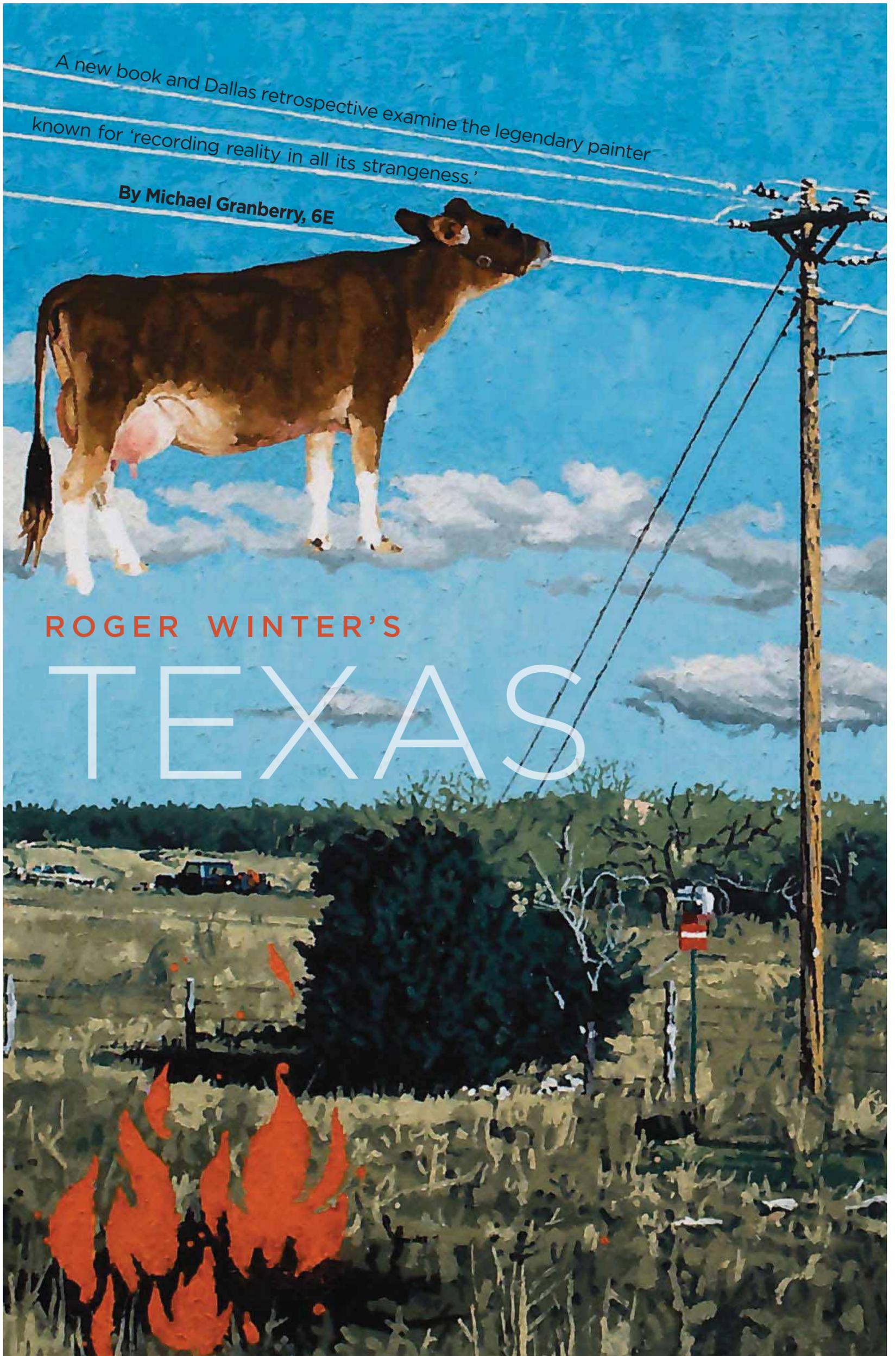


The Dallas Morning News

ARTS & LIFE

SECTION E **SUNDAY** NOVEMBER 1, 2020



A new book and Dallas retrospective examine the legendary painter known for 'recording reality in all its strangeness.'

By Michael Granberry, 6E

ROGER WINTER'S

TEXAS

Private Collection/Museum of Texas Art (MoTA)

BOOKS

Biography captures the life of the underexposed, trailblazing creator of *Switched-On Bach*.

By Karen Iris Tucker, 7E



VISUAL ARTS

The Nasher Public initiative puts North Texas artists front and center in sites around the city.

By John Zotos, 10E



CLASSICAL MUSIC

A symposium this week works to address the great strides of women and the imbalances that persist.

By Tim Diovanni, 5E



Photos: Roger Winter/Texas A&M University Press

Artist Roger Winter, whose work includes the painting *Horchow Sisters* (above), has pursued art since his childhood in Denison.

VISUAL ARTS | RETROSPECTIVE

DRAWING FROM A DEEP WELL

Renowned Texas artist creates extraordinary works from ordinary reality



MICHAEL GRANBERRY

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At 86, Roger Winter is a Texas legend. His life as one of the state's premier artists goes back to his days growing up in Denison during the Depression, the youngest of eight children living in a four-room house bereft of plumbing or electricity.

As biographer and art historian Susie Kalil writes in her elegant new book, *The Art of Roger Winter: Fire and Ice*, Winter has long been preoccupied with "recording reality in all its strangeness."

