



THE  
**SHELDON**  
Arts Without Borders

Chris Peimann  
Director of Marketing & Publicity  
cpeimann@TheSheldon.org

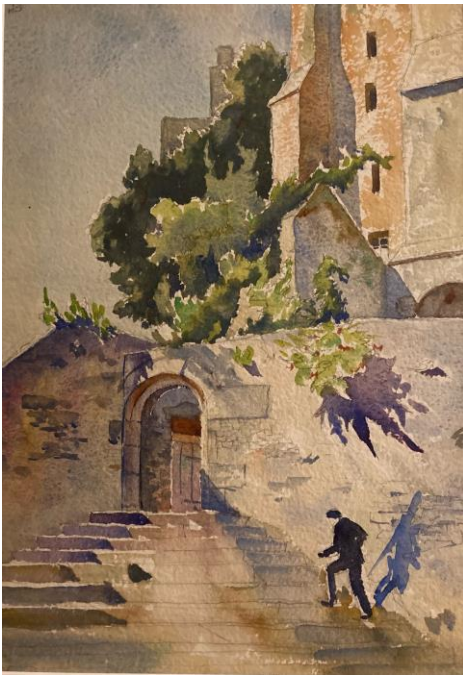
Sarah Samples  
Marketing & Group Sales Manager  
ssamples@TheSheldon.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 17, 2021

## **INSTALLATION OF WORKS BY ST. LOUIS-BORN ARTIST WALLACE HERNDON SMITH FEATURES SKETCHBOOK DRAWINGS FOR THE FIRST TIME**

ST. LOUIS – The Sheldon Art Galleries presents ***Wallace Herndon Smith: Landscapes***, March 5 – May 15, 2021 in the Gallery of Photography. A free public opening will be held **Friday, March 5 from 12 - 9 p.m.** Visitor capacity for the opening will be limited to 10 visitors per 15-minute time slot. Advanced registration is required at [TheSheldon.org/events/springopening/](https://TheSheldon.org/events/springopening/). *Registration ends at 10 a.m. on March 5.* Registration for an exclusive, 45-minute time slot for a party of up to 10 people, is required during normal gallery hours. Sales end at opening time each day (noon on weekdays and 10 a.m. on Saturdays). Gallery hours are Tuesdays – Fridays, noon – 5 p.m. and Saturdays, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Admission is free. All staff and visitors age 9 and older will be required to wear masks.. For more information on exhibitions, reservations and safety procedures, visit [TheSheldon.org](https://TheSheldon.org).



This annual installation of works by St. Louis-born artist Wallace Herndon Smith, from the collection of the Bellwether Foundation, features oil and watercolor paintings by the prolific artist, and for first time, drawings from Smith's sketchbooks.

Smith was active from the 1930s through the 1970s, focusing on portraits and figurative works. Smith maintained traditional sensibilities throughout his career, shunning abstract expressionism. However, his works show a keen interest in underlying abstract concepts like structure, composition and color relationships.

MORE...

Combining formal concerns with the emotional, he brought his own form of experimentation to his works through his rendering of the world, first in atmospheric, tightly rendered works reminiscent of the Regionalists, and later in colorful, exuberant paintings that used loose brushwork and evoked the work of Europeans like Pierre Bonnard and Henri Matisse. Throughout his long career, Smith felt that his painting should reflect “life and the world” by representing elements of the visible environment.

Born in 1901, Smith studied at *l'École des Beaux-Arts* in 1927, returning a year later to enroll in Washington University's architectural program, where he studied with Louis LaBeaume. He designed several homes, but painting remained the focus of his attention. In 1932 he and his wife Kelse moved to New York and befriended artists including Walt Kuhn, Francis Bacon and Edward Hopper, who recommended one of his paintings for a prize in an exhibition in Philadelphia. Landscapes and street scenes from this period, and later, reflect Hopper's influence on Smith's work. In the late 1930s, Smith gained attention in New York and his work was included in exhibitions in New York galleries and at the Museum of Modern Art. During these early days, his work was characterized by its affinity to American Regionalism and his portraits were highly finished, quiet examinations of his subjects.

Smith and his wife moved to Philadelphia and both taught at the Tyler School of Art from 1938- 1939. During the war years, the couple moved several times, spending large periods of time in St. Louis; Provincetown, Massachusetts; and Harbor Springs, Michigan, where Smith established a studio by Lake Michigan. Smith's work continued to gain maturity, and in the 1960s began to be characterized by loose brushwork. He studied physiognomy, color theory and composition, creating colorful, spontaneous renderings of friends, family, models and the architecture found on his travels. His works illustrate a keen sensitivity to the psychological resonance of color, form, gesture and above all, the atmosphere of a place. Always inquisitive and passionate about painting, Smith left behind a substantial body of work that reveals the artist's visual intelligence.

# # #

Image caption: Wallace Smith, *View of City Walls with Climbing Figure*, c. 1935-45, watercolor, 15 ¼ x 11 ¼ inches, courtesy of Bellwether Foundation.