Akron-Kent Painters:

September 14 - October 2, 1988
Leroy Flint
Raphael Gleitsmann
Hazel Janicki
Harold Kitner
Robert Morrow
Elmer Novotny
Joseph B. O’Sickey
William Schock
Forward

Soon after I arrived at Kent State University in 1985, Virginia Wojno, Katherine Syracopoulos, and other community art patrons brought to my attention the need to do an exhibition of regional artists who were active prior to 1970. I agreed with them since I believe the School of Art Gallery must recognize its responsibility to the historical and contemporary traditions of northeastern Ohio. In fact, the Gallery’s 1988-89 exhibition schedule reflects such a commitment. In addition to this project, the Gallery will present “The Cleveland Enamelists: 1930-1955” and “Reflections of the City: Photography and Sculpture.” After numerous meetings, Virginia Wojno, Katherine Syracopoulos, Elmer Novotny, and I finally decided to focus on “Akron-Kent Painters: 1930-1970.” The selection of paintings was hard because the region has such a rich and extensive tradition in all areas of the arts and crafts. In large part, the painting tradition flourished as a result of developments at KSU’s School of Art since the mid-1930s and the post-World War II establishment of the School of the Akron Art Institute.

This exhibition documents the work of eight artists: Leroy Flint, Raphael Gleitsmann, Hazel Janicki, Harold Kitner, Robert Morrow, Elmer Novotny, Joseph O’Sickey, and William Schock. These painters were influential in making the Akron-Kent area a thriving arts center for more than forty years. Except for Gleitsmann, they were all affiliated with Kent State University, The School of the Akron Art Institute, or both. The works of these artists do not represent a single school, but represent a range of representational styles that demonstrate a concern with subject. Although Hazel Janicki and William Schock were killed in an automobile accident in Florida on January 1, 1976, the other artists are still alive. And, many of them are continuing to work and exhibit.

Harold Kitner, Elmer Novotny, and Leroy Flint were asked to prepare statements for the catalog in order to present a good overview of the period. Kitner, a member of the KSU art faculty since 1947, was also a former art critic for the Akron Beacon Journal. Novotny, Director of the KSU School of Art for twenty-eight years was responsible for bringing a number of these artists to the area. Leroy Flint, Director of the Akron Art Institute for many years, became Director of the KSU School of Art Gallery in the early 1970s.

The exhibition and catalog were made possible by the support and collaboration of both the University and the community. Assistance was provided by the College of Fine and Professional Arts, Virginia Wojno, Bruce Kiefer, and the Friends of the Gallery. Curatorial support was provided by Mrs. Wojno and Elmer Novotny. I am sincerely indebted to them for their insights and encouragement. All in all it was both an educational and enjoyable experience. I would also like to thank the Gallery Staff — especially John Cooperrider, our designer, for their hard work and dedication.

The lenders to the exhibit need to be especially thanked for their cooperation. These include The Akron Art Museum, The Canton Institute of Art, Dr. & Mrs. Ronald Bell, Margaret Baxtresser, Luke and Rolland Lietzke, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Morrow, Mr. & Mrs. Elmer Novotny, Mr. & Mrs. Joseph O’Sickey, Mr. and Mrs. Nicolas Syracopoulos, and Virginia Wojno.

Fred. T. Smith, Director
School of Art Galleries
Kent State University
Introduction

From 1949 to the mid 1960s, I was the art critic for the Akron Beacon Journal. Although being an artist, educator, community art advocate, and art critic simultaneously might seem strange from the perspective of contemporary specialization, it was not in the generation noted in this exhibition. For example, Novotny was the premier portraitist of this area, an outstanding educator and lecturer, and the father of Kent State's School of Art. Flint, who in the pre-World War II days was known for his sensitive prints and flowing cape, became one of the most respected art educators and, at a critical point, the Director of the Akron Art Institute (now Museum). Morrow, whose wide knowledge and rational mind was reflected in his teaching, also constructed murals throughout the region and nationally. He was an excellent designer and, of course, an important painter and draughtsman. Janicki, in addition to being one of the most respected painters of this time, taught at Kent State. Schock worked for many years as a window display artist and later, while producing coloristically superb paintings, taught with unstinting dedication both at Kent State and in the community. For more than a decade, O'Sickey was a respected graphic designer in the Cleveland area before he turned to teaching and painting full time.

