Sous le Charme
(or Flora)



Large plaster panel depicting eight figures, four on each side, surrounding a central ninth figure, perhaps Flora, goddess of flowers, “with tambourines, cymbals, and horns, evidently among the flowers of a garden,” according to a description of the panel in the 29 March 1908 *San Francisco Call and Post* (page 21, col. 3). A label of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, held in San Francisco in 1915, is affixed to the back side of the panel, titling the panel “Sous le Charme” [“Under the Spell”], the label evidencing that Elizabeth submitted the panel for exhibition seven years after its 1908 creation. **[See endnote 1]**

Information from the labels on the back sides of the above-mentioned piece and a similar piece, named “California,” is important concerning the dating of the creation of the pieces, their names, and exhibition in world’s fairs.

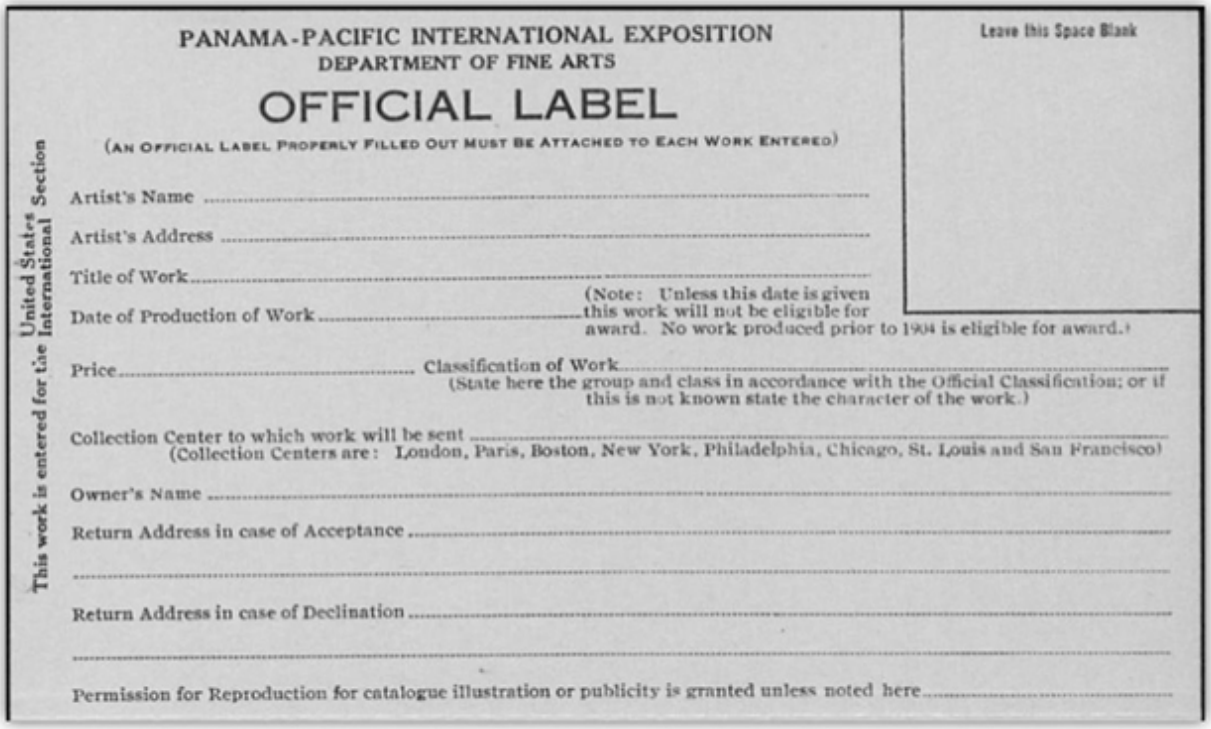
Stephen Ehat (author of this present note) recalls that either his aunt Noel (daughter of Elizabeth Madeline Ferrea Ehat, the artist) or one of Noel's first cousins (Lucille Martha Ehat or Carletta Rae Ehat) told him that the name of the bas-relief is “Flora,” and that it depicts the

