

TheMedium

Volume 35, Number 2 (Fall 2009)

- Annual Business Meeting Minutes
- Hidalgo Pumphouse Museum
- McAllen Slide Show
- Mission Historical Museum Annex
- Museum of South Texas History
- Old Town McAllen Art Walk
- Quinta Mazatlan
- Rex Cafe and Bakery
- Texas's Largest Killer Bee Statue
- Tour of Ann Moore's House and Collection

Annual Business Meeting Minutes

Business Meeting: 2009 Business Meeting Minutes

November 10, 2009-Sigler, Karen

Art Libraries Society of North America Texas-Mexico Chapter

Annual Meeting 2009 McAllen, Texas

Minutes

I. Call to order (President Ellard)

The Art Libraries Society of North America, Texas-Mexico Chapter's Annual Business Meeting 2009 was held at the Renaissance Casa De Palmas Hotel, McAllen, Texas on November 8, 2009. The meeting was called to order by President Carla Ellard.

II. Introductions (President Ellard)

President Ellard asked those present to introduce themselves. In attendance were Craig Bunch (Houston Independent School District), Gwen Dixie (Dallas Public Library), Martha González Palacios (University of Texas at Austin), Beverly Mitchell (Southern Methodist University), Edward Lukasek (Museum of Fine Arts, Houston), Sheri Salisbury (University of Texas at San Antonio), Selene Hinojosa (Texas State University), Tara Spies (Texas State University), Karen Sigler (Texas State University), and Carla Ellard (Texas State University). Guests in attendance were George and Virginia Gause, University of Texas-Pan American).

President Ellard thanked several people for making the meeting a success, including George & Virginia Gause, who helped with local arrangements. She also thanked her colleagues, Karen Sigler and Tara Spies and executive committee, Craig Bunch and Edward Lukasek for all of their support.

III. Secretary's Report and Approval of 2008 Business Meeting Minutes (Secretary Sigler)

Minutes from the 2008 meeting had previously been submitted to Chapter members for comments. Copies of the revised minutes were given to those in attendance with the one requested change.

Secretary Sigler then asked that the 2008 Business Meeting Minutes be approved with edit suggested by members. President Ellard moved to have the minutes be approved. Craig Bunch seconded the motion.

IV. Treasurer's Report (Treasurer Lukasek)

Treasurer Lukasek reported we have had 21 members renew or join. Sherman Clark is back as a member (he

is now a retired cataloger). We started our balance at \$1,055.38, but have had expenses of \$153.19 for this conference. Our current balance stands at \$1,399.46 but does not include the business meeting breakfast. He also provided President Ellard with an updated directory, which she will have updated on the Chapter's website. Treasurer Lukasek will also send out another reminder about renewals and donations for the Lois Swan Award.

V. Medium Editor's Report (Vice-President Bunch)

Vice President Bunch reported there were 5 submissions to The Medium. He thanked those who had submitted articles. He then recruited volunteers for submission to the next issue and asked that they be submitted by mid-December.

VI. Lois Swan Jones' Award Committee Report (Tara Spies)

Committee chair, Tara Spies, reported that Nicole Davis was selected as last year's winner and was awarded \$500 to supplement her attendance at the national ARLIS North America Conference in Indianapolis. This committee was comprised of Vice-President Bunch, past secretary, Essinger and Tara Spies.

VII. Call for new LSJ Award Committee Volunteers (President Ellard)

President Ellard made a call for volunteers to serve on this committee. Tara Spies (chair), Sheri Salisbury, and Beverly Mitchell agreed to serve. Treasurer Lukasek is a member by default. Tara will put out a call in January for applicants. The amount of the award and number of awardees was discussed and it was agreed that it is more beneficial to have the award go to one person versus splitting it into two amounts. A motion was made by Gwen Dixie to award \$500 to the recipient of the LSJ Award, seconded by Secretary Sigler.

VIII. Online dictionary with a bibliography of Texas artists post World War II (Beverly Mitchell)

Beverly Mitchell discussed the need for an updated and extended online dictionary for Texas artists. The members favored the idea and recognize the need. It was also agreed that focusing on a decade at a time might make the project more manageable. Beverly will write up a review of what was discussed and send it out to the members for more discussion. Vice President Bunch is involved in the Texas Reference Sources Online and was able to provide valuable information on his experiences with this project and how this project might proceed in a similar fashion.

