extent:** 2 boxes, 5 framed paintings, 1 framed print (39 items)
- Abstract:** The collection consists of paintings, drawings, and prints by and related to Tennessee Williams. Art by Williams includes twenty-six paintings of still lifes, landscapes, and portraits of his friends, including a few paintings from his childhood years.
- Call Number:** AR-00299
- Language:** No linguistic material
- Access:** Open for research. Please note that a minimum of 24 hours notice is required to pull Art Collection materials to the Ransom Center's Reading and Viewing Room. Some materials may be restricted from viewing. To make an appointment or to reserve Art Collection materials, please contact the Center's staff at [art@hrc.utexas.edu](mailto:art@hrc.utexas.edu). Researchers must create an online Research Account and agree to the Materials Use Policy before using archival materials.
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**Administrative Information**

**Preferred Citation** Tennessee Williams Art Collection (AR-00389). Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

**Acquisition:** Purchases, 1966-2019 (R2913, R1963, R5900, 19-09-018-P); gifts, 1966-2003 (G12245, G10499)

**Processed by:** Alice Egan, 1997, Helen Young, 2001, and Mary Alice Harper, 2019

**Repository:** [Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.](#)

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## Biographical Sketch

The playwright Tennessee Williams was born Thomas Lanier Williams, III, on March 26, 1911, in Columbus, Mississippi, to Cornelius Coffin and Edwina Dakin Williams. He spent his early childhood in Mississippi and Tennessee before his family moved to St. Louis, Missouri, in 1918. Williams started writing at an early age, and he showed early artistic ability. He briefly attended the University of Missouri and Washington University in St. Louis before graduating from the University of Iowa in 1938. A few months after graduation, he moved to New Orleans, where he soon became friends with a clarinetist, Jim Parrott. In early 1939, Williams went with Parrott to Los Angeles hoping to find a screenwriting job and briefly worked on Parrott's uncle's pigeon farm. During this time he also received art lessons from Parrott's mother Adelaide, a WPA art instructor, who was impressed by Williams' artistic talent. After this, Williams sketched and painted often, and he continued to do so for the rest of his life. For subjects, he turned to his mother Edwina, his sister Rose, and friends, including Jim Parrott. As his writing career developed he also painted characters from his plays. Later in life while living in Key West, Florida, Williams received further lessons from Henry Faulkner, with whom he also exhibited works. At this point he also created limited edition portfolios which he sold in New York through Gotham Book Mart.

In March of 1939, Williams won a \$100 Group Theatre Prize for five one-act plays, which were later published in 1948 as *American Blues*, as well as a \$1,000 grant from the Rockefeller Foundation for *Battle of Angels*. He gained even greater success with *The Glass Menagerie* in 1944. His plays *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955) both won Pulitzer Prizes. Other successful plays included *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958), *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1959), and *Night of the Iguana* (1961). Williams also wrote two novels, film scripts, poetry, essays, short stories, and his autobiography, *Memoirs* (1975). He died February 25, 1983, in New York City.

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## Sources:

Leverich, L. *Tom, the Unknown Tennessee Williams*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1995.  
"Tennessee Williams." *Contemporary Authors, New Revision Series*, vol. 31, ed. J. G. Lewniak. Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1990.

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## Scope and Contents

The collection consists of paintings, drawings, and prints by and related to the playwright Tennessee Williams (American, 1911-1983). The collection is divided into the following series: I. Works by Tennessee Williams, 1928-1947, 1981, undated; II. Portraits of Tennessee Williams by Other Artists, 1962, undated; and III. Works Related to Tennessee Williams, 1940s-1980, undated.

Series I. is comprised of twenty-six paintings and drawings of still lifes, landscapes, and portraits Williams made of his friends, including a few paintings from his childhood years. One of the paintings, "By that time Summer and Smoke were past..." takes its title from a line in Hart Crane's poem, *Emblems of Conduct*. The works in this series are arranged by accession number. Series II. consists of four portraits of Williams created by various artists, and they are arranged alphabetically by artist surname. Series III., Works Related to Tennessee Williams, includes a portrait of Williams' maternal grandfather, Dr. Dakin; a dust jacket design by Cecil Beaton for *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*; a preliminary sketch by Thomas Hart Benton for his painting *The Poker Night*, which was used on the cover of the Signet paperback edition of *Streetcar Named Desire*; and drawings of Williams' dog, Buffo, by the actress Anna Magnani, who won an Oscar for her role in the screen version of *The Rose Tattoo*. These works are arranged alphabetically by artist surname.