mythological Roman goddess of flowers and spring, “Flora.” Stephen states that one thing that has always intrigued him is the French phrase in Elizabeth's handwriting on the badly damaged label pasted on the back of the bas-relief. He thought it was the title Elizabeth gave to it (and that the title is not “Flora”) but he was never sure. But when what exists of that label is superimposed on an undamaged original of the label, as scanned by the Smithsonian Institution (and available on the Smithsonian’s website here: https://transcription.si.edu/view/8704/AAA-jacqself00064-000015), one can see that at least in 1915 she gave to the piece the name of “Sous le Charme.” And even though Elizabeth created the bas-relief in 1908 (as evidenced by the newspaper account describing it contemporaneously with its creation), the label was attached for exhibiting the piece nine years after she created it. She exhibited the piece in the world's fair known as the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, held for a period of forty-one weeks in San Francisco from Saturday, February 20, 1915 to Saturday, December 4, 1915. See:

https://www.nps.gov/goga/learn/historyculture/ppie.htm
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panama%E2%80%93Pacific_International_Exposition
https://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=The_Palace_of_Fine_Arts
https://ppie100.org/history/

The damaged label on the back of the piece states that the “Title of [the] Work” is “Soue le Charme,” with Elizabeth likely meaning to write “Sous le Charme.” (“Soue” is not a word in French.) “Sous le Charme” is literal French for “Under the Spell.” Of course, the bas-relief itself does not seem undoubtedly to depict the topic of anyone being affected by magic or under the influence of another or in love with another. So there is reason to be torn between what Stephen was told (that the piece depicts “Flora” and what the label seems to state (that it is titled “Sous le Charme,” meaning “in love.”

Here's the Smithsonian scan of an undamaged original label used at that 1915 exhibition:



PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION
DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS

OFFICIAL LABEL

(An Official Label Properly Filled Out Must Be Attached to Each Work Entered)

Leave this Space Blank

This work is entered for the United States International Section

Artist's Name .....

Artist's Address .....

Title of Work .....

Date of Production of Work ..... (Note: Unless this date is given this work will not be eligible for award. No work produced prior to 1904 is eligible for award.)

Price ..... Classification of Work .....
(State here the group and class in accordance with the Official Classification; or if this is not known state the character of the work.)

Collection Center to which work will be sent .....
(Collection Centers are: London, Paris, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis and San Francisco)

Owner's Name .....

Return Address in case of Acceptance .....

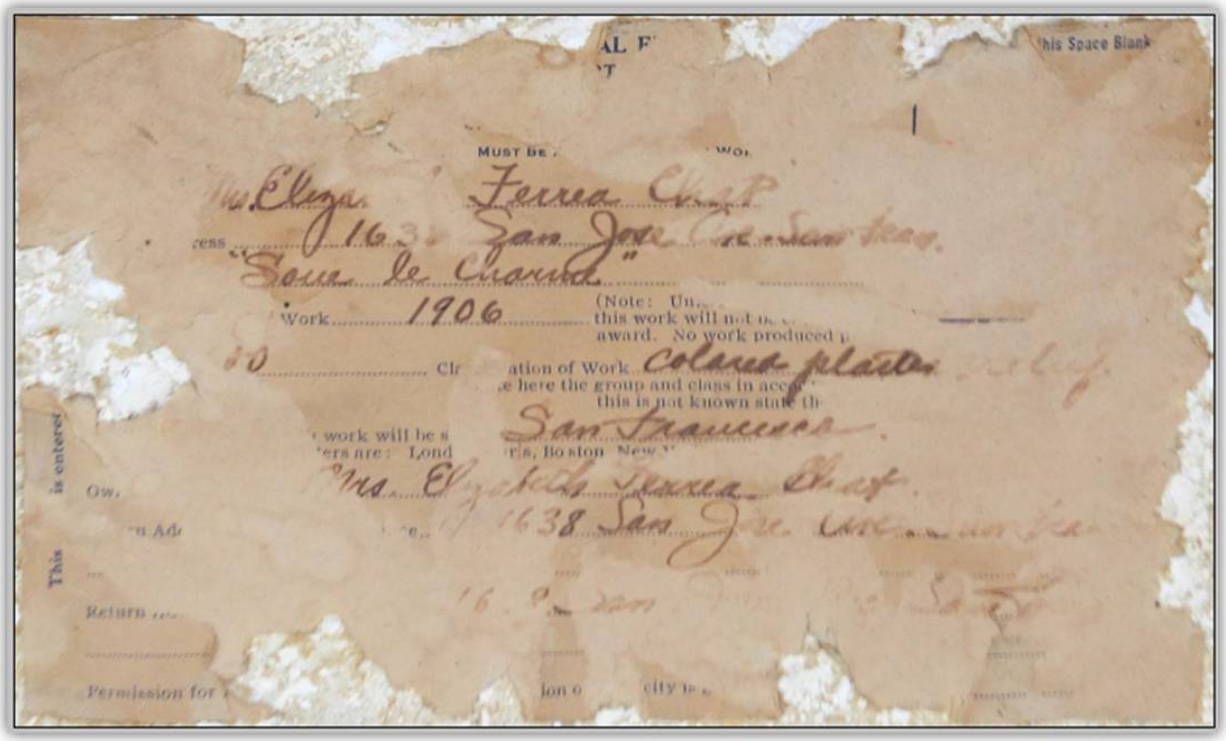
.....

