



## Artscene. Vol. 14, No. 3 Spring 1998

Elvehjem Museum of Art

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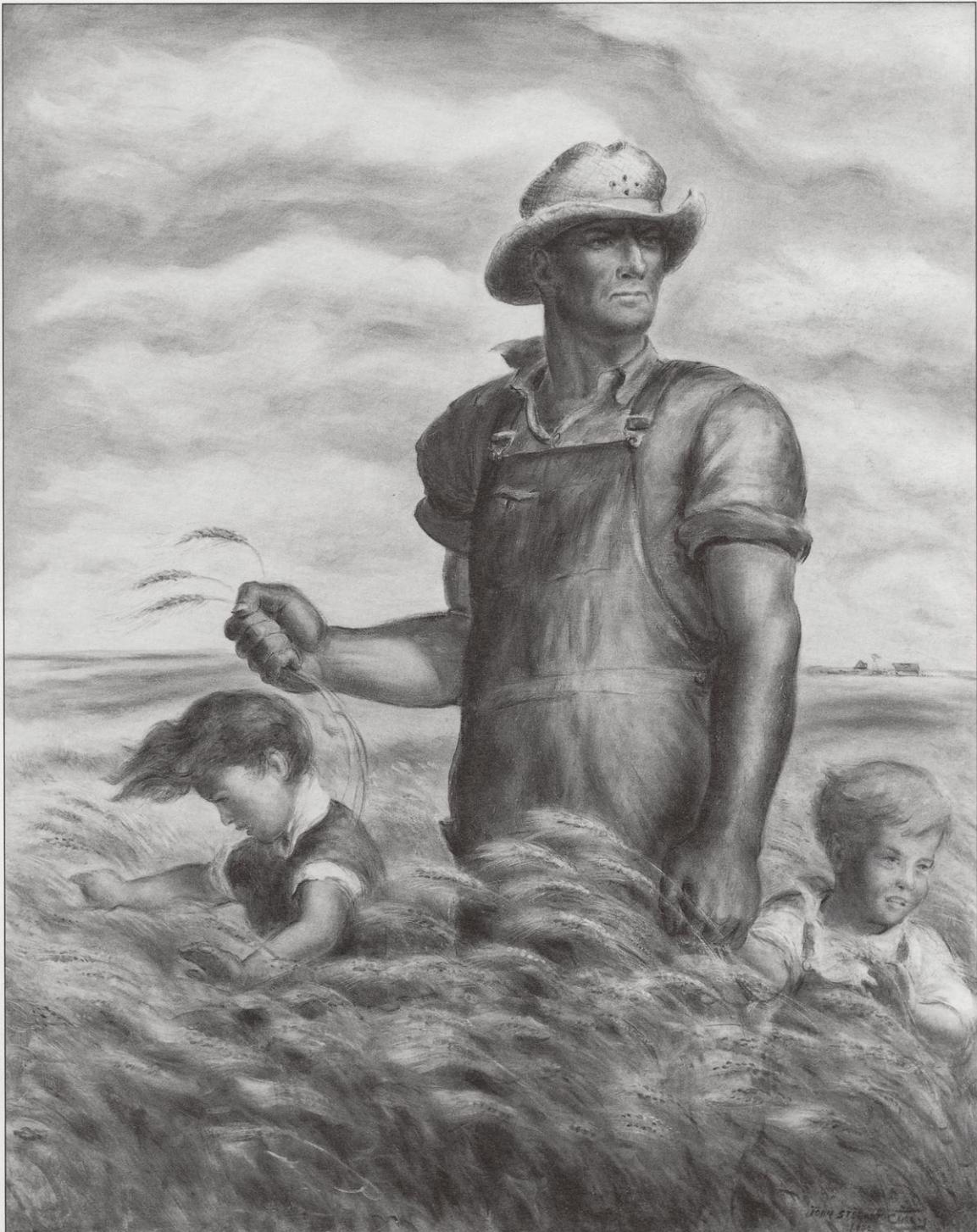
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ELVEHJEM  
LVM

# ARTSCENE

Elvehjem Museum of Art

University of Wisconsin-Madison



SPRING

1998

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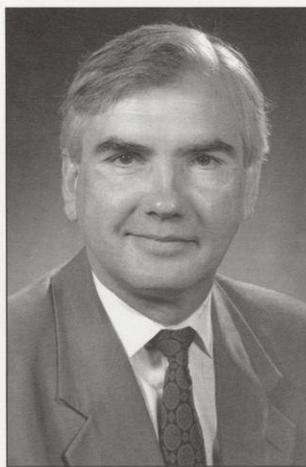
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**Cover:**

*John Steuart Curry (American, 1897-1946), Our Good Earth, ca. 1940-41, UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences*



## From the Director

*John Steuart Curry: Inventing the Middle West*, an exhibition in the making since 1992, opens to the public on March 7. It brings together, from public and private collections around the country, a selection of Curry's finest work, including many paintings which have not been on public view for more than twenty-five years. The Elvehjem exhibition is accompanied by a major catalogue copublished with Hudson Hills Press containing essays by leading scholars on American art, history, and culture. Following its premier in Madison, the exhibition, undoubtedly the most important ever originated by the Elvehjem, will travel to the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum of San Francisco and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Missouri.

Curry was invited to the University of Wisconsin in 1936 to be artist-in-residence, an experiment not only at the UW but in the entire nation. Surprising is the fact that this unique position, funded through the generosity of the Brittingham family, was created not by the Department of Art as one might expect, but by the College of Agriculture. Curry was given a studio and encouraged to paint and be himself. He taught no formal classes during his ten-year stay in Wisconsin. He was simply to be himself practicing his art in a community where normally there were no artists. He was the perfect choice for this experiment; his art, his ideas, and his personality were such that he profoundly influenced many in rural Wisconsin not only to an interest in the visual arts but also to its practice.

