From 1932 until 1941, several like-minded artists gathered every summer to create art in Ste. Genevieve, the oldest town in Missouri. The time the artists spent at the Colony was often one of experimentation. While in many such colonies, artists worked in a similar style, the artists at Ste. Genevieve showed their individualism and wide-ranging artistic knowledge as they worked in numerous manners. This exhibition explores the diversity of these artists and the richness of their art, as well as the important role of Missouri in Midwestern art.

Located only 65 miles south of St. Louis on the west bank of the Mississippi River, Ste. Genevieve was a peaceful refuge, which still provided access to a major urban center with talented artists who could serve as faculty. In addition, the area provided a bountiful supply of local art students as well as audiences for group exhibitions. The numerous examples of picturesque French Colonial architecture and the town’s proximity to the river, farmlands, and lime industry promised a variegated landscape with differing qualities of light and air.
This atmosphere would have appealed to Aimee Schweig and Jesse Rickly, the founders of the Ste. Genevieve Summer School of Art, who had learned the plein air (French for open air or outside) method of painting under Charles Hawthorne at the Provincetown art colony in Massachusetts. With a program inspired by that of Provincetown, they hoped that their school would increase the appreciation of art in the Midwest as well as "perpetuate Midwestern life by the preservation of its scenes and types in paint."

While much of the art produced at Ste. Genevieve showed American life portrayed in a naturalistic vein, to categorize the colony as a center for only Regionalist and Social Realist art denies the artistic pluralism that thrived there. The artists at the colony were often well traveled and aware of artistic trends on the East Coast, in the American Southwest and Mexico, as well as much of Europe including Madrid, Paris, and Munich. They used their knowledge to paint scenes of the Midwest in a variety of deeply personal styles.

A view of the riverfront in St. Louis by Joe Jones shows him painting in a temperate modernist vein. The hard-edged and simplified forms with smooth surfaces and restrained modeling reflect his knowledge of the Polish artist Tamara de Lempicka, Georgia O'Keefe, and the pure geometric forms of precisionist art. Miriam McKinnie was also known for her moderate modernism, but her painting *Women Gathering Greens* reveals a remarkable sculptural quality as she transforms a Renaissance triangle construction into a powerful composition showing women hard at work outside on their knees.
Joseph Vorst used an expressive style, reflective of his study with Thomas Hart Benton (Benton spent only one day teaching at the colony), to portray and call attention to poverty along the Mississippi. His Sharecroppers' Revolt painted in 1939 shows the plight of jobless tenant farmers. Evicted from their housing, they must now live in a makeshift house made of quilts during the cold of winter. In The Old Rock House of 1932, Oscar Thalinger shows unemployed workers huddling for protection near an abandoned residence at the river's edge as they wait for day labor on a barge. He exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art a year later. The richness of his coloring, which so effectively evokes the ambience of this scene, reflects his study with Hermann Groeber in Munich.

Several of the artists chosen for this exhibition were of major importance to the success of the art colony. Bernard Peters was at the colony from the beginning, encouraged by Frank Nuderscher, who also painted at Ste. Genevieve and served as Director of the Ozark School of Art. A highly educated artist, Peters had studied in England, France, at St. Louis University, and at Harvard University. His studies at Gloucester in Massachusetts, however, perhaps proved the most influential as he adopted the similar broken application of paint used by Frederick Mulhaupt (also from Missouri), who was a leading painter of this port city.

Both Schweig and Rickly hoped that the colony and school of Ste. Genevieve would help focus the artistic ambitions of the participants and provide opportunities for collegial gatherings and interesting artistic discussions, as well as encourage interest in the art and artists who participated. The art colony succeeded in achieving these goals and its vitality can be seen in the diversity of themes and responses to contemporary artistic and political issues. The works chosen for this exhibition, while not all produced at the colony, illustrate the creativity and experimental nature of many of the participating artists, who saw beauty just as readily in the commonplace as in the artistic process itself. This exhibition illustrates the diversity of the art produced in Missouri, the reality of which has been clouded by the dominance of the style of Regionalism propounded by Benton and his circle.

Even though the colony thrived and was viewed as a notable addition to the artistic scene, the summer school disappeared after 1938. Schweig and other artists from St. Louis continued to visit Ste. Genevieve, but they did so in diminished numbers, and with the entry of the United States into World War II the colony disintegrated. Fortunately, the story does not end there. Several of the artists associated with Ste. Genevieve continued to have very productive careers, as they won prizes in painting competitions, were selected for important exhibitions, and sometimes even had solo exhibitions in important cities. Despite the continued prominence of the artists of the Ste. Genevieve Art Colony, they are not widely known today.
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FROM 1932 UNTIL 1941, artists gathered every summer to create art in Ste. Genevieve, the oldest town in Missouri. Only 65 miles south of St. Louis, the quaint town with its French Colonial architecture provided a peaceful refuge. At the same time its close proximity to a major urban center ensured access to talented artists who could serve as faculty, to an adequate supply of students for the school, and to audiences for group exhibitions.

The time the artists spent at Ste. Genevieve was often one of experimentation. While in many art colonies artists frequently worked in a similar style, those at Ste. Genevieve showed their individualism and wide-ranging artistic knowledge as they worked in numerous manners. The artists were often well traveled and fully aware of artistic trends in New York, Madrid, Paris, and Munich, as well as the American Southwest and Mexico.

While much of the art produced at Ste. Genevieve portrayed American life and scenery in a naturalistic vein, to categorize the colony as a center for only Regionalist and Social Realist art denies the artistic pluralism that thrived there. The founders of the colony and associated art school include Bernard E. Peters, Jessie Beard Rickly, and Aimee Schweig. They hoped that the colony and school would help focus the artistic ambitions of the participants and encourage public interest in the art and artists who participated.

The works of art chosen for this exhibition (all created by artists affiliated with the colony, but not necessarily produced while they were in attendance) illustrate the diversity of the art produced by Missouri artists, the reality of which has been clouded by the dominance of the style of Regionalism propounded by Thomas Hart Benton and his circle. Moreover, these pieces reveal the important role of Missouri in Midwestern art and the state’s relation to 20th century art as a whole.

Even though the colony thrived and was viewed as a notable addition to the artistic scene, the summer school disappeared in 1938, and with the entry of the United States into World War II the colony disintegrated. Fortunately, many of the artists shown in this exhibition continued to have productive careers, winning prizes in painting competitions, and showing at important exhibitions. Sadly, their popularity waned over the years and most of the artists of the Ste. Genevieve Art Colony are not widely known today.
Bernard E. Peters

(1893 – 1949)

Biography:

Born August 8, 1893 Bernard Peters received his bachelors degree in art from St. Louis University. He then studied at the University of Missouri before receiving his masters degree from Harvard University. He then travelled to England and France to study. Later, he also studied under Frederick Mulhaupt, a highly regarded teacher who worked in Chicago and Gloucester, Massachusetts.

