

Grant Wood's Lithographs: A Regionalist Vision Set in Stone

September 14 through November 8, 2015

Opening Reception Monday, September 14, 2015, 7–9 p.m.

Nobel Conference Reception Tuesday, October 6, 2015, 6–8 p.m.



Grant Wood's Lithographs: A Regionalist Vision Set in Stone

September 14 through November 8, 2015 Hillstrom Museum of Art

he Hillstrom Museum of Art's complete set of examples of all nineteen of the lithographs made by famed Regionalist artist Grant Wood (1891-1942) is the result of the generosity of Museum namesake, the late Richard L. Hillstrom and, especially, Dr. David and Kathryn Gilbertson. All but one of the prints were donated by them, including three from Hillstrom alone, four from him and the Gilbertsons together, and the remaining eleven from the Gilbertsons alone. This exhibition, which is the first time these works are being shown as a group, is presented in memory of Hillstrom and in honor of the Gilbertsons.

Wood's lithos were created in the last half decade of his life and they were the locus of much of his artistic efforts in that period, when he painted only a handful of pictures and spent a great deal of time lecturing. As a group, the prints constitute around one fourth of the artist's mature body of work. Although any full consideration of Wood's career must therefore take them into account, they have tended to be neglected or dealt with superficially in the literature on the artist.

Wood had little experience in printmaking prior to beginning his work in lithography, though he appreciated the artistic legitimacy of prints and he had included lithography in the curriculum of the Stone City (Iowa) Art Colony that he helped created and run during the summers of 1932 and 1933. Lithography is a more recent form of printmaking than engraving and etching and because of its process is a freer medium, similar to drawing and more capable of capturing subtle nuances of handling and detail. The artist draws her or his image directly on a slab of fine-grained limestone using a greasy litho crayon. The printing surface is then moistened with water and then inked with oily lithographic ink, which adheres to all the marks made by the artist but not to the unmarked, water-soaked areas of the stone, since oil is repelled by water. A sheet of paper when pressed to the inked stone surface picks up the artist's image in remarkable detail and fidelity, and in reverse. When the edition of lithographs has been completed, the stone can be carefully cleaned of all the greasy marks from the litho crayon and then reused for a new print.

As a consummate, sensitive draftsman, lithography was a natural for Wood. He must have relished the opportunity presented when Associated American Artists (AAA) of New York contacted him and other prominent artists including Wood's fellow Regionalists John Steuart Curry (1897-1946) and Thomas Hart Benton (1889-1975) with a program that offered opportunities to create prints that would be marketed and distributed to the general public by AAA. The company, founded by art dealers Reeves Lewenthal and Maurice Leiderman in 1934, was highly successful, remarkable in the economic climate of the Depression. They sold the prints, made in large editions of 250 and offered for \$5 each, through department stores and mail order catalogues.

Wood was slow to begin producing lithographs and although his agreement with AAA was made in 1934 and several of the lithographic stones were shipped to him that same year, he did not actually create his first such print until 1937. Wood took printmaking very seriously, and he felt compelled to take time to become proficient in the new medium. And he was pleased how the program run by AAA made art accessible to many, as indicated in his comments in a 1938 letter: "I am so thoroughly convinced of the value of the five dollar original lithographs as the most effective means of producing an art-minded public for the future that I would be delighted to sign a long-time exclusive contract with AAA tomorrow. A contract based on the five dollar print—Depression or no Depression."

After discussing his ideas for a possible litho with Lewenthal at AAA, Wood typically would make a fully developed preparatory drawing. This served as his guide to transfer the image, in reverse and using a lithographic crayon, onto the lithographic printing stone. The stone was then carefully packed up for shipping to New York, where professional lithographer George C. Miller (1894–1965) would print a small group of trial proofs. AAA would send these to Wood for approval, which he signaled by signing his name in pencil to the proof that he wanted to be used a guide when Miller printed the whole edition.

Wood was pleased with the process and with his prints that resulted from it. He appreciated, too, the democratic aspect of AAA's program of providing relatively inexpensive but original art to people who were not wealthy. This attitude fit well with his Regionalist precepts of art relating to one's own life and the locale in which it was lived.

When Wood began his association with AAA and lithography, he was already well established as Regionalism's most prominent artist. After a period early in his career of working in an impressionist style and pursuing study abroad and European subjects, he famously devoted himself to an art that was American in style and imagery. This approach became firmly established with paintings such as his 1930 landscape *Stone City* (Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska) and his

double figure group *American Gothic* (Art Institute of Chicago), also of 1930, which made him nationally famous. Wood embraced his role as a fully American artist, writing and lecturing about Regionalism and creating a down-home, overalls-wearing persona to go with it.

But that persona also served for Wood as a convenient way to deflect interest in his personal life, including his sexuality. As a closeted homosexual man, he was in great danger of being recognized as such and because of it falling into disgrace and artistic oblivion. Many of Wood's contemporaries apparently knew his secret and their discretion helped keep him safe. This included artist Elizabeth Catlett (1915–2012), who came to the University of Iowa to study with Wood and became the first African-American to receive an M.F.A., and who in an interview in 2002 said that everyone knew about Wood's sexuality. Some newspaper coverage of Wood questioned why the eligible bachelor didn't seem interested in marrying, and this may have been an important factor in his finally tying the knot, in 1935, with an older divorcée named Sara Sherman Maxon, a marriage that was by ample evidence and many accounts ill-suited and that ended in separation in 1938 and divorce the following year.

Until recently, the major literature on Wood ignored his sexuality. Darrell Garwood's 1944 study *Artist in Iowa: A Life of Grant Wood* hinted at some of the artist's personal life, earning him the lasting enmity of Wood's sister, Nan Wood Graham. She controlled important resources about Wood after his death, including extensive scrapbooks, availability of images for publication, and her own recollections of her brother, and although she likely knew the truth about Wood, she felt it important to protect his reputation and artistic legacy. She told Wood scholar Wanda Corn that she burned Wood's letters, a remarkable scholarly loss surely motivated by her concerns about his privacy.

Explicit publication suggesting that Wood was a homosexual seems to have first appeared in 1997 in Robert Hughes' American Visions: The Epic History of Art in America, where the critic and historian described Wood as "a timid, deeply closeted homosexual." Since then, several important studies addressing the issue have appeared. In 2000, Henry Adams presented a paper titled "The Truth About Grant Wood" at the February 2000 Annual Meeting of the College Art Association, in a session titled "Regionalist Practices on the Margins of Queer Culture." In 2005, Joni Kinsey published "Cultivating Iowa: An Introduction to Grant Wood," in Grant Wood's Studio: Birthplace of American Gothic, which discusses a meeting in the administration of the University of Iowa in which it was recorded that a charge of homosexuality had been made against Wood. In 2006, James H. Maroney, Jr., first presented his Hiding in Plain Sight: Decoding the Homoerotic and Misogynistic Imagery of Grant Wood, which is available on the Internet with a copyright date of 2013. And in 2010, R. Tripp Evans published his meticulously researched Grant Wood: A Life.

Besides debuting the Hillstrom Museum of Art's full collection of Wood's lithographs, the major goal of this exhibition is to consider them in light of the new approach to the artist that does not ignore something so basic as his sexuality. The importance of such an undertaking is expressed by Henry Adams in his paper "The Truth About Grant Wood," where he states "What I would argue is that homosexual feelings fundamentally shaped [Wood's] artistic vision, and that his masterpieces are permeated with what might be termed a homosexual outlook" adding later that "Raising the issue of homosexuality means that we need to confront some sensitive questions, but it also refreshingly reveals that Grant Wood's art is not just about the American dream and a thoroughly conventional outlook on life. On the contrary, it is about issues which are very real, often painful, and truly significant. If we wish to understand what is truly great about Grant Wood's achievement, these issues must be addressed." And addressing these issues will, it is hoped, allow for a multivalent understanding of Wood and his "curiously compelling oeuvre," to quote James H. Maroney, Jr.

In addition to the lithographs, this exhibit includes additional works by Wood, including two more from the Museum's collection, a fine portrait drawing donated by Hillstrom and a copy of a 1937 limited edition of Sinclair Lewis' 1920 novel *Main Street* for which Wood created illustrations, donated by the Gilbertsons. And the exhibit includes five works lent from other collections, among them drawings on loan from Dr. John and Colles Larkin and from Childs Gallery in Boston (from the collection of Thomas S. Holman), a bronze self-portrait of the artist lent anonymously, and two oil landscape paintings lent by Keichel Fine Art of Lincoln, Nebraska and the Minnesota Museum of American Art in St. Paul. The Hillstrom Museum of Art is grateful to all these lenders.

Numerous scholars of Grant Wood have graciously assisted with inquiries related to the artist, his lithographs, and this exhibition of them. I would like to thank Henry Adams, Wanda Corn, Lea Rosson DeLong, R. Tripp Evans, James S. Horns, Bruce E. Johnson, Paul C. Juhl, Randall Lengeling, James H. Maroney, Jr., Terance Pitts, and Sean Ulmer. I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of students in my Museum Studies class (ART 255) in the Spring of 2015 at Gustavus Adolphus College, including Brandon E. Anderson, Leah M. Creger, Alexander L. Grafton, John M. Granlund, Paige M. Heitzman, Katherine G. Landreville, Elsa R. Larsen, and Alexandra R. Wetterlin, whose individual class presentations each considered one particular lithograph, providing a useful review of over half of Wood's prints.

In conjunction with *Grant Wood's Lithographs: A Regionalist Vision Set In Stone*, the Hillstrom Museum of Art is hosting a public lecture by R. Tripp Evans titled "Crossed Lines: Grant Wood's Prints for Associated American Artists," at 3:30 p.m. on October 18, 2015, in Wallenberg Auditorium, Nobel Hall of Science, Gustavus Adolphus College. The lecture, which is free and open to the public, is supported with funds from the Lefler Series of Gustavus Adolphus College and from the College's Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies Program. The Museum is grateful for this support.

Donald Myers Director Hillstrom Museum of Art



A note on the order and chronology of the lithographs:

There is a great deal of inconsistency in the literature on Wood regarding the years and order in which his prints were created. This exhibition is arranged chronologically, and the works are presented following the order and dating established by Bruce E. Johnson based on extensive research in the records and catalogues of Associated American Artists. The Museum is grateful to Johnson for sharing his findings. Johnson's book titled *Grant Wood: The 19 Lithographs* is to appear in 2016.

