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# WITTE MUSEUM

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## **Witte Museum Presents The Art of the Onderdonks** **Featuring *Bluebonnets and Beyond: Julian Onderdonk, American Impressionist,*** ***The Onderdonks: A Legacy of Texas Art and the Onderdonk Art Studio***

**SAN ANTONIO**—Straight from the Dallas Museum of Art, the Witte Museum welcomes traveling exhibition *Bluebonnets and Beyond: Julian Onderdonk, American Impressionist*, on view **September 19, 2008** through **January 11, 2009** in the Kathleen and Curtis Gunn Gallery. Exclusive to the Witte, additional works by Julian's father, Robert Onderdonk and his sister, Eleanor Onderdonk will be on view complementing the exhibit.

Featuring 93 paintings from this Texas-born artist, *Bluebonnets and Beyond* celebrates the work of a great landscape artist. Using *plein air* technique—the art of drawing outdoors—Onderdonk's paintings contain visible brush strokes, natural light and open compositions and settings to depict his own experiences and perceptions of the world around him. Julian's style uses color and contrast to depict the specific time of day which was being captured in his paintings.

Born into a family of artists, Julian Onderdonk was educated in the arts first by his father, Robert Onderdonk, and then went on to study at the Art Students League in New York City where his father studied. It was while he was in New York that he developed his style under the direction of his teacher, William Merritt Chase, who also taught Julian's father Robert Onderdonk.

The exhibition includes the Witte Museum's own *Dawn in the Hills*, which was Onderdonk's last painting before his death in 1922. This particular painting was on its way to New York City for an annual exhibition at the National Academy of Design when Onderdonk passed away. Because of the suddenness of his death along with his success as a painter, Onderdonk's paintings were still shown in the exhibit despite the Academy's regulations for displaying only living artists.

*The Onderdonks: A Legacy of Texas Art*, exclusive to the Witte and complementing *Bluebonnets and Beyond*, features 40 works by Robert Onderdonk and Eleanor Onderdonk including paintings, sketches and photographs. Robert Onderdonk was an accomplished painter by the time his children had been born. Raised in a household of scholars, Robert went on to study at the National Academy of Design in New York. It was there that he helped form the Art Students League with William Merritt Chase who would go on to teach Robert's son Julian. After the birth of his children, Robert took a job as a teacher and assisted in founding what would later become the San Antonio Art League.

Born two years after her brother Julian, Eleanor Onderdonk studied at the Art Students League where her brother was educated and her father taught. Eleanor was the Witte Museum's first curator of art where she stimulated the interest in the world of art, with a special focus on Texas artists. Through her work as a curator, the Witte Museum houses what many believe to be the most important Texas art collection in the state. Also included in this exhibit is a Gallery Theatre, a dramatic performance in which Eleanor Onderdonk comes to life and speaks about the role her family played in the arts both locally and nationally, and about her time spent as the Witte's first curator of art.

Another Witte Museum exclusive to this exhibit is the **Onderdonk Art Studio**, Julian Onderdonk's actual painting studio, located on the grounds of the Witte Museum. Visitors are able to see where Julian Onderdonk's work took place. This studio, originally located behind the Onderdonk family home on West French Place in San Antonio, was generously donated to the Witte Museum by the Onderdonk family.

The Art of the Onderdonks is generously supported by the Marcia and Otto Koehler Foundation, the Nathalie and Gladys Dalkowitz Charitable Trust, the G. A. C. Halff Foundation, Betty Lou and Larry Sheerin, Mrs. John White, Marie and Hugh Halff, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Tom Frost, and the City of San Antonio Office of Cultural Affairs. The Onderdonk Art Studio is a gift of Ofelia Onderdonk Robbie in memory of Eleanor Onderdonk, Witte Museum Curator 1927-1958, made possible by the Roane Harwood Family and Betty and Bob Kelso. For more information call 210.357.1900 or visit [www.wittemuseum.org](http://www.wittemuseum.org).

Note to Editors: High resolution images are available upon request. Please email [shannonstandley@wittemuseum.org](mailto:shannonstandley@wittemuseum.org)