Shreveport artist Elizabeth Harris produced this new mural, which illustrates a Louisiana plantation scene. The 12’x7’ painting hangs in the museum’s rotunda. The Caddo Treaty Mural, painted by Dr. H. B. Wright, shows the Caddoans surrendering lands. One of the newest additions to the museum is a mural showing a Louisiana plantation scene. Painted in oil by Shreveport artist Elizabeth Harris, the mural is 12 feet wide and 7 feet high, and hangs on the museum’s rotunda wall.

Louisiana in miniature—that’s the theme of the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum, whose function is to preserve the old and at the same time show the technological advance of a progressive people.

To tell the Louisiana story, the Shreveport-located museum uses dioramas, agricultural and industrial displays, archaeological relics, art collections and historical murals.

One of the newest additions to the museum is a mural showing a Louisiana plantation scene. Painted in oil by Shreveport artist Elizabeth Harris, the mural is 12 feet wide and 7 feet high, and hangs on the museum’s rotunda wall.

Mrs. Harris’ works have been exhibited in Chicago, Philadelphia, Atlanta and other major cities. Last year, the Shreveport artist restored the famous “April Morning” oil painting which was found damaged in the museum storage room. The painting, like the mural, depicts a rural Louisiana scene.

Also hanging in the museum are two historical murals painted by Dr. H. B. Wright—the St. Denis Mural and the Caddo Treaty Mural.

Louis Juchereau de St. Denis established the first trading post and fort at Natchitoches in 1714. The large and colorful painting depicts his landing at Natchitoches on the Red River.

The Caddo Treaty Mural shows the final meeting of Caddoan Indian and United States officials, as the Indians surrendered all of their lands within the Territory of the United States. The event took place in 1835, 32 years after the Louisiana Purchase, and during the presidency of Andrew Jackson.

“The mural by Mrs. Harris,” says Louisiana Agriculture Commissioner Dave L. Pearce, “is designed to complement the dioramas and other displays. It will also be an impressive means of preserving in the minds of thousands of schoolchildren who visit the facility every month an historic scene from Louisiana’s past.”
He's planning to design "The Swimmer," based on a story by Truman Capote.

One year he competed against himself for an Oscar. He was nominated for his designing work on both "The Cardinal" and "America, America." He won with "America, America." Two years before that he shared an Oscar for "The Hustler."

Callahan, a 41-year-old bachelor, lives in a huge 9-room apartment on Manhattan's West Side. His rooms are dazzling in their decor and originality, as one might expect from someone who turns out posh sets for a make-believe world.

"For 'The Group' I had to design the largest number of sets I ever had to do for one picture," reports Callahan, who talks with distinction to match the authoritative appearance his ample reddish beard provides.

There were 60 interiors built in the studio, and 84 more sets on location that had to be altered to fit the period of the 1930s. There are 27 phone calls in the film, each one requiring a set at each end.

"We made 'The Group' in color, which is more difficult, although even in black and white I always coordinate the sets as if they were in color, since it makes actors feel more comfortable and helps create the proper mood."

Callahan worked under a handicap with "The Group." He suffered a broken leg in a fall while getting out of a taxi. There were complications, and he wound up having to scoot around in a golf cart while the film was being completed.

How does a man get to the top of such a lucrative profession?

Things began according to a "script" by which thousands of others play out their lives without such recognition. Callahan went to Catholic High in Baton Rouge. He did designing for the Baton Rouge Little Theater, and also worked with the drama group at college.

After leaving school he stopped by to see a friend who was designing scenery in a Catskill Mountains theater in New York State.

"That day the leading man left," Callahan recalls. "My friend had to take over the role, and I was asked to take over my friend's job. I stayed. When the job ended, I came to New York to work in the decorating section of a department store in 1948. Then I got a job as assistant designer at the Paper Mill Playhouse in New Jersey."

In 1958 he made the move into films. "I did 'The Fugitive Kind,' in which another LSU student, Joanne Woodward, appeared," he fondly recollects.

Callahan has always free-lanced in the business. He likes it better that way because he has his maximum freedom. The assignments could make others green with envy.

At any time he is apt to go shooting off to an inviting part of the world. With "The Cardinal" it was Boston, Austria and Rome. For "America, America," it was Turkey and Greece.

"We had problems in Turkey," he said. "We were almost kicked out. They were afraid of their image. At one point we were photographing the hamals, the human bearers who have saddles on their backs and carry unbelievably heavy loads in this manner for long distances.

"The Turks kept wanting to clean up the streets to make the working conditions look better. Some of our film was confiscated. Finally, we had to leave and do the Turkish scenes in Greece."

It is the perennial challenge of design—working from the beginning with a script and director and coming up with a complete environment—that fires Callahan's imagination when a project meets his fancy.

Every once in a while there is that special film which engenders a spirit above and beyond the call of duty. "David and Lisa" was such a film, and Callahan considers it among the best that he has done. In such cases, usually there is a very limited budget with which to work.

"I'm appalled by the waste on some of the high-budget pictures," he says.

Now that he has gone so far in the designing field, there is a further yearning—the possibility of producing. It looms as the next step for the man who builds the worlds in which the actors emote.

New England farm kitchen was one of the 60 interior sets which Callahan designed for "The Group." He also made dozens of exterior sets. While working on movie, he broke leg and traveled in golf cart.

Callahan won Oscar for work in "America, America." He's surveying location in Greece with director Elia Kazan. Movie scenes were also shot in Turkey.