John Steuart Curry's residency at the College of Agriculture came under the broad aegis of the Wisconsin Idea, a progressive plan first formulated in the 1920s to promote the economic, social, intellectual, and moral development of the people of the state. The boundaries of the university were and are the boundaries of the state. The Wisconsin Idea is still at the heart of the university's mission. And it can be said that it was in the spirit of the Wisconsin Idea that the Elvehjem Museum of Art opened to the public in 1970. Like the experiment that brought Curry and his art to Wisconsin, our mission is to make the visual arts available and to be an educational resource to all the citizens of our community.

It was Patricia Junker's intellectual curiosity, while here as curator of collections between 1990 and 1992, about this unusual experiment and about the Wisconsin Idea that gave birth to the John Steuart Curry exhibition. She is truly a remarkable scholar whose dedication to this project persevered even after her departure for San Francisco where she is now associate curator of American art at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

Another visionary individual who is responsible for the John Steuart Curry exhibition is Walter Frautschi. Mr. Frautschi who passed away on December 2, 1997 at the age of 95, knew John Steuart Curry well and believed in the man and his art. On more than one occasion he proudly showed me Curry's painting of the Frautschi family riding on horseback in a southwestern mountain range. Walter and Dorothy Frautschi generously gave the funds necessary to bring together a group of experts from around the United States to plan the exhibition and the accompanying catalogue, even before the exhibition was a sure thing. Mr. Frautschi was willing to take a chance and act on his belief in the artist and in the Elvehjem. We will miss him.

Russell Panczenko

# John Steuart Curry : Life and Art Reexamined



John Steuart Curry, *Tornado*, 1929, oil on canvas, 46 1/2 x 60 1/2 in. Muskegon Museum of Art

The Elvehjem presents *John Steuart Curry: Inventing the Middle West* from 7 March through 17 May 1998. This traveling exhibition revives the reputation of John Steuart Curry (American, 1897–1946), one of the most important and controversial artists of the first half of the twentieth century. It presents the first serious critical evaluation in over fifty years of Curry's art and its place in American art history.

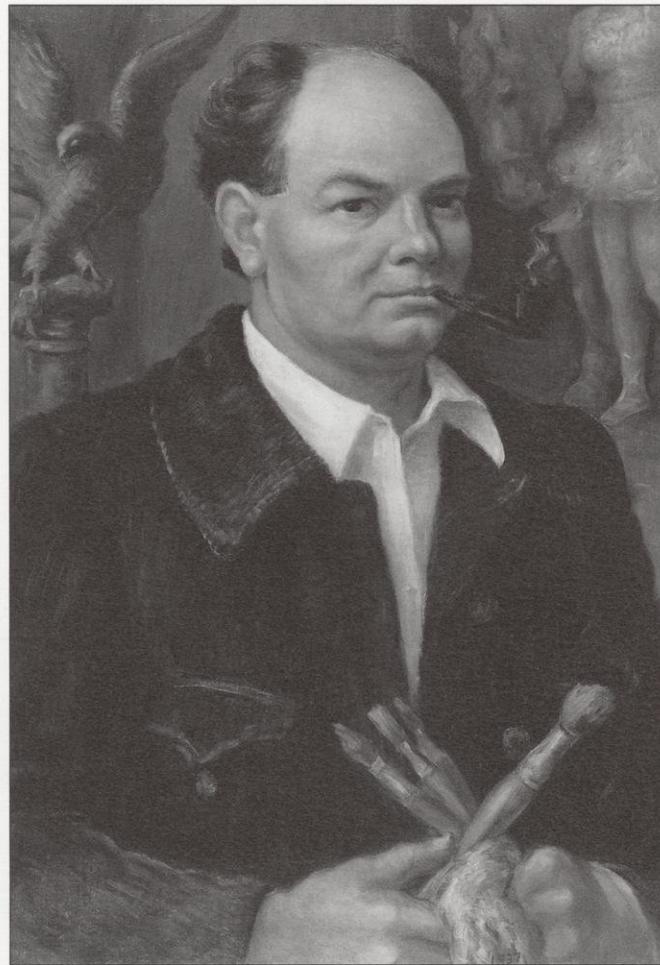
Curry has a special place in the hearts of Wisconsin citizens. He served as artist-in-residence in the College of Agriculture at the University of Wisconsin from 1936 to 1946, where he was intensely involved in the rural arts program. Curry's innate sympathy with the lives of rural Americans showed in his dealings with budding rural artists who came for advice as well as in his paintings of midwestern scenes and people. His mural in the UW Law School library of *The Freeing of the Slaves* (1942) has recently been conserved to show the brilliant colors and composition. He painted that mural along with others in the UW–Madison

Biochemistry Building, *The Social Benefits of Biochemical Research* (1941–43), while he was in residence here, even while he worked on such ultimate masterpieces as *Wisconsin Landscape* (1942), now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Curry evolved from magazine illustrator to nationally acclaimed champion of America's rural and small-town depression-era realities, myths, values, and ideals. His greatest successes were in the 1930s as he attempted to create a purely American art free of European modernist influences. He painted farm life in his native Kansas, the circus, and the American scene in general. Curry's art especially emphasized romanticism, formal conservatism, devotion to rural and historical themes, commitment to social justice, and passionate belief in the inevitability of human progress. His ambitions, not always realized, were larger than life. This exhibition examines their impact upon his times and the extent to which his pictorial representations of those ambitions remain relevant and of interest to us today.

The exhibition includes forty-seven drawings and paintings by Curry from 1927 through 1941 on loan from museums and private collections nationwide, including *John Brown and Wisconsin Landscape* (Metropolitan Museum of Art), *Tornado* (Muskegon Museum of Art), *Baptism in Kansas* and *The Stockman* (Whitney Museum of American Art), *Line Storm* (private collection), *Manhunt* (Joslyn Art Museum), *Circus Elephants* (National Gallery of Art), several studies for his important murals for Washington government buildings *Law versus Mob Rule*, *Westward Movement: Justice of the Plains*, *The Freeing of the Slaves*, and self-portraits from 1927–29, 1935, and 1937.