Grant Wood (1891-1942) **Tree Planting Group**, 1937

Lithograph on paper

8 3/8 x 10 3/8 inches

Gift of Dr. David and Kathryn Gilbertson

Wood's first lithograph is based closely on his earlier painting titled *Arbor Day* (1932, William I. Koch Collection), establishing an ongoing pattern of frequent close relationships between the lithos and his other works. The painting had been made as a tribute to two pioneering schoolteachers in the Cedar Rapids, lowa area where Wood spent much of his life, and it features a similar grouping of young men digging a hole for planting a sapling, held by an on-looking teacher surrounded by her pupils. *Arbor Day*, which includes additional landscape imagery around a fully-depicted schoolhouse, had been purchased by the Cedar Rapids School District and was inspired by the story of a grove of trees that had been planted decades earlier, one at a time on successive Arbor Days over several years, under the supervision of one of the teachers. Wood's painting hearkened back to the period prior to the prescient educator's efforts in planting an arbor, highlighting her foresight.

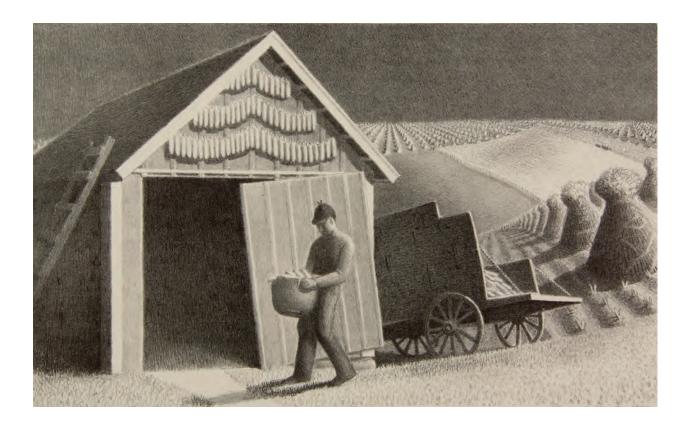
Not long after painting *Arbor Day*, Wood had the opportunity to sell it for six times the price the school had paid him, and he was allowed to reclaim it, agreeing to replace it with another picture. This likely was a large charcoal drawing, now in the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art on loan from the Cedar Rapids School District, that depicts the same, more concentrated imagery Wood reused in his *Tree Planting Group* lithograph.

The print is typical of the artist's style in both its reliance on geometric simplification of shapes, such as the gently rolling hills in the background or the regularized outlines of the three girls standing at the top of the stairs to the school, and in its use of patterning, such as the repeated lines and texture of the grassy plains that are about to be altered by the teacher and her cohorts' actions.

The large drawing has a few differences in detail from the litho. The faces of the children on and around the staircase are more fully developed than in the print, and the teacher, based on Miss Catherine Motejl, looks down and to her left at the student whose hand she holds. Visible over her left shoulder in the drawing is the faint image of a windmill, which is also found in the related *Arbor Day* painting and which, together with the overalls Wood typically wore by this time, was a personal symbol for the artist. In both the drawing and the print, the central figure wears overalls, but the young man behind him does not, and he may be meant as a grown up rather than a student assisting in the planting. The white handkerchief clearly visible in his back right pocket may signify something about his greater level of maturity.

Wood's sister Nan Wood Graham stated in her recollections titled *My Brother, Grant Wood* (published in 1993 after her death in 1990) that a preliminary charcoal drawing for *Tree Planting Group* was purchased by Arthur Mooney of New York, a photographer and art collector who in this exhibit is suggested as the model for Wood's later lithograph *The Midnight Alarm.* Because the drawing in Cedar Rapids remained there after Wood made it to replace the *Arbor Day* painting, the work bought by Mooney must have been a different, perhaps smaller depiction of the scene.

Imagery derived from the painting *Arbor Day* and related to the *Tree Planting Group* formed the basis for the reverse side of the lowa state commemorative quarter dollar when it was issued in 2004.



Seed Time and Harvest and Tree Planting Group appear to have been printed at the same time, and it's possible that Wood saw them as thematically complementary, since the planting theme of the first represents an investment toward a future benefit like the harvest in the second lithograph.

This second litho introduces in the prints the corn motif, a recurring image throughout Wood's art that earlier appeared in murals he painted in 1925 in the "lowa Corn Room" of the Montrose Hotel in Cedar Rapids (which also featured his chandelier of ears of corn) and in a number of impressionistic images of corn shocks. Corn became especially prevalent in Wood's work once he embraced the Regionalist ideal and eschewed subjects not related to the Midwest. He envisioned a "Corn Series" of paintings that, according to an article in January 1938 in the *lowa City Press-Citizen*, was to include several paintings he had already done plus an anticipated (but never undertaken) painted version of *Seed Time and Harvest*.

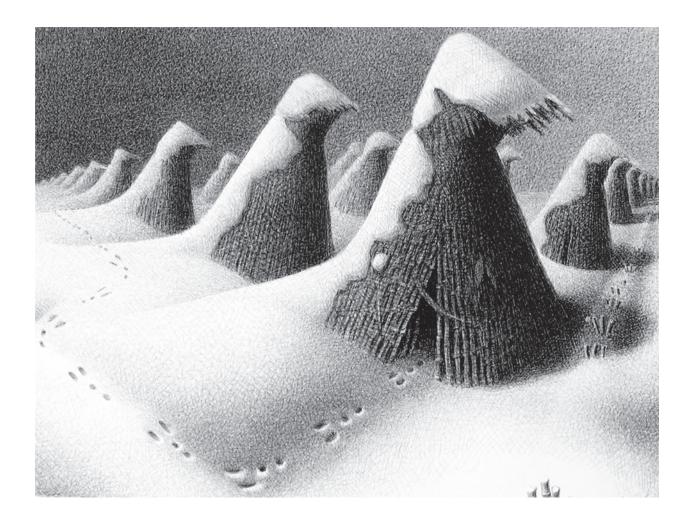
An ear of corn was perfect as an agrarian emblem, but it can also function as a phallic symbol. A subversive reading of this lithograph might take note of the basket full of ears of corn held by the farmer against his hips and groin. Those ears, plus many others depicted by the artist in the wagon and on the barn, more overtly signal abundance.

As was the case with the farm house in his famous 1930 painting *American Gothic* (Art Institute of Chicago), the architectural detail in *Seed Time and Harvest* was inspired by an actual structure Wood had observed, in this case a barn with draped strings of corn that he found appealing. Typical of the artist, he did not particularize the details of the composition, but created stylized shapes in continuous patterns, as in the ears of corn decorating the barn's gable and in the repeated shocks that draw the viewer's gaze into the background.

The farmer is carrying carefully selected ears of corn to store them as seed for next year's crop, while the rest of the yield will be processed or sold for consumption. By the 1930s hybridization of corn had become important, with the commercial introduction of hybrid seed having occurred in 1926, following experimentation such as that of Iowan Henry A. Wallace, who in 1924 won a gold medal in the Iowa Corn Yield Contest for the hybrid he developed, which he called "Copper Cross." Wallace, admired by Wood, would later serve as the Vice President of the U. S., and before that, as the Secretary of Agriculture, and it was during Wallace's earlier role that Wood did his portrait for a 1940 cover of *Time* magazine.

Wood was surprised when the editions of Seed Time and Harvest and Tree Planting Group both sold out in advance of being offered through the catalogues of American Associated Artists, and this established a pattern for many of the prints that followed. Typically Wood signed his lithographs "Grant Wood" in pencil, as is the case here. His first two prints are different from those that followed in that they frequently also have the date (as in this example), though there is some variability; and there are examples of both these lithos in which Wood has also inscribed the title in the lower left margin.

There exists a study for *Seed Time and Harvest*, location unknown, which is reversed in imagery, has a greater number of ears of corn affixed to the building, and is toned blue in the sky. It may be the same drawing that was lent by Wood's estate to the 1942 memorial exhibit that opened at the Art Institute of Chicago a few months after his death, which was listed in the exhibition catalogue with a price of \$1000 and was dated 1937.



Grant Wood (1891-1942)

January, 1938
Lithograph on paper
8 % x 11 % inches
Gift of Dr. David and Kathryn Gilbertson

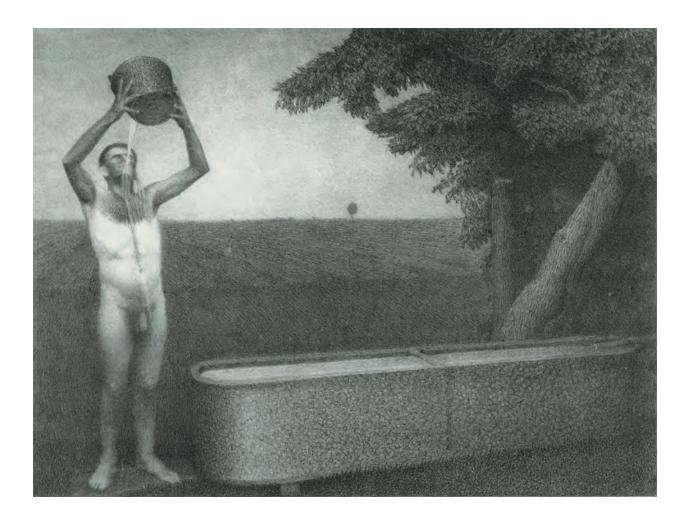
January is the first of Wood's five lithographs relating to a specific month, and he may have planned to make one for each of the months. Although landscapes were common in his work, the artist rarely showed them in winter, but in the lithos he returned to that season with two of his last works, February and December Afternoon. January is a compelling depiction of wintry cold, and Wood's oft-repeated motif of corn or corn shocks symbolize the fertility of the lowa landscape, while the series of rabbit tracks in the snow show that life is not extinguished but merely in seasonal dormancy. Wood had considered the month of January in an earlier work shown in 1920 whose title, January Thaw (location unknown), suggests it was very different in feel.

The motif of rabbit tracks in snow was one Wood also used around this same time in one of his illustrations for the 1937 limited edition of Sinclair Lewis' 1920 novel *Main Street* (an example of which is included in this exhibit). In his image there titled *Village Slums*, the tracks cut across paths formed in the snow by the residents of the dilapidated houses trudging to their outhouses and to their communal water pump, for an effect that is far less solitary than in this print. Here, the murky nighttime sky, along with the frigid and undisturbed snow mounding against and atop the seemingly endless repetition of corn shocks, creates a mood almost of despair, relieved only partially by the evidence of animal life. Wood said of this image, "Here in lowa the winters are severe, Heaven knows, but even in the height of winter, one does not get the feeling of utter bleakness and desolation It is a land of plenty here which seems to rest, rather than suffer, under the cold." American Associated Artists featured this image in a Christmas card with the message "Greetings of the Season."

Scholar Henry Adams has suggested that Wood may have in some way identified with the lonely bunny implied in the image, given difficulties in both his personal and professional life. His sham marriage was tumultuous and had alienated a number of his old friends, and colleagues at the University of Iowa where he was teaching were conspiring against him. Adams further suggests that Wood implied a bawdy pun through the image of a hole in the forward corn shock ("cornhole" being a recognized reference in noun form to the anus and in verb form to anal intercourse).