Peters was a long time member of the St. Louis Artists Guild and participated annually in their exhibitions. He was also a member of the prestigious 2 x 4 Club, associated with Washington University in St. Louis. This was a group of 24 painters and sculptors. According to his wife, Ord Peters, he was also good friends with the St. Louis artist Frank Nuderscher. They traveled throughout the Ozarks together, sketching the Missouri landscape. Nuderscher introduced Peters to Ste. Genevieve native, Mathew Zeigler in 1932, which led to the creation of the Ste. Genevieve Artist Colony. In 1933 he purchased a house in St. Mary, Missouri, just ten miles south of Ste. Genevieve. It became the permanent summer home of Peters and his wife until 1943. They had no children.

He died tragically from Bright’s Disease (a kidney ailment) at the age of 55 on May 21, 1949. Although, when he was diagnosed with the disease as a child he was told that he would probably die in his early twenties.

For much of his life he taught manual arts in the St. Louis public school system, but at various times he had also worked as a lecturer, mural painter, writer and designer.

Bernard E. Peters (St. Louis, MO, 1893 - St. Louis, MO, 1949)

*Untitled*, 1918

Oil on canvas

Lent by Joel and Debbie Schnedler

Painted in 1918, this painting was created long before the formation of the Ste. Genevieve Art Colony. The subject matter showing ocean waves breaking on a rocky coastline and the resultant foam spraying into the air indicate that the work was painted far away from Missouri. Indeed, Peters is known to have worked in the 1920s in Gloucester, Massachusetts, where he was influenced by the broken brushwork and compositions of the artist Frederick Mulhaupt, who coincidentally was also from Missouri.

This work, however, appears to have been painted before Peters’ encounter with Mulhaupt as he experiments with the broken brushwork and reflected light used by the French Impressionists. Peters was highly educated, having studied art at St. Louis University and Harvard University, as well as in England and France.

Bright dabs of orange illuminate the rocks as differing colors of blue show the water flowing down the interstices of the rocks. The straight strokes of the land contrast with the curving ones reserved for the water. In this early, monumental work, broken brushwork fuses with an expressionist tendency to render the drama of the never-ending story of the ocean. The composition climbs up the canvas with minimal recession as the ocean waves incessantly roll toward the shore.

Peters understood the value of experimentation in the formation of an artist, as did many of the artists who worked in Ste. Genevieve. The modernist vein of this painting wanes in the artist’s later works, examples of which can be seen in this exhibition. This painting stayed in Peters’ private collection until his death in 1949 and then remained with his widow the following fifty years until her death in 1999.
Bernard E. Peters (St. Louis, MO, 1893 – St. Louis, MO, 1949)

*On Kaskaskia Island*, ca. 1930’s

Oil on paper mounted on board

Lent

Founded by French traders, the town of Kaskaskia, Illinois, dates back to 1703 and it became an important agricultural and fur trading center. The name derives from the Kaskaskia Indians, a tribe of the Illini confederation. With the French and Indian War, Fort Kaskaskia was built on Garrison Hill overlooking the town. The British destroyed the fort in 1763, and soon thereafter the French ceded their territory east of the Mississippi River to the British. At this point, many of the French speaking people of Kaskaskia and other French colonial towns moved west of the river, settling in nearby Ste. Genevieve, St. Louis, and other areas.

In November of 1803, Lewis and Clark stopped at Kaskaskia hoping to add more men to their expedition to explore the newly purchased Louisiana Territory. Six years later in 1809, Kaskaskia served as the capital of the Illinois territory until 1818, when it then became the capital of the new state of Illinois. In 1819 the state capital was moved to the more centrally located town of Vandalia.

Following the flood of 1844, the original location of Kaskaskia became an island surrounded by the Mississippi River, and the town subsequently moved to the south. The flood of 1881 destroyed the final remnants of the original town, and as the Mississippi shifted again, the river carved a new channel east of the relocated town of Kaskaskia. This change in the river’s course made Kaskaskia the only part of Illinois lying west of the Mississippi River.

Probably inspired by the experiments of the other Ste. Genevieve artists, Peters abandoned his typical open brushwork here. The geometric and simplified forms, smooth surfaces, and restrained modeling reveal the influence of the moderate modernism of Joe Jones, who was present at the colony in 1936 and 1937. The rich color palette, winding road, and tree leaning into the composition are typical of Peters, however.
Bernard E. Peters (St. Louis, 1893 - St. Louis, 1949)

Untitled (Landscape), ca. 1930s
Oil on canvas
Lent by John and Susan Horseman

In 1932 Peters visited Ste. Genevieve at the urging of Frank Nuderscher. Not long afterward, he and Jessie Beard Rickly, with their respective families, rented the early nineteenth-century Mammy Shaw House and the Ste. Genevieve art colony was born. Artist friends were invited to come and visit Ste. Genevieve on the weekends. Discussions about art took place in the old home, which also served as a gallery for the summer art exhibition of the artworks made by participating artists.

Peters found inspiration in the rolling Ozark hills and probably discovered near Ste. Genevieve the rustic home portrayed in this painting. The composition is a complex one with the house arranged on the slope of a hill, which Peters defines through winding and gutted paths. These trails lead both to the house and past it, down through the valley and up a neighboring hill. Peters successfully indicates the wide variety of vegetation through a complex use of color and texture. While his exuberant brushwork and mastery of color reveal him to be a great American Impressionist painter, the scrappy tree that leans into the painting shows how Peters also enjoyed manipulating formal elements and endowing the landscape with a mood.
Bernard E. Peters (St. Louis, MO, 1893 – St. Louis, MO, 1949)

The Quarry
Oil on board
Lent by John and Susan Horseman

The county of Ste. Genevieve is rich in stone and mineral resources, including limestone, marble, and sandstone. In particular, limestone mining came to the area around 1840. The manufacture of lime obtained by the heating of limestone was an important industry in the area. The lime was used in the construction of buildings and as a raw material for concrete, mortar, and plaster, among other things. In 1928 thirty-four kilns were burning limestone at or near Ste. Genevieve. No sign of the chimneys that would have been spewing smoke into the air can be found, however, in this painting.

The gleaming white gashes caused by the mining of limestone comprise part of the beauty of the landscape. The limestone and water shine thanks to the juxtaposition of strokes of color next to each other. The fertility of the land is implicit owing to the rich variety of lush green tonalities of this late-spring idyllic scene. Peters was immediately attracted to Ste. Genevieve upon his first visit. The differing qualities of the light, air, land, and water to be found in the area must have appealed to him after his studies in France and the port city of Gloucester, Massachusetts.
Jessie Beard Rickly

(1895 – 1975)

Biography:

Jessie Rickly was born in Poplar Bluff, Missouri and educated at Harvard and at Washington University School of Fine Arts. Further training came from Charles Hawthorne in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and upon returning to St. Louis she also studied with Oscar Berninghaus and with Edmund Wuerpel, the director of the Washington University School of Fine Art. In 1934 she and fellow artist Aimee Shweig co-founded the Ste. Genevieve art colony whose members included Joe Jones, Joseph Vorst and Thomas Hart Benton, among others.