IX. Disaster preparedness/management document (Beverly Mitchell)

Beverly brought up the topic for discussion to see what everyone is doing at different institutions as a follow up to what happened after Hurricane Ike. The group discussed various projects that are going on at different

institutions. Selene volunteered to bring a copy of Texas State University's updated disaster/emergency plan at the next chapter meeting.

X. Revisiting the issue of recruiting members from Mexico (Vice-President Bunch)

Vice-President Bunch brought up the topic for discussion to see what we might do to encourage or enlist librarians from Mexico. The group decided the best approach at this point might be to contact ARLIS NA to find out if there might be a way to grant an initial exemption or sliding scale fee for these librarians. Treasurer Lukasek and Beverly Mitchell volunteered to discuss this idea with other members in the parent organization that might provide guidance or assistance in this area.

XI. Election of Vice President/President Elect (Past President Hinojosa and Gwen Dixie)

Past Presidents, Mark Pompelia and Selene Hinojosa, along with Gwen Dixie, made up the nominating committee. They nominated Beverly Mitchell for Vice-President/President-elect. She was unanimously elected.

XII. Chapter Welcome Party Donation (Treasurer Lukasek)

Treasurer Lukasek stated that the chapter could afford to donate \$300 to the welcome party at the 2010 ARLIS/NA Annual Conference in Boston. He anticipates more donations and renewals will be forthcoming. Tara Spies moved that the chapter donate \$300. Beverly Mitchell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

XIII. 2010 Meeting Planning (Vice-President Bunch)

Vice President Bunch suggested the next meeting be held in Houston. Fort Worth was also suggested. After some discussion, President Ellard made the move that the next meeting be held in Houston. Secretary Sigler seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

XIV. New Business (President Ellard)

President Ellard explained about TEI, ARLIS/NA's new management firm and their requirements and method for collecting chapter dues. The group discussed the options and it was decided for the time being we prefer to collect our chapter dues through our treasurer. The members felt this new firm needed some time to work out some of the issues before we commit to their guidelines. We will review it again at next year's meeting.

XV. Adjournment (President Ellard)

After the conclusion of new business, President Ellard concluded the meeting @ 10:30.

Hidalgo Pumphouse Museum

The Hidalgo Pumphouse Museum

The Hidalgo Pumphouse Museum features displays that portray, to quote from a McAllen ISD web page, “the important and beneficial effects of the pumphouse towards the irrigation of agriculture in the lower Rio Grande Valley.” We saw tools once used on the machinery and “huge engines that had once sent more than 300,000 gallons of water per minute to an area reaching 70,000 acres around the cities of Hidalgo, McAllen, Edinburg, Pharr, and San Juan.”

A wing of the World Birding Center is also here. Depending on the season, one may see tropical kingfishers, green jays, clay-colored robins, Altamira orioles, warblers, kinglets, and gnatcatchers, and other species.

There is a superb view of the Rio Grande, and we took the opportunity for a group picture on a deck overlooking the river. You may see this and other photos (partial group pictures overlooking the wooden railing, the imposing Pumphouse smokestack, and a section of the border fence) if you click on “McAllen Slide Show” in the fall 2009 Medium.

Submitted by Craig Bunch

McAllen Slide Show

[Click here for a slide show of the ARLIS/Texas-Mexico Chapter fall meeting in McAllen:](#)



[Update: Slideshow no longer active]

Mission Historical Museum Annex

TOUR: Mission Historical Museum Annex

"Day of the Dead" exhibit

Saturday, November 7, 2009 was a full day of tours and events. So by the tail end of the afternoon (and we had two events that evening), I just didn't think anything would be that remarkable, though I have to admit, everything we saw and did at the chapter meeting last fall has stayed with me, for the good.

It was a small museum, comprised of two buildings, converted from city offices. The larger building was closed, but that is where the main exhibits area is. Here is an online tour of their permanent collection.