Wood's method of drawing with the lithographic crayon is evident in this work, which has areas of texture created from abstracted patterning of short strokes that seem almost like the craquelure on old ceramics and that effectively suggest the undulating, snow-covered surface in the field. Wood collected majolica ware and other forms of ceramics and may have appreciated the surface effects of minute cracks in the glaze that often occur with age or that can be deliberately caused for decorative effect.

An example of this lithograph was shown in an international exhibition in Venice and came to the attention of Pope Pius XI. After the Pontiff expressed interest in purchasing the print, Wood sent him an example as a gift. A large colored drawing in charcoal, chalk, and pencil of the image in reverse to the litho is in a private collection and is dated 1938 by the artist. It may have served as a model for a painted version Wood made, also with the imagery reversed (Cleveland Museum of Art), which is dated on its front 1940 though has an inscription on its reverse indicating it was completed in late January 1941. As with most of the few paintings Wood did in the last few years of his life, this one sold immediately, to Hollywood film director and producer King Vidor who said that it gave him "the whole feeling of America right in my own dining room."



Grant Wood (1891–1942) **Sultry Night**, 1938

Lithograph on paper
9 x 12 inches

Hillstrom Museum of Art purchase, with endowment acquisition funds

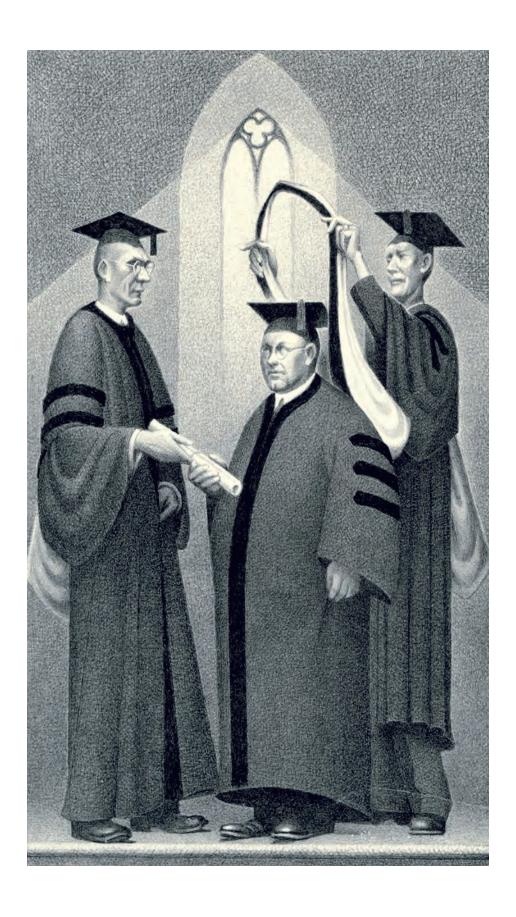
Sultry Night is one of the most controversial of all of Wood's works and one of his few nudes (most of which were male figures). Because of its frontal nudity, the U. S. Postal Service indicated that it would be deemed obscene, so Associated American Artists did not distribute it through the mail, and they curtailed its edition to just 100 examples instead of 250. Wood denied that there was anything sexual about this image, invoking the ostensibly chaste nudity of classical depictions of Apollo. He insisted that Sultry Night was simply a depiction of something common in the rural Midwest: "In my boyhood no farms had tile and chromium bathrooms. After a long day in the fields, and after chores were done, we used to go down to the horse tank with a pail. The sun would have taken the chill off the top layer of water; we would dip up pailsful and drench ourselves."

Wood also used the image in a painting from around the same time, and when he first showed it, to a group of friends invited to his home in lowa City, the reception was not positive. According to Darrell Garwood's 1944 biography of Wood, among the mixed crowd present, it was the men who were embarrassed, because the artist did not "follow the time-honored tradition of shrinking and shadowing the male parts." Despite this reaction, Wood submitted the painting to a major national exhibit, only to have the organizers pressure him to withdraw it. After that, Wood reportedly sawed off the nude figure and burned that portion of the painting before delivering the remainder to Dr. Wellwood Nesbit, a Wisconsin collector who was a longtime friend of the artist and was instrumental in his being awarded an honorary degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, with which Nesbit was associated. A letter from Wood to the organizer of the exhibit that rejected the painting indicated that collector Stanley Resor had first refusal to purchase the work, and perhaps after it had been cut down he was no longer interested. The truncated painting is today on loan from Nesbit's heirs to the Chazen Museum of Art at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, after having been the subject of a lawsuit following an attempt to sell it at auction in 2012.

Despite protests to the contrary, it is clear that both Wood and his sister Nan Wood Graham recognized the strong sensuality in the image that disturbed many. In describing the fate of the painting, Nan wrote that her brother was "bothered by the thought that some detractor might try to create evil where there was none." The artist made a distinctly phallic shape in the narrow, long water trough, which points attention to the nude man. He has a "farmer's tan," and the bright tones of his torso in the evening light draw attention to his nudity, as does the stream of water that pours down his chest, drawing the eye along a path that teasingly just avoids his penis. Author R. Tripp Evans has analyzed the pictorial elements that amplify the sensual effect of this work, including how the faint perspective lines of the background field recede to the point where the water first touches the man's body, and how the print's horizon line is perfectly even with his nipples while the line showing the closer edge of the field connects with the curving lines of his abdominal muscles, drawing the glance to the groin. There is a voyeuristic element due to the man's closed eyes, which allows the viewer to fully examine him with impudence.

Wood is known to have used models for most of the figures he depicted, and a photographer named Ruth Weller identified the man in *Sultry Night* as "James," telling in an interview in 1993 that Wood's assistant Park Rinard asked her to photograph a drawing Wood had done, evidently a study of the nude man, and that she was shocked. Although she did not specify who this James was, she suggested that it was possible he was still living at that time. R. Tripp Evans theorizes that the model, on the contrary, was British author Eric Knight (1897–1943), later famous as the writer of *Lassie Come Home*. Knight was in lowa City through the lowa Writers' Workshop and he lived for some time in a room rented in Wood's large house. In support of this identification is the fact that, as a European, Knight was likely uncircumcised, like the man in *Sultry Night*. Also, Wood enjoyed jokes and puns, and if the model were Knight, it would be another example of the artist's wordplay, especially if he found his friend Knight to be "sultry."

In addition to the painting, there is also a large charcoal drawing related to *Sultry Night*, titled *Saturday Night Bath* (1937; location unknown) and featuring two young men, one nude and the other disrobing, about to dip water out of a trough as two horses look on. In the background is a gabled barn similar to the one depicted in Wood's *Fertility* lithograph, and scholar Henry Adams believes that that print is, effectively, a less explicitly sexual version of the drawing.



Grant Wood (1891-1942) **Honorary Degree**, 1938 Lithograph on paper

Lithograph on pape

11 3/4 x 7 inches

Hillstrom Museum of Art purchase, with funds donated by the Reverend Richard L. Hillstrom, in honor of College President Axel Steuer

Honorary Degree is a particularly noteworthy lithograph because the central figure was based, obviously so, on Grant Wood himself. Although the man depicted is heavier than Wood actually was, his cleft chin and the large, round glasses are familiar from numerous photographs and self-portraits of the artist. Wood was the recipient of several honorary degrees, and the first of these, awarded by the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1936, seems to have inspired this image.

There is some confusion in the literature about the print, however, and it has been stated that it was based on the degree Wood received in 1938 from Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin. Further, it has been noted that when Wood received his degree, famed stage actress Katharine Cornell (1893–1974) was also there at Lawrence and the two exchanged remarks about not being educated. While it's true that Wood later sent an example of *Honorary Degree* to Cornell as a memento of their shared experience, as a preserved thank you letter of June 1939 from Cornell to Wood indicates, Cornell did not receive an honorary degree from Lawrence but did receive one from Madison at the same time that Wood received his, according to online records of honorary degrees bestowed by the two universities.

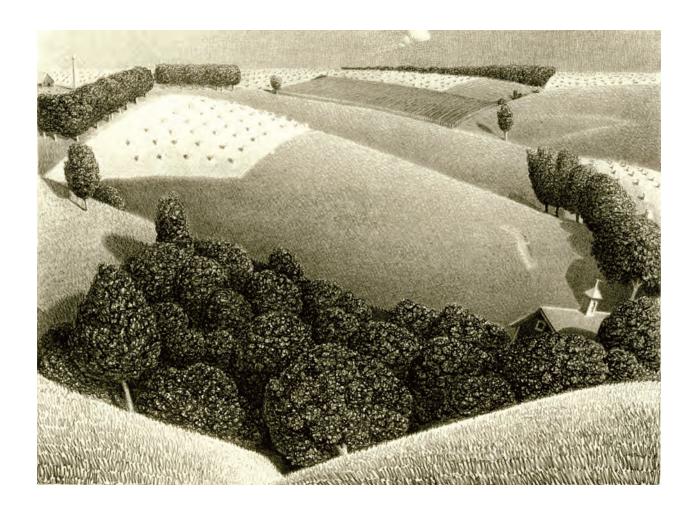
Part of the confusion likely stems from a tendency to view this image not as a generic, satirical commentary on the sometimes-dubious practice of awarding honorary degrees but instead to see it as a record of an event that really occurred. Wood's sister Nan Wood Graham fell into this trap when she later wrote that the two men who served as the models for the academic figures bestowing the degree on the man in the center were two of his colleagues from the University of Iowa who were also awarded honorary degrees on the same occasion. The models for the two men have been identified in contemporary reports as Norman Foerster and Carl E. Seashore, who were indeed colleagues from the University, but neither of them was given honorary degrees with Wood, neither from Madison nor from Lawrence.

In the image, Wood lampoons the central figure, contrasting his unsophisticated and rotund form with the flanking tall and thin academic figures bestowing his degree. Descriptions of the image from Associated American Artists support the supposition that it was not meant as a portrait of Wood, and they concentrate on the laughable pretense the artist was trying to convey: "Here caricatured is a disagreeable American vice: glorification of the second-rate by mumbo jumbo. The healthy hatred of sham behind this lithograph is eloquent. Note the stance of the magnifico handing Mr. Dope his diploma. Is it not the very essence of petty importance? And is not the entire vacuity of the Dope himself expressed in his flat-footed, well-fed posture?"

Even though the image should not be read as reportage and the persons shown should not be seen as true portraits of Wood and his colleagues, there is still significance in how the artist shows the figure based on himself. Following the strategy of caricature, he exaggerates certain telling features, and, for instance, makes the figure stouter than he himself was. This is reflected in a recollection made by Hazel E. Brown, a friend of Wood who wrote a reminiscence of him. Noting that *Honorary Degree* was a favorite of many of Wood's friends, she relates that Dr. Byron McKeeby, who had served as the model for the man in Wood's *American Gothic* painting (1930; Art Institute of Chicago), said of the image, "there he is, tubby, grinning, stubby toes peeking out from under the long gown." Brown also noted that this print was nicknamed "Scholastic Gothic," and Wood's use of the pointed gothic window in the background, which is reiterated in the shape of the academic stole about to be placed on the honoree, references his most famous work, *American Gothic*, a strategy he employed a number of times, including in his later lithograph *Fertility*.