Return Address in case of Declination .....

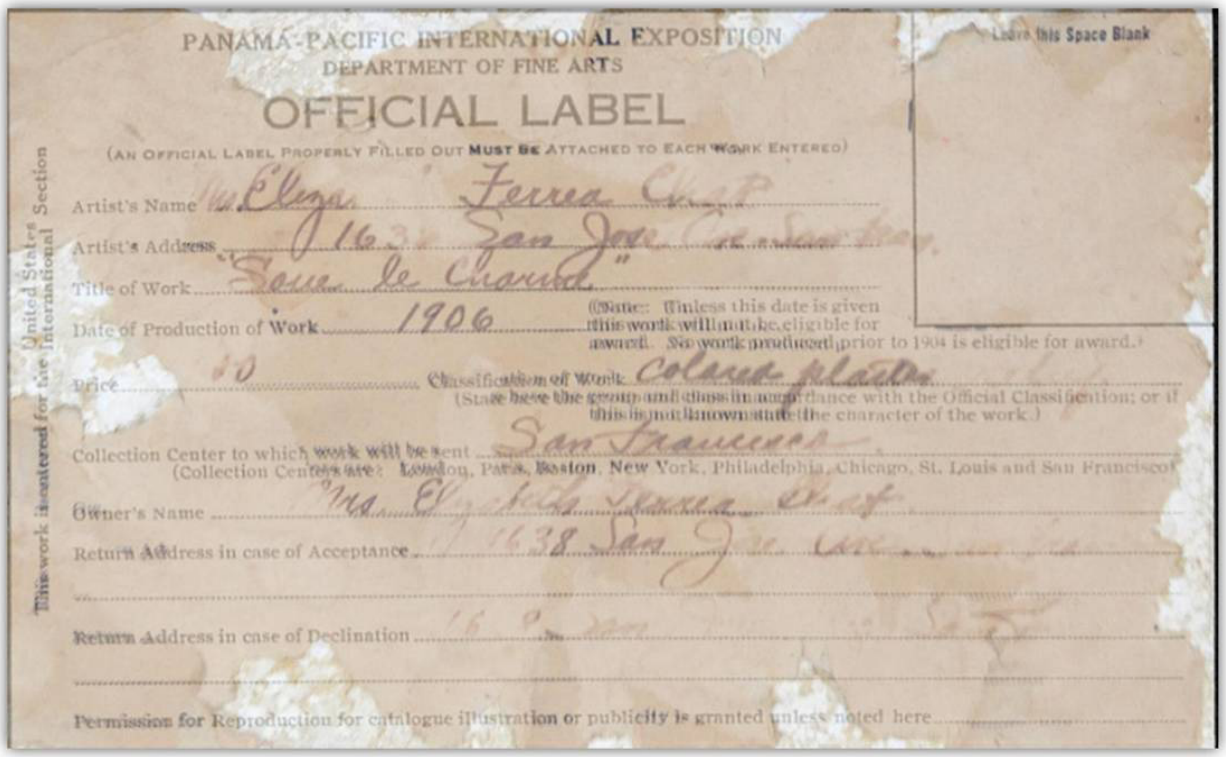
.....