The smaller building, the annex, was formerly the Mission post office. It contained a couple of wall murals, one of recent vintage, and one created as part of the WPA post office mural by a Spanish (from Spain) artist, Xavier Gonzales. It was called "West Texas Landscape," done probably sometime in the 1940s.

But the main part of the building contained 6 large "Day of the Dead" (we were there just after All Souls day) exhibits or "altares." These are altars, are set up and decorated to honor a friend or family member who has passed away. This art form mimics the Mexican custom of taking gifts and food to the cemetery, in memory of, and to commemorate, departed loved ones, on All Souls Day (November 2).

The altares are set up with food, candy, gifts, and items of cherished meaning to the departed. If intended to commemorate an individual, a photograph of the loved one is often included.

This type of large, in-door art installation is a relatively new art form, and has gained in popularity in the U.S. over the past few decades. Traditionally, in Mexican and Mexican-American homes, photographs, floral arrangements and lighted candles would be placed on top of a table or piece of furniture, arranged as a small shrine or altar, to commemorate departed family members. They were referred to as "altares." I recall seeing this type of installation, as an art piece, in the early 1970s, when the Houston Contemporary Art Museum (CAM) opened their "Dále Gas" exhibit. I just thought it was something Hispanic families did, I had never thought of them as an art form. These contemporary "altares" that we saw in Mission, are a combination of the small family shrine (that was pretty much a permanent exhibit in your home) with the more anthropological "Dia de los Muertos" or All Souls Day cemetery visits and celebrations.

The museum's Director, Adela Ortega gave us a lovely talk and powerpoint presentation of her version of the history of "Day of the Dead" altares.

Submitted by Selene Hinojosa

Museum of South Texas History

Tour of Museum of South Texas History

After breakfast at Rex Cafe, Texas Mexico chapter members drove to Edinburg to visit the Museum of South Texas History. Barbara Stokes, archivist at the museum, served as our tour guide. Ms. Stokes started the tour with a history of the building and explanation of the Spanish-Colonial architectural style of the building. She also gave us a behind-the-scenes tour of the collections area, allowing chapter members to peruse the aisles of items not currently on exhibit. Ms. Stokes also showed us the Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archive reading room/library and the archives spaces and cold storage and newspaper storage area.

The Hidalgo County Historical Museum was formerly a jail built in 1910 and the original building was remodeled and opened as the Hidalgo County Museum in 1970. The museum changed their name to Museum of South Texas History, to appropriately reflect their holdings of materials of frontier history from northern Mexico and South Texas.

Texas-Mexico chapter members had an opportunity to view all of the exhibitions on display. There was one hanging at the jail in 1919 and the noose and hanging area is part of the museum's permanent exhibit. Nearby, were the Day of the Dead altars honoring celebrities and family members that had been made by local citizens. On permanent display in the main museum gallery is Rio Grande Legacy, a bilingual exhibit that explores the history of the region.

Chapter members all headed for the gift shop at the end of the tour. We then drove back to McAllen for our next tour at Quinta Mazatlan.

Submitted by Carla Ellard

Old Town McAllen Art Walk

Old Town McAllen Art Walk

On November 6th, members of the ARLIS TX/MX chapter gathered in the lobby of the Marriott Renaissance Casa de Palmas Hotel for the Friday night Old Town McAllen Art Walk. The Art Walk takes place on the first Friday of the month from 6 – 10 pm from September to May, and it runs through the center of North Main Street where art galleries and hosts open up their spaces to the public. On our visit, we experienced a crowd of local students and other citizens from South Texas traveling up and down a street filled with art vendors or a variety of performances in the art galleries, such as a lady rhythmically moving on stage with her very attentive dog, and a lively music group at the Nuevo Santander Gallery. The Art Walk supports local culture and artists in the Rio Grande Valley, and chapter members, with their fair share of shopping, did too.