John Steuart Curry was born on a farm near Dunavant, Kansas in 1897. Determined to be an artist rather than a farmer, he left high school at the end of his junior year to enroll first in the Kansas City Art Institute and then the Art Institute of Chicago. He studied in New Jersey with the well-known illustrator Harvey Dunn and by 1921 was illustrating stories for *Boy's Life*, *Country Gentleman*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*. In 1926 he traveled to Paris to study with the Russian academician Basil Schoukaieff and absorb the lessons of such Old Masters as Rembrandt and Rubens at the Louvre. His technical skills thus honed, he returned to his country increasingly determined to produce a distinctly American art. His critically acclaimed 1928 painting *Baptism in Kansas* prompted Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney to grant Curry a stipend that allowed him to paint free from financial worries for one year and that supported his travel back to his homeland of Kansas. Taking advantage of Whitney patronage, Curry completed several of his most important paintings within a year, including *Tornado*. Such purchases by the Whitney Museum of American Art of *Baptism in Kansas* and the Metropolitan Museum of Art of *Spring Shower* boosted both his confidence and his renown, and they established him ever after as "Curry of Kansas," as a painter first and foremost of the midwest scene.



John Steuart Curry, *Self Portrait*, 1937, oil and tempera on canvas, 30 x 24 in. The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

In the Depression year of 1932 Curry spent two months touring with the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, producing such paintings as *Circus Elephants* and *The Runway*. He completed two murals for public schools in Connecticut, where he then lived with his wife. In 1935 Curry was chosen to paint a mural for the new U.S. Department of Justice building in the nation's capital. The following year he was appointed artist-in-residence at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, where he remained for the next ten years. He executed murals for the biochemistry building and the law school at the university and for the Kansas Statehouse in Topeka. During the decade of the 1930s Curry gained fame as a painter and as one of the Big Three Regionalists with Thomas Hart Benton and Grant Wood. In

August 1946, while preparing

for a retrospective exhibition at the Milwaukee Art Institute, Curry suffered a heart attack and died.

■ On Saturday, March 21 the public is invited to hear curator Patricia Junker discuss the evolution of this project at 5:30 p.m. followed by a reception with music by The Bluegrass Orphans, refreshments, and cash bar. The talk and the reception are free to members of the Elvehjem Museum of Art and \$5.00 to the nonmember public.

■ The Elvehjem Museum of Art and Patricia Junker, associate curator of American art at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, organized this exhibition, which will travel to the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco from June 13 to August 30, 1998 and to the Nelson Atkins Museum in Kansas City from October 11, 1998 to January 3, 1999.

■ The Elvehjem is most grateful to the generous funders, named on page 14, who made this exhibition possible.

# Frans Post's Village of Olinda, Brazil (1660)

One of the most important Old Master paintings in the Elvehjem collection, the *Village of Olinda* by Frans Post (1612–1680), will be the focus of an exhibition in Mayer Gallery from April 11 through May 31. By presenting this one painting in the context of additional examples of Post's art, contemporary documents, illustrated books, and atlases, the exhibition provides a background to the Dutch exploration of the New World, of which the *Village of Olinda* is a direct product. Post's landscape expresses the significance that Brazil held for the Dutch Republic in visual terms. The purpose of the exhibition is to make clear what Post's painting meant for his seventeenth-century Dutch audience.

From 1637 to 1644, Post served as a painter in the entourage of the governor of the Dutch colony in northeast Brazil. The *Village of Olinda* is one of the many paintings that Post did of the new world after his return to Haarlem. By displaying additional images and contemporary documents, the exhibition illuminates the major motifs in the Elvehjem painting: the city of Olinda itself; the Brazilian flora and fauna; and the African slaves. One of the most popular themes in Post's Haarlem paintings is the ruins of the city of Olinda (which was destroyed during the Dutch occupation). The exhibition also includes Post's panoramic engraving of Olinda from a 1647 volume lauding Johan Maurits's governorship. A delightful aspect of the *Village of Olinda* is Post's portrayal of exotic plants and animals. Willem Piso, another member of Johan Maurits's entourage, gives a scientific account of the natural history of Brazil in his *Historia Naturalis Brasiliæ* (Amsterdam: 1648). Piso's work and the exotica portrayed in the *Village of Olinda* both respond to the Dutch fascination with plants and animals discovered in the New World. Post's depiction of the dancing African slaves in the *Village of Olinda* contrasts starkly with the reality of their life in Brazil. Post's illustration for the map of Pernambuco in the *Atlas Major* published by Joan Blaeu (Amsterdam: 1662) shows Africans performed the grueling labor necessary for the production of sugar—the colony's most profitable export.



Frans Janz. Post (Dutch, 1612–1680), *Village of Olinda, Brazil*, ca. 1660, oil on canvas, 32 1/2 x 51 1/2 in.  
Gift of Charles R. Crane, 13.1.16

## Regionalist Prints: Benton, Curry, Wood

In view through March 29 is an exhibition of prints by a group called "The Big Three" by such mass media as *Time* and *Life* in whose pages they were hailed as celebrities, as true AMERICAN artists. All of the works shown in Meyer Gallery are drawn from the Elvehjem's print collection.

During the 1930s and 1940s many artists created imagery intended to express a new, particularly American aesthetic. Thomas Hart Benton, John Steuart Curry, and Grant Wood were widely recognized for their paintings, murals, and prints that celebrated the American rural landscape, people, and institutions. This common interest in portraying America from an agrarian point of view links them together as "regionalist" artists. This democratic approach to art, celebrating the imagery of the American countryside as well as being accessible to the man-on-the-street, is another similarity in their careers.

Thomas Hart Benton's prints, like his paintings, are often composed with strong, rhythmic lines. These landscape elements often seem as animated as the human characters in his works; the land and sky appear to be mighty forces in constant

*continued on page 13*

# Circus Posters

From April 18 through May 24 the Elvehjem will display posters from the Circus World Museum in the Whyte Gallery, across from the Museum Shop. Circus posters constitute one of the most ubiquitous and attractive forms of lithography from around the turn of the century. Always eager to draw a larger audience, circuses produced more and more sumptuous posters to convey the color, size, and excitement of their shows. We have selected twelve posters from the collection of the Circus World Museum, dating from the 1870s through the 1930s, to show the increasing sophistication of these images.

