



Ohio Arts Council's
RIFFE GALLERY

THE STATE
of the ARTS

A CELEBRATION OF OHIO'S
RICH ARTISTIC HERITAGE

MARCH 3 – MAY 4, 2003

Curated by James M. Keny and Nannette V. Maciejunes

THE STATE *of the* ARTS

The State of Ohio has produced artists and arts institutions of international stature — a fact that is not widely known. Ohio's 200-year history has profoundly influenced American and international art and continues to do so today. As part of the commemoration of Ohio's Bicentennial, *The State of the Arts: A Celebration of Ohio's Rich Artistic Heritage* explores Ohio's prominent role as a catalyst for the visual arts within America and abroad.

Included within the exhibition are outstanding examples of the various modes of American art championed by Ohio artists including landscapes inspired by the Hudson River School, folk portraiture, 19TH century trompe l'oeil still lifes, academic Boston School paintings, Impressionist and Post-Impressionist work, and 20TH century examples of Urban Realism, Regionalism, Social Realism and Modernism. It is noteworthy that the history of American art could not have been written without the brilliant contributions of such seminal figures from Ohio as Worthington Whittredge, Frank Duveneck, Robert Henri, George Bellows and Charles Burchfield. A select number of decorative objects and sculpture enhance the texture of the show and highlight the depth of Ohio's contribution to the arts.

The State of the Arts is organized around chronological themes offering audiences the opportunity to walk through Ohio's cultural past. These themes include settlement and early statehood (1788-1876), the industrial boom (1876-1914) and industrial maturity (1914-1945).

Some of the early work in the exhibition was created by itinerant portrait painters. In the first few decades of Ohio's statehood many artists traveled from city to city seeking portrait commissions from wealthy families and giving art lessons to aspiring artists. One of Ohio's first successful itinerant painters was Jarvis Fray

Hanks (1799-1853). Hanks is represented in the exhibition with *Death Scene* (c.1840).

In addition to painting portraits, several itinerant artists made social and political commentaries through their art as exemplified in David Gilmour Blythe's (1815-1865) *Street Urchins* (1856-1858). The painting depicts a group of homeless children, smoking cigars and creating mischief, a common fixture in the urban centers of the time. The plight of the immigrant poor — specifically street children — was a regular subject for Blythe who used his art to address social issues.

Many 19TH century artists were also inspired by the Ohio landscape, creating visual records of the state in its early years. Charles Fontayne and William Southgate Porter documented the Cincinnati waterfront in a dramatic series of eight whole-plate daguerreotypes. The artists installed their camera on the roof of a building across the Ohio River in Covington, Kentucky and captured a panorama of Cincinnati's growing skyline. The 1848 work, presented in this exhibition as a

Elizabeth Nourse, *La Petite Soeur*, 1902, oil on canvas, Collection of Florence and Ron Koetters



Charles Burchfield, *Sultry Moon*, 1959, watercolor, Private Collection

reproduction, is viewed as one of the most successful sets of daguerreotypes of its kind.

Ohio artists living and working abroad in such major European art centers as Rome, Paris, Munich and Florence also had great influence on their contemporaries both overseas and in America. In the late 19TH century, Cincinnati-born Frank Duveneck became a prominent figure in American art, first as an outstanding student in Munich and then as a charismatic teacher at the Royal Academy and elsewhere. In Cincinnati and overseas, Duveneck mentored a group of aspiring artists, including John Twachtman (1853-1902), Robert Blum (1857-1903), Joseph Decamp (1858-1923) and Theodore Wendel (1859-1932). The group became known as the "Duveneck Boys" and followed Duveneck to Munich, Florence and Venice. Some of these artists then became teachers and carried the Duveneck influence on to subsequent generations.

James Roy Hopkins (1877-1969), born in Irwin, Ohio and educated at the Columbus Art School and the Art Academy of Cincinnati, relocated to Paris in the early 20TH Century. Hopkins soon became recognized as a fine Impressionist painter. After returning to the United States, he departed from his exclusively Impressionist style and created an important series of representational paintings depicting rural Appalachian life. These paintings are among the earliest examples of Regionalist painting in 20TH century America and include *Mountain Preacher* (1917), which is featured in the exhibition.

