

## Rosenberg Library Highlights Island Artist Boyer Gonzales this Winter

Rosenberg Library is pleased to announce that the Winter 2013 – 2014 selection for the Museum Book Club Series is *With Bold Strokes* by Dr. Edward Simmen. This engaging biography of Galveston artist Boyer Gonzales (1864 – 1934) chronicles the story of a shy boy who was the son one of Galveston’s most industrious cotton merchants. Although groomed from an early age to manage the lucrative family business, Gonzales eventually left it behind to pursue his true passion: art.

Utilizing an expansive collection of materials from the Rosenberg Library’s archives and museum, Simmen delves deeply into the history of the Gonzales family, and in so doing, reveals a larger picture of life Galveston during the Victorian era.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Edward Simmen is a professor emeritus at Universidad de las Americas-Puebla in Puebla, Mexico who has published numerous articles and books on Chicano literature and culture. He received his Ph.D. from Texas Christian University. His most recent work can be found in *Galveston Chronicles: The Queen City of the Gulf* (2013, The History Press). Dr. Simmen was born in Galveston and has fond childhood memories of time spent at the Rosenberg Library where his parents were active members of the Friends.

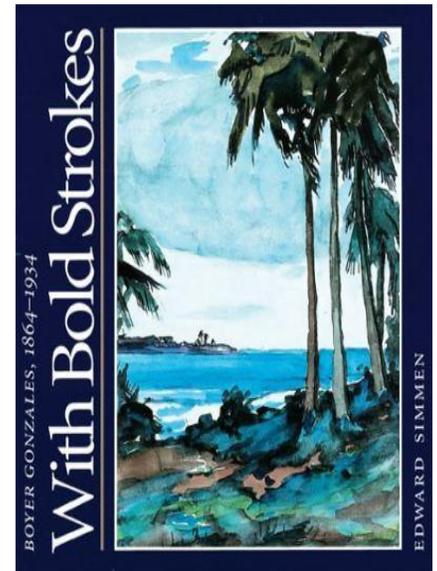
### **THE GONZALES FAMILY**

Boyer Gonzales’s story begins with his grandfather, Victor Gonzales, a Spanish-born army surgeon who immigrated to Mexico around 1815 during its war for independence from Spain. After Lt. Gonzales’s death in 1835, his widow Rita moved their young sons Tomás (Thomas) and Francisco (Francis) Gonzales to New Orleans. There the brothers developed into enterprising businessmen.

By the mid-1850s both had settled in the bustling port city of Galveston, Texas where Thomas established a cotton factoring firm and Francis served as the consul to Mexico. Eventually Thomas Gonzales & Sons grew to become one of the largest shipping agencies based in the Port of Galveston.

### **A PASSION FOR ART**

Born to Thomas and Edith Gonzales in 1864, Boyer Gonzales was an intelligent yet introverted boy who loved going to the West End of the island to hunt ducks with his brothers. As a child he displayed a natural talent for art, but like his brothers, he was expected to continue the success of his family’s business which he did dutifully for many years.



Cover image of *With Bold Strokes*



*Boyer Gonzales (1864 - 1934)*  
[image courtesy of Galveston  
and Texas History Center]

Coincidentally, Gonzales was a friend of Arthur Homer, owner of a rope factory in Galveston and brother of Winslow Homer, one of the most celebrated artists in America at the turn of the twentieth century. Arthur introduced the two in 1887, and a long friendship between mentor and student ensued. Frequent trips to Winslow Homer's studio in Maine eventually inspired Boyer Gonzales to follow his artistic aspirations wholeheartedly.

In 1907 Gonzales married a longtime acquaintance, Eleanor 'Nell' Hertford of Galveston, and also joined the Art Students League in Woodstock, New York. The following year the couple took an extended trip across Europe where Gonzales continued his art education. The Gonzaleses celebrated the birth of their only child, Boyer Jr., in 1909. By the mid-1910s, Boyer Gonzales Sr. had divested himself completely from the cotton business. From that time until his death in 1934, he painted full time and exhibited his work across the country. Highly regarded by critics of the day, Gonzales received a number of prestigious awards for his art.

#### ***FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION***

Select artworks from the library's permanent collection will be showcased during the Winter Museum Book Club programs. Participants will have an opportunity to view rarely exhibited works by Gonzales and others up close. Among these is a recently conserved etching and two original watercolors created by the prolific American artist Winslow Homer. Also included will be some of the hundreds of works by Boyer Gonzales in the museum collection, most notably *The Dawn of Texas*, an oil painting depicting La Salle's historical voyage to Texas. This piece is interesting for its subject, its Impressionistic style, and the notoriety it received when it was first unveiled to the public in 1913. Other works to be viewed will include paintings by American artists William John Whittmore (1860 – 1955) and Boyer Gonzales Jr. (1909 – 1987).



*Grand Canal – Venice (1908)* [image courtesy of Rosenberg Library Museum]  
*Dockside, Galveston (1919)* [image courtesy of Rosenberg Library Museum]

### ***ABOUT THE BOOK CLUB***

Museum Book Club offers participants the chance to experience art and literature in a more interactive way. Members will have the opportunity to view art and historical artifacts from the Rosenberg Library Museum collection as they discuss related books. The book club focuses on a single book and related museum objects on a quarterly basis.

The first meeting of the Winter 2013 Rosenberg Library Museum Book Club will be a brown bag lunch session, Wednesday, December 11, from 12:00 noon – 1:00 pm. A second brown bag lunch club will be held on Thursday, January 23, from 12:00 noon – 1:00 pm. On Saturday February 15th, the book discussion and art presentation will include a question-and-answer session via Skype with author Edward Simmen. This program will take place from 11:00 am – 12:30 pm.

Each meeting in this series will be held in the McCullough Room on the library's second floor. Light refreshments will be provided at all programs. Registration is required for all Museum Book Club meetings. Established book clubs are encouraged to participate. Groups of over 10 people are asked to call the Reference Desk so that we may arrange to accommodate your entire group.

*With Bold Strokes* is available for [\*\*check out at the Rosenberg Library.\*\*](#)