Submitted by Beverly Mitchell

Quinta Mazatlan

Tour and Lunch at Quinta Mazatlan

Foregoing a scheduled stop for antique shopping due to the fascinating and engaging tour at the Museum of South Texas History, ARLIS members headed for the Quinta Mazatlan for a tour and lunch. Quinta Mazatlan is one of the largest remaining adobe homes built in Texas. Construction began in 1935 by Jason Matthews and his wife Marcia who were publisher/editor of The 'New' American Mercury, a pro-American publication originally founded by H. L. Mencken. The first structures completed on the site were a cottage and a hooch which was Mr. Matthews' hideaway accessible only by a rope ladder. A huge 12 foot deep adobe block swimming pool measuring 25 x 55 feet was then constructed but has since been filled in and converted to what could be called a wading pool.

The main house with more than 6700 square feet of living area was built next. This is where the family lived for thirty years. Interestingly, due to Mr. Matthews' eccentricity or perhaps paranoia, the home was painted inside and out with aluminum sulfate paint to prevent radar waves from penetrating the building! A beautiful feature of the main house is the front doors. Peter Mansbendel, a famous Swiss wood carver (who created many carvings around Austin including the elaborate woodwork above the door on the fourth floor UT Wrenn Library) was commissioned to recreate the stately doors of the Spanish Governor's Palace in San Antonio. The door includes two gargoyles and two cherubs in the likeness of the Matthews' son and daughter. The back area of the house is called "Cedar Hall". The ceiling beams are made from Lebanese cedars that were purportedly a gift from the King of Lebanon to Mr. Matthews, who fought alongside Lawrence of Arabia in the War of Independence from the Turks.

After the Matthews' deaths in 1963 and 1964, the grounds sat empty and in disrepair until Frank and Marilyn Shultz bought the property in 1968 and spent the next 30 years restoring Quinta Mazatlan to its original splendor. The city of McAllen subsequently purchased the historic grounds plus an adjoining eight acres in 1998 leading to the creation of the McAllen Wing of the World Birding Center/Nature Park, which offers nature trails for the viewing of over 100 species of birds nestled in over 100 tropical and native trees, flowers, and plants. Quinta Mazatlan is today devoted to environmental education and the principle of ecotourism. After the tour, we gathered around the wading pool with its comforting water jets to enjoy a tasty box lunch before heading to Hidalgo in search of the "Killer Bee"!

Edward Lukasek

Rex Cafe and Bakery

REX Cafe & Bakery (submitted by Tara Spies)

On Saturday November the 7th the ARLIS/Texas Mexico Chapter met for breakfast at the Rex Cafe & Bakery, located in downtown McAllen, Texas on 321 South 17th Street. El Rex Cafe opened on April 23, 1947 and is the oldest restaurant in McAllen. The original owner, Rogelio Guerrero, opened the cafe after he returned from World War II. He named it El Rex after the Latin word "Rex" for "king" (Quaintance, 2009).

When we arrived at around 8:45am the cafe was completely packed with people waiting and eagerly watching for their spot to eat breakfast. We followed suit and began watching for our chance to grab some empty tables. Our group ended up being split up between the back end and the front end of the cafe as these were the only tables available. Along the wall across from the bar of the cafe was a long monochrome mural collage painting of the cafe and McAllen.

In addition to the REX Cafe and Bakery seeming like the most popular place in town this Saturday morning, they also had a live organ player. I was sitting at the table closest to him and familiar classic tunes sounded great. [See attached .mp3 file for a sampling of the music]. The entertainment, the tasty authentic Mexican breakfast, and the bustling energy of the cafe made for a very positive memorable dining experience. Thanks to George Gause for helping me find some background information on the El REX Cafe.

Texas's Largest Killer Bee Statue

"In a quiet country village stood a statue on a hill,

There I sat with ARLIS friends not long ago."*

On a small hillock next to Hidalgo City Hall is sited a larger than life statue of a KILLER BEE. It commemorates that nameless insect who, in October of 1990, crossed illegally into the United States over the nearby Texas border but was captured and detained in an insect trap. Though their official name is "Africanized honey bee, they are known colloquially as KILLER BEES.

This insect has a dark history. It began in Brazil in 1956 when scientists reminiscent of Dr. Frankenstein sought to mix African honeybees with the local variety to increase honey production. But the African bees escaped the laboratory and began to mate with and dominate the local populations. This miscegenation created a smaller but much more virulent species which began to spread northward out of Brazil at the rate of two hundred miles per year. By 1990 it was at the United States border and heading north.