Carl E. Seashore (1866-1949), model for one of the two tall men giving the degree in this image, was Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Iowa during Wood's years of teaching there. Seashore was a prominent psychologist who was interested in the psychology of music and whose 1919 Seashore Tests of Musical Ability are still in use today. He was also an 1891 graduate of Gustavus Adolphus College. Reports vary as to which of the two figures was based on Seashore, though an article in the *New York Herald Tribune* in April 1939 states that it was the man on the left. Images of Seashore, including a bust by American artist Alice Littig Siems (1897-?), seem to support this identification. Seashore's moustache seems slightly indicated in Wood's image, and the distinct shape of the man's earlobe is in accord with how Seashore's are depicted in his sculptural portrait (which exists in a bronze version at Gustavus Adolphus College and a plaster at the University of Iowa).

A small drawing in lithographic crayon and wash that was offered for sale at Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, in 1973, from the collection of Albert L. Hydeman, may be the same drawing that was offered in 1942 by AAA to researcher Marian S. Meyer, just a few days after Wood's death. She had inquired about the availability of the lithograph and was initially told it was uncertain, but the letter was then annotated to indicate that an example could be had for \$10. A drawing lent by Wood's estate to the 1942 memorial exhibit held at the Art Institute Chicago, listed in the catalogue with a price of \$300, may also be the same work, though the catalogue dates it to 1935, while the auction catalogue for the Hydeman drawing dates it to 1939, while also noting its inscription, "This is the original pencil drawing for Honorary Degree."



Grant Wood (1891-1942) **July Fifteenth**, 1938

Lithograph on paper
8 15/16 x 11 15/16 inches

Gift of Dr. David and Kathryn Gilbertson

July Fifteenth is the most Regionalist landscape image in all of Wood's lithographs and is similar to his painted landscapes both in his stylized, patterned approach to the rolling, cultivated countryside of eastern lowa and in the bird's-eye viewpoint that at once distances the viewer while also allowing numerous details from near and far to be seen. The artist's depictions of the countryside frequently resonate strongly with those who know the region where he worked. His fellow Regionalist painter John Steuart Curry (1897–1946) remarked, "I used to think Grant's landscapes were too neat, too well-ordered, until I saw his part of lowa. That's the way lowa is around Cedar Rapids, its uncrowded trees are perfectly molded, its earth is clipped, well cared for, its hills roll just as gently, as peacefully as he painted them."

Wood's imagery is not, however, photographic in any way, and his abstracting process can be seen here in the hundreds of vertical strokes indicating the grassy foreground or in the rounded, geometricized trees. The artist strikes a balance between the artificiality of a created image and the specificity of the actual region from which it derives. The general effect is strikingly timeless, although certain details such as the frequently-seen personal symbol of a windmill in the upper left or the belfry of the barn near the lower right add some specificity of locale, while the stillness of the image is slightly alleviated by the bit of puffy cloud near the top center, which seems in motion, suggesting a bit of breeze moving across the landscape.

The windmill image was incorporated into many of Wood's works, including his important self-portrait (in the Figge Museum of Art, Davenport). Woods' sister Nan Wood Graham quoted him as saying, "The Old Masters all had their trademarks, and mine will be the windmill. Wherever it is feasible to use it, I will."

As with a number of his works, *July Fifteenth* displays Wood's working method of dividing his picture plane into thirds as a way to create a visually dynamic composition. This involved trisecting the picture plane both horizontally and vertically, resulting in nine separate divisions. Each of these is then diagonally intersected, creating a series of nine crisscross marks. Along these the artist placed important compositional features, such as the diagonal line of tree trunks in the upper left division, the right edge of the cloud in the upper center division, or the springing point of the tree from the ground in the lower left division. This "dynamic symmetry" approach was one that Wood taught to his students.

July Fifteenth is the second of the artist's lithographs to deal with a specific month, and the only one that specifies a particular date. The literature on Wood rarely has addressed this. The significance of that date probably is that around the middle of July is when the crop of oats or wheat, indicated in the many shocks in the fields, is harvested. Although corn is harvested later, it is around this same time that the optimal pollination time occurs, and this may be suggested by what appears to be a cornfield in the upper center of the image. The fifteenth of July is also the "Ides" of July, and Wood may have been aware of the term, which in the Roman calendar was associated with the full moon and which for the months with 31 days, including, in that system, March, May, July, and October, fell on the fifteenth (the Ides fell on the thirteenth for the shorter months in the Roman calendar).



Grant Wood (1891-1942) **Shrine Quartet**, 1939

Lithograph on paper
8 x 11 % inches

Gift of the Reverend Richard L. Hillstrom

As in his following lithograph, *The Midnight Alarm*, in this print Wood used deep shadows for a highly dramatic image, though here the effect is theatrical and comical. What is first seen as a setting near the Egyptian pyramids, complete with rider-bearing camels, is soon recognized as a stage backdrop behind the singing quartet of Shriners. That fraternal group flourished in the 1930s across the U.S., as outlined in a 1938 article in *Life* magazine that published images of the organization's rites and accompanying costumes, including the characteristic red fezzes of the same sort worn by the four men in Wood's image. The male membership of the Shriners tended to include the most prominent citizens of the region. The Shriners were an offshoot of the Masons, specifically designed to be a fun, fraternal group, and the *Life* article described them as "prankish."

In Iowa, there were four Shrines, including the El-Kahir Shrine of Wood's Cedar Rapids. According to his friend Hazel Brown, Wood was associated with the Masons for three years (and in 1921 he painted a large mural titled *The First Three Degrees of Masonry* for the Masonic Library in Anamosa, Iowa, which was later transferred to the Grand Lodge of Masons in Cedar Rapids). Brown notes that Wood's *Shrine Quartet* features both satire and sympathy. This sometimes-uneasy combination is not uncommon in the artist's work, which, however, critics have frequently reduced to one-dimensional images that either make fun of Iowa and its people or that extol both.

There is some pretension to be read in the four men, who as important Cedar Rapidians must have taken themselves fairly seriously. Wood was frequently amused and sometimes disgusted by pretense, and at some level surely is mocking or at least teasing the four Shriners a bit. The image operates in a manner similar to Wood's famous and notorious 1932 painting *Daughters of Revolution* (Cincinnati Art Museum), in which he satirized the Daughters of the American Revolution. Wood had been criticized by the D.A.R. for being unpatriotic a few years earlier when he had his 1927-1929 stained glass *Veterans Memorial Window* (Veterans Memorial Building, Cedar Rapids) fabricated in Germany instead of in the United States (Wood was unable to find domestic glass artists of sufficient expertise to make the large memorial). In the painting, he returned fire, not only by implicitly mocking the organization's essentially un-American aristocracy of membership, but also by showing the three depicted D.A.R. members as detestable, scornful crones, whose wrinkly necks and shriveled faces were likened by Wood scholar Wanda Corn to "fleshy phalluses."

But unlike the unbridled dislike of Wood for what those three women represented, in the four Shriners we detect also his sympathy. There is sincerity and passion in the features of the men as they belt out some organizational hymn. Each face expresses something a bit different, the most earnest being the one at the left. At the same time, Wood's sense of understanding is tempered by the distorting quality of the stage lighting on the faces, and is turned to humorous mockery by the outlandish and amusing forms the figures take through their shadows. The four men likely were modeled after friends or acquaintances of the artist, as is indicated in Wood's letter in February 1939 to Associated American Artists thanking them for sending his copies of *The Midnight Alarm, Honorary Degree*, and *Shrine Quartet* and indicating that he planned to use some of his copies of the prints "to pay off some embarrassing obligations to those who posed for me for those drawings."

Shrine Quartet was the first work by Wood donated by Museum namesake Richard L. Hillstrom, who purchased it in Minneapolis in 1948, possibly in a store that sold AAA prints. Hillstrom paid \$7, which may have been the going rate by that time for Wood's lithographs.



Grant Wood (1891-1942) **The Midnight Alarm**, 1939

Lithograph on paper

11 % x 7 inches

Gift of Dr. David and Kathryn Gilbertson

The unusual profile of the pictorial field in *The Midnight Alarm*, a jagged, angular shape different from the rectangular ones in most of Wood's lithographs, adds to the tension of the subject. A young man, surprised from his sleep and dressed in a union suit that serves as his pajamas, cautiously sidles down the stairs, his attentive face a mask of concern. Wood heightens the dramatic fear of the unknown by emphasizing and even exaggerating the angle of the staircase and its handrail, plunging them in a downward diagonal that is visually balanced by the heavy, black shadow behind the man. The bright illumination from the kerosene lamp is indicated by Wood as an area of the print without any ink, and its radiance cuts across the man's face and also provides a highlight against which his right arm has been placed. That arm, along with the man's hands, tensed feet, and powerful thighs, add to the sense of alert expectation in this masterful condensation of sudden alarm in the night.

The image is related to a never-executed painting conceived by Wood in 1934. It was to be called *The Bath—1880*, and was to feature a man clad in red flannel underwear and preparing to bathe in a round wooden tub. Wood made considerable effort to locate an authentic pair of red underwear for the image, and evidently had a model (a Cedar Rapids man) in mind, which the garment would need to fit. He even placed advertisements in newspapers in the Midwest, but later, according to his sister Nan Wood Graham, he abandoned the plan, angered by unkind press coverage that suggested the effort was a publicity stunt. Wood may have been even more worried by insinuations in the papers that his interest in men's undergarments was less than innocent. And if the image in *The Midnight Alarm* in some way reflects how the man in the painting was to have looked, it is perhaps noteworthy that Wood emphasized not only the well-built physique of this young man but also, through patterns of folds of cloth and the resulting shadows and highlights, his crotch.

The man's facial features, which are particular and idiosyncratic, suggest the use of a specific model. This may have been John Arthur Mooney, a photographer from Charles City, lowa who knew Wood. A photograph of Mooney as a young man of perhaps twenty shows the same large eyes and ears, strong jaw, prominent nose, and curly hair atop a high forehead as in the print. Mooney's appearance in a later photograph, by famed photographer Clarence White (1871–1925) and in the Museum of Modern Art in New York, also supports this identification. Mooney was an art collector whose holdings, which he donated to the Charles City Public Library, include two of Wood's lithographs, *Honorary Degree* and *Tree Planting Group*, the latter inscribed by the artist "To Arthur Mooney." Mooney, according to Wood's sister Nan Wood Graham, bought the preliminary charcoal drawing for the lithograph *Tree Planting Group*, and he is known to have visited Wood's 1935 exhibition at New York's Ferargil Gallery. One of the co-authors of a 1939 catalogue of Mooney's collection in the Charles City library was Wood's colleague at the Stone City Art Colony, Adrian Dornbush (who was understood to be gay). Mooney was born in 1859 and in 1880, the year specified in the aborted painting with which this print is associated, he would have been around twenty, the approximate age of the man in the print.