The fact that all of the painters in the exhibition were affiliated with Kent State, with the exception of Gleitsmann, is historically appropriate. There were other area institutions of importance. For a substantial period of time, the Akron Art Institute (now Museum) ran a good art school. It had a first-class faculty, including Flint and O'Sickey, who years later became members of the Kent faculty. Firestone had its own art department, and several of the community's respected painters worked there. A more conservative aesthetic viewpoint was strongly promoted by several organizations including the Akron Society of Artists. And Akron University also had an art department, but its prominence was reserved for a later date.

It was Kent's School of Art that became the giant, attracting major student talent from everywhere. Many settled in the area. The faculty ultimately included artists with national and international reputations. Also it is noteworthy that Flint, Novotny, Morrow, O'Sickey, Janicki, and I were graduates from the Cleveland School of Art (now Institute). Schock was a Clevelander, strongly influenced by the Cleveland scene but chose to study in Boston after World War II. Ironically, while in some important ways Kent's School was an off shoot of the Cleveland School, ultimately major aesthetic differences developed, and a vigorous, healthy rivalry ensued.

Finally, as artists we were aware that we chose to work in media that limited the scope of direct communication to the region. It was our good fortune that we had a dynamic organization, The Akron Art Institute, at the center. The Institute was composed of artists, students, educators, directors and curators with vision who sensed and promoted the cultural interrelations of the various sectors of the community. The pursuit of the vague ego strokings of "national recognition" simply was unimportant. The Institute, under Val Clere and George Culler, diligently collected work by local artists, knowing that this was the fundamental heritage. The liveliest show in the region was the Institute's Akron May Show. We talked, we partied, and we worked, and the community knew the artists, and we knew the community and were part of it.

Harold Kitner,
Emeritus Professor of Art
Kent State University
The establishment of a School of Art at Kent State University in the mid-1930s had a profound effect on the art of this region. During those years it was extremely rare to find education in art, of a professional nature, being taught on college campuses. Education in studio art was primarily confined to the art academy or private art schools, and most of them were relatively expensive.

It was the objective of Kent State University to offer professional art training in a state-supported institution, thereby making it possible for those less fortunate financially to obtain an art education.

One of the challenges in establishing such a school was to staff it with competent artists of high quality. Few practicing artists during that time period had academic degrees which tradition dictated were mandatory for them to qualify for a university position.

The director of the new School of Art during those early years appealed to the new president of the University, Dr. George A. Bowman, to allow him to appoint non-degree artists of high professional stature to the teaching staff. Dr. Bowman, recognizing the wisdom of this request, granted this permission, and to him goes a great deal of credit for Kent's fine School of Art.

Many artists came to Kent who otherwise would not have been here had not this door been opened. Among those appointed were several artists who make up this exhibition: Robert Morrow was the first appointee followed by Harold Kitner, then William Schock along with his wife Hazel Janicki, then Joseph O'Sickey, and Leroy Flint. Flint was already an Akron resident before joining the Kent staff.

The high quality of art produced by these artists and their teaching skills cannot be denied. Their artistic endeavors helped establish this area as a significant art center.

Elmer L. Novotny,
Director Emeritus
School of Art
Kent State University
The quality and character of an institution seems, at any given time, to be determined by the way people intimately involved with its operation define its mission and devise ways to carry out that mission in the community. The group of dedicated and hard-working people concerned with the creation of the Akron Art Institute in the post-World War II years had a pretty clear idea that what the community needed was an Art Center with an education program which would help find meaningful relationships with the arts in their lives.

With that as their mission, they developed a program that included: (1) a school of art and design that was a charter member of a newly organized National Association of Schools of Art, which rapidly became the accrediting agency for all art schools offering the now universally accepted professional B.F.A. and M.F.A. degrees; (2) an extensive and broad program of informal classes for adults and children; (3) an exhibition program heavily weighted in the areas of design to use and live with, as well as the painting and sculpture of our time and geographical area; and (4) an eclectic and limited educational collection program.