The circus posters are related to the work of John Steuart Curry. His debut exhibition with the Whitney Studio Galleries in New York in 1929 was in *The Circus in Paint*, set in a tent with sawdust floor and circus props. Fascinated with circus performers, he spent two months traveling with the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey circus in the spring of 1932, where he drew and got to know some of the circus performers. He explained to a reporter in 1933: "The circus is one of the most colorful phases of the American scene. I am immensely drawn by the excitement and movement." Much more common in Curry's time, the circus posters shown at the Elvehjem thus represent the imagery with which Curry's audience would have been familiar when they approached his quite different interpretation of this traveling entertainment.

The posters are part of the fascinating collection of circus ephemera held at the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin. This important collection is kept on the site of the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey's Circus's former winter quarters and is open all year around. The summer season's live shows of circus acts commence at Circus World on May 9th. For more information on the circus at the Elvehjem, see article on *Gala* on page 14.



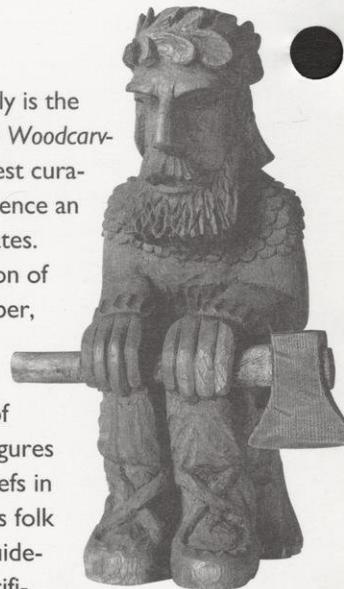
Downie Brothers Circus poster, ca. 1920, lithograph, 29 x 42 in. Courtesy Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisc.

# Sacred Wood

Opening 30 May and remaining on view through 12 July is the exhibition *Sacred Wood: The Contemporary Lithuanian Woodcarving Revival Revival*. Organized for the Elvehjem by guest curator Ruta Saliklis, the exhibition will enable audiences to experience an exciting form of folk art that is barely known in the United States. These fifty works, on loan for the exhibition from the collection of the Lithuanian Museum of Art in Lemont, Illinois, feature somber, humorous, expressive, and bold sculptures by ten artists on a variety of sacred and secular themes.

Woodcarvings are wrought with meaning for the people of Lithuania. Roughly carved in a blocky, manneristic style, the figures reflect the syncretization of pagan and Christian religious beliefs in Lithuania. These traditional woodcarving is usually classified as folk sculpture, because the carvers work within the established guidelines of the community, but each artist has an individual, identifiable style. Once known as *dievdirbiai* (god-makers), woodcarvers continue to enjoy an elevated social status by virtue of their art.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Elvehjem is publishing a catalogue, for sale in the the Museum Shop, providing up-to-date research on the subject by both American and Lithuanian scholars. This will be the first English-language documentation of these significant works. Ruta Saliklis has provided an essay on the role of folk art in Lithuanian national rebirth. Authors contributing catalogue essays include Beverly Gordon, textile and folk art expert at UW-Madison; Milda Richardson, art historian at Boston University; and Ale Pociulaitis, ethnographer and research associate at the Lithuanian Folk Culture Center in Vilnius, Lithuania.



Ipolitas Uzkurlys (Lithuanian, b. 1926), Woodcutter, 1981, 22 x 14 x 8 in. Photo by Joe Ziolkowski, Chicago. On loan from the Lithuanian Museum of Art, Lemont, Illinois

# M A R C H

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 12:30 p.m. Concert, Gallery III, Pro Arte Quartet 2 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibition, 40 minutes, by docent Sybil Robinson	2 Galleries Closed	3	4	5 12:30 p.m. Tour, 40 minutes, by docent Jane Pizer	6	7 <b>EXHIBITION OPENS</b> <i>John Steuart Curry: Inventing the Middle West</i>
8 12:30 p.m. Concert, Gallery III, Lawrence Chamber Players, Appleton 2 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibition, 40 minutes, by docent Susan Stanek	9 Galleries Closed	10	11	12 GALLERIES AND MUSEUM SHOP OPEN TILL 7 p.m. 12:30 p.m. Tour, 40 minutes, by docent Marion Stemmler	13	14
15 12:30 p.m. Concert, Gallery III, Flutes Quatre 2 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibitions, 40 minutes, by docent Beverly Calhoun	16 Galleries Closed	17 4 p.m. Tour of <i>John Steuart Curry</i> , 40 minutes, by docent Jane Eisner	18	19 GALLERIES AND MUSEUM SHOP OPEN TILL 7 p.m. 12:30 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibitions, 40 minutes, by docent Sallie Olsson	20 Tandem Press Print Conference, L160	21 Tandem Press Print Conference, L160 5:30 p.m. Curator P. Junker talks 6-8 p.m. Reception for Curry exhibition \$5 charge for non-members for both events)
22 12:30 p.m. Concert, Gallery III, Duo Coriolan, Milwaukee 2 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibition, 40 minutes, by docent Sylvia Hultkrans 2:30 p.m. Lecture Patricia Junker, "John Steuart Curry and Wisconsin," L140	23 Galleries Closed	24 4 p.m. Lecture, "How King Tut Changed American Museums," Emily Teeter, L140 4 p.m. Tour of <i>John Steuart Curry</i> , 40 minutes, by docent Jane Pizer	25 Museum Closed	26 GALLERIES AND MUSEUM SHOP OPEN TILL 7 p.m. 12:30 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibitions, 40 minutes, by docent Anne Kramer 5:30 p.m. Lecture, Charles Eldredge, "John Steuart Curry's Kansas," 5:30, L140 7 p.m. Film, <i>Wild Boys of the Road</i> , dir. William Wellman, L160		
29 12:30 p.m. Concert, Gallery III, Uri Vardi, cello, and friends 2 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibition, 40 minutes, by docent 2:30 p.m. Lecture, Leslee Nelson, "John Steuart Curry's Legacy: The Wisconsin Regional Arts Program Today," L140	30 Exhibition CLOSED: Regionalist Prints Galleries Closed	31 4 p.m. Tour of <i>John Steuart Curry</i> , 40 minutes, by a docent				

