



Office of Public Affairs

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**Smithsonian American Art Museum’s Renwick Gallery Presents
New Look at Grant Wood’s Roots in Decorative Arts
Exhibition Includes Iconic Paintings of American Life**

“Grant Wood’s Studio: Birthplace of ‘American Gothic’” opens at the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum on March 10 and runs through July 16, 2006. The exhibition presents for the first time Grant Wood’s decorative art and design work within the larger context of his paintings, drawings and prints.

“Grant Wood’s Studio: Birthplace of ‘American Gothic’” is presented under the Honorary Patronage of Iowa Congressman Jim Leach and Deba Leach. The presentation at the Renwick Gallery is the only stop outside of Iowa for the exhibition which was organized by the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art.

“‘Grant Wood’s Studio’ transforms our understanding of a beloved American painter,” said Elizabeth Broun, The Margaret and Terry Stent Director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. “The Smithsonian American Art Museum is pleased to bring this exhibition to Washington and to support fresh ideas that show the connections between crafts and the rest of American art.”

The exhibition features approximately 160 works, including Wood’s early decorative artworks that led to iconic paintings, such as “Stone City, Iowa,” “Midnight Ride of Paul Revere” and “Daughters of Revolution,” that rarely travel. Also included in the exhibition are photographs of Wood’s studio/home and artifacts that served as props for his paintings. These help to recreate the studio in the exhibition and illustrate the importance of his studio as a creative laboratory for his work.

“Grant Wood’s Studio: Birthplace of ‘American Gothic’” coincides with the renovation of the artist’s historic studio/home in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, known as “5 Turner Alley.” Wood converted the loft of a turn-of-the-century carriage house, given to him in 1924 by influential patron David Turner, into a showcase for his decorative arts work and a backdrop for some of his most famous paintings. Wood designed and made many of the utilitarian and decorative elements, including the metal and plaster work and the furniture inspired by his travels to Europe and study of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

Wood (1891–1942) established his national reputation as a Regionalist artist in the 1930s with paintings that were created in the studio where he lived and worked from 1924 to 1935. Many of the ideas and themes that appear in Wood’s best-known paintings from this period, including his use of humor, can be seen in the architectural alterations and decorative elements Wood incorporated in his studio and other decorating commissions. For instance, he designed a “Corn Room” dining room for a hotel, complete with corn cob light fixtures, and he modified a coffin lid for his studio door, which included a wrought-iron pointer on the glass window on which he inscribed his possible whereabouts: “Is In, Out Of Town, Is Taking A Bath, Is Having A Party, Is At....”

“The importance of Wood’s initial training in craft and design sheds new light on his development as a painter,” said Jane Milosch, curator of the exhibition and curator at the Renwick Gallery. “His 5 Turner Alley studio was his first mature work of art, a carefully crafted and staged environment that suited his own artistic vision and ultimately led the way for his painting.”

Credit

“Grant Wood’s Studio: Birthplace of ‘American Gothic’” was organized by the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art with major support from the Archer Daniels Midland Company, The Henry Luce Foundation, and Hometown Perry, Iowa.

The Renwick Gallery presentation is funded with lead sponsorship by Archer Daniels Midland Company. Additional support is provided by the James Renwick Alliance; the following Friends of Grant Wood: Elizabeth Ballantine and Paul Leavitt, Judah Best, Tania G. and Thomas M. Evans, Jr., The Figge Foundation, James P. Hayes, William I. Koch, Randy Lengeling, Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc., Louise and Stanley Resor, Rockwell Collins, Inc., Clarice Smith, Stamats Communications, Inc., Eva Stark, Candace Wong; and other

generous contributors.

Book

The accompanying book, published by Prestel Publishing, contains essays by Jane Milosch; Wanda M. Corn, Robert and Ruth Halperin Professor in art history at Stanford University; James M. Dennis, professor emeritus of art history at the University of Wisconsin, Madison; and Joni Kinsey, associate professor of art history at the University of Iowa, Iowa City. The book will be available at the Renwick Gallery store for \$40 (\$32 for museum members).

Free Public Programs

A schedule of public programs, including lectures, artist demonstrations and performances is available in a brochure. Call (202) 233-0667 to request a copy by mail or visit the museum's online program calendar at americanart.si.edu.

The Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum is dedicated to exhibiting American crafts and decorative arts from the 19th to the 21st century. It is located on Pennsylvania Avenue at 17th Street N.W., near the Farragut North (Red line) and Farragut West (Blue and Orange lines) Metrorail stations. Museum hours are from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily. Admission is free. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 357-1729 (TTY). Recorded information: (202) 275-1500. Please visit the museum's award-winning Web site at americanart.si.edu.

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Note to Editors: Selected high-resolution images for publicity only may be downloaded from <ftp://saam-press@ftp.si.edu>. Call (202) 275-1594 for the password. Additional information about the exhibition will be available from the museum's online press room.