

High Plains Arts Club talks about workshop and show

An oil painting workshop is being considered by the High Plains Arts Club and was discussed during their regular meeting Tuesday, March 8.

Bev Kern with the club said that the event is planned for June 16-17 at Colby Community College with Rita Roberts, a prize-winning artist leading the workshop.

The price of the workshop is estimated to be \$55 per person, she said.

Kern brought a painting she did at the Rita Roberts workshop in McCook to show the type of work Roberts does.

Marlene Carpenter, club President, said that Brenda Meder, director of the Hays Arts Council will be the judge of the Oberlin Art show in April that she and Kern will be entering.

Marj Brown, Secretary, reported on a communication she received from Goodland Arts Council asking for new members. This was discussed and tabled for next meeting.

Margaret Denneler discussed 20th century American artist John Stewart Curry for her March 8 program at High Plains Art Club.

The reason, she said, was that her husband, Dan, grew up around the small town of Dunavan the same as Curry and he knew some of Curry's family.

However, Denneler said she was surprised when she found her father-in-law's name mentioned in one of the Curry histories she was reading.

Dan's father, Alexander Hamilton Denneler, or Alex as he was called, operated the Federal Land Bank out of his home at that time and was, later, county treasurer of Jefferson County.

A letter Mr. Denneler had written to Curry's brother, Eugene, in January of 1938 was printed, in part, in Rethinking Regionalism, by M. Sue Kendall, which talked about the possible purchase of a farm that was due for foreclosure.

John Stewart Curry was well aware of the plight of Kansas's farmers, who had gone through some of the worst times in Kansas's history during the "dirty thirties." He was often criticized for depicting the worst of Kansas with his paintings of Kansas's tornadoes, and hogs killing rattle snakes. In fact, when he held his first art showing in Kansas, he didn't sell even one painting. Kansans wanted him to paint the beauty of Kansas with the golden wheat fields and serene farmsteads. He did, later, paint farms, but said:

I have been accused of seeing only the dark and seamy side of my native state . . . to show the beauty of real things under the hand of a

Spring is repot time for most houseplants

SALINA—All plants respond to spring's longer days — including those living indoors. The resulting growth spurt is why most houseplants need to be repotted annually. And, spring is when that usually occurs.

"If you try to get around this chore, you're likely to cause problems," said Chip Miller, Kansas State University Research and Extension horticulturist.

"Trying shortcuts rarely works well, either."

Ignoring a houseplant's expansion needs can lead to a gradual decline that can bring a strangling kind of death.

At the other extreme, moving a plant into a significantly larger pot creates a large border of soil that's unoccupied by roots. This soil will get wet more easily, and it will stay wet much longer than the original soil that's filled with roots. So, rather than growing into this wet border, the root tips will tend to rot, Miller said.

"On the other hand, if you try to keep the border soil just slightly moist, the original soil ball will be too dry. And, again, the plant will suffer," he added. "The situation is hard to manage well.

"In fact, even plants just moved up to the next larger pot size need to be managed carefully at first. Overwatering and underwatering both are risks until roots penetrate the new, wetter soil."

As a rule of thumb, if a current pot is less than 10 inches wide, the new pot should be just an inch wider, Miller said. If the original pot is 10 inches or more in diameter, the new pot can increase in size by 2 inches across.

"The worst thing you can do is go

Club News

beneficent Nature—and we can suppose in these panels that the farm depicted is unmortgaged, and that grain and cattle prices are rising on the Kansas City and Chicago markets. The quote was taken from Rethinking Regionalism, Kendall.

Further information Margaret told the group included that Curry was born on Nov. 14, 1897, and grew up on a farm near the small town of Dunavant. His parents were Smith and Margaret Stewart Curry and his siblings were: Eugene, Paul, Margaret and Mildred. They belonged to the Scotch Covenant Church.

Curry began drawing at an early age and took his first art lessons in 1909. In 1916 he left home to study art in Kansas City Art Institute and then at the Art Institute of Chicago and then at Geneva College in Pennsylvania, she said.

In 1919 he received instruction in Illustration from artist Harvey Dunn in Leonia, New Jersey, where Curry was living at the time.

It wasn't long after this that he received notoriety as a professional illustrator, with works published in western novels and popular magazines.