John Arthur Mooney Image courtesy Mooney Collection, Charles City Public Library



Grant Wood (1891–1942)

Fruits, 1939
Lithograph with watercolor on paper
7 x 10 inches
Gift of Dr. David and Kathryn Gilbertson and the Reverend Richard L. Hillstrom

Wood's four lithographs *Fruits*, *Vegetables*, *Tame Flowers*, and *Wild Flowers* are unique in his group of prints in that they are a series, they are still lifes, they are hand colored, and, because of the last fact, they were sold by Associated American Artists, either in groups or individually, for \$10 per print instead of the normal price of \$5. The four images are emblems of the fecundity of the land in Wood's eastern lowa region and the variety of flora found there. They are formally related in their similar compositions, and are a mix between naturalism and stylization.

The four prints relate to paintings Wood made in 1932 for the Montrose Hotel in Cedar Rapids, collectively titled *The Fruits of Iowa*, which are murals depicting aspects of Iowa's farming industry and its practitioners. Among these was a still life *Basket of Fruit* now in the collection of Coe College in Cedar Rapids, the composition of which was repeated nearly identically, although in reverse, in Wood's lithograph *Fruits*. The coloring of the painting, done in oil, is bolder than that of its lithographic counterpart, which has watercolor.

In coloring these lithographs, Wood emulated the practice of the nineteenth-century American lithographic firm Currier and Ives, one of several Americana influences on his art, as he noted in a letter in late 1938. Doing so also provided a way for Wood to help his sister Nan Wood Graham and her husband Edward Graham, who were responsible for applying the delicate coloration to the black and white prints. They lived in Los Angeles and, like many during the Depression, had fallen on hard times. Wood's project provided a welcome opportunity for the artistically inclined Nan, who naturally had some interest in art making, if only because of her brother, and who had her own New York exhibition in 1938, of her reverse paintings on glass.

Wood brought his sister to lowa to train her in his painstaking method for coloring the lithos. His detailed instructions indicated where each of numerous subtle shades should go, and included, for instance, four different versions of green. In some areas, he directed that two, three, or four of these were to be layered over one another, in a particular order. He painted one of the sets of prints himself to serve as a visual model and the remainder were done by the Grahams after Nan returned home and taught her husband. The 250 examples of each of the four separate prints took over three years to completely tint, providing steady work for the Grahams, who were paid \$100 per month during the period that they were engaged on the project. The couple divided the work, having Nan do all the colors except for the greens, which her husband did.

Wood was very satisfied with the work his sister and her husband did and eventually instead of inspecting their efforts and then signing his name to each print they had colored, he had AAA send him the uncolored prints first and after signing them he sent them on to Nan and her husband, who in turn forwarded the colored prints directly back to AAA in New York.



Grant Wood (1891-1942) **Vegetables**, 1939

Lithograph with watercolor on paper
7 x 10 inches

Gift of Dr. David and Kathryn Gilbertson and the Reverend Richard L. Hillstrom

The composition of this lithograph, *Vegetables*, is quite similar to the first of this series, *Fruits*, though instead of a basket there is a white enameled bowl with blue decoration to hold the vegetables, a kind of vessel readily associated with rural life. The bulk of the produce is inside the bowl but, similar to the strawberries in *Fruits*, there are some items, specifically, four pea pods and an ear of corn, artfully placed outside of it. The vegetables depicted relate back to the 1932 murals Wood painted in the Montrose Hotel in Cedar Rapids, which include a painting of a *Farmer's Daughter* standing amidst growing vegetables while holding in her hands a bowl with beans, and an image of a *Farmer with Pigs*, a young man holding, against his thighs and hips, a bushel basket filled with ears of corn.

The ear of corn was an image frequently depicted by Wood and can be read not only as a sign of abundance but also as a phallic indicator. A personal identification with the image may in this print be signaled by its placement in the composition, immediately adjacent to where Wood put his signature.

In addition to offering original prints by Wood and other artists, American Associated Artists also sold merchandise with images of the artists' works. These included such things as placemats, ashtrays, and even patterned fabrics. Sylvan Cole, an art dealer who joined AAA after Wood's death and who in 1984 produced a catalogue raisonné of Wood's prints for AAA, recalled that the company offered sets of playing cards bearing the image of this lithograph as well as other sets with images of other prints in the series.

The ground for the prints in this series initially seems, at least in the first three, to be identical, based on something like the top of an elaborate table, and similar to the surface of the related painting of fruit from the Montrose Hotel murals (after which the *Fruits* lithograph was modeled). However, in each successive print in this series, that surface outline is different, as if Wood had an irregularly edged wood support that he turned to a different angle for the second and third prints and that he nearly obliterated in the fourth one, *Wild Flowers*.



Grant Wood (1891-1942) **Tame Flowers**, 1939

Lithograph with watercolor on paper
7 x 10 inches

Gift of Dr. David and Kathryn Gilbertson and the Reverend Richard L. Hillstrom

The title of this lithograph is rather tongue-in-cheek and presupposes that of the next in the series, *Wild Flowers*. In addition to several pots with growing flowers, Wood has also included a garden trowel, a couple of dandelions that might be seen as humorous interlopers (since they are weeds amongst the cultivated flowers), and a couple of fallen petals from the geranium in the center of the image. The last element may have been intended as a nod to the long tradition in still lifes of including an indication of the passage of time, such as a withered flower or a piece of fruit that has started to rot. Wood had painted numerous floral still lifes earlier in his career, in the late 1920s and in 1930, but had abandoned the genre in favor of landscapes and genre scenes until returning to it with the lithographs in this series.

Two of the most prominent of the different types of "tame" flowers depicted here may have been of particular significance for Wood. He is recorded as saying that he was very fond of geraniums, and that he liked their smell. And the large pansies on the right of the image may be a sly reference to his sexuality. "Pansy" had been used to refer to homosexuals at least as early as the beginning of Wood's century, and he may have been aware of the 1933 novel by Robert Scully titled *A Scarlet Pansy*, which described itself in its dust jacket as "The first honest and really complete story of 'one of those men."

Given the success of these colored lithographs, both in terms of sales and as a way for his sister Nan Wood Graham and her husband Edward Graham to make a living, Wood planned to do additional prints that Nan and Edward could color. A letter he wrote to Nan in May 1940 describes a visit to lowa from Reeves Lewenthal of Associated American Artists during which Wood showed him a sketch for a farm dinner scene that he wanted to develop into a colored lithograph to be titled *The Family Saying Grace*. Lewenthal was enthusiastic about the plan and felt that there would be a strong market for the print. He and Wood agreed that the artist should do both it and a second print not described in the letter as soon as possible, so that the coloring process could be started in time for fall sales.



Grant Wood (1891–1942)

Wild Flowers, 1939

Lithograph with watercolor on paper
7 x 10 inches

Gift of Dr. David and Kathryn Gilbertson and the Reverend Richard L. Hillstrom

This fourth of Wood's series of watercolor-tinted lithographs is different from the others, both thematically and compositionally. Instead of having the title imagery occupy the center of the depiction, the artist here has arranged the wild flowers, including violets, trillium, jack-in-the-pulpit, and Dutchman's breeches, around a rough piece of rock. Unlike the fruits, vegetables, and potted plants in the other three prints, the plants shown here are not cultivated ones. The setting is different, too, and instead of the irregularly shaped surface on which all the other images are placed, here the ground has devolved into something resembling a forest floor or an untamed landscape, and there's also a log on the lower left, which has various fungi and mushrooms and even some moss growing on it. Atop that log is a frog hungrily eyeing a fly as it buzzes by.

The pairing of *Tame Flowers* and *Wild Flowers* suggests a comparison between rural life and life in the town or the city, a theme that Wood explored in several of his works, such as his 1931 painting titled *Appraisal* (on loan to the Dubuque Museum of Art from the Carnegie-Stout Library of Dubuque), in which a young farm wife and an older city woman to whom she may be selling a chicken eye each other critically, or his late pair of paintings titled *Spring in Town* (1941; Swope Art Museum, Terre Haute, Indiana) and *Spring in the Country* (1941; Cedar Rapids Museum of Art).

The Hillstrom Museum of Art's set of Wood's four colored lithographs formerly belonged to Mrs. Margaret Averill of Cedar Rapids. Her husband Worth Averill was of a prominent family that included an lowa partner of Cyrus McCormick, founder of the International Harvester Company. Worth Averill was a nephew by marriage to Wood, since his mother was a sister of Wood's wife Sara Sherman Maxon Wood. In addition to the lithographs, there were other works by Wood in the family, and Mrs. Averill described, in a 1984 interview for the Junior League of Cedar Rapids Oral History Project, having four by the artist that included two scenes with boats in a harbor, one of them Wood's 1924 oil painting *Boats at Piano Sorrento* (which resurfaced in a 2002 auction). She told that she knew Wood well, and that he and Sara had stayed at her home in Three Rivers, Michigan while the artist was working on a commission in Kalamazoo. Mrs. Averill also recalled visiting Wood in the hospital not long before he died.

A photograph exists of Wood signing an example of this lithograph, *Wild Flowers*, while artists Arnold Blanch (1896-1968) and Doris Lee (1905-1983), who were married and who also made prints through Associated American Artists, look on. Lee and Blanch, like Margaret Averill, visited Wood during his final weeks in University Hospital.



Grant Wood (1891-1942)

In the Spring, 1939
Lithograph on paper
8 15% x 11 15% inches
Gift of Dr. David and Kathryn Gilbertson

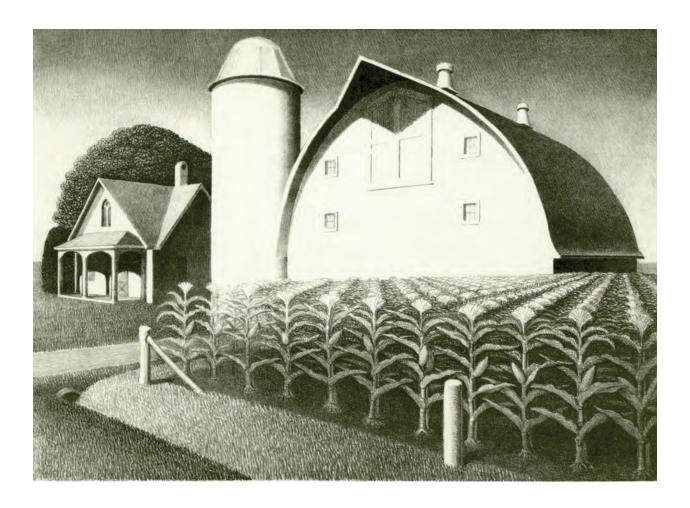
In the Spring depicts a farmer resting briefly in his task of digging a long line of postholes. The image calls to mind a painting by Jean-François Millet (1814-1875), a French artist likely known to Wood from his periods of study and painting in France in the 1920s. Millet's *The Man with a Hoe* (1860-1862; The J. Paul Getty Museum) also features a rural laborer holding a long-handled implement and standing in the right half of the composition, his upper torso rising above the horizon line. Although that painting was in California by 1893, it was known through reproductive prints that Wood could have known. Millet's worker, a poor peasant who seems broken by the weight of his labors, is in contrast to Wood's figure, who smiles even though he's already done a lot of work. Where Millet wanted to draw attention to his subject's harsh living conditions, Wood, in true Regionalist style, is celebratory of the agrarian life.