*John Steuart Curry, Prize Stallions, 1938, from exhibition Regionalist Prints*

# APRIL

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
							
		<i>John Steuart Curry, Baptism in Kansas, 1928, oil on canvas, 40 x 50 in. Whitney Museum of American Art</i>					
5							
12:30 p.m. Concert, Gallery III, Marc Fink, oboe, and friends 2 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibition, 40 minutes, by docent Jane Eisner							
	6	Galleries Closed	7	4 p.m. Tour of <i>John Steuart Curry</i> , 40 minutes, by docent Jane Eisner	8		
12	13	Galleries Closed	14	4 p.m. Tour of <i>John Steuart Curry</i> , 40 minutes, by a docent	15		
12:30 p.m. Concert, Gallery III, Anthony Padilla, piano, Appleton 2 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibition, 40 minutes, by docent Susan Stanek							
19	20	Galleries Closed	21	4 p.m. Tour of <i>John Steuart Curry</i> , 40 minutes, by a docent	22		
12:30 p.m. Concert, Wausau Conservatory Faculty 2 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibition, 40 minutes, by a docent 2:30 p.m. "Grant Wood Up Close" family program with Dugglby book signing in Museum Shop							
26	27	Galleries Closed	28	4 p.m. Tour of <i>John Steuart Curry</i> , 40 minutes, by a docent Susan Stanek	29		
12:30 p.m. Concert, Gallery III, Winner of Neale-Silva Young Artist Competition 2 p.m. Family Day—circus performers, slide show, tour							
2				2	3	4	
				GALLERIES AND MUSEUM SHOP OPEN TILL 7 p.m. 12:30 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibitions, 40 minutes, by docent 5:30 p.m. Lecture, James Dennis, "Curry's Images of Women," L140 7 p.m. Film, <i>Our Daily Bread</i> , dir. King Vidor, L160		EXHIBITION OPENS <i>Frans Post's Village of Olinda</i>	
10				9	10	11	
				GALLERIES AND MUSEUM SHOP OPEN TILL 7 p.m. 12:30 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibitions, 40 minutes, by docent Jane Eisner 7 p.m. Film, <i>Black Fury</i> , dir. Michael Curtiz, L160			
17				16	17	18	
				GALLERIES AND MUSEUM SHOP OPEN TILL 7 p.m. 12:30 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibitions, 40 minutes, by docent 4 p.m. Lecture, Leslie Blacksberg, "Frans Post" 7 p.m. Free films in L160, see p. 11		EXHIBITION OPENS <i>Posters from the Circus World Museum</i>	
23				23	24	25	
				GALLERIES AND MUSEUM SHOP OPEN TILL 7 p.m. 12:30 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibitions, 40 minutes, by docent		GALA	
30				30			
				GALLERIES AND MUSEUM SHOP OPEN TILL 7 p.m. 12:30 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibitions, 40 minutes, by docent 5:30 p.m. Lecture, Sandra Adell, "Curry: Representations of Race," L140			

# M A Y

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
3 12:30 p.m. Concert, Gallery III, Pro Arte Quartet 2 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibition, 40 minutes, by docent	4 Galleries Closed	5 4 p.m. Tour of <i>John Steuart Curry</i> , 40 minutes, by a docent	6	7 GALLERIES AND MUSEUM SHOP OPEN TILL 7 p.m. 12:30 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibitions, 40 minutes, by docent	8  Posters from the Circus World Museum in Whyte Gallery, opposite the Museum Shop	
10 12:30 p.m. Concert, Gallery III, Ilona Kombrink and Wendy Rowe, sopranos 2 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibition, 40 minutes, by a docent	11 Galleries Closed	12 4 p.m. Tour of <i>John Steuart Curry</i> , 40 minutes, by a docent	13	14 GALLERIES AND MUSEUM SHOP OPEN TILL 7 p.m. 12:30 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibitions, 40 minutes, by docent	15 5-7 p.m. Downtown Gallery Night	16
17 12:30 p.m. Concert, Gallery III, Lawrence Chamber Players, Appleton 2 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibition, 40 minutes, by a docent	18 Galleries Closed EXHIBITION CLOSED: <i>John Steuart Curry</i>	19	20	21 12:30 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibitions, 40 minutes, by docent	22	23
24 2 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibition, 40 minutes, by a docent	25 Galleries Closed EXHIBITION CLOSED: Posters from the Circus World Museum	26	27	28 12:30 p.m. Tour of temporary exhibitions, 40 minutes, by docent	29	30 <b>EXHIBITION OPENS</b> Sacred Wood, Lithuanian woodcarving
31						5:30 p.m. Curator gives tour 6-7:30 p.m. Reception

## Programs for All Ages

“American Gothic in Your Face: Grant Wood Up Close,” a presentation by John Duggleby suitable for all ages, Sunday, April 19, 2:30 p.m. Another well-known regionalist painter is introduced in this family program. Dressed as the famous farmer in *American Gothic*, Duggleby will show how Wood’s Iowa childhood observation and determination endure through this American cultural icon. The presentation ends with participants drawing a chicken, Grant Wood-style. Duggleby will be available after the presentation to sign copies of his children’s book, *Artist in Overalls: The Life of Grant Wood*. Paige Court, Elvehjem.