He married Clara Derrick in 1923. They had no children before she died in 1932.

Between 1923 and 1932 he was financially able to purchase his own studio in Westport, Connecticut.

In 1926, in an effort to improve and grow in the field of art, Curry went to Paris to study with Basil Schoukaieff at the Russian Academy Art School for one year before returning to the U.S. to learn Lithography at the Art Students League. In 1928 he came back to Westport and to his wife, determined to become famous as a painter, and he became famous quickly with his painting, Baptism in Kansas, exhibited at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., that autumn. The New York Times art critic, Edward Alden Jewell, wrote, "Kansas has found her Homer," Dec. 7, 1930.

This painting was so impressive that Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney awarded Curry a weekly stipend of \$50 for the following two years.

Whitney also purchased the painting in 1930 for the Whitney Museum of American Art, due to open in New York the following year.

In 1932, two years after the death of his first wife, Curry married Kathleen Muriel Gould who had one son from a previous marriage.

In 1934 when the U.S. government initiated a national mural

project, part of the Federal Art Project in which American artist were appointed to create works of art for the walls of government buildings, Curry received many of these commissions. As a result of this, he created murals in the Department of Justice building and the Department of Interior building, both in Washington D.C.

In 1936 Curry was appointed artist in residence at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. He held this post for the remainder of his life and he painted several murals in building at that University.

In 1943 he had completed two murals he had been commissioned to paint for the rotunda of the capital building in his home state of Kansas. Curry had originally planned also to paint eight smaller panels, but the Kansas legislature committee overseeing the project refused to remove some Italian marble slabs to make room for Curry's murals.

However, it has been reported that the committee, which asked Curry to depict Kansas in a "sane and sensible manner, from the Aug. 1, 1937 Art Digest, was not pleased with one of the first two murals, The Tragic Prelude, in which Curry featured a tornado, a prairie fire, dead soldiers, and with a giant figure of John Brown sacking Lawrence right smack in the middle of it all with his hair flying in the wind and his arms out-stretched holding a Bible in one hand and a rifle in the other.

Curry was disheartened over the whole affair, but said, "in the panel of John Brown, I have accomplished the greatest painting I have yet done."

Curry was considered to be one of the greatest painters in the style of "regionalism," characterized by its subject matter, painting scenes of life in small towns. He is regarded along with Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri and Grant Wood of Iowa, as one of its three leaders.

He died on Aug. 29, 1946 of a heart attack in Madison, Wisconsin and is buried in his hometown of Dunavant, Kansas in the Scotch Covenant Church Cemetery.

The next meeting will be on April 2 with Lee Fleckenstein giving the program and Denneler serving refreshments.

out and dig up some dirt in the yard. Even if you're willing to sterilize it in your oven, it's always going to drain and handle nutrients poorly, due to its structure and the constrained environment of a pot," Miller said. "For container gardening, you need a growing medium that's better than garden soil."

He recommends using a high-quality potting medium—a recognizable name brand of a soilless mix. Putting gravel or pot shards over the drainage holes in a new pot will keep this soilless mix from washing out.

If that gravel/shard layer is more than minimum coverage, however, it also will tend to keep the "soil" wet.

"The plant must sit at the same level it was in the old pot. So, you need to add enough potting mix to the bottom of the new pot to ensure this. Then you have to firm the mix in place, so it doesn't settle over time, taking the plant deeper," Miller said.

This firming remains important once a plant is in its new pot and mix goes in to fill around the original root ball.

"You can firm the mix with a slender stick or tap the bottom of the pot on a table. If you don't get it close to the firmness of the root ball, though, this new 'soil' will be so light and airy that water will tend to move straight through it, rather than through the entire pot root ball and all," he said.

Plants need a thorough watering after repotting, Miller said.

"But be especially careful not to overwater for about two weeks. More people lose repotted plants to root rot than to an artificially created drought," he said.

Donating for books



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Sacred Heart Catholic School fifth graders Julia Huffles and Megan Schroeder worked on projects in class today. Students will benefit from a \$535 donation from Taylor Motors the school received this week. The donation was the result of the "Chrysler Drive for Kids" fund-raiser during the school's carnival last month. Five dollars was donated for each person who took a test drive during the carnival. Principal Dave Evert said the money will probably go toward new math text books.

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