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PAINTINGS BY WALLACE SMITH FEATURED AT SHELDON ART GALLERIES

ST. LOUIS, MO - The Sheldon Art Galleries presents *Wallace Herndon Smith Paintings - Evolution*, December 1, 2017 – February 10, 2018 in the Bellwether Gallery of St. Louis Artists. **An opening reception will be held on Friday, December 1 from 5 – 7 p.m.** Galleries open until 9 p.m. for First Fridays in Grand Center. The Sheldon Art Galleries are open Tuesdays, Noon – 8 p.m.; Wednesdays - Fridays, Noon – 5 p.m.; Saturdays, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. and one hour prior to Sheldon performances and during intermission. Admission is free. For more information on exhibitions, visit the galleries' website at TheSheldon.org.

This exhibit will trace the evolution of St. Louis-born Wallace Herndon Smith's style with examples of his work from the 1930s to the 1980s and beyond. Born in 1901, Wallace Herndon Smith was a traditional painter who absorbed the visual



language of artists like Pierre Bonnard, Henri Matisse and Edward Hopper. In the late 1930s, his work gained attention from important American artists like Hopper, Walt Kuhn and Peggy Bacon. He traveled extensively to Europe, Mexico and America's East Coast, and had a summer residence and studio in Harbor Springs, Michigan, subjects of which are found in several works in the exhibit. His works have been exhibited widely including in New York at the Museum of Modern Art, in Philadelphia, St. Louis and many other cities.

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In 1927, Smith and his wife Kelse moved to Paris, where for a year he studied at *l'École des Beaux-Arts*. When he returned to St. Louis a year later, he enrolled in Washington University's architectural program, studying with Louis LaBeaume. He designed several homes, but painting remained the focus of his attention. In 1932 he and Kelse moved to New York and befriended artists including Kuhn, Bacon and 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's work gained attention and 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 places he visited 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.

The not-for-profit Sheldon Art Galleries exhibits works by local, national and international artists in all media. Over 6,000 square feet of the galleries' spaces on the 2nd floor are permanently devoted to rotating exhibits of photography, architecture, music art and history and children's art. A sculpture garden, seen from both the atrium lobby and the connecting glass bridge, features periodic rotations and installations, and the Nancy Spirtas Kranzberg Gallery on the lower level features art of all media. The Sheldon actively supports the work of St. Louis artists in all mediums and features a dedicated gallery with museum-quality exhibits by St. Louis artists, past and present.

Financial Assistance for this project has been provided by the Missouri Arts Council, a state agency. Support is provided by the Regional Arts Commission and the Arts and Education Council.

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Image caption: Wallace Herndon Smith, *Still Life with Pitcher, Cyclamen and Apples*, c. 1943, oil on canvas 16 x 20 inches, collection of the Bellwether Foundation #145.