His body of work, she notes, springs from a deep well of influences: "Childhood memories of gospel hymns blaring from a loudspeaker atop the 'Holy Roller' church near his home; strange totems composed of crows, foxes, angels and old family photographs; rusted cars resting among chest-high weeds; faces reflected in the windows of a New York City bus."

There would seem to be no better time for a retrospective of Winter's work than now. In addition to Kalil's book, Kirk Hopper Fine Art celebrated the opening of its new space in the Dallas Design District by making the Winter show its inaugural exhibition.



Details

"Dallas Collects Roger Winter: Exhibiting Major Paintings From Dallas Collectors" through Nov. 28 at Kirk Hopper Fine Art, 1426 N. Riverfront Blvd., Dallas. Free. kirkhopperfineart.com.

The Art of Roger Winter: Fire and Ice, by Susie Kalil, is published by Texas A&M University Press.

We recently caught up with Winter at his home in New York City, where along with Manhattan's other 1.63 million residents, he has been hunkered down since March. He lives there with his wife, Jeanette, whom he married 60 years ago. They have two sons, ages 58 and 50.

"We have been on lockdown so long," he says with a laugh, "that every time I wake up and my toes hurt, I think it might be the coronavirus."

From the starkness of the Depression to a global pandemic, Winter has weathered some extraordinary moments. As a 2-year-old, he contracted "dust pneumonia," from the dust invading the Texas Plains via the Dust Bowl of Oklahoma.

"No one expected me to live," he says. "And here I am, 86!"

Next came World War II, which left three Winter brothers in combat in three different faraway places. All three survived, but brother David, who was two years older than Winter, was killed in an accident involving a plane that took off from an aircraft carrier during the Korean War.

Winter spent his college years at the University of Texas, where he was mentored by the great Loren Mozley, who also became his chess partner. Winter followed Mozley's example, becoming a renowned professor of art at Southern Methodist University, where his own gifted proteges included John Alexander, David Bates, Brian Cobble and Lilian Garcia-Roig.

He began teaching at SMU in 1963 and did so until 1989.

Bates, whom he taught in the 1970s, is one of Texas' most acclaimed artists. His work resides in the permanent collections of such elite museums as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, both in New York.

But in his early days at SMU, Bates remembers sitting in a classroom — and feeling utterly lost.

"I would draw the other people drawing the model and the football players peeping in the door at the nude model, and stuff like that," Bates says. "Roger came by and said, 'OK, come on, let's go.' I thought, 'Oh, my God, I just flunked out of school!' He took me downstairs and out of the building to a bus stop. I thought, 'He's gonna put me on a bus out of town!'"

Winter instructed him to ride the bus all day — and to draw. "I was drawing people on the bus, the stuff I saw downtown, and when I came back, he had this great big smile on his face. He said, 'That's what I'm talking about.'"

Looking back in 2020, it's now so clear. As Bates says, "Roger saw someone who had potential but who was not getting anywhere in a classroom. So, he customized it for me. He did that for a ton of people in a ton of different ways. And I haven't had a teacher do that before or since."

As for the love his mentor is being showered with in 2020, Bates says, "This is long deserved for Roger, and I don't want to diminish the fact of what a great artist he is by talking about the teaching."

And yet, Winter concedes the obvious: "I taught a lot of people who have become much better known than I am, and I'm very proud of that."

As for his own body of work, he says, "I have never stopped relying on my eyes. I try to look at things without any sort of prejudice."

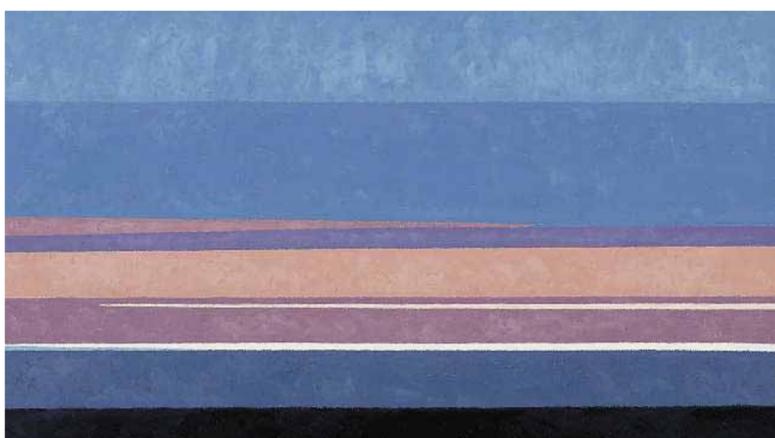
As with any successful artist, he mixes talent with hard work. Even now, he journeys seven days a week from his home on the Upper West Side to a 12th-floor studio at West 103rd Street and Riverside Drive, where he revels in his view of the Hudson River. There, he pursues the defining elements of his art, which he describes as "structure, deriving from what I see, and the surface created by paints. Putting things together that don't always belong together."

The river of his own life has always led to art. With a laugh, he tells the story of his oldest brother, a banker 20 years his senior, "who did not want me in the arts." As a boy, Winter told his parents what he most desired for Christmas was an oil-painting set buried in the pages of the Sears Roebuck catalog. Furious, his brother admonished their parents, saying: "Don't encourage him to do this. He's already a sissy. What are you going to do next, give him ballet lessons?"

Mom and Dad never wavered. They encouraged baby Winter's talent, which eventually even his oldest brother had no trouble seeing.

"And what do you know," Winter says with a wry chuckle. "Out of all the people in my family, he became my biggest fan."

Twitter: @mgranberry



Black Beach



Texas Odyssey, #1