Family Day features circus performers; “Following Curry’s Yellow Brick Road: From Kansas to Wisconsin,” a program presenting the American scene Curry portrayed in the exhibition through slides, music, and a sing-along; and a guided tour of the exhibition. Sunday, April 26, 2:00–4:00 p.m., Elvehjem. A schedule will be available in Paige Court that day or by calling the museum after April 1.



Exhibition curator Denis Martin explains fine points of exhibition *Images of Epinal* to docents, as part of the continuing training sessions.

## New Docent Class

Docents serve as the Elvehjem’s volunteer tour guides. The museum will be training a new class of docents beginning in September, 1998. The museum recruits and trains guides on the basis of their ability and enthusiasm for learning and teaching about original works of art with visitors from the public and the university. Training consists of a minimum

of 22 sessions about the museum’s collection and is held on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons in the fall and early winter. Participants should expect to serve for at least two years. Being a docent is an excellent way to learn art history, gain public speaking skills, and serve the community. For more information, call the curator of education, Anne Lambert, at 608 263-4421.

Taiwanese artist Ah-Leon explains techniques for constructing his fool-the-eye ceramics bridge to a packed house of high school ceramic students



# Programs to Accompany Curry Exhibition

## Lectures

“John Steuart Curry and Wisconsin: The Twilight of Americanism’s Golden Age,” Patricia Junker, associate curator of American art, the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Sunday, March 22, 2:30 p.m., L140 Elvehjem

When John Steuart Curry became the University of Wisconsin’s first artist-in-residence in 1936, he believed participation in this innovative social experiment would be the culmination of his life-long concerns, merging his work as an artist and his abiding interest in the lives of farming people. Ms. Junker, the organizing curator of the exhibition, will address the degree to which Curry succeeded in realizing his goals during his Wisconsin years.

“John Steuart Curry’s Kansas,” Charles C. Eldredge, Hall Distinguished Professor of American Art, University of Kansas, Thursday, March 26, 5:30 p.m., L140 Elvehjem

Professor Eldredge will assess the currency and potency of “Curry’s Kansas,” examining the state’s rural themes in the context of the artist’s own humanistic values and populist sensibilities, his commitment to an aesthetic ideal linking art with life, and the common values of Depression-era America.

“John Steuart Curry’s Legacy: The Wisconsin Regional Arts Program Today,” Leslee Nelson, professor of art, departments of art and liberal studies and the arts, UW–Madison, and director, Wisconsin Regional Arts Program, Sunday, March 29, 2:30 p.m., L140 Elvehjem



John Steuart Curry, *Stallion and Jack Fighting*, 1932, oil on canvas, 24 x 36 in. The Minnesota Museum of American Art, St. Paul

In his role as artist-in-residence Curry used the University of Wisconsin’s network of agricultural agents to introduce him to artists in rural communities where he encouraged them to paint and to exhibit their work. Professor Nelson will examine the program of exhibitions that Curry developed beginning in 1940 and report on its vitality today.

“Curry’s Images of Women from the Sun Bonnet Myth to Social Criticism,” James M. Dennis, professor of art history, UW–Madison, Thursday, April 2, 5:30 p.m., L140 Elvehjem

Professor Dennis will trace John Steuart Curry’s evolving representations of women from idealized frontier women, as helpmates to their pioneer

husbands, in such paintings as the *Oklahoma Land Rush* and *The Homestead* to their transformation into images of protest and social criticism in works like *Parade to War*.

“John Steuart Curry: Representations of Race,” Sandra Adell, associate professor of Afro-American studies, UW–Madison, Thursday, April 30, 5:30 p.m., L140 Elvehjem

During the 1930s Curry portrayed black Americans both in his single canvases and in his public mural projects. From her perspective as a specialist of Afro-American literature and the black performing arts, Professor Adell will discuss how the cultural and social currents of the 1930s might have influenced Curry’s representations of black people.

## Films of America's Great Depression

The series will provide context for Curry's paintings of the agrarian environment, his empathy with the people dispossessed by the social and economic upheaval of the Great Depression, and his belief in the New Deal. For people interested in film, the series offers examples of how both Hollywood and federal government filmmakers dealt with the Great Depression and its social problems. All the films are in black and white.

March 26, *Wild Boys of the Road*, 1933, directed by William Wellman. Concerned with the sociological displacement caused by the Depression, it features the plight of homeless orphaned or abandoned children.

April 2, *Our Daily Bread*, 1934, directed by King Vidor, 74 minutes. This idealistic representation portrays a group of

unemployed people who start a cooperative farm.

April 9, *Black Fury*, 1935, directed by Michael Curtiz, 95 minutes. Paul Muni stars as a coal miner who becomes involved in a workers' dispute in a Pennsylvania mine, in this example of labor strife in the Depression.

April 16, *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (1936) and *The River* (1937), directed by Pare Lorentz, approximately 36 minutes. These two short documentaries are examples of U.S. government films made to persuade Americans that the New Deal was responsive to their needs.

This film series is cosponsored with the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. All films are on Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. in room L160 Elvehjem; film notes will be provided.



The problem of homeless boys thieving and bumming their way across the country during the Depression is portrayed in the film *Wild Boys of the Road*. (Ward Bond, center, Frankie Darro, right). Courtesy the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research

## Guided Tours

Group guided tours by docents are available, by appointment, for adults and students. A free teacher slide packet on John Steuart Curry will be lent to teachers prior to a tour. Call at least three weeks in advance for an appointment, for dates beginning March 24 (608 263-4421). Beginning March 12, 30-minute tours for drop-in visitors will be held Thursdays at 12:30 p.m., Sundays at 2:00 p.m., and Tuesdays at 4:00 p.m.

## Teachers: Professional Development Offering

A teacher staff development program, "John Steuart Curry: An Artist Reinventing the Middle West," has relevance for teachers of art, social studies, science, and the Wisconsin sesquicentennial. In cooperation with the Madison Metropolitan School District the Elvehjem will offer a three-session class (April 2, 16, and 23, 4-6 p.m.) in the exhibition. Professional advancement credit is available. Each session features a different lecturer and curriculum emphasis: Teachers will be art history graduate student Tom Kleese; Madison high school social studies teacher Phil Paulson; and Madison elementary art teacher Katharine Goray. For more information or to register, call 608 266-6181.

