

# Work of Mark C. Clapham on display at Heritage Museum



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*By Maggie Gutierrez / Art Talk*

One of the last paintings, Mark Clapham painted before his death in January 2012. The painting is titled, "Last of His Kind," and is now available for viewing at the Heritage Museum of Montgomery County.

## LAST OF HIS KIND

A comprehensive collection of paintings, drawings and sculpture created over his life time by the renowned Texas painter and sculptor Mark C. Clapham can now be viewed at the Heritage Museum of Montgomery County, along with some of the artist's extensive personal collection of Native American and western artifacts. Mark wanted, following his death in January 2012, the contents of his extraordinary museum-like studio and all of his artwork which had not previously been sold or given as gifts, to be available for the public to view in the town he loved for so many years.

He selected the Conroe-based Heritage Museum of Montgomery to be the new owner and caretaker of his artistic and historical legacy. Plans are under way to raise funds to build an addition to the existing Heritage Museum building so the Museum can effectively display all of Mark's remaining artwork, items from his home and studio, as well as his extensive collection of Native American and western artifacts. Until the new addition is completed, the Heritage Museum has devoted one of their existing rooms to displaying a significant number of Mark's paintings, sculpture and collected artifacts. The Heritage Museum of Montgomery County is located at 1501 I-45 North (on north feeder road) adjacent to Candy Cane Park in Conroe. The museum's hours are 9 am to 5 pm Wednesdays through Saturdays (except for holidays). Their telephone number is 936-539-6873.

Mark Clapham was born in 1948 in Vallejo, Calif. He grew up in west Texas and shortly after receiving a degree in Fine Arts from the University of Houston, made Conroe his home for nearly 40 years. Mark's interest in the visual arts began as a child and was encouraged by his mother, Wanda Clapham, an internationally known porcelain painter. Prior to attending college, Mark studied sculpture with acclaimed Taos, New Mexico artist, A. Kelly Pruitt. Later Mark also studied with Freemont Ellis, founder of the prominent New Mexico art group, "Los Cinco Pintores."

Mark's many honors include: the University of Houston's John B. Van Ness Distinguished Alumni Award, the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, and the Alternate Texas State Artist award in 1991. In 1973 Mark was commissioned to create the Hall of Honors Awards for the University of Houston and over the course of his life cast more than eighty bronze sculptures for the University of Houston. In 1990 his work was selected by the National Academy of Arts for a national museum tour. His 70-foot mural, "The Montgomery County Walkway Through Time" is the only mural that spans a Texas highway.

Part Chickasaw Indian, Mark devoted much of his extraordinary artistic talents to celebrating the heritage and culture of Native Americans. Perhaps ironically, one of the last paintings Mark completed before his death was titled, "Last of His Kind." That painting is included in the collection Mark left to the Heritage Museum of Montgomery County.