Rickly was an artistic voice for women in the 1930’s and very active politically. She was involved in creating organizations to help educate the public and other artists about the role of art in society including the Independent Artists, The Missourians and the New Hats. In 1935, Rickly made St. Louis her permanent home where she continued her art career.

http://www.umsl.edu/mercantile/mexhibevents/Missouri%20Splendor/urb_Rickly.htm
**Jessie Beard Rickly** (Poplar Bluff, MO, 1895 –
St. Louis, MO, 1975)

*Still Life*, n.d.

Oil on board

Lent in Memory of Keith Schrader

Co-founder of the Ste. Genevieve art colony and school, Rickly studied under Charles Hawthorne at the Provincetown art colony in Massachusetts along with Aimee Schweig. At Provincetown they learned to paint outdoors (*en plein air*) as opposed to the traditional academic procedure of painting inside a studio.

This bright, luminous still life reflects Rickly’s training at Provincetown, where she learned about impressionist brushwork and experimented with methods of painting the effects of light. The spontaneity of the composition also seems to reflect Hawthorne’s practice of working directly on the canvas without preliminary drawings. The coloring is particular to Rickly, however, as she opts for a studied rainbow of jewel-like colors.
Jessie Beard Rickly (Poplar Bluff, MO, 1895 – St. Louis, MO, 1975)
Still Life -- Lilies and Fruit, ca. 1930
Watercolor
Lent by John and Susan Horseman

This still life shows Rickly’s serious study of the effects of light and color as she deftly exaggerates the effects of light reflected from flat surfaces and passing through glass and water. By overstating the bluish component of the shadows cast on the table, she calls attention to the complex reality of color (perceived and portrayed) as the Impressionists did. Taking advantage of the fluid watercolor medium, she bleeds the colors into each other endowing the sensitive composition with a glowing, ethereal effect.

The subject matter and modern style featured in this watercolor parallel works created about the same time by the artists Georgia O’Keefe and Charles Demuth, who were both part of the group of artists known as the Stieglitz Circle. Working in New York City, these artists experimented in a variety of ways as they strove to create a new American art, like many of the Ste. Genevieve artists.
Jessie Beard Rickly (Poplar Bluff, MO, 1895 – St. Louis, MO, 1975)
Red Shoes Fantasy, ca. 1932–35
Oil on board
Lent in Memory of Keith Schrader

The winter following her first summer in Ste. Genevieve, Rickly exhibited eighteen of the paintings created there at the St. Louis Artist’s Guild. The collegial and artistic experiences the colony provided clearly inspired her creativity, while they also appeared to have had a positive impact on the marketability of her art. In 1933 Rickly spent practically the entire summer in Ste. Genevieve, while Aimee Schweig came on the weekends. During this summer Rickly and Schweig contemplated the idea of an art school, which they thought would give more focus to their artistic aspirations as well as generate more interest in the work produced at Ste. Genevieve. Independent and spirited, Rickly became an artistic voice for women in the 1930s as she battled against gender expectations, became a professional artist, and co-founded an art colony.

This interior scene of a bedroom was most likely painted in Ste. Genevieve at some point between the period when she helped to found the colony and when she left three years later for unknown reasons, never to return. A reworking of Van Gogh’s famous painting Bedroom in Arles (a version of which she could have easily seen at the Art Institute of Chicago beginning in 1926), Rickly’s variation embodies the bohemian ambiance of an artistic colony formed of artists who had traveled and studied around the world. The exotic locales of the American Southwest or Mexico are implied in the colorful coverlet, and Old World Europe is embodied in the sgabello or Italian side chair. The altar containing a sculpture of the Madonna at the head of the bed reflects the deep spirituality of many of the town’s residents.
Aimee Schweig

(1897 – 1987)

Biography:

Born in 1891, Aimee Schweig attended art classes at Washington University and also at the art colony in Provincetown, Massachusetts. Her daughter Martyl, who would also become a successful artist, accompanied her to Provincetown. A skilled painter, Schwieg helped create the People’s Art Center (an integrated art school that was a venture in Democracy) and was a founding member of St. Louis chapter of the National Society of Arts and Letters. Revered as a teacher, she inspired many students during the 21 years that she taught at Mary Institute. A member of Artists’ Equity, she was among those who picketed the City Art Museum (now the Saint Louis Art Museum) to demand that more local artists be shown. After that happened, she helped to raise funds for a photographic section at the museum in memory of her husband, Martin Schweig, a prominent photographer. Her works have also been exhibited at the St. Louis Artists’ Guild, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Kansas City Art Institute, the Denver Art Museum, and the National Association of Women Artists. The success of the Ste. Genevieve Art Colony was due largely to Schweig’s efforts to lure talented and famous artist-teachers to the colony, such as Thomas Hart Benton, Joseph Meert, Fred Conway and Joe Jones.

http://www.biasandtolerance.org/artifact11.php

Aimee Schweig (St. Louis, MO, 1897–St. Louis, MO, 1987)
Still life, n.d.
Oil on board
Lent by Terrie Liberman and Martin Schweig

When she returned from Provincetown, Schweig brought with her the modernist teachings of Charles Hawthorne, who promulgated the techniques of the French Impressionists and Post-Impressionists. Hawthorne exclaimed: “We must teach ourselves to see the beauty of the ugly, to see the beauty of the commonplace.” In this most humble of scenes, Schweig shows a coffee grinder, potatoes, and towel draped over an old wooden table. An early work by Schweig, according to her son Martin, this painting with its high viewpoint and concentration on shades of brown reveals a debt to Vincent Van Gogh, who painted analogous modest images focusing on potatoes.
**Aimee Schweig** (St. Louis, MO, 1897 –
St. Louis, MO, 1987)

*Pierrot*, n.d.
Woodcut
Lent by Terrie Liberman and Martin Schweig

This woodcut shows Schweig’s interest in a German Expressionist art group called *Die Brücke*, meaning “the bridge,” formed in Dresden in 1905. The name refers to the group’s hope that their art would act as a bridge to the art of the future. The artists of *Die Brücke* revived the woodcut as a medium for fine art printmaking. The large, contrasting planes of black and white endow this small print with an energy, immediacy, and directness belying its small size. The title of this print references a character from the seventeenth-century *Commedia dell’Arte*, meaning “comedy of art.” Pierrot’s heart was perpetually broken by Columbine, who appears to be pictured here.
Aimee Schweig (St. Louis, MO, 1897 – St. Louis, MO, 1987)
*Tillie*, 1932
Oil on panel
Lent by Lorraine Stange

This portrait of an African American woman by Schweig was painted near the inception of the Ste. Genevieve Artist Colony. One can see the influence of her studies at the Provincetown Art Colony in the use of a palette knife to apply paint in quick, planar strokes. As one of Charles Hawthorne’s students recalled: “More than anyone else, Hawthorne appreciated the fact that plane relationships are better expressed through comparative values of color than through drawing.”

