

# Pavel Tchelitchew:

## An Inventory of His Art Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

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### Descriptive Summary

<b>Creator:</b>	Tchelitchew, Pavel, 1898-1957
<b>Title:</b>	Pavel Tchelitchew Art Collection
<b>Dates:</b>	circa 1933-1939, undated
<b>Extent:</b>	5 oversize folders, 1 framed painting
<b>Abstract:</b>	The Pavel Tchelitchew Art Collection includes six original works, three drawings and three paintings, by Pavel Tchelitchew.
<b>Call Number:</b>	Art Collection AR-00270
<b>Language:</b>	English
<b>Access:</b>	Open for research. A minimum of twenty-four hours is required to pull art materials to the Reading Room.

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### Administrative Information

<b>Acquisition:</b>	In part purchase (R938).
<b>Processed by:</b>	Alice Egan, 1997; Lauren Algee, 2010
<b>Repository:</b>	<a href="#">Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin</a>

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## Biographical Sketch

Pavel Tchelitchew was a painter and stage designer of Russian birth, who lived and worked in Russia, France, and the United States. Educated by private tutors, he drew from an early age and attended art classes at the University of Moscow from 1916 to 1918. Moving south in 1918 to avoid the Revolution, he studied at the Kiev Academy until 1920 and worked with Alexandra Exter. In 1920, he moved to Odessa, where he worked in the theater, and then, in 1921, to Berlin, where he again supported himself with theater work and began to paint still lifes, figures, and portraits.

From 1923, Tchelitchew lived in Paris, where he abandoned the brightly colored Cubo-Futurist influence of Exter in favor of a more realistic representation of objects that served as symbols of cosmic order, a style that was greatly indebted to Russian symbolist painting. He became the ideologue of a small band of artists, who became associated with the term Néo-Humanisme in France (Neo-Romanticism in the United States). The group specialized in dream-like landscapes and figures in somber tones; they included Eugene Berman and his brother Leonid Berman, Christian Bérard, and André Lansky.

Tchelitchew was introduced to the writer Edith Sitwell in the salon of Gertrude Stein and their relationship became one of the most influential in Sitwell's life. He was captivated by Edith's presence and later painted her portrait several times. Over many years she served him as muse, mother, and impresario in a tumultuous and (for her, likely unfulfilling) platonic relationship.

Tchelitchew sought to define an imagery of the soul's journey to immortality. Basing his model of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise on the vision of Renaissance Neo-Platonists, he created an allegory of the spirit in a lengthy sequence of pictures. The series was still unfinished at his death. In *Hide and Seek*, Tchelitchew's most celebrated canvas, he related the seasons to procreation and growth by merging plant and human forms.

From 1919 to 1942, Tchelitchew also earned a reputation as one of the most innovative stage designers of the period. His work was particularly admired for its novel use of new materials and dramatic lighting effects.

Tchelitchew lived in the United States beginning in 1934 and became an American citizen in 1952, just before moving to Italy. His fragile health kept him abroad until his death on July 31, 1957.

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## Sources:

Prokopoff, Stephen S. "Tchelitchew, Pavel." *Oxford Art Online*, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com> (accessed 13 April 2010).

Jones, Richard. "The Art of Being a Sitwell." *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, Summer 1980: 470-485.

## Scope and Contents

The Pavel Tchelitchew Art Collection includes six original works, three drawings and three paintings, by Pavel Tchelitchew. Three of the works are portraits of well-known figures in the literary and artistic circles of Paris in the 1930s: Edith Sitwell, Parker Tyler, and Charles Henri Ford. Three additional works include a design for a book cover for Sitwell, a still life of a head of lettuce, and a surreal image of a woman and infant.

The works are listed by date and grouped by subject. Titles are transcribed from the items; cataloger's titles appear in brackets.

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**Series I. Works, 1933-1939, undated**

**Accession Number: 73.425** [Woman in a long dress, handkerchief in one hand, stands in right profile with her arms bent up and looking up at a naked male infant in the upper right corner. The upper half of the child's body is hidden by clouds.] 1933. **Location**  
1 drawing (pen and ink; black and white), 26.1 x 19.7 cm. Flat file

**Accession Number: 73.378** Lettuce. [Still life of a head of lettuce, upright.] 1939? 1 **Location**  
painting (pen, ink, and watercolor; black and white), 27 x 21 cm. Flat file

**Accession Number: 73.357** English Eccentrics. [Design for frontispiece of book. Head-and-shoulder caricatures of three women and two men with "English Eccentrics by" written above and "Edith Sitwell" written below in white.] Undated. 1 painting **Location**  
(tempera on graphite pencil; black and white), 45.9 x 32.3 cm. Flat file

**Accession Number: 65.119** Edith Sitwell. [Bust three-quarter left-profile portrait. Sitwell is looking down. She has a narrow chin, a long, narrow nose and wide forehead. Her hair is short or styled against her head. She wears a red v-neck blouse.] Undated. 1 painting (oil on canvas; color), visible image 80 x 62 cm. (96 x 78 **Location**  
cm., in frame). Painting Storage

**Accession Number: 69.9** Parker Tyler. [Left-profile portrait. A sketch of a figure falls past Tyler's nose.] Undated. 1 drawing (pencil on paper), 27.8 x 21.4 cm. **Location**  
Flat file

**Accession Number: 73.160** Charles Henri Ford. [Full-face, head-and-shoulder portrait of Ford looking up with large eyes. A halo-like circle and scribbles are behind his head and two small partial-face sketches are to the right.] Undated. 1 drawing **Location**  
(pen, ink, and wash; color), 30 x 19.9 cm. Flat file