## Audio Tour

An audio-cassette tour of the exhibition, lasting one-half hour and covering the major themes in Curry's art, will be available for rental (\$1) from the Museum Shop.

## Museology Lecture on King Tut's Legacy

The discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun over seventy-five years ago had an enduring impact upon more distant fields than archaeology and Egyptology. The blockbuster exhibition of the

treasures from the tomb of Tutankhamun in the 1970s changed the expectations of museums throughout the world. Emily Teeter, associate curator, Oriental Institute Museum, will lecture on the phenomenon in "How King Tut Changed American Museums." Her lecture will be Tuesday, March 24 at 4:00 p.m. in room L140.



Emily Teeter

## Lecture on Frans Post's Village of Olinda

Leslie Ann Blacksberg, curator of collections, will present a gallery lecture on the exhibition she has organized around

Frans Post's painting, *Village of Olinda, Brazil, ca. 1660*. Emphasizing three themes in the work—the city of Olinda, the portrayal of Brazilian flora and fauna, and the representations of African slaves—she will place those motifs in the context of seventeenth-century Dutch culture. She will discuss the documents, atlases, and illustrated books which underscore the importance of those themes. The lecture will be Thursday, April 16, and will begin at 4:00 p.m. in Mayer Gallery.

## Gallery Talk and Reception

Ruta Saliklis, guest curator for the exhibition *Sacred Wood: The Contemporary Lithuanian Woodcarving Revival*, will give a gallery tour, "A Stroll through the Woods," followed by the exhibition opening reception. The gallery tour will be at 5:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 30.

## continued from page 5

struggle. Like Curry and Wood, Benton was partial to lithography. His prints are often related to his paintings, either as precursors to a theme which he would develop later as a painting, or as repetitions of his painted subjects.

Grant Wood's subject matter can be quite similar to Benton's and Curry's, but his style emphasized the similarities that exist between different parts of his composition. Wood promulgated a vision of human beings in harmony with a landscape they shaped by their hard work.

John Steuart Curry, too, brings a distinct style to his compositions which, like those of the other two artists, often take their images from the farm and countryside. He stresses man's relationship to nature. Prints in this show such as *Prize Stallions* (1928) and *Stallion and Jack Fighting* are precursors to oil paintings in the exhibition *John Steuart Curry: Inventing the Middle West*.



Thomas Hart Benton (American, 1889–1975), *Island Hay*, n.d., lithograph, 10 x 12 5/8 in.  
Gift of Amanda Berls, 1978.253

## Our Special Thanks

The Elvehjem Museum's many exhibitions and programs are made possible by a number of important people and organizations. The museum has received significant backing from local, regional, and national donors whose support benefits thousands of visitors each year.

The Wisconsin Arts Board has provided state funds for exhibition programming for 1997-1998.

The Elvehjem's major traveling exhibition, *John Steuart Curry: Inventing the Middle West*, received major funding from The Henry Luce Foundation, Inc.; the National Endowment for the Humanities, a federal agency dedicated to expanding American understanding of human experience and cultural heritage; and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency dedicated to the arts. The Luce Foundation's grant was particularly significant, marking the first time the Elvehjem has received a financial contribution from this prestigious organization. The two grants from the NEH and the NEA demonstrate a par-

ticular level of artistic and scholarly excellence. Additional funds for the exhibition have been provided by the Anonymous Fund; Brittingham Fund, Inc.; the Evjue Foundation Inc./The Capital Times; Walter and Dorothy Frautschi; Wisconsin Sesquicentennial Commission with funds from individual and corporate contributors and the State of Wisconsin; Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission with additional support from the Madison Community Foundation; the Wisconsin Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Funds for the presentation of the *Four Directions* exhibition and the concert performance of Gronk and Kronos Quartet have been contributed by the Anonymous Fund, the Madison Community Foundation, Terry Haller, Wisconsin Education Association Council, and the Nave Visiting Scholars and Artists Lectures Committee.

The Elvehjem Museum is grateful to all individual, foundation, corporate, and government donors who provide financial support.



John Steuart Curry, *The Runway*, 1932, oil on masonite, 30 x 40 in. Swarthmore College Art Collection

## Gala 1998

The Elvehjem Museum of Art will celebrate John Steuart Curry's love of the circus with a special Gala affair this spring. "Under the Elvehjem Big Top" will be held on Saturday evening, April 25 from 8:00-10:00 p.m. This elegant, festive event will offer cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, special live music, and performances, all with a circus flair. The Elvehjem has teamed up with the Circus World Museum of Baraboo to present a unique night of entertainment. A special exhibition of circus posters will be on view in the Whyte Gallery (see related story on page 6). Watch your mailboxes for invitations; tickets will be \$25 per person. Please call 608 263-2495 with questions. Come one, come all!

## Opening Reception

Help the Elvehjem Museum celebrate the opening of the major exhibition *John Steuart Curry: Inventing the Middle West* at a special reception on Saturday, March 21, from 6:00-8:00 p.m. Members will be admitted free to the museum, while admission for the general public will be \$5. This fee will include admission to the "Meet the Curator" gallery talk featuring exhibition curator Patricia Junker at 5:30 p.m., as well as the reception immediately following. The event will feature hors d'oeuvres, a cash bar, and live music by The Bluegrass Orphans. For more information please call 608 263-2246.

## Downtown Gallery Night at the Elvehjem Museum

The Elvehjem will participate in the semi-annual Downtown Gallery Night on Friday evening, May 15th with extended evening gallery hours. The museum will remain open until 7:00 p.m. for visitors to view the exhibition *John Steuart Curry: Inventing the Middle West*.

**Information: 608 263-2246****Admission is free****Gallery and Museum Shop Hours**

Tuesday-Friday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Saturday-Sunday 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

CLOSED MONDAY

**Kohler Art Library Hours**

Monday-Thursday 8 a.m.-9:45 p.m.