Certainly, an ambitious and idealistic program, quite right for its time, but as things worked out, a program that was somewhat beyond their financial means to maintain indefinitely.

Leroy Flint, 
Retired Professor of Art
Kent State University

Leroy Flint, APOCALYPSE — A TRIPTYCH. Photo credit: Akron Art Museum, Museum Acquisitions Fund.
Leroy Flint

born 1910

**METAPHOR**, 1950
tempera on masonite
27 7/8 x 24 inches
Collection Akron Art Museum,
Gift of Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Keithley.

**APOCALYPSE — A TRIPTYCH**, 1953
oil on masonite
24 1/4 x 75 1/3 inches
Collection Akron Art Museum,
Museum Acquisition Fund.

**THE WHITE CLIFFS OF DOVER**, 1955
acrylic on canvas
32 3/4 x 26 1/2 inches
Collection Virginia B. Wojno.

**JET GEOMETRY**, 1966
acrylic on canvas
40 x 34 inches
Collection Canton Art Institute.

Leroy Flint, **THE WHITE CLIFFS OF DOVER**. Photo credit: Bruce Kiefer.
Raphael Gleitsmann

born 1910

- **WINTER EVENING**, 1932
  oil on masonite
  39 x 44 inches
  Collection Akron Art Museum,
  Gift of Joseph Erdelac.

- **WINTER LANDSCAPE**, 1948
  oil on masonite
  14 x 18 inches
  Collection Akron Art Museum,
  Gift of Mrs. Mary S. Huhn, Mrs.
  Dorothy S. Steinberg, and Mr.
  John F. Seiberling, Jr., in memory
  of their father, Mr. J. Frederick
  Seiberling.

- **WINTER VIEW**, 1949
  oil on hardboard
  10 x 18 inches
  Collection Margaret Baxtresser.

- **UNTITLED**, 1950
  oil on masonite
  14 1/2 x 18 1/2 inches
  Collection Virginia B. Wojno.

Raphael Gleitsmann, **WINTER EVENING**. Photo credit: Akron Art Museum, Gift of Joseph Erdelac.
Hazel Janicki

(1918-1976)

THE INTRUDER, 1951
tempera on masonite
17 3/4 x 33 1/2 inches
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Robert
Morrow.

TRIPTYCH: TOMORROW,
YESTERDAY AND TODAY, 1962
tempera on masonite
29 x 11 inches
Collection Kent State University
School of Art Gallery, Gift of the
artist.

THE CABINET, 1965
tempera, ink, and modeling paste
on masonite
21 1/2 x 44 inches
Collection Luke and Rolland
Lietzke.

THE DRAWER, 1965
tempera and wooden knob on
masonite
12 x 16 5/8 inches
Collection Akron Art Museum,
Museum Acquisition Fund.

Hazel Janicki, TRIPTYCH: TOMORROW, YESTERDAY AND TODAY. Photo credit:
Larry Rubins.
Harold Kitner

born 1921

ENIGMA 1, 1955
oil on masonite
15 5/8 x 19 1/4 inches
Collection Akron Art Museum,
Museum Acquisition Fund.

OF TIME, 1957
watercolor and casein on paper
17 7/8 x 23 5/8 inches
Collection Akron Art Museum,
Museum Acquisition Fund.

• REPAST, 1961
mixed media
35 x 30 inches
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Nicolas
Syracopoulos.

DESCENT, 1966-67
oil on masonite
40 1/4 x 52 1/2 inches
Collection Kent State University
School of Art Gallery.

Harold Kitner, REPAST. Photo credit: Bruce Kiefer.
Robert Morrow

born 1917

PITCHMAN, 1950
oil on masonite
48 x 24 inches
Collection Canton Art Institute.

GREENHOUSE AND SPRINKLERS,
1953
drawing and watercolor
11 x 15 1/4 inches
Collection Canton Art Institute

SEPTEMBER, 1960
gouache on handmade paper
25 x 37 inches

OCTOBER, 1963
gouache on handmade paper
25 x 37 inches
Collection Akron Art Museum, Art Acquisition Fund.

Robert Morrow, PITCHMAN.
Photo credit: Canton Art Institute.
Elmer Novotny

born 1909

**PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AND WIFE, 1938**
oil on canvas
51 x 59 inches
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Novotny.