Schweig’s daughter Martyl later recalled the disturbing living conditions of African Americans living in Ste. Genevieve, “When I would walk down the sidewalk in Ste. Genevieve, black people – there weren’t many – would get off into the street and let me pass... that would upset me, something was not right... Social protest was in the air, and many artists began painting black people, or the disadvantaged.”

In 1930, after two African American men were accused of killing two white lime-kiln workers, the threat of lynching drove nearly all the two hundred black residents from Ste. Genevieve. While civic leaders invited “native, property owning blacks” to return and reclaim their homes, the fear of mob violence kept many away. Painted in the shadow of this violence and the exodus of blacks from Ste. Genevieve, this work of art records one of the few African Americans who chose to stay in the small, segregated town despite the hostilities they faced.
Helen Louise Beccard

(1903 – 1994)

Biography:

Helen Louise Beccard was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1903. She received her art training at the St. Louis School of Fine Arts of Washington University from 1921 to 1924. For the next 15 years, Beccard taught painting and drawing at the Mary Institute, a prestigious prep school established by the founders of Washington University. During this time she was a socially conscious realist and exhibited widely in museums and galleries in the Midwest and the East. She became a member of the American Artists Congress, spent time in Mexico studying mural and fresco painting, taught at the St. Genevieve Artists' Colony with Thomas Hart Benton, Joe Jones and other noted regionalists, was a member of the St. Louis Artists Guild, and in 1939 her oil "Sleep" was accepted into the New York World's Fair.

In the early 1940s Beccard taught art in New York City, and in 1948 she moved to Washington, D.C., becoming a member of the Society of Washington Artists. One of her works was awarded a purchase prize from the Baltimore Museum of Art in the mid-fifties.

After moving to California in 1956 her work became less figurative, and the use of abstract and geometrical forms began to play an increasingly important role. She also went on to conduct a lithography workshop at the Palo Alto Art Center. Right up until her death in 1994, Beccard remained very active, winning numerous prizes and awards from the San Francisco Society of Woman Artists.

http://www.aarongalleries.com/biography/beccard.html
Helen Louise Beccard (St. Louis, MO, 1903 – San Francisco, CA, 1994)
*Will and the Golden Eagle*, 1938
Oil on paper mounted on canvas
Lent by Melissa Williams

According to Beccard, St. Louis offered as “interesting art models as can be found anywhere in the world.” She enjoyed painting the picturesque characters that interpreted the “urban life of elbow-rubbing people, who accept the meagerness of their environment while making the most of the simple, unexpected pleasures which chance throws in their way.” Her trip to Mexico helped her to see “new values” in familiar things at home. After painting Mexican peasants, she expressed her opinion that the local blacks shared some interesting qualities with them, in particular their “passiveness,” as well as their ability to “assume beautiful poses and hold them almost indefinitely.” While many artists had progressive social views, they were still products of their time.

Will Guyle, pictured here, is one of the employees Beccard found on the *Golden Eagle*, a Mississippi River cargo steamer that had begun taking on passengers to earn more revenue in response to the increased competition from railroads and trucks. Calmly passing time as the steamer goes upstream with a cargo of mustard and vinegar, Will’s relaxed pose, torn shirt, and simple hat belie his position as the head of the roustabouts (laborers on river steamboats who loaded and unloaded the cargo). At the time of this portrait, Will had been working with Captain Buck Leyhe for forty-five years.

While Beccard is hardly known today, the Brooklyn Museum hosted a display of her watercolors, and she also had an exhibition of her paintings in Philadelphia, in addition to numerous exhibitions in St. Louis.
Thomas Hart Benton

(1889 – 1975)

Biography:

American painter, illustrator and lithographer. He was the son of a congressman and first studied art in Washington, DC, where he saw the murals in the capital’s public buildings. In 1907 he enrolled for a year at the Art Institute School in Chicago, visiting Paris the following summer. He studied until early 1909 at the Académie Julian and thereafter independently. Benton rejected academic methods and was exposed to both the Louvre and modernist styles; his interests seem to have focused on Impressionism and Pointillism.

Early in 1912 Benton returned to Missouri, but, unable to find work, he moved to New York where he lived until 1935. Until 1920 he worked at resolving the conflict between modernist abstraction and art’s social function. He had also come under the influence of Marxism and met many of the radicals of the Masses, a socialist journal. In 1918 he joined the Navy. He became committed to art as an objective narrative of American themes and values. In order to stress the three-dimensional reality of the subject in its environment, he made sculptural prototypes for his figurative paintings and vehemently rejected abstraction.

During the 1920s Benton established a more settled life and produced his first major paintings. In 1922 he married Rita Placenza, with whom he had two children. Benton was teaching at the Art Students League by 1926. He was aware of the growing reputation of the socially concerned Mexican muralists, particularly Diego Rivera, and was eager to paint such large-scale works himself. By 1930 Benton had won mural commissions. These murals spurred violent controversy over their style and politics. Around this time he was also identified as an exponent of Regionalism, with Grant Wood and John Steuart Curry. His populist and Marxist sympathies were misunderstood by New York artists radicalized by the Depression, to whom Regionalism, with its sometimes ironic panoramas of rural America, did not appear sufficiently in step with the politics of the Popular Front. Disgusted, Benton left New York in 1935 to paint an anti-capitalist mural on the Social History of the State of Missouri in the State Capitol at Jefferson City in 1936. During the late 1930s Benton devoted himself to teaching at the Kansas City Art Institute. In 1941 he produced a series of propaganda paintings as part of the war effort.

In the years after World War II, and continuing until his death, Benton’s work was widely exhibited and collected in ‘heartland’ America, although it was disdained by the New York art world, which extolled his former student Jackson Pollock and Abstract Expressionism.

http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T007989?q=thomas+hart+benton&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit
Several of the artists who met and worked at Ste. Genevieve hoped that some of their art would have a social impact with the power to change injustices in the world. Benton, having grown up with populist concerns, was naturally inclined towards political and societal reform:

“The idea of a ruthless and greedy crowd of economic buccaneers sucking the life blood of the country for their profits was familiar to me before I had ever heard of Karl Marx, Communism, or even Socialism. It was acceptable on plain American grounds. It had long been a part of Midwestern Democratic campaign talk, and I could remember it from my earliest childhood.”

Based on a drawing that Benton did in 1928 while visiting coal mines in West Virginia, this print depicts the violent clash between striking miners and the militia. The history of injustices suffered by coal miners in West Virginia is a long one as miners faced extremely poor economic conditions, and the state had one of the highest mine death rates in the country.

