

VERSO

AN INSIDER'S LOOK AT THE OGDEN MUSEUM OF SOUTHERN ART

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2010

Robert and Julian Onderdonk



Julian Onderdonk, *In the Hills of the Spanish Oaks*, c. 1917

Collection of Susan and Claude Albritton

Julian Onderdonk (1882 – 1922), known as “the father of Texas painting,” is celebrated for his poetic renderings of the South Texas Landscape. Trained in his teenage years by his father, the realist painter Robert Onderdonk, Julian spent two formative years on Long Island in New York City, studying with William Merritt Chase, one of the most important painters and teachers of his generation. After an attempt to establish a studio in New York City, Julian returned to San Antonio in 1909, and painted the Texas landscape until his untimely death in 1922.



Robert Onderdonk, *Portrait of Julian Onderdonk*, 1892

Roger Houston Ogden Collection

While not the first or only painter to capture the shimmering blue Texas landscape with bluebonnets in blossom, Julian Onderdonk is by far the most popular. In 1901, ten years before Onderdonk painted his first bluebonnet landscape, the bluebonnet was named the official Texas flower. This series captures a popular subject with a strong regional identity, using the newly-developed style of American Impressionism.



Julian Onderdonk, *Bluebonnet Scene with Girl*, 1920

Ogden Museum of Southern Art

Gift of Roger H. Ogden Collection

Julian Onderdonk's style was formed by his studies with William Merritt Chase in 1901 - 1902 in Southampton, New York. There, Chase and his students painted out-of-doors (en plein air), exploring the boundary between perceptual truth and the subjective impressionistic approach of capturing light as it strikes the eye. Lacking the theoretical base of French Impressionism, American Impressionism was rooted more deeply in felt response to the

landscape, rendered in a traditional compositional scheme, with a clear foreground, middle ground and background. What Onderdonk shares with the French Impressionists is the love of painting out-of-doors, the exploration of the times of day, an interest in capturing the play of light on canvas, and the subjective filtering of the landscape through the eyes of the artist.



Julian Onderdonk, *A Spring Morning, Bluebonnets, San Antonio, 1913*

Private Collection

Julian Onderdonk's bluebonnet paintings stand as important examples of a moment of transition in American art. They also represent a burgeoning concern with place and regional identity, subjects that became increasingly important within the context of American art in the decades after his death in 1922. -DH

Paintings by Robert and Julian Onderdonk will fill three galleries of the Ogden's Goldring Hall through January 2, 2011.