Within a few short years after his arrival Columbus native George Bellows (1882-1925) galvanized New York's art world. After enrolling at the New York School of Art in 1904, Bellows immediately caught the attention of Robert Henri, the leader of the Ashcan School. Under his guidance he created realistic and dramatic depictions of life in New York City at the turn of the century that are some of the most powerful paintings in the history of American art. After only five years in New York, Bellows sold a painting to Philadelphia's prestigious Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and by 1911 a patron had purchased his work *Up the Hudson* for the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In the first decades of the 20TH century, Henry Keller (1869-1949), Charles Burchfield (1893-1967) William Sommer (1876-1949), Raphael Gleitsmann (1910-1995) and other artists associated with the Cleveland School of Art experimented with avante garde concepts developed in Europe including Art Nouveau and German Expressionism. These northeastern Ohio artists abandoned traditional concepts of beauty, and pursued instead more imaginative and emotive forms of aesthetic expression. As such, they were strong advocates of Modernism and became some of the preeminent American practitioners of this aesthetic.

Ohio's distinctively rich resource base and burgeoning population supported a cultural infrastructure that enabled many Ohio-born or educated artists to achieve a strong presence in the national and international art scene. By presenting this impressive collection of work we hope to stimulate ongoing interest and pride in Ohio — a state for the arts.

The State of the Arts was assembled from distinguished public and private collections throughout the state. This exhibition would not be possible without the lenders' generous contributions.

EXCERPTED FROM AN ESSAY BY JAMES M. KENY

Additional research by Jennifer Poellot, Ohio Arts Council Communications Specialist

EVENTS

THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 2003 • 7 PM
Free! Lecture and Tour with James M. Keny and Nannette V. Maciejunes

Co-curators James M. Keny and Nannette V. Maciejunes will lead a tour of the exhibition while discussing Ohio's prominent role as a catalyst for the visual arts in America and abroad. Take this opportunity to learn about Ohio's rich artistic heritage during the state's bicentennial celebration.

SUNDAY, APRIL 6, 2003 • 2 & 3:30 PM
Free! Family Day

Go back in time to meet Nathan B. Kelly who, in 1854, became architect of Ohio's Statehouse. Kelly, portrayed by actor Mark Passerello, will offer guided tours of the Riffe Gallery's exhibition and the art of the Ohio Statehouse, one of the nation's premier examples of Greek Revival architecture. Children of all ages and their parents can enjoy a one hour tour at 2 p.m. or 3:30 p.m. Tours originate at the Riffe Gallery.

Presented by Ohio Arts Council's Riffe Gallery and The Statehouse Education & Visitors Center.

ADDITIONAL VENUES

Fitton Center for Creative Arts

Hamilton, OH
June 1 – July 26, 2003

Springfield Museum of Art

Springfield, OH
August 16 – October 5, 2003

Southern Ohio Museum and Cultural Center

Portsmouth, OH
October 20 – December 31, 2003

The Butler Institute of American Art

Youngstown, OH
January 11 – March 14, 2004

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The Ohio Arts Council is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally and economically.

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OHIO ARTS COUNCIL
727 East Main Street
Columbus, OH 43205-1796
614/466-2613
For TTY/TDD use Ohio Relay Service
1-800-750-0750
www.oac.state.oh.us



The Riffe Gallery, operated by the Ohio Arts Council, showcases the work of Ohio's artists and curators, exhibitions produced by the Ohio Arts Council's International Program and the collections of the region's museums and galleries. The Riffe Gallery's Education Program seeks to increase public appreciation and understanding of those exhibitions.

RIFFE GALLERY
Vern Riffe Center for
Government and the Arts
77 South High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215
614/644-9624



GALLERY HOURS

Tu 10-4
W, Th, F 10-8
Sat 12-8
Sun 12-4

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