

# Art Through the Ages in Ste. Genevieve

The Ste. Genevieve art community lays claim to a more varied and vibrant past than any other its size in the entire Midwest

## 1940 to the Present: Post-Colony Artists

World events in 1941 changed national priorities and the Colony closed down, but its spirit was kept alive by Ziegler, who continued to encourage artists to come to Ste. Genevieve. In 1950 St. Louis sculptor Barnett Evans and his artist wife, Frances, helped Ziegler establish the town's first art gallery. Ziegler also introduced Illinois artist Roscoe Misselhorn to Ste. Genevieve. Misselhorn documented Missouri's most historic town by drawing its buildings. One of Ziegler's greatest contributions to the local art scene was his mentoring of young Charles Rhinehart, who became an internationally-known landscape painter and shared his own knowledge with hundreds of students in the region in the 60s and 70s. One of those students, Betty Geraghty, moved to Ste. Genevieve to be part of the art scene created by Ziegler, Misselhorn and Rhinehart. In 1983, Geraghty, along with Jane Naeger and Margaret Forhan, formed the Sainte Genevieve Art Guild.



Ziegler mural; Rhinehart

## Explore and be Inspired

Artists continue to be drawn by the town's culture and arts traditions. Today the Guild boasts some 50 members and a significant number of artists (both professional and non-professional) work in the community. Making art has made its own history in Ste. Genevieve.

## 1900 to 1940: American Art Movements

By the 20th Century artists across the country were forming collectives to share their ideas and techniques. In the 1930s, Ste. Genevieve became home to one...the Ste. Genevieve Art Colony. Indeed, the creation of this art conclave may have been the most important event in Ste. Genevieve's art history. The colony was formed in 1932 by a group of prominent St. Louis painters, notably Bernard Peters, Jessie Rickly and Aimee Schweig. Much of their success can be attributed to the significant help they received from local artist and Ste. Genevieve native Matthew Ziegler. Ziegler provided the welcoming presence, housing and connecting necessary conditions for the Colony to thrive for a decade. The Shaw House became headquarters for both the Colony and the Summer School of Art (established in 1934) which attracted art world luminaries such as Thomas Hart Benton and Joe Jones as instructors. The group significantly contributed to 20th Century American art history by combining Regionalism, Social Realism and other schools to produce a distinctive body of art in the Midwest.



Jessie Rickly woodcut

## 100 to 1700: Native American Art



Fine art has been created in Ste. Genevieve County for millennia. As early as AD100 Woodland peoples sculpted burial offerings of amazing artistry from local clay. Around AD1000 visionary abstract symbols were pecked into the walls and floor of a cave near Saline Creek. Native Americans known as the Mississippians created decorated ceramics when their village dominated the riverfront around AD1300. And a variety of arts were created by tribes that were present when French fur traders arrived here in the 1600s.



French faience

## 1700 to 1900: European Art Traditions

The earliest French settlers brought objects of art with them from France. Those who grew wealthy from furs and mining imported more luxury goods, including art, from Europe. Refugees from the 1792 French Revolution arrived with valuable paintings formerly owned by the aristocracy, and were quickly followed by more French refugees from the Revolution in Haiti, including one John James Audubon who arrived in 1811 to undertake a mercantile venture, but ultimately became a renowned artist/naturalist. Mid-nineteenth century immigrants from Germany also brought art objects from their homeland as a means of preserving their traditions and culture. Each wave of artisan settlers brought methods and designs that they used to create new art in the New World.

## Art Events

In keeping with its history Ste. Genevieve continues to be a center for the arts. Over a dozen galleries, studios and art spaces display original works including paintings, sculpture, fabric art, jewelry, metalwork, pottery and unique artisan crafts. The Gallery Association of Sainte Genevieve sponsors the 4th Friday Art Walk, which combines opportunities to view art, meet artists and artisans, and enjoy conversation and refreshments.

An ongoing show of work by Sainte Genevieve Art Guild members is on view at the Sainte Genevieve Art Center and Art Museum and at the Sainte Genevieve County Public Library. A major Guild exhibit is mounted during the holiday season. Periodically, special events and exhibits honor the town's rich art history. (All Guild exhibits are free and open to the public.)

The Guild sponsors an annual Plein Air Painting Competition, art show and sale that attracts artists from throughout the region and farther afield.



Since 1997 the Art Guild has sponsored an annual scholarship to encourage county high school seniors who plan to major or minor in art. The Guild also sponsors an annual High School Art Awards Show, open to all high school students who live in the county in addition to a semi-annual Youth Plein Air Painting Competition and Awards Show.

The county's annual Jour de Fete celebration, the largest outdoor crafts fair in Southeast Missouri, has been held during the second full weekend in August for some 50 years.



...is a growing, inclusive group of regional and local fine artists and art enthusiasts.

A non-profit organization founded in 1983, we are committed to the arts, as well as the history and legacy of the creative spirits who lived and worked in the area before us.

Information about the Guild, including dues levels, opportunities for sponsorships, calendar of events and more is available online at

[www.artstegen.org](http://www.artstegen.org)

Contact us:

Facebook: [stegenieveartguild](https://www.facebook.com/stegenieveartguild)  
Email: [stegenieveartguild@gmail.com](mailto:stegenieveartguild@gmail.com)  
or: Sainte Genevieve Art Guild  
310 Merchant Street  
Ste. Genevieve, MO 63670

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Art and History Meet Here

Follow a 1,900 year trail of art, artists and artisans in Ste. Genevieve