Friday 8 a.m.-4:45 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday 1-4:45 p.m.

For hours between terms call 608 263-2258

**Museum Membership Benefits**

Membership enables you to become an integral and essential part of the Elvehjem Museum of Art.

**Annual benefits include**

- Invitations to openings, receptions, and special events
- Subscription to *Artscene* for advance notice of exhibitions, education and membership programs, and special events
- 15% discount on Museum Shop purchases
- Discounts on trips and special programs
- The *Bulletin/Annual Report*

**As a member you support**

- Acquisitions
- Exhibitions
- Publications
- Educational programs
- Special events

**Parking**

The city of Madison's Lake Street and Frances Street ramps and in university lots 46 and 83 on Lake Street between Johnson Street and University Avenue. University lot 47 on Johnson Street between Park and Lake streets is available on weekends only.

**For Visitors with Disabilities**

Wheelchair access is via the north entrance from Murray Street. Elevator is across from Kohler Library entrance. The Elvehjem will provide sign language interpreters for programs by request in advance. To request a sign language interpreter, call Anne Lambert, curator of education, weekdays, 608 263-4421 (voice) as soon as possible.

**Tours**

Drop-in tours by docents are offered on Thursdays at 12:20 p.m., a 40-minute tour of the permanent collection and on Sundays at 2:00 p.m., a 40-minute tour of temporary exhibitions, beginning in Paige Court.

For group tours by schools and organizations at other times please call for an appointment at least three weeks in advance of the desired date (608 263-4421).

**Museum Etiquette**

Museum rules promote the safety of artworks and pleasant viewing conditions for visitors. Food and drink are not allowed, and smoking is not permitted in the building. Animals except guide dogs for the blind and hearing impaired are not permitted.

Objects such as packages and purses larger than 11 x 14 inches and backpacks, umbrellas, and rigid baby carriers that could damage art are not permitted into the galleries. Lockers that require a 25-cent deposit for storing parcels are available on the second-floor level, in the north and south hallways. Items too large for lockers and umbrellas may be checked at the Paige Court Security desk.

Running, pushing, shoving, or other physical acts that may endanger works of art are prohibited. Touching works of art, pedestals, frames, and cases is prohibited.

Photographs of the permanent collection may be taken with a handheld camera without a flash. Written permission must be obtained from the registrar for any other photography.

**MEMBERSHIP FORM**

Yes, I want to become a member of the Elvehjem Museum of Art.

(If you are already a member, please encourage a friend to join you in supporting the museum through membership.)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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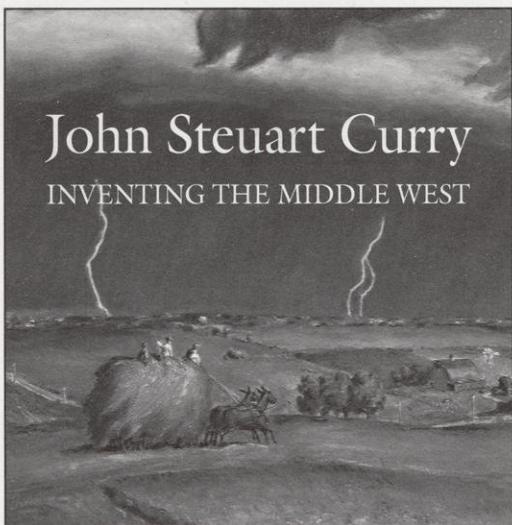
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*Please return this form to Elvehjem Museum, Membership Office, 800 University Avenue, Madison, WI 53706.*

*John Steuart Curry: Inventing the Middle West*

By exhibition curator Patricia Junker, with additional essays by Henry Adams, Charles C. Eldredge, Robert L. Gambone, M. Sue Kendall, Lucy J. Mathiak, and Theodore F. Wolff, and reprint of a eulogy by Thomas Hart Benton  
 288 pages, 68 color plates, 118 B&W prints, soft cover Hudson Hills Press  
 and Elvehjem Museum of Art  
 \$32 (\$27 members)

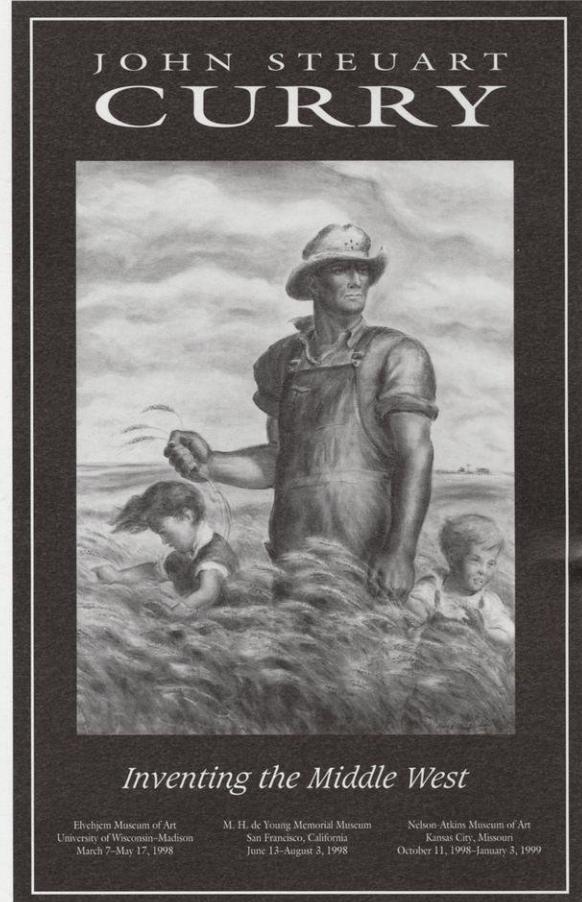
This long-awaited volume is published on the occasion of the centennial of John Steuart Curry's birth, celebrated by a retrospective exhibition at the Elvehjem.

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*Inventing the Middle West*

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