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## Related Material

Additional portraits of Tennessee Williams, also held in the Art Collection, include works by Don Bachardy, David Levine, Emanuel Romano, and David Schorr. Extensive Tennessee Williams manuscript holdings are held in the Tennessee Williams Collection (MS-04535) and in several smaller collection. Photographs by and of Williams can be found in Tennessee Williams Literary File Photography Collection (PH-02858) and in other Literary Files of the Photography Collection (PH-00281).

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## Index Terms

### People

- Beaton, Cecil, 1904-1980.
- Benton, Thomas Hart, 1889-1975.
- Jones, Liza.
- Kinstler, Everett Raymond.
- Magnani, Anna, 1908-1973.
- Safran, Bernard, 1924- .
- Williams, Tennessee, 1911-1983.

**Subjects**

Dramatists, American.

Portrait painting.

**Document Types**

Caricatures.

Drawings.

Landscape paintings.

Paintings.

Self-portraits.

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**Series I. Works by Tennessee Williams, 1928-1947, 1981, undated**

- Accession Number: 65.399.1** Williams, Tennessee (attributed). [Jim Parrott?], 1939? Watercolor, 45.5 x 30.4 cm. **Box** 1.1
- Accession Number: 65.399.2** Williams, Tennessee. [Tennessee Williams, self-portrait], 1939. Oil on paperboard, 30.4 x 20.7 cm. **Box** 1.2
- Accession Number: 65.399.3** Williams, Tennessee (attributed). [Fred Parrott or Walter Willard "Spud" Johnson], 1939? Oil on paperboard, 35.5 x 22.8 cm. **Box** 1.3
- Accession Number: 65.399.4** Williams, Tennessee (attributed). [James Merle or Frank Merlo], undated. Oil on paperboard, 30.4 x 21 cm. **Box** 1.4
- Accession Number: 2003.1.0001** Williams, Tennessee. [Frank Merlo], undated. Oil on canvas board, 50.1 x 40.4 cm. **Box** 1.5
- Accession Number: 65.399.5** Williams, Tennessee. Jim, 1939? Oil on paperboard, 30.3 x 20.9 cm. **Box** 1.6
- Accession Number: 65.399.6** Williams, Tennessee. [Jim Parrott?], undated. Oil on paperboard, 30.5 x 25.5 cm. **Box** 1.7
- Accession Number: 65.399.7** Williams, Tennessee. [Still life], undated. Oil on board, 20.8 x 30.2 cm. **Box** 1.8
- Accession Number: 65.399.8** Williams, Tennessee. [Prancing horse with vase], undated. Oil on board, 25.4 x 30.5 cm. **Box** 1.9
- Accession Number: 65.399.9** Williams, Tennessee (attributed). [Landscape], undated. Oil on masonite, 22.8 x 30.1 cm. **Box** 1.10
- Accession Number: 65.399.10** Williams, Tennessee (attributed). [Tropical scene at night], circa 1928. Oil on linen, 27.9 x 31.2 cm. **Box** 1.11
- Accession Number: 65.399.11** Williams, Tennessee. [Winter landscape], before 1939. Oil on paper, 9.2 x 12.7 cm. **Box** 1.12
- Accession Number: 65.399.12** Williams, Tennessee. [Spring landscape], before 1939. Oil on paper, 9.9 x 12.2 cm.
- Accession Number: 65.399.13** Williams, Tennessee. [Summer landscape], before 1939. Oil on paper, 8.4 x 9.9 cm.
- Accession Number: 65.399.14** Williams, Tennessee (attributed). [Landscape], undated. Oil on board, 25.9 x 40.3 cm. **Box** 2.1