According to documents, it appears that Benton took a brief pause from painting the Missouri State Capitol mural in 1936 to spend one day in the middle of August teaching at Ste. Genevieve.
Biography:

Frederick E. Conway was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1900. He graduated from Soldan High School in 1916, had a brief stint as a printer’s devil in Chicago and soon returned to St. Louis where he began taking evening art classes from local sculptor Robert Porter Bringhurst at his art school located at the corner of Grand and Olive (a site that became particularly inspiring to the artist for the rest of his life). Soon after, Conway’s close friends, the Gladneys, supported his travels through Europe for two years, where he spent time in Paris studying at the Académie Julian, the Académie Chaumiére and the Académie Moderne. He also explored Northern Africa, sketching anything and everything under the hot desert sun.

After returning from Paris, he enrolled at the Washington University School of Fine Arts and began to establish himself as a serious artist. Conway’s schooling coincided with Max Beckmann’s residence at Washington University and the two became close associates. Conway was one of the first to recognize Beckmann’s importance and seriously devoted himself to his teachings. Beckmann painted Conway’s portrait in 1949. Shortly after completing his studies in 1924, Conway joined the faculty of the School of Fine Arts and then devoted himself equally to painting and teaching for the next forty years of his life.

Conway was an avid golfer and he spent the last ten years or so of his life painting humorous scenes of golfers carousing on the golf course. Many of these paintings are now located in a variety of St. Louis area golf clubs. Conway also transformed his love of golf into illustrations for the book, How to Keep Your Temper on the Golf Course, written by former PGA pro Tommy Bolt.

Conway's joie de vivre extended into all aspects of his life. He was married three times, once to one of his students, and he had three children. After retiring from Washington University he moved into the Old Congress Hotel (now Portland Towers) where he was able to lease a studio on one floor while he lived with his third wife, Helen Busch, on an upper floor. Stories are still told by his friends, family and former students about his lively sense of humor and intense enjoyment of life. Conway died of cancer at Barnes Hospital in St. Louis in August, 1973.

http://www.umsl.edu/mercantile/mexhibevents/Fred%20Conway%20Exhibit/The_Artist.htm
Fred E. Conway (St. Louis, MO, 1900 – St. Louis, MO, 1973)

Seated Figure
Watercolor
Lent by Melissa Williams

Aimee Schweig invited Conway to teach at the Ste. Genevieve Summer Art School in 1935 and again in 1937. With an extensive and prestigious art education in Europe and America, a position as instructor of art at Washington University, and a successful painting career, Conway was an ideal professional to teach at the colony. Moreover, he was an experimental artist capable of working in a variety of mediums including oil, encaustic, and watercolor, and accomplished in several styles of painting ranging from realism to abstraction.

Conway balanced these two extreme styles of painting for this image of a young man casually dressed in blue jeans and a button down shirt with rolled up sleeves. Taking advantage of the watercolor medium, he loosely applied broad, curving strokes to create a very lively representation of a seated person. Conway believed that it was the artist’s task “to put something on canvas that is indisputably the artist’s own, something that tells what he sees in life.”
Fred E. Conway (St. Louis, MO, 1900 – St. Louis, MO, 1973)
Elsah Bluffs, n.d.
Oil on panel
Lent by the St. Louis Mercantile Library at the University of Missouri – St. Louis

A versatile artist with an astounding technical mastery, Conway could move between realism and abstraction with ease. He was an active member of the St. Louis art scene and is known for numerous murals created for the WPA (Works Progress Administration.) A painter, educator, and lecturer, he taught at the Washington University School of Fine Arts, and his work was shown at numerous prestigious museums including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, Art Institute of Chicago, and Los Angeles County Museum, among others. In 1935 and 1937, Conway served on the visiting faculty of the Ste. Genevieve Summer School of Art.

In this painting, Conway chose to paint the bluffs soaring above the Mississippi River at the small town of Elsah, Illinois, located approximately 30 miles upstream from St. Louis. With daring and lavish strokes of white and glowing red and orange paint, Conway endowed the millions of years of exposed geological history with an excitement that only a master modernist and colorist could capture.
Fred E. Conway (St. Louis, MO, 1900 – St. Louis, MO, 1973)

Jazz Scene, ca. late 1940s
Encaustic on Masonite
Lent by Melissa Williams

Conway spent two years in Europe, during which he studied at the Académie Julian, Académie Chaumiére, and the Académie Moderne. Upon his return to St. Louis, he enrolled at the Washington University School of Fine Arts when Max Beckmann was teaching. Conway recognized the importance of Beckmann at an early moment and followed his teachings closely. The overlaying and stacking of forms, the startling juxtapositions, and the decorative use of color in this painting show the unmistakable influence of Beckmann. Portraying a lively scene of music making, the painting conveys the vitality of Mardi Gras with the harlequin patterns, masked figures, and musicians.

Curious as an artist, Conway studied a multitude of artistic styles and media as he explored the world around him. In this painting he adopted the medium of encaustic. First used by ancient Greek and Roman artists, encaustic painting involves the mixing of dry pigments or colors with molten wax. The medium is durable, fast drying, and can be applied in thin glazes and thick impasto. A variety of twentieth-century artists embraced encaustic in the Americas and Europe, including Diego Rivera, Georges Rouault, and Jasper Johns, and the technique enjoyed some popularity in the United States in the 1940s.
Joseph James “Joe” Jones
(1909 – 1963)

Biography:

Born in St. Louis, Missouri, April 7, 1909, and died in Morristown, New Jersey, 1963, Joe Jones was a painter and lithographer. Self taught, he quit school at age fifteen to work as a house painter.

Winning his first award in 1931, Jones gained the attention of St. Louis patrons who financed his travel to the artists' colony in Provincetown, Massachusetts. He began winning awards at age 22 in 1931 with his early paintings that are typical Midwestern Regionalist works depicting wheat fields and wheat farming.

A political activist as well as a painter, Jones organized art classes for unemployed youngsters, which he held in the old St. Louis courthouse in 1934. He alienated his supporters with the pronouncement that he had joined the Communist Party, so Jones signed up for the Public Works of Art Project in 1934.

He left St. Louis in 1935 to pursue his art career in New York. In 1937, he was awarded a prestigious Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship to create a pictorial record of conditions in the dust bowl. That same year, his work was included in a major 119 exhibition at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, PA.

Through the period of the WPA Jones was awarded five major mural commissions. As a result, he created murals for the post offices at Seneca, Kansas, Men and Wheat (1940); Anthony, Kansas, Turning a Corner (1939); Hutchinson, Kansas; Magnolia, Arkansas; and Charleston, Missouri.

During World War II he worked as a war artist for Life magazine. Because Jones addressed major political and social issues in so many of his paintings, he is typically cited as a Social Realist as well as a Regionalist. His style changed in the late 1940s to minimal and non-representational. He also worked as an instructor at St. Bernards School for Boys, Ralston, NJ.