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Here's a photo of the damaged label on the back of the panel:



And here is the superimposition of the two:



The title of the piece is given in Elizabeth's own handwriting as "Soue [Sous] le Charme." Note that Elizabeth wrote "1906" on the label as the "Date of Production of Work." The newspaper proves, however, that the date of production was 1908. The "1906" on the label does not prove that the panel was created in 1906; it only evidences that in 1915, when Elizabeth wrote the label affixed to the back of the piece for display in the 1915 world's fair in San Francisco, that at that time she thought back and calculated that she had created it in 1906. She made the same sorts of errors in 1922, following the death of her husband (Frederick Miller Ehat), when she applied for a special teacher's credential. At that time she tried to think back to when it was that she had begun certain teaching positions in art schools in San Francisco. Demonstrably, based on newspaper accounts of her being hired for various teaching positions, that 1922 document she wrote simply got the years wrong. This is understandable because of the

disruption in people's lives in San Francisco after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire and perhaps also poor memory or lack of documentation in her possession. Comparisons of the dates mentioned her 1922 application for the credential (dates that demonstrably she penned in 1922) with late (1905) entries in her 1903-to-1905 diary reveal that she used the very same pen used in 1922 to make date markings to "correct" her 1903-to-1905 diary! And comparisons of all of the dates of the events themselves, as reported in the San Francisco newspapers (mentions of her in the newspapers happened frequently), establishes that she made erroneous "corrections" in her 1903-to-1905 diary when she wrote in it in 1922. So this little error between "1906" and "1908" regarding "Sous le Charme" is both understandable and resolved by the below news clipping:



At the home of the Arts and Crafts, California street, a special exhibition is being held preparatory to the usual spring one which will take place in April. Some very good work is shown in the bas reliefs by Miss Ferrea, who has under way a panel for installment over a fireplace which shows a number of figures with tambourines, cymbals and horns, evidently among the flowers of a garden. The conception of the panel is quaint and effective and the characters purely ideal. When completed it will be tinted in soft gold, brown and ivory colors and, if the original idea is carried out, the effect will be notably soft and harmonious. The panel is designed for Arizona. Dassonville, Oscar Maurer, Adelaide Hanscom (now married) and Emily Pitchford have some excellent work in photography. The Hanscom idealized photographs are wonderfully fine. They are not new, but her illustrations of the Rubaiyat are always impressive and strong and one views them with pleasure over and over again.

• • •

The San Francisco Call and Post › 29 Mar 1908, Sun › Page: 21

Note that the above mentions neither "Flora" nor "Sous le Charme."

A Related Note About the Large Bas-Relief Titled, "California"

When what remains of the label on the back of the "California" panel is superimposed on an undamaged original of the label, as scanned by the Smithsonian Institution (and available on the Smithsonian's website here: https://transcription.si.edu/view/8704/AAA-jacqself00064-000015), one can see that Elizabeth attached the label for purposes of identifying the piece when exhibiting it in 1915, at least seven months and as many as nine years after creating the piece. The label on the back of the piece evidences that she exhibited the piece in the world's fair known as the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, held for a period of forty-one weeks in San Francisco from Saturday, February 20, 1915 to Saturday, December 4, 1915. See:

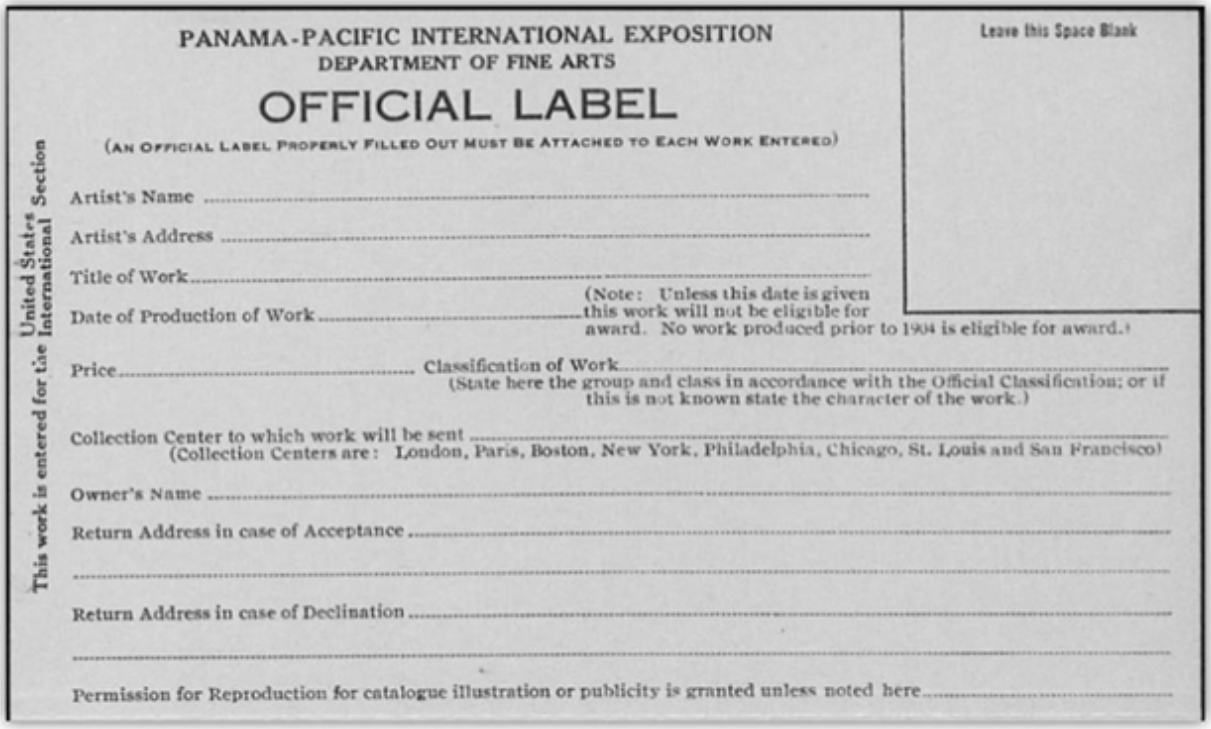
https://www.nps.gov/goga/learn/historyculture/ppie.htm
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panama%E2%80%93Pacific_International_Exposition
https://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=The_Palace_of_Fine_Arts
https://ppie100.org/history/

The self-identification on the front side of the piece renders her name as "Elizabeth Ferrea"—



The absence of the married surname "Ehat" supports the conclusion the piece was created prior to July 1914 when she married Frederick Miller Ehat (1886–1922).

Here's the Smithsonian scan of an undamaged original label:



PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION
DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS

OFFICIAL LABEL

(AN OFFICIAL LABEL PROPERLY FILLED OUT MUST BE ATTACHED TO EACH WORK ENTERED)

Leave this Space Blank

This work is entered for the United States International Section

Artist's Name .....

Artist's Address .....

Title of Work .....

Date of Production of Work ..... (Note: Unless this date is given this work will not be eligible for award. No work produced prior to 1904 is eligible for award.)

Price ..... Classification of Work .....
(State here the group and class in accordance with the Official Classification; or if this is not known state the character of the work.)

Collection Center to which work will be sent .....
(Collection Centers are: London, Paris, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis and San Francisco)

Owner's Name .....

Return Address in case of Acceptance .....

.....

Return Address in case of Declination .....