- Accession Number: 65.399.15** Williams, Tennessee. Purification [2 female figures, 1 male figure], undated. Ink on coated board, 28.3 x 17.8 cm. **Box**  
2.2
- Accession Number: 66.36.1** Williams, Tennessee. [Tennessee Williams, self-portrait], undated. Oil on canvas, 39.5 x 29.5 cm (visible image); 59 x 50 cm (frame). **Location**  
Screen  
Storage
- Accession Number: 66.36.2** Williams, Tennessee. [Unidentified woman], 1947? Oil on canvas board, 40.3 x 30.1 cm. **Box**  
2.3
- Accession Number: 66.36.3** Williams, Tennessee. [Pancho Rodriguez], undated. Oil on canvas board, 39.5 x 29.5 cm (visible image); 59 x 50 cm (frame). **Location**  
Screen  
Storage
- Accession Number: 66.36.4** Williams, Tennessee. [Male dancer], 1947? Oil on canvas board, 50.1 x 40 cm. **Box**  
2.4
- Accession Number: 66.36.5** Williams, Tennessee. [Standing jester], 1947? Oil on canvas board, 50.1 x 40 cm. **Box**  
2.5
- Accession Number: 66.36.6** Williams, Tennessee. By that time Summer and Smoke were past..., circa 1947. Oil on canvas, 39.5 x 49.5 cm (visible image); 42.5 x 53 cm (frame). **Location**  
Screen  
Storage
- Accession Number: 2006.1** Williams, Tennessee. The Vogue of the Wide Tie [head profile of man facing left], undated Pencil, 15.2 x 10.1 cm. **Box**  
2.6
- Accession Number: 73.390** Williams, Tennessee. Criswell, undated. Pencil, 27.8 x 21.5 cm. **Box**  
2.7
- Accession Number: 94.12** Williams, Tennessee. [Crucifixion], undated. Oil on canvas, 24.5 x 19.5 cm (visible image); 37.5 x 32.5 cm (frame). **Location**  
Screen  
Storage
- Accession Number: 2019:0021:0001** Williams, Tennessee. Evening in the Studio, 1981. Acrylic on canvas, 54.6 x 69.8 cm (visible image); 56.2 x 71.3 (canvas on original stretcher); 64.9 x 80.1 cm (frame).

**Series II. Portraits of Tennessee Williams by Other Artists, 1962, undated**

- Accession Number: 97.17** Kinstler, Everett Raymond. The Violets in the Mountains ... [design with face portrait of Williams, with quote from Camino Real; "V/L"], 1975. Color lithograph, 55.7 x 40 cm (visible image); 81.9 x 61 cm (frame). **Location** Screen Storage
- Accession Number: 65.483** Safran, Bernard (attributed). [Tennessee Williams], circa 1962. Black crayon on paper, with white correction fluid or paint, 24.8 x 21.2 cm. **Box** 2.8
- Accession Number: 84.30** Safran, Bernard. Tennessee Williams [Time magazine cover], published 9 March 1962. Color reproductive print, 25.3 x 20.3 cm. **Box** 2.9
- Accession Number: 73.342** Unidentified artist. [Caricature of Tennessee Williams], undated. Watercolor, 24 x 20.1 cm. **Box** 2.10



**Series III. Works Related to Tennessee Williams, 1940s-1980, undated**

**Accession Number: 73.161** Beaton, Cecil. The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone, 1950s? Color ink, crayon, and gouache, 36.2 x 28.2 cm. **Box** 2.11

**Accession Number: 73.159** Benton, Thomas Hart. The Poker Night, 1948. Pencil and ink, 18.5 x 21 cm. **Box** 2.12

**Accession Number: 97.20** Jones, Liza. Snowfall [with poem of the same title by Tennessee Williams], 1980. Color etching, 17.5 x 24.7 cm (image); 37.5 x 57.5 cm (sheet). **Box** 2.13

**Accession Number: 77.38.1** Magnani, Anna. Buffo! [Tennessee Williams' dog], circa 1960. Pencil, 21 x 29.5 cm. **Box** 2.14

**Accession Number: 77.38.2** Magnani, Anna. Buffo! [Tennessee Williams' dog], circa 1960. Pencil, 13.5 x 10.2 cm.

**Accession Number: 65.482** B. A. [Unidentified artist]. Dr. Dakin [Tennessee Williams' grandfather], undated. Pencil, 20.7 x 27.9 cm. **Box** 2.15

**Accession Number: 84.89** Unidentified artist. The Trade Winds, Key West, Florida, likely 1940s or later. Woodcut, 8.3 x 13.9 cm. **Box** 2.16

**Accession Number: 68.77.1** Unidentified artist. The Night of the Iguana, 1961? Color poster, 56 x 35.7 cm. **Box** 2.17

**Accession Number: 68.77.2** Unidentified artist. The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore, 1964? Color poster, 56.1 x 35.7 cm.