**CITIZEN OF ONSTEAD, 1939**
oil on masonite
22 x 25 1/4 inches
Collection Akron Art Museum,
Gift of the artist in memory of
Mrs. June Schulman.

**LAST OF THE WHITLEYS, 1940**
oil on masonite
29 1/2 x 35 1/2 inches
Collection Canton Art Institute,
Gift of the artist.

**LA NAPOULE, 1967**
acrylic on canvas
30 x 48 inches
Collection Virginia B. Wojno.

*Elmer Novotny, LA NAPOULE. Photo credit: Bruce Kiefer.*
Joseph B. O’Sickey

born 1918

GARDNER’S BENCH, 1969
oil on canvas
69 x 78 inches
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Joseph B. O’Sickey.

LARGE FLORAL STILL LIFE, 1969
oil on canvas
92 x 69 inches
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Joseph B. O’Sickey.

MAPLE TREE, 1969
oil on canvas
69 x 84 inches
Collection Dr. and Mrs. Ronald Bell.

OLD MAN’S GARDEN, 1970
oil on canvas
92 1/2 x 138 inches
Collection Canton Art Institute.

Joseph B. O’Sickey, GARDNER’S BENCH. Photo credit: Jeff Glidden.
William Schock

(1913-1976)

CITY LIMIT, 1952
oil on canvas
28 x 17 1/2 inches
Collection Kent State University
School of Art Gallery, Gift of the artist.

CAROSEL, 1954
oil on canvas
29 1/2 x 19 1/2 inches
Collection Akron Art Museum,
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Sidney D.
Josephs.

FIGURE WITH STRIPED BLOUSE,
1963
oil on masonite
27 1/2 x 21 1/2 inches
Collection Kent State University
School of Art Gallery, Gift of the artist.

GLOXINIAS, 1969
oil on canvas
46 3/4 x 39 1/2 inches
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Nicolas Syracopoulos.

William Schock, GLOXINIAS. Photo credit: Bruce Kiefer.
Friends of the Gallery 1988

Student/Sr. Citizen

Linda Branden
Catherine E. Dumm
Mrs. Andrew Goda
Janet M. Hoover
Geraldine Wojno Kiefer
Marie-Therese Pecquet
Kathleen Davis Pierce
Nancy Seibert
M. Diane Taninecz
Dave Thornberry
Karen McCool Turnidge
Dr. Herbert L. Zobel

Individual

Earl Baxtresser
Linda Bernat
Lisa R. Bixenstine
Dorothy Caldwell
Adrian L. Evans
Joan Gardner
Dr. Gertrude S. Hornung
Katherine Kennedy
Barbara Krupp
Lawrence E. Lohman, M.D.
McKay Bricker Gallery & Framing
Ms. Robin C. Mucha
Rosella Pierce
Mrs. William Cameron Sandwich
Gerald L. Schweigert
Mrs. Lois H. Strassburg
Frank D. Susi
Katherine Syracopoulos
Cheri Ure
Virginia B. Wojno

Family

Lee Bale
Helen Dix
Frame & Save Art Gallery
Alan S. Grotenrath
Mrs. Rae R. Grotenrath
Ralph & Joanna Harley
Tom & Fran Lehnert
Eric & Patricia May
Caven & Patricia McLoughlin
Dr. Arlyn Melcher
Janice Lessman-Moss & Al Moss
Dr. & Mrs. Yale Palchick
Mr. & Mrs. Allen Pavlovich
V. Rajamohan, M.D.
Noel Reifel & Carla Wilczak Reifel
Carol Salus
Scillia Family
Jack & Kathleen Smith
Arnold & Phyllis Weinstein

Sponsor

Thomas & Carol Barber
Carlyn & Ben Bassham
Jones, Koppes & Leporis
Typesetting Co.
Florence M. Lewis
Allan R. Lundell
Elmer L. & Virginia Novotny
Fred & Nancy Smith
Mel Someroski
Walter T. Wojno

Benefactor

Dr. & Mrs. John Allan Campbell
DuBois Bookstore
Thomas & Linda Riley/Glass Art Gallery