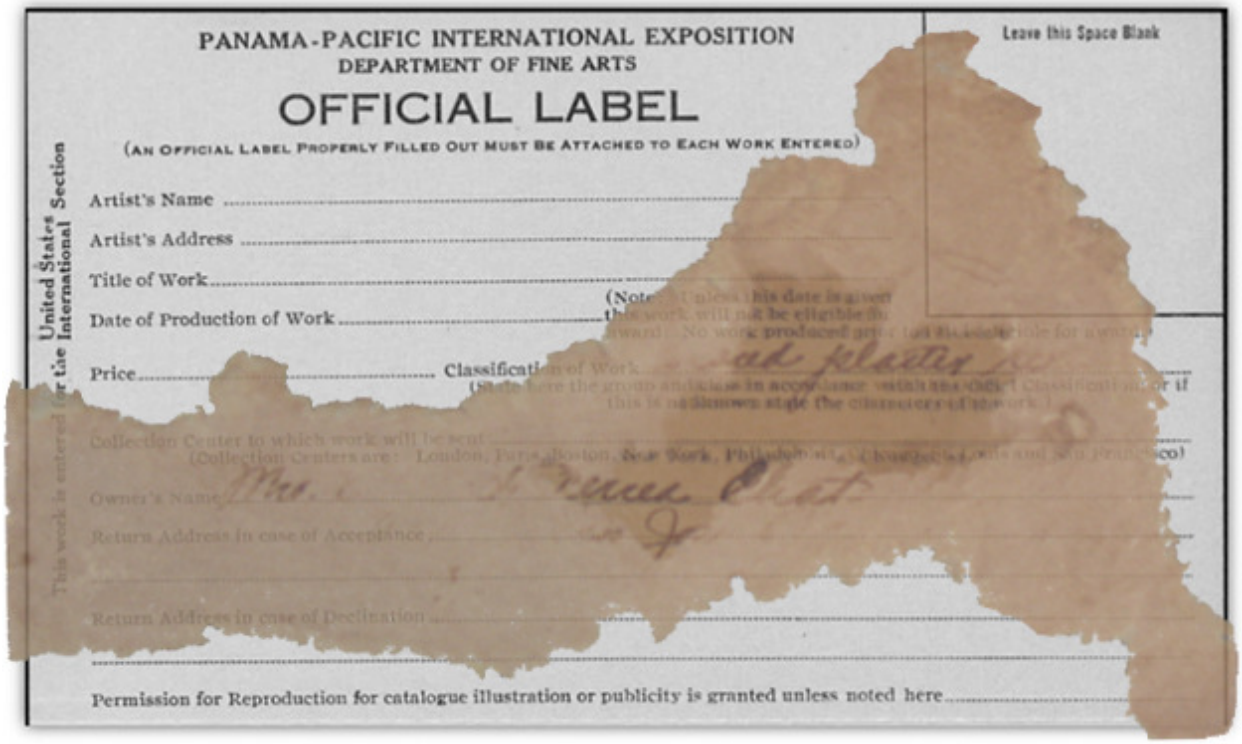
.....

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Here's a photo of the damaged label on the back of the "California" panel:



And here is the superimposition of the two:



Elizabeth's own handwriting gives her name as "Mrs. Elizabeth Ferrea Ehat" (by the time of the Exposition she was married) and she gives her address as "San Jose Avenue."

Elizabeth herself captured a black-and-white photograph of the "California" bas-relief and in her own handwriting wrote a note on the back side of a print of the photograph: "Colored Plaster Panel – photograph by Elizabeth Madeline Ferrea." Here below is a reproduction of her photograph of the front side of the bas-relief, showing also the number "94" on a sticker that apparently was applied by officials on the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, Department of Fine Arts:


ELIZABETH BERRY
CALIFORNIA
94

[1] The provenance for this very large plaster panel is as follows:

Elizabeth Madeline Ferrea Ehat >
Mary Louise Mugler Ehat Wormley >
Raphael Frederick Ehat >
Stephen Kent Ehat >
Joanne Ehat Leyes >
Anonymous Buyer >
Stephen Kent Ehat >
Andrew Frederick Ehat >
Evan Andrew Ehat

The situation regarding the "anonymous buyer" is as follows: Stephen Ehat inherited the panel from his father, Raphael Frederick Ehat. Stephen gave the panel to his sister, Joanne Ehat Leyes. She sold it to an anonymous buyer and when Stephen learned of the sale he tracked down the buyer and purchased the panel from that buyer. Stephen then gave the panel to his brother, Andrew, and he bequeathed it to his son, Evan Andrew Ehat.