Joe Jones (St. Louis, MO, 1909 – Morristown, NJ, 1963)

#43 Westmoreland Entrance, 1931
Lithograph (73.280)
Gift of Prof. and Mrs. Saul Weinberg in Memory of Bernard Weinberg

This lithograph shows part of the entrance gate to one of the most exclusive private streets in the city of St. Louis, Westmoreland Place. The square-like structure incorporating a large arch at the center of the composition, along with its companion tower (not pictured), were designed by the St. Louis firm of Eames and Young.

In this unusual bird’s-eye rendition of the entrance, Jones used the tower-like structure to anchor an abstract composition that has only a peripheral relation to the actual subject. The gate tower as represented by Jones is significantly shorter than in reality, having lost the upper story. With the central element of the composition thus flattened, the curving and rectilinear lines that emanate and surround the gate structure flow fluidly throughout the piece in a manner vaguely reminiscent of the work of Kandinsky, one of the pioneers of abstraction.

In the fall of the same year this print was made, Jones became a founding member of New Hats, a group dedicated to encouraging and promulgating contemporary artistic trends. At this same time, the critics acknowledged Jones as a “thorough modernist.”
Joe Jones (St. Louis, MO, 1909 – Morristown, NJ, 1963)
Riverfront in St. Louis, early 1930s
Oil on canvas
Lent anonymously

During the early 1930s Jones painted in a modernist formal vein. In this painting, he reduced the St. Louis riverfront to its geometric essence showing it as a series of simplified planes and shapes portrayed with an extremely limited color palette and minimally modeled surfaces. Devoid of any figures or action, the urban landscape becomes a modern utopia. No trace of air pollution or the urban struggles between labor and industry remain.

Jones’ fame grew throughout the 1930s, and in May 1935 he received his first one-person show in New York City. Because he also wanted to help his fellow artists, a year later he arranged for an exhibition of art by Midwestern artists at the ACA (American Contemporary Artists) Galleries in Manhattan. A review in the New York Times praised the show, grateful that there weren’t any imitations of Benton, Curry, and Wood. Ten of the twenty-three artists who participated in this New York show were associated with Ste. Genevieve at one time or another.

Jones became involved with the Ste. Genevieve colony during his rise to national prominence, and in 1936 he became one of the co-directors of the Summer School of Art. That so many of the artists associated with Ste. Genevieve had been included in the New York exhibition helped validate the art colony and its importance for the development of American art.
Miriam McKinnie

(1906 – 1987)

Biography:

Miriam McKinnie was born in Evanston Illinois on May 15, 1906. She was the Granddaughter of William Wells, the noted wildlife painter. As a teenager, she enrolled in the school of fine arts in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Soon afterwards she went to Chicago for three years to study with the painter Anthony Angarola, a proponent of the modernist movement. She eventually attended both the Kansas City Art Institute and the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. In the 1930s she earned her Master of Fine Arts at the Instituto Allende in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. She was a well-rounded artist who showed great technical skill in a number of mediums, including oils, caseins, lithographs, brush drawings, pen-and-ink sketches, and collage. Most of her work is characterized by a “sunset glow” which she achieved by either glazing of applying multiple thin layers of ochres, browns, and deep reds.

Miriam McKinnie (Evanston, IL, 1906 – Berryville, AR, 1987)

Women Gathering Greens, ca. 1937
Oil on canvas
Lent by John and Susan Horseman


Using a Renaissance triangle to organize the composition, McKinnie portrayed the figures using a modernistic approach. With limited modeling, a restricted color palette, and strategically placed, curving fabric folds, she infused a remarkable amount of energy into the stable, symmetrical composition. McKinnie attributed the subtle dynamic quality of her paintings to her studies with the painter Anthony Angarola at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. While she subsequently won a competition that entitled her to a year’s free tuition at the New York Art League, a family illness kept her in the Midwest, and she studied art at the Kansas City Art Institute and the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center.

McKinnie was an award-winning painter, had a one-woman show in St. Louis, and taught at the Washington University School of Fine Art. First invited to visit the Ste. Genevieve colony in 1932, she served as a visiting instructor in 1934. Her work was prized by important art collectors including Jeanette Rockefeller and Joseph Pulitzer.
**Miriam McKinnie** (Evanston, IL, 1906, – Berryville, AR, 1987)

*Still Life with Art Books*, ca. 1925-30

Oil on canvas

Lent by Melissa Williams

The artists at the Ste. Genevieve colony studied art intensely during the precious moments they spent there. Here, McKinnie has created a still life composed of art books she probably used on a flat surface. Interspersed with these appear a translucent blue stemmed glass and a brilliant orange ceramic vase with orange flowers. The Victorian single arm oil lamp with green cased glass shade, clear glass chimney, and separate brass oil reservoir probably dates to the latter nineteenth century.

Much exhibited, McKinnie was known for the golden glow of her works, which derived from the thinly applied layers of paint and glazes. Thanks to her lively paint application, her forms while solidly rendered appear to simultaneously float in spite of the architectonic structuring of the configuration. The originality of her compositions, which often contained a severity suggestive of masculine energy, was noted by contemporary critics.
Joseph Meert

(1905 – 1989)

Biography:

Born in Brussels, Belgium, Joseph Meert (1905 – 1989) emigrated to the U.S. at the age of five. As a young adult he studied with Thomas Hart Benton at the Kansas City Art Institute, where Meert himself taught from 1935 to 1941. During the Great Depression, he worked as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) artist, painting murals in government buildings. He became a close friend to Jackson Pollock, and is credited with saving Pollock’s life on a sub-zero winter’s night in 1943. The works in this collection examine Meert’s influences from geometric abstraction in the late 1940s, to abstract expressionism in the 1950s and beyond. Meert spent his last decade institutionalized for mental illness; his care funded in part a grant from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation. With the aid of an art therapist, however, he continued to produce a final series of watercolors during this period.

http://www.oakton.edu/museum/meert.html
Joseph Meert (Brussels, Belgium, 1905 – Waterbury, CT, 1989)
Landscape, n.d.
Oil on canvas
Lent by the St. Louis Mercantile Library at the University of Missouri – St. Louis

The artistic and intellectual vitality of the Ste. Genevieve art colony became known quickly, attracting a variety of talented artists to serve as teachers. Meert first visited the colony in 1936 and then became an instructor at the school in 1937.

Moving to Kansas City with his family at the age of five, Meert later studied at the Kansas City Art Institute. Beginning in 1926 he became a scholarship student at the Art Students League of New York and studied with a variety of artists including John Sloan and Thomas Hart Benton. Benton considered Meert to be one of his finest students and invited him to teach with him at the Kansas City Art Institute.