Why this judgmental appellation? The Africanized honey bees, KILLER BEES, are more belligerent than domestic honey bees. They attack when riled up and tend to go first for the head. They are very irritable insects, and movements as simple as mowing grass or high winds can put them in attack mode. They are attracted to white clothes and ostentatious jewelry. It is their tendency to sting the head first that has caused most of the deaths associated with them. By May of 1991 the first attacks by these mutant bees were reported in Brownsville. The first fatality from KILLER BEE stings happened in Harlingen in 1993.

The KILLER BEES proliferate because they swarm (bee language meaning make new hives) more frequently and are less choosy about where they build their nests than domesticated bees. They will use both natural and made-made places such as hollow trees, porches, sheds, utility boxes, and garbage containers. They dominate by entering the hives of domestic bees and killing their queens. When mated with domestic bees their aggressive traits dominate the new progeny. KILLER BEE history reads like a science fiction novel. The BEES have now spread through Texas into parts of Arkansas and even into the Chesapeake Bay area. Colder climates and lack of vegetation are the only things that stop them.

The KILLER BEES' fierce reputation has given name to the Rio Grande Valley hockey team and to rebellious Texas legislators who hid in crevices to keep their Houses from having a quorum for legislation that they couldn't defeat by votes alone. But only the small town of Hidalgo has a statue dedicated to it.

*To the tune of "Maple on a Hill" by Gussie Davis, 1863-1899

Mayor John Franz conceived the idea for the largest KILLER BEE statue and got the City Council to appropriate \$20,000 to have it built. He proclaimed Hidalgo to be Killer Bee Capitol of the World; no one disputed it. Hidalgo's KILLER BEE was written about in the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, Time Magazine and The Guinness Book of World Records, and featured in a Snapple commercial. The KILLER BEE statue is pulled from the site and paraded down Hidalgo's Main Street during the annual Border Day Parade, just as saints are in religious parades. Postcards and posters are sold with the KILLER BEE picture on it. "What other small town has something like this?" says Mayor Franz. "We're not going to follow the leaders anymore. We're going to take some chances and get out there in front."

Now here comes a personal comment: This making of lemonade when you have lemons seems to be a South Texas trait. Perhaps it was born of making do in an historically economically depressed area. There's the story of the Border candy millionaire. When complimented for becoming a millionaire by making milk candy, he said it was especially hard since he didn't have any milk. The kudzu vine, the walking catfish, the zebra mussel, the Asian carp and the boll weevil have found a home in the United States. So why shouldn't Hidalgo become famous as the entry point for a dangerous, despised, ill-tempered, invasive and ugly creature like the KILLER BEE, who after all, is just looking for a home?

Did I mention that the Texas/Mexico Art Librarians posed for a picture seated beneath this statue? Next year maybe we can do the Popeye Spinach statue in Crystal City or the Bo Pilgrim colonnade in Pittsburg as we pursue art in all its forms.

Text by Gwen Dixie. Photos by Delana Bunch

Tour of Ann Moore's House and Collection

For many, the Saturday evening reception and tour of McAllen collector extraordinaire Ann Moore's home was the highlight of the ARLIS / Texas-Mexico fall meeting—and worth the trip even if it had been the only item on the itinerary.

The house as a whole, and virtually every room, resembled a wunderkammer or phantasmagoria—in fullness and inviting wonder and awe. The collection included the work of modern masters including Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Louise Nevelson, and Michael Tracy. Most in evidence perhaps was Mexican folk art of all colors and media—wood, ceramics, textiles, metal, paper, papier-maché, painting, etc. One such room was marked for donation to a museum. Even a bathroom was so amply mirrored as to multiply the already ample wonders.

The backyard forest—beautifully lit at night--was equally full but perhaps less diverse in its inhabitants. One might nearly trip over a cement alligator, though. The backyard's winding path led past a swimming pool and to the small guesthouse, as full and charming as the spaces of the main house. Who wouldn't treasure a night in this house of treasures? Thanks, Ann!

Text and photos by Craig Bunch