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Ste. Genevieve Art Guild

Promenade des Arts Committee

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Ste. Genevieve Art Guild Hosts Thomas Hart Benton as the Featured Artist for the Promenade des Arts Weekend, October 8-11

Thomas Hart Benton (1889 – 1975), arguably the most famous artist from Missouri, will be featured in this year's 10th edition of Promenade des Arts, this fall in Ste. Genevieve. "Regional Visions: Thomas Hart Benton and the Ste Genevieve Art Colony," will have two exhibits of Benton works and an exhibit of Art Colony paintings on October 8-10, 2010 as well as other art events on that weekend.

Thomas Hart Benton was born in 1889 in Neosho, Missouri located in Newton County on the western edge of the Missouri Ozarks. He studied art at the Art Institute of Chicago and at the Academie Julian in Paris, France.

After serving as an artist in the U.S Navy in Norfolk, Virginia during World War I, he returned to New York City in the 1920's and dubbed himself an "enemy" of modernism in art and began painting and teaching in a representational and realistic style, later identified as Regionalism. Benton's most famous student, ironically, was Jackson Pollock, who became another influential painter and a major figure in the wildly popular abstract expressionist movement.

In 1934, Benton's self portrait was on the cover of Time magazine, which featured an article called "The American Scene," a story about him and fellow mid-western artists, Grant Wood and John Steuart Curry. Benton painted a huge mural for the Missouri State Capitol building in 1935 and was a faculty member at Kansas City Art Institute from 1935 to 1941.

In 1936 and 1937, Benton was a featured faculty member of the Summer School of Art in Ste. Genevieve, operated by the Ste. Genevieve Art Colony. The colony was founded by St Louis artists, Aimee Schweig, Jesse Beard Rickly and Bernard Peters and included names like Joe Jones, Joseph Vorst, E. Oscar Thallinger, Joseph Meert, Sister Cassiana Marie, Mirriam McKinnie and Ste. Genevieve artist, Matthew Zeigler, among others.

Although Benton's national popularity declined as an American artist over the ensuing years, eclipsed by Jackson Pollack and other abstract painters, Tom Benton continued painting pictures and was in demand for murals. He summered for years at Martha's Vineyard and died there 1975, just as he was about to sign his final painting, a mural for Nashville,

Tennessee's Country Music Hall of Fame.

The Benton exhibit, October 8-10, 2010 will feature artwork from the collections of the State Historical Society of Missouri to be shown at the Felix Valle State Historic Site in the 1819 Shaw House. The event will also feature Benton artworks from the St Louis Mercantile Library to be shown in the 1820 Bolduc-LeMeilleur House. The Ste Genevieve Art Colony paintings, from a collection owned by the Ste Genevieve Women's Club will be shown at the city's visitor Welcome Center that weekend.

Among other art events associated with Promenade des Arts, this fall, will be an exhibit of woodcut prints by Jerry Walters of Farmington, Missouri woodcut artist, Jerry Walters. Walters in the 1970's was a friend of Matthew Ziegler, an original member of the 1930's Art Colony from Ste Genevieve, who owned and hung one of Walters' woodcuts in his home.

Walters taught for more than 40 years at colleges and universities in the Midwest. He is professor emeritus at Mineral Area College in Park Hills, Missouri where he taught drawing, printmaking and art history. He also served 15 year as Dean of the school's Fine Arts Department. He continues to teach classes on art history and humanities.

The annual Ste Genevieve Plein Air event, sponsored by the new Ste Genevieve Downtown Renewal Group, will culminate on the weekend of Promenade des Arts' Benton exhibits with a competition and art show and sale, featuring many participating artists from the region. There will also be children's plein air exhibit that weekend.

Plein air art is made outdoors and on site to capture the light and mood of the painting scene and was a typical type of art technique of artists of the Colony.

Other artists represented in gallery exhibits during the Regional Visions event are DeSoto, Missouri artist James Wooldridge, Jefferson County artist, Janet Krause; Ste. Genevieve artists Ali Cavanaugh and Jane Naeger and former Ste. Genevieve artist, M. Charles Rhinehart.

"Regional Visions: Thomas Hart Benton and the Ste Genevieve Art Colony," is the first of three art exhibits, opening over a four-month period in the region, featuring artists from the influential Ste. Genevieve Art Colony of the 1930's.

The St. Louis Art Museum will feature painter Joe Jones in an exhibit entitled "Joe Jones: Painter of the American Scene" opening October 10, 2010. The University of Missouri – Columbia's Museum of Art and Archeology will open an exhibit January 29, 2011 called "A Midwestern View: the Artist Colony of Ste. Genevieve."

This Benton exhibits are being produced by the Ste Genevieve Art Guild with cooperation from the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in Missouri. The exhibit is generously funded by the Ste. Genevieve County Community Foundation, the Missouri Arts Council and Bob and Linda Mueller. The City of Ste. Genevieve Department of Tourism, the State of Missouri Department of Natural Resources, the State Historical Society of Missouri and the University of Missouri-St. Louis are among the principal supporters.

Ste. Genevieve, Missouri, is also the location for the of a growing art scene including over one dozen downtown art studios and galleries and a monthly 4th Friday Art Walk. The Art Walk is