While this painting reflects the influence of the Regionalist art of Benton, it also reveals the nascent modernist aesthetic Meert developed under the influence of Jackson Pollock. During the 1940s he mostly abandoned Regionalism and moved toward Abstractionism in order to understand the underlying “color rhythms” of nature. He had decided that he wanted to paint “the way I felt I ought to paint—to paint creatively. That is what I have done and that is what I am going to keep doing, even if I never sell anything to anybody.”
Frank Bernard Nuderscher

(1880 – 1959)

Biography:

Frank Nuderscher was an American painter and muralist based in his native city of St. Louis, Missouri. In 1936, he was a supervisor for the Works in Progress Administration. A member of the National Society of Mural Painters, he produced murals for the St. Louis Zoological Gardens, and public buildings such as banks and hospitals. He also produced easel paintings of the Ozarks and urban St. Louis in a style influenced by the colors and atmospheric approach to landscape of Impressionism. Nuderscher was recognized with numerous awards from area arts institutions, including the City Art Museum of St. Louis (which also exhibited his work) the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce, the St. Louis Art Guild, and the Missouri State Fair.

**Frank Bernard Nuderscher** (St. Louis, MO, 1880 – St. Louis, MO, 1959)

*Nocturne*, n.d.

Oil on canvas

Lent by the St. Louis Mercantile Library at the University of Missouri – St. Louis

While technically not an artist known to have painted in Ste. Genevieve, Nuderscher was key to the formation of the colony. Known as the “painter of the Ozarks,” Nuderscher directed the Ozark School of Art, a summer school not far from Ste. Genevieve in Arcadia, Missouri. He informed Peters about Ste. Genevieve, which was a picturesque, quiet town featuring French houses dating back to the eighteenth century. After Nuderscher convinced Peters and his wife to visit the town, the couple immediately fell in love with the locale and they rented the Mammy Shaw House at 202 Merchant Street. Not long after that Jessie Beard Rickly and her husband joined the Peters family in Ste. Genevieve, and the art colony was born.

Nuderscher was a master at painting the delicate colors and hazy atmosphere found in the Ozarks. Through his delicately rendered and blended strokes and limited color palette, Nuderscher captured the eerie quiet of the moonlit landscape in this painting.
Martyl Schweig

(1918 – )

Biography:

A plein-air landscape painter in styles of both realism and abstraction, Suzanne Schweig Langsdorf was known as Martyl, a name given to her by her artist-mother, Aimee Goldstone Schweig, for her daughter to use as an artist signature. She lived in Missouri and Illinois, although she traveled widely. From 1945 to 1972, she was art editor of the, “Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists,” and from 1965 to 1970, she was an instructor at the University of Chicago.

Martyl was born and raised in St. Louis, and her natural talents combined with the tutelage of her mother, led to early recognition as a child artist. At age eleven, she won a first prize for drawing at a competition of the St. Louis Art Museum, and the next year she won second prize. Throughout her career, she had numerous exhibition venues including the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, the Royal British Artist Gallery in London, and the Gibbes Museum in Charleston, South Carolina.

Her mother became her frequent painting and traveling companion, and they went to “many parts of the globe in search of subject matter” (205). One of their early trips together was in 1930, when Martyl was twelve, to Provincetown, Massachusetts. Other trips included New Mexico, Colorado and Arizona where the Grand Canyon was one of the destinations.

Early in her career, Martyl was a WPA (Works Progress Administration) muralist, and two of her murals are in post offices, one titled “Wheat Workers” in Russell, Kansas, and the other, “La Guignolee”, in Sainte Genevieve. Another mural, “The courageous Act of Cyrus Tiffany,” completed in 1943, is in Washington DC at the Building of the Recorder of Deeds.

Martyl graduated from Mary Institute in St. Louis and enrolled in Washington University where she studied art and history. In Missouri, she also attended Sainte Genevieve Summer School, which her mother had co-founded and served as director. In 1940 and 1941, Martyl went to Colorado Springs where she studied at the Fine Arts Center with Boardman Robinson and Arnold Blanch.

In 1941, she married Alexander Langsdorf, Jr., who was a nuclear physicist, and the couple had two daughters. They lived in the St. Louis area until 1943 and then moved to Illinois, living in Chicago, Roselle, and from the 1970s in Schaumburg.

Martyl (St. Louis, MO, 1918 –)
_Erosion_, ca. 1942
Oil on Masonite
Lent by John and Susan Horseman

Born Martyl Suzanne Schweig, the artist later became known to the art world as Martyl. The daughter of the photographer Martin Schweig, Sr. and Aimee Goldstone Schweig, the painter and co-founder of the Ste. Genevieve colony and art school, Martyl was predisposed for a career in the fine arts. When she was only eleven, Martyl won first prize in a drawing competition held by the St. Louis Art Museum, and the following year she placed second. Shortly thereafter, she accompanied her mother to the Provincetown art colony in Massachusetts. In addition to art instruction at Ste. Genevieve, she studied painting at the St. Louis Art Museum, at Washington University, and later at the Fine Arts Center in Colorado Springs.

During the 1930s Martyl became interested, along with various other Ste. Genevieve colony artists, in creating socially-concerned paintings concentrating on the hardships that many people suffered. _Erosion_ portrays the power of nature, which relentlessly carves away at the land irrespective of the houses built on it. Painted in the regionalist style championed by Thomas Hart Benton, Martyl shows the subject dispassionately, portraying she says “the facts broadly and succinctly as they appear, if you think more is needed, she leaves you to supply.”
Martyl (St. Louis, MO, 1918 –)

*Draw Close, Speak Not a Word,* n.d.

Lithograph

Lent by Terrie Liberman and Martin Schweig

This lithograph is based on a 1942 painting by Martyl entitled *Draw Close, Speak Not a Word (Underground).* The addition of the word “underground” probably indicates that this print and the associated painting, relate to the subject of underground (secret) organizations that emerged in opposition to German occupation during World War II. Resistance ranged from disinformation and non-cooperation to sabotage and working with Allied intelligence agents. These resistance movements were sometimes referred to as “the underground.”

The entry of the United States into World War II effectively ended the Ste. Genevieve Art Colony. The Mammy Shaw House, which had housed artists from the colony and served as center for artistic discussions for nearly a decade, became the home of two displaced Belgian nuns for the duration of the war. By 1943, Matthew E. Ziegler, a native of Ste. Genevieve, was the only participant who remained in the small town and former art colony.
Martyl (St. Louis, MO, 1918 –)
Untitled, early 1930s
Acrylic on paper
Lent by Terrie Liberman and Martin Schweig

This small color study depicts a girl, who seems to have fallen asleep while reading. The peaceful subject contrasts with the vibrant and broadly applied strokes, reflective of her study of Abstract Expressionism. Martyl’s incorporation of blocks of rich, vibrant color and her interest in color relationships may reflect the influence of the German abstract expressionist Hans Hofmann. Known for his concern with pictorial structure and color relationships, Hofmann famously stated: “the ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak.”
Martyl (St. Louis, MO, 1918 –)
*Martin Schweig, Jr.*, early 1930s
Lithograph
Lent by Terrie Liberman and Martin Schweig

An expressive portrait of the artist’s brother as a young boy, this lithograph reveals Martyl’s exploration of a variety of artistic trends that would have been encouraged at Ste. Genevieve. The broad cubist planes combine to create a remarkably detailed likeness. Martyl took exceptional care in depicting Martin’s eyes. She learned to study her subject closely from her father: “His photography taught me observation and clarity. Looking, looking, and more looking – that’s what an artist always has to do.”
E. Oscar Thalinger

(1885 – 1965)

Biography:

Native to Alsace Loraine, Thalinger and his family emigrated from Europe to St. Louis when he was fifteen. Realizing their son’s talent, they enrolled him in Washington University School of Fine Art, where he studied drawing, painting and sculpture. Thalinger was a teacher at the Ste. Genevieve Art School in 1934 and 1935 and he served as a director of the art school in 1936 and 1937. After completing his studies at Washington University, he returned to Munich where he studied with the painters Heinmann and Grueber.

Thalinger believed that color was psychological and had impact because of a metal reaction that it caused. He felt that the artist was equipped with emotional sensory experience that allowed him to use the colors of his palette to charge the painting with message and power. The result was a painting that relied not only on composition and design but also on colors that spoke and related to the viewer’s emotional bank.

The second level of Thalinger’s mind revolved around his rather dark view of the world. Throughout his career, death and uncertainty found a place in his art. Overall, his painting reflected a man touched and overwhelmed with the troubles and the weight of history. To Thalinger, the process of painting was an emotional reaction to nature, incubated through the senses.
E. Oscar Thalinger (Alsace-Lorraine, France 1885 – St. Louis, MO, 1965)
*The Old Rock House*, ca. 1932
Oil on canvas
Lent by John and Susan Horseman

A well-known and respected artist in St. Louis by the early 1930s, Thalinger served as a teacher at Ste. Genevieve in 1934 and 1935, and the following two years he served as a director of the colony’s art school. Having grown up in France and studied in Germany, the chance to interact with other well-traveled and studied artists with differing artistic perspectives was undoubtedly stimulating.

This painting seamlessly combines Thalinger’s interest in color theory, affinity for the negative aspects of life, embracement of Modernism, and ability to tell a story. A harmonious arrangement of line, plane, and color, the canvas portrays unemployed workers huddling for protection near an abandoned, once grand residence on Laclede’s Landing in St. Louis. Out-of-work men often waited for day labor under the bridges near the river. To reveal some of the sensations experienced by the three men waiting for work, such as the bitter cold of winter and feeling of insignificance, Thalinger dispensed with irrelevant details. Critics called paintings like this one “glorious symphonies of the outdoors.” Thalinger was a master of portraying both the visible and invisible aspects of weather and place.
E. Oscar Thalinger (Alsace-Lorraine, France, 1885 – St. Louis, MO, 1965)

Farm Landscape in Winter, ca. 1932
Oil on board
Lent by the St. Louis Mercantile Library at the University of Missouri – St. Louis

Born in France, Thalinger moved with his parents to the United States when he was about fifteen years of age and soon began studying art at Washington University’s School of Fine Art. He later continued his art studies in Munich with various German artists, developing his own unique approach to color. According to Thalinger, color affected the viewer psychologically, and both the quality and placement of color worked together to influence the viewer and endow the painting with meaning.

Thalinger’s paintings often seem dark and foreboding, as he embraced and portrayed the darker pessimistic side of life. Farm Landscape in Winter shows a cold Midwestern day. Leafless trees flank a farmstead cloaked in darkness. Barren earth engulfs most of the foreground. The earthy brown and orange colors as well as the textures of the soil and dormant vegetation are to be found in the winter Missouri landscape. While a sense of loneliness permeates the winter setting, the sky tells another story, livening up the dreary scene. Delicate fan-shaped clouds of white and grey, not unlike those sometimes found in the winter, unfold across the sunless sky. The patches of green foretell the impending arrival of spring. This unusual landscape comes from the inspired imagination of an artist who, while representing moments in time, embedded meaning, feelings, and stories into his paintings.
Joseph Paul Vorst

(1897 – 1947)

Biography:

Vorst was born in Essen, Germany. He served in World War I, where he suffered an injury that caused him to walk with a limp the remainder of his life. After the war, he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin. In 1929, he attended the prestigious German National Academy in Berlin where he studied with the famous German Impressionists Maz Slevogt and Max Liebermann. Vorst enjoyed a successful career in Germany before his immigration to the United States.

Vorst chose to come to Ste. Genevieve partially because he had distant relatives living there at the time.

At the age of fifty, he died unexpectedly of a cerebral hemorrhage.
Joseph Paul Vorst (Essen, Germany, 1897 – St. Louis, MO, 1947)
Sharecroppers’ Revolt, ca. 1940
Oil on panel
Lent by John and Susan Horseman

Before coming to the United States in 1930, Vorst studied at the German National Academy in Berlin with the German Expressionists Max Liebermann and Max Slevogt. Beginning his career during the troubled Weimar Republic in the 1920s, he showed an interest in the current populist movement that focused on rural values.

Vorst liked to paint the “Missouri Scene,” because “it reflects the true American life unspoiled and untainted by ruthless modernization. I like to paint the people of the Missouri Ozark region as they live their everyday lives toiling and striving for little more than the bare necessities of life.”

Sharecroppers’ Revolt shows the plight of jobless tenant farmers, many of whom were African Americans, who lived in poverty even when they were employed. Evicted from their housing, they must now live in a makeshift house made of quilts during the cold of winter.

Vorst was deeply influenced by the art of Thomas Hart Benton and the two men met on several occasions. When speaking about American regional artists, Vorst once remarked that “There’s just Benton.”
Mathew Ziegler

(1897 – 1981)

Biography:

Born on February 4, 1897 in Ste. Genevieve, Missouri, Ziegler was a farmer, inventor, and businessman, but essentially a painter. He never married and had no children. He grew up on his family’s farm. His aunt, Sister Cassiana Marie of the Order of St. Joseph, an accomplished Regionalist painter, encouraged him to pursue art. He studied at the Art institute of Chicago and was a member of the St. Louis Artist Guild. Like many Ste. Genevieve Colony members, he was a WPA (Works Progress Administration) artist. In 1932, Zeigler was introduced to Bernard Peters by Frank Nuderscher. Ziegler was instrumental in the formation of the Ste. Genevieve Art Colony because the school was held largely in and around his house in town, known as the Mammy Shaw House. Ziegler and his aunt were the only local members of the Ste. Genevieve colony.

*Untitled*, n.d.
Oil on canvas
Lent by John and Susan Horseman

While a farmer, inventor, photographer, and businessman, Ziegler saw himself foremost as a painter. During the 1930s he won several awards and honors and exhibited nationally and internationally. While other artists came to Ste. Genevieve for peaceful beauty, Ziegler was a native, who welcomed the artistic and intellectual vitality that the visiting artists brought.

Ziegler’s art reflects his studies and the major modern artistic movements that prevailed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This painting with its large fields of color and painterly strokes reveals the influence of Abstract Expressionism, which Ziegler turned to beginning in the 1950s.