In 1935, just a few years before making this lithograph, Wood published an essay titled "Revolt Against the City," an explanation of his aims for Regionalism. In it he urged artists to embrace the life around them. For those working in the Midwest, this meant throwing off undue influence on their art from the East Coast and Europe, and also recognizing the viability of the farm and farmers as a subject matter for art. Although parts of Wood's essay seem rather like boosterism, his attitude toward his chosen subject matter and his region was not simplistically uncritical. While noting that the Midwest farmer was proud, and that his life was "engaged in a constant conflict with natural forces" and was therefore "essentially dramatic," Wood stated that a "true regionalist is not a mere eulogist," but that "he may even be a severe critic."

Many viewers of Wood's art have tended to see a satirical intent on his part, and the larger-than-life figure in this print has an inscrutable expression that might be read as smug. The artist, however, could easily have meant there to be ambivalence in the depiction. He shows a man who physically towers over the entire landscape, a giant overshadowing the farm, the cattle, the very earth. At the same time, he gives an awkwardness to the man's stance, an unheroic hunch to his shoulders, and an unpleasantly superior quality to his gaze.

The overalls worn by the man in this image were a kind of personal emblem for Wood, who affected a homespun, rural look by regularly wearing them in public, as seen in numerous photos of him, including ones with him standing next to his major paintings after each was finished, as well as in pictures of him teaching at the Stone City Art Colony in 1932 and 1933.

A large pencil drawing related to this print is in the Butler Institute of American Art (Youngstown, Ohio). It is perhaps the artist's preparatory drawing and is very similar in imagery, including in its inclusion of Wood's visual signature of a windmill seen in the distant right background. In the drawing, however, the phallic post behind the man is longer and comes closer to touching him. Both images show splitting in the middle of the left foreground post, more strongly emphasized in the lithograph where the exposed cut edge is brightly lit and makes the cracks seem darker. Wood may have added this detail to suggest a bit of ineptitude on the part of the farmer, since a cracking post is not the best to use; or he may have been making a sly and salacious reference to an anus, which it somewhat resembles; or he may have just appreciated the visual interest it provides.



Grant Wood (1891–1942)

Fertility, 1939
Lithograph on paper
9 x 11 % inches
Gift of Dr. David and Kathryn Gilbertson

Corn is again a dominant motif in this print, *Fertility*, one of the most visually satisfying of all Wood's lithographs. The impressive crop in the image is typical of his admiring depictions of the fertile lowa farmland that celebrate his rural milieu. A friend of Wood, Hazel E. Brown recounted in her reminiscence of the artist that *Fertility* was her favorite of her friend's prints. Brown had a shop in which she sold the lithographs, and this work was there nicknamed "Hazel's Pregnant Barn" because of the overwhelming sense of fertility it evokes.

The image recalls the earlier *Seed Time and Harvest*, serving like a mid-summer prelude to that work. Both prints indicate abundance, here through the motif of a patterned stand of corn plants that are part of a larger field extending into the picture frame from the right side in front of the large barn and silo. At the left of the composition is a house that is dwarfed by the other buildings and, especially, by the crop. The house is similar, though not identical, to the one depicted in Wood's *American Gothic* (1930; Art Institute of Chicago), including in its covered porch and, above it, a pointed gothic window. The pointed arch form was reused by the artist several times after its appearance in the famous painting, and is reiterated in this composition by the peaked gable and arched top of the barn.

This litho likely also operated on a more personal level. The bright, nearly white, smooth silo is decidedly phallic in form, and that kind of imagery is also to be found elsewhere in the print, notably in the most prominent stalks of corn near the lower right corner of the composition. There the single ears of corn jut upward, and in their defiance of gravity each is like an erection. Wood quite likely knew a painting with similar imagery by his fellow Regionalist artist John Steuart Curry (1897–1946), who became his friend and joined him as a teacher at Wood's Stone City Art Colony in 1932 and 1933. Curry's 1933 oil *Kansas Cornfield* (Wichita Art Museum) focuses on a single, fully-developed corn plant that nearly fills the picture frame and that includes anthropomorphic features such as a large tassel as the head, outstretched leaves that function like arms, and a prominent mature ear of corn that draws attention by its placement and its phallic form, and also by the unusual pink shades of the silk that protrudes from its husks. The painting has been discussed as a kind of self-portrait of Curry and that identification appears to have been known to Thomas Hart Benton (1889–1975), the third of the great triumvirate of Regionalist artists, and it may have been known to Wood as well.

Scholar Henry Adams has suggested that *Fertility* represents a less overtly sexual version of a large drawing titled *Saturday Night Bath* (location unknown) that features two nude males and that was related to Wood's notorious *Sultry Night* lithograph. The barn in the background of that image is very similar to the one in *Fertility*, although there it is depicted in nighttime shadows with its loft door invitingly open.

A large related drawing, which sold through Christie's New York on December 2, 2004 (location unknown), may have been the preliminary work for the lithograph. It is very similar to the print, although generally darker, as if the time of day depicted were dusk, and the ear of corn on the plant just behind and right of the upright post in the lower right of the composition is more prominent due to it being whiter than the others. The drawing is likely the same one that was lent by Wood's estate to the 1942 memorial exhibit held at the Art Institute of Chicago, which was listed in the exhibition catalogue with a price of \$750.



The haunting, wintry depiction of three horses on a frigid, February evening is one of Wood's most compelling images, in any medium. Set in a nearly desolate landscape, the loneliness of which is relieved only slightly by the tiny indication of a farmstead in the distant background, it forces the viewer into the cold night, making her or him the object of the equines' arrested attention. The creatures are silhouetted into blackness, and their manes seem chillingly windswept or even frozen into shape. Wood has artificially manipulated their forms, and, except for the sense of cold they convey, they are like carousel horses. He thus plays with his viewers, in a manner similar to his use of a child's rocking horse as the model for the steed in his 1931 painting *Midnight Ride of Paul Revere* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

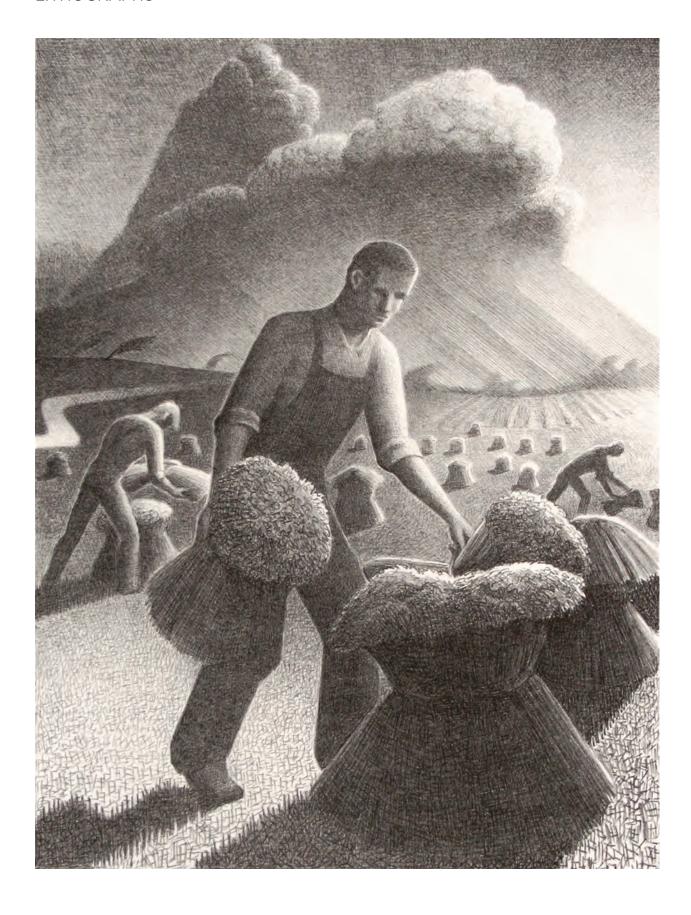
The rectangular picture field in this print is organized into a series of triangles, actual or implied. In the immediate foreground, instances of that shape represent bits of the ground just outside the fence and, as with the attention from the horses, these serve to connect the viewer, who stands on that same ground, with the scene. The head of the horse at the right is nearly triangular, and the bends in the barbed wire suggest incomplete triangles while the stick to which they're attached forms an actual triangle with the fence post and the loop that connects it and the stick. This configuration is a kind of inexpensive gating system, sometimes called a Hoover Gate after the Depression-era President, in which the loop that holds the two uprights nearly together could be slipped over the top of the post to allow the barbed wire to be laid down on the ground, evidently in this case causing the wires to be bent. Wood paid special attention to the details of the fence and wire, and while he generalized out the particulars of the horses, he used the bright white of snow to pick out the specifics of the fencing system, including the sharp barbs, which amplify the sense of wariness in the horses. The announcement by Associated American Artists when this litho was first offered claimed that Wood had witnessed the scene depicted while driving in February and was so entranced that he stopped and made a sketch on the spot.

Another suggested inspiration for February, however is a poem by Wood's friend Jay Sigmund (1885–1937), a Regionalist poet who influenced him to embrace lowa as a subject matter in his art. Sigmund wrote several poems that connect with Wood, including one titled *Grant Wood*, and the first verse of his *Winter Pastoral* seems particularly relevant:

Out on the winter-battered hills The three gray horses paw; No harness binds them to the thills; The snow is thin; the east wind chills— No manger there; no straw.

Although the manger cited in Sigmund's poem alludes to Christmas, Wood's image seems too disturbing for such a festive theme. However, as with the far less spooky scene in his earlier *January* litho, *February* was issued by AAA as a Christmas card. As with the later *December Afternoon*, the final of the artist's three winter-themed lithographs, prints in the snow are an important element of this image. In all three of these wintry works, Wood plays with the viewer by confounding expectations of how such prints should appear, and here in *February* its overall mysterious quality is supported by the illogic of the hoof prints in the foreground, which do not seem to make sense with the position of the forward horse.

A large charcoal drawing of *February*, with the imagery in reverse, was sold through Christie's, New York, in December 2008, fetching over \$1 million (location unknown). It was from the collection of Alice Lawrence, and had formerly been with dealer James H. Maroney, Jr., author of the 2006 study *Hiding In Plain Sight: Decoding the Homoerotic and Misogynistic Imagery of Grant Wood.* It may be the same drawing that was lent to the 1942 memorial exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago by Timothy Fuller Marquand.



Grant Wood (1891-1942)

**Approaching Storm*, 1940

Lithograph on paper

11 % x 9 inches

Gift of Dr. David and Kathryn Gilbertson

Like the earlier litho *In the Spring*, this print features a monumentalized figure of an overalls-clad farmer who looms above the horizon line. The ominous thunderheads in the background of *Approaching Storm* are a rarity in Wood's work, unlike his fellow Regionalist artists, including John Steuart Curry (1897–1946), where severe weather was depicted with some frequency. The men working in the field pay little attention to the coming storm but continue their efforts, steadily working to cover the tops of the shocks of wheat or oats with additional sheaves in order to channel the imminent rain and prevent the crop from becoming soaked.

The men are shown as solid and powerful heroic figures. This is emphasized in the man in the foreground by a line of highlighting around his head and his shirt collar, a halo effect that aggrandizes him. The figure in the left middle ground is similarly strong, and he was repeated in a portrait Wood did for *Time* magazine the same year depicting Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace, a fellow lowan who the next year would become Vice President. Similar figures are to be found in other of Wood's works, such as the strong young man bending as he digs a hole in the earliest litho *Tree Planting Group*, or in one of the artist's last paintings, *Spring in Town* (Swope Art Museum, Terre Haute, Indiana) from 1941.

Approaching Storm has been associated with the threat of war that loomed on the horizon in 1940 and, closer to home for Wood, with the stormy relationship between him and other faculty at the University of Iowa, where he had been teaching since 1934. Art historians Lester Longman and Horst W. Janson, Wood's colleagues at the University, considered his art to be sentimental and provincial, and Janson seems to have held a grudge against Wood, whom he blamed for his having been fired after taking students to a Picasso exhibition in Chicago.

Longman's objection to Janson's firing led to him being rehired, and in the fall of 1940, the two began a concerted effort to discredit Wood, who took a leave of absence from the University for the 1940-1941 academic year to distance himself from the situation. In a private University meeting in 1941, the rumors that Wood was homosexual were openly discussed, and earlier a reporter from *Time* magazine had shown up in lowa City looking for a juicy story, likely tipped off about the situation by Longman, who later wrote to the magazine a disingenuous letter damning Wood with faint praise and stating that Wood's "personal persuasions" had nothing to do with his leave of absence. Later, after Wood's death, Janson not only wrote articles critical of Wood, comparing Regionalist work with Nazi-sanctioned art, but also he omitted any reference to Wood or Regionalism in his art history survey text, which became a standard and influential teaching tool in colleges and universities for many years after it was first published in 1962.

The actions of Longman and Janson were disheartening to Wood, and he may have meant the image in *Approaching Storm* as an exemplar for himself to follow, by ignoring negative events while working to mitigate their effects. After his year away, the artist was reinvigorated and ready to return to teaching at the University, though his illness and subsequent death prevented this from happening.

A small sketch for *Approaching Storm* (on loan from a private collection to the Dubuque Museum of Art) is very similar in appearance to the lithograph, although in the print Wood heightened the sense of threat by darkening the distant storm clouds.



Grant Wood (1891–1942) *March*, 1941
Lithograph on paper
8 % x 11 ¾ inches
Gift of Dr. David and Kathryn Gilbertson

March, the fourth of Wood's lithos to consider particular months, is a sparse and abstracted image that well indicates the late winter moment just before spring bursts forth. An advertisement for the sale of the print by Associated American Artists notes that "the howling loneliness of the wind-swept hill tells its story of strength and coming fertility," while another ad calls the lithograph "Grant Wood at his best," noting the artist's "genius in being able to endow his subject matter with an extraordinary originality and an amazing sense of design," and urging patrons to send in their orders for the print promptly since "it will certainly not be long available."

The design of this lithograph relates to a 1935 painting titled *Death on the Ridge Road* (Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts), which was inspired by a near-fatal auto accident involving Wood's friend Jay Sigmund (1885–1937), an lowa poet who encouraged Wood to find inspiration for his art in his own region. The car in which Sigmund was riding was sideswiped by another car as it tried to avoid collision with a truck and Sigmund was injured when his vehicle rolled over twice. Some of the drama of that painting, which was purchased by songwriter Cole Porter (1891–1964), reappears in the print in the dramatic zigzag of its composition, which quickly pulls the viewer into the image, bringing him or her up the hill and abreast of the farmer in the horse-drawn wagon.

The abstract quality of the image is impressive. Wood's texture is visually exciting and demanding of attention, especially in the lower part of the composition, which is entirely covered with circular strokes and which takes up nearly a quarter of the entire sheet. Other recognizable elements, in addition to the farmer and his wagon and horses, include a house, a barn that's gabled similarly to others in Wood's images, and a tree bent by the wind, a motif repeated from the earlier *Approaching Storm*. Without these specific elements, the print could almost be an example of non-representational art.

Wood experimented with doing this lithograph in reverse but was evidently unsatisfied and only three examples of that version are known to have been printed. A small drawing in charcoal and white chalk that may have been a preparatory work for the earlier version of the lithograph was sold by Nan Wood Graham to the Davenport Museum of Art (now the Figge Art Museum). There is also a related large charcoal drawing (location unknown), with the imagery oriented the same as in the final litho. It has several additional trees, includes in the middle ground a windmill near the house and barn, and has a road that is less artificially placed and that progresses back into the space less vertiginously. In comparing the two images, it almost seems like Wood did not fill in all the details of the drawing when transferring the image onto the lithographic stone but instead decided to enhance the abstract quality of the work by eliminating some of them. The large charcoal may be the same as the work titled *Early March* that was lent to the 1942 memorial exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago by Dr. and Mrs. Wellwood Nesbit, frequent patrons of Wood from Madison, Wisconsin.

LITHOGRAPHS



Grant Wood (1891-1942) **December Afternoon**, 1941

Lithograph on paper

9 x 11 % inches

Gift of Dr. David and Kathryn Gilbertson

Several of Wood's artworks were criticized for lacking modernity, and for the rosy picture they presented in the 1930s during the height of the Depression. *December Afternoon*, the last lithograph based on a particular month and the last one offered through Wood's normal distribution channels of Associated American Artists, is one of the artist's most nostalgic images, especially amongst the prints.

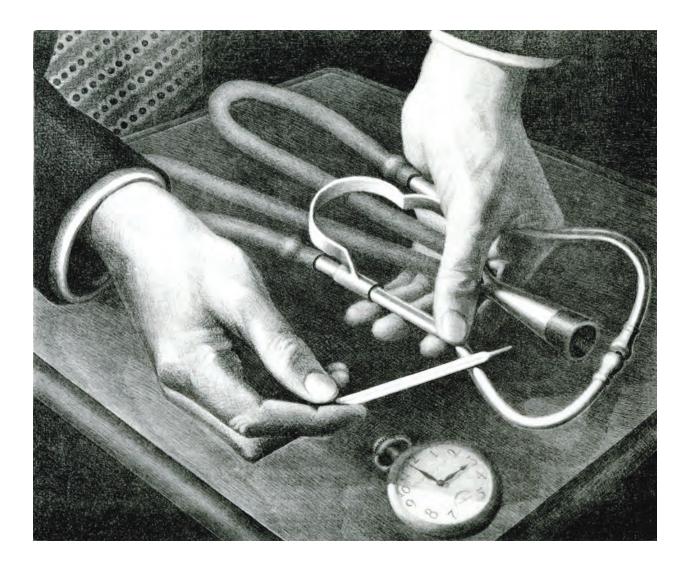
Wood depicts a rural scene with a young man leading a horse that's decked out with bells, to hitch it to an open sleigh for a ride. Perhaps this is a popular pastime at this farmstead, since the thills of the sleigh lay on the ground and there are tracks in the snow from the horse's last dash around the countryside, maybe earlier that day. As the horse and sleigh are readied for the final foray of the day, the afternoon shadows are lengthening, creating dramatic patterns, from the sleigh and the short wall at the right side, plus strong contrasts of light and dark.

The image, which was used many times for Christmas cards issued by AAA, has a festive, joyful quality to it, and it calls to mind the light-hearted depictions in the prints of Currier and Ives, which were an influence on Wood. He was very familiar with those prints and helped his friend and early supporter David Turner form his extensive collection of over one hundred such works (today in the collection of the Busse Library at Mount Mercy University in Cedar Rapids). One of these, titled *American Homestead Winter* (1868), is relevant because it depicts a homestead with figures in a horse-drawn sleigh.

Although the image in *December Afternoon* is pleasant, there are some peculiar qualities, of the sort that Wood apparently enjoyed and that tend to hold the viewer's attention. One of these is the appearance of the trees at either side of the barn, which seem not only barren from winter but also either severely trimmed or even broken off, perhaps suggesting an earlier, severe storm. The tracks in the snow initially appear odd because while there are some from the horse, there are no accompanying ones visible from the sleigh; but careful inspection reveals that Wood has lined up the ends of the runners with the edge of the picture frame, which disallows the tracks to be depicted. A drawing in charcoal that may have been preparatory for this lithograph has the runners extending beyond the image frame, for a less peculiar effect. In that drawing, the size of the barn seems rather larger, which makes it seem less like a toy structure that is too narrow on its end to be real. The drawing was lent by Dr. Clarence Van Epps of Iowa City for the 1942 memorial exhibit at the Art Institute of Chicago and later was given by him to the University of Iowa Art Museum.

Despite its chilly imagery, *December Afternoon* was created during a period of extreme heat in August 1941, in Clear Lake, lowa, where Wood and his secretary and assistant Park Rinard had moved for the summer so the artist could get away and focus on work. Wood was very happy there, reinvigorated by the seclusion it offered. An article published August 18 in the *Globe-Gazette* of nearby Mason City described this litho and its inspiration, noting that the barn was based partly on that at the farm of Lee Boyd, who also had the "Portland box" cutter sleigh Wood depicted and from whom Wood's studio and living quarters, in an old train depot, was rented. Boyd's son Jim was the model for the young man leading the horse, which had been sketched at the nearby farm of George Perkins. The article concludes with discussion of Wood's expected return to teaching duties at the University of Iowa in the fall, which was largely prevented by the advancing illness that soon took his life.

LITHOGRAPHS



Grant Wood (1891–1942)

Family Doctor, 1941

Lithograph on paper

10 x 11 15/16 inches

Gift of Dr. David and Kathryn Gilbertson

Unlike his other prints, this one was not distributed through the postal service and retail stores but was made through Associated American Artists for Abbott Laboratories, a pharmaceuticals company in Chicago that used art as a marketing tool in their magazine, *What's New.* AAA in 1939 became Abbott's art broker, and other well-known artists associated with AAA also created works for Abbott, as when Regionalist Thomas Hart Benton (1889–1975) was commissioned to do a series of eight paintings about the horrors of war.

Doctors with a subscription to Abbott's magazine were able to mail in a coupon for a free, signed example of *Family Doctor*. Although it was made in an edition of 300, more than the normal 250, many of the examples seem not to have survived. Perhaps because of the nature of their distribution, that they were free, and that those who acquired them were not print collectors, their value was not recognized and they were not always preserved. The print thus is relatively scarcer than other of Wood's lithos. The magazine gave advice about how to display *Family Doctor*, specifying that it should have a light cream or gray mat and a plain black or natural wood frame.

The image of a doctor's hands holding a stethoscope and a thermometer had obvious appeal to the intended audience, and it also served as homage to Wood's own doctor, A. W. Bennett. He had served as Wood's model earlier, for an image titled *General Practitioner* that was one of Wood's illustrations for a 1937 limited edition of *Main Street* (first published 1920) by Sinclair Lewis (1885–1951). Bennett had treated both Wood and his mother, Hattie, and it was he who referred Wood to the University Hospital in Iowa City when in November 1941 the artist complained about not feeling well.

Wood left a description of this print that indicates his gratitude to Dr. Bennett, and to other physicians: "Let this be a tribute to the skill and artistry of the Family Doctor from one who for many years has known him well, sometimes in his professional role, occasionally as a critic, always as a friend." Wood may have meant to indicate the dedication of doctors to their jobs through the time shown on the pocket watch, which can be understood as 3:00 a.m.

A letter of December 11, 1941 from Wood's assistant Park Rinard to Reeves Leventhal and his associate Maurice Leiderman of AAA is a response to their having heard that Wood had died. Rinard opens his letter, "I told Grant about his reported demise and he vigorously denied it," then he indicates that they expected Wood's gallbladder to be drained or removed, that his discomfort had been pinpointed to that organ, and that there were no ulcers and Wood's heart, lungs, and blood were healthy. He states that Wood is in good spirits. He then inquires as to whether or not there were still examples of the Abbott lithos to be signed, noting that Wood wanted to be sure he did everything necessary before his operation.

Wood had exploratory surgery on December 19, which revealed the extensive spread of cancer from his pancreas and into his liver and other areas. He signed and titled some of the *Family Doctor* lithographs from his room at the University Hospital, and Dr. Bennett's wife later claimed that Wood gave prints to "every janitor, nurse, orderly, and doctor at the hospital." Wood died there on February 12, 1942, just a couple hours before his fifty-first birthday.



Grant Wood (1891–1942) **Self-Portrait Caricature**, 1939 Ink on paper $5\ \frac{1}{2}\ x\ 3\ \frac{1}{2}$ inches (image; sheet dimensions $9\ x\ 6\ \frac{3}{4}$ inches) Lent by Dr. John and Colles Larkin

This drawing is dated 1939 and is inscribed across the top of its sheet "To Carl Laemmle—a self portrait—Grant Wood—1939." Laemmle, famed Hollywood filmmaker and founder of Universal Studios, was also an avid collector of autographs, including others such as that of Russian composer and pianist Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943). His letter of December 3, 1938 requesting Wood's autograph was preserved by the artist's sister Nan Wood Graham. In it, Laemmle notes that he had enclosed a sheet of parchment paper from his own album, presumably the same sheet on which Wood made this autograph drawing. Laemmle also describes his autograph collection briefly, stating "For quite a number of years I have had this album and I hope by adding a few more such parchment sheets that I can make it the most unique in the world—something that I can leave to my children—something that will last for all time."

As in Wood's self-portrait mask (a cast of which is also in this exhibit) and the self-portrait image in *Honorary Degree*, Wood here emphasized his distinctive cleft chin and the large, round frames of his eyeglasses, which in the drawing double as the two middle letters of his surname. The drawing was purchased at an auction at Sotheby Parke Bernet in the 1970s and has not been exhibited since its acquisition at that sale; it may, in fact never have been exhibited before now. As an example of the artist's self-portraiture and also an indicator of his playful sense of humor, it is an important work.



Grant Wood (1891–1942) **Self-Portrait,** cast after plaster original of 1925 Bronze $3 \% \times 2 \% \times 1$ inches Lent anonymously



Grant Wood (1891–1942)

Honorary Degree (detail), 1938

Lithograph on paper

11 ³/₄ x 7 inches

Hillstrom Museum of Art purchase, with funds donated by the Reverend Richard L. Hillstrom, in honor of College President Axel Steuer

This bronze relief derives from a plaster self-portrait Wood made probably in 1925. The artist had by then already created a handful of different reliefs and his other work in three dimensions included a variety of decorative and utilitarian objects as well as jewelry, all media that were eclipsed by his paintings, drawings, and prints as his career became established.

His sister Nan Wood Graham recorded that Wood made the original self-portrait in clay, which he used to make a mold from which he cast one hundred copies in plaster, painting them in antique gold and giving them to friends as Christmas mementoes. She also said that the copies were made so Wood's friends "could carry him around in the palm of their hand or in a pocket, or simply use him as a paperweight."

At some point, the self-portrait image was cast in metal, perhaps both during and after the artist's lifetime. A 1972 letter from Wood's sister to John B. Turner II authorizing him to make reproductions is in the files of the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, which owns a cast that had been the property of Turner's father David Turner, Wood's close friend, and which was donated by the younger Turner and his wife. Numerous other examples of the bronze cast exist, including one in the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., a donation of Esther Y. Armstrong. A large number of posthumous reproductions such as this one on view were made as membership premiums by the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art and offered as recently as the 1990s, according to Museum Director Sean Ulmer.

The depiction in this object clearly resembles other images of the artist, including photographs of him from Europe in 1920 and 1923, plus the self-portrait drawing in this exhibit from the Larkin Collection, and the image based on Wood in his lithograph *Honorary Degree*.



Grant Wood (1891–1942) **Landscape with a River and Hills**, c. 1930–1931
Oil on wood panel
17 ½ x 21 ½ inches

Lent by Keichel Fine Art, Lincoln, Nebraska

This landscape painting has only recently been added to the ranks of works by Grant Wood. Scholar Henry Adams, in an online article for the Smithsonian Institution titled "The Case for a New Grant Wood Painting," and in a précis for Keichel Fine Art, the dealer that lent the work for this exhibit, has laid out the argument for its authenticity. In addition to aspects of style that connect the work with Wood, there are two credible witnesses. One is Park Rinard, the artist's secretary and assistant, who once commented that the painting had always been around in Wood's studio. The other was the widow of Dr. Titus Evans, a radiologist who, according to his widow, had tried several times to purchase the painting but was refused. Wood eventually gave the landscape to Evans, soon after his December 1941 surgery, and it hung in the Evans home for some years.

Further support of the attribution of the unsigned work comes from an examination made by noted conservator James S. Horns, who has studied and published on other works by Wood. Horns found that the materials in the painting and also the method of its creation are consistent with other paintings by Wood.

That this work is unfinished is indicated by the incomplete red silo of the farm in its upper left corner and by the summarily indicated cornfields in the upper right, which have a border of corn shocks that would have been repeated in a logical pattern had the painting been completed. The composition of trees and fields on rolling hills is similar to a number of works by Wood, including the *July Fifteenth* lithograph in this exhibit.

A notable feature is the landscape's graduated sets of trees at the bottom of the hill on the left side that lead down to the river. Adams and others have seen in this configuration a many-toed foot, and Adams connects it with a prank Wood had earlier played. In 1916 he had tried to make the citizens of Cedar Rapids believe that a giant had appeared in the area by making a large foot and using it to fake huge footprints in a ravine hear his home. Adams suggests that Wood may have been playfully referencing this incident in this painting, but that he never developed the idea enough to make a finished painting.



Grant Wood (1891–1942), *General Practioner*, illustration for 1937 edition of Sinclair Lewis' novel *Main Street*

Grant Wood (1891–1942)

Main Street, 1937

Illustrations for the limited edition of the novel by

Sinclair Lewis (1885–1951) published by

Lakeside Press, Chicago, for The Limited Editions Club, New York

Gift of Dr. David and Kathryn Gilbertson

For many, the pairing of author Sinclair Lewis (1885–1951) and his most famous novel *Main Street* (1920) with Grant Wood and his art seemed almost pre-ordained, and when Wood's *American Gothic* (1930) became America's most famous painting, it was suggested that Lewis ought to purchase it with the money from his Nobel Prize in Literature (also 1930). Although Lewis was generally more critical of the small town Midwest than Wood, both artists brought significant attention to American life outside of big cities.

Wood had long admired Lewis and his writing and was pleased to be invited to create illustrations for a limited edition of *Main Street* commissioned by the Limited Editions Club of New York and printed by Lakeside Press in Chicago. Wood not only made nine illustrations for the edition, but he also contributed by helping to choose the book's paper and its binding colors, which harmonized with the subdued tones of his images.

Seven of Wood's nine illustrations related to particular characters in Lewis' book, and all were modeled on friends and associates of the artist. For *The Perfectionist*, related to the book's main character Carol Kennicott, Wood's step-daughter-in-law Dorothy Maxon was the model. Her husband, handsome Sherman Maxon, of whom Wood was quite fond even after his marriage to Sara Maxon had started to dissolve, was the model for Wood's illustration *The Radical*, related to the novel's character Miles Bjornstam.

For one of the characters, Dr. Will Kennicott, Wood only depicted the hands of his model, who was his own doctor, A. W. Bennett of the University of Iowa Hospitals. This illustration, *General Practitioner*, was the basis for Wood's last lithograph, *Family Doctor*, and while the two images are very similar in their focus on just the physician's hands, there are significant differences. The *Main Street* illustration has a more homey quality to it, with the doctor in shirtsleeves and wearing a shorter tie than the more sophisticated figure in *Family Doctor*. The stethoscope and thermometer of the litho is not found in the earlier image, though a very similar pocket watch is, and it shows 2:55 as the time, five minutes earlier than in the later image in the litho. *General Practitioner* includes the arm of a patient, probably a farmer from rural Gopher Prairie, the fictional Minnesota town, based on Lewis' hometown of Sauk Centre, where *Main Street* takes place.

The edition of *Main Street* was limited to 1500 copies, all of which were signed in pencil by Wood, on one of the back pages. Lewis was pleased with Wood's illustrations, and in a letter of June 10, 1937 to the author, Wood wrote, "I'm glad you like the *Main Street* drawings. A man takes a good deal for granted when he tries to interpret in drawings what has been so adequately done in words." Wood, in fact, took some liberties with his images, and it has been observed that some of his illustrations seem more related to the models he used than to the characters to which they relate in the book. Wood was keen to create a group of works that could stand on their own, and envisioned the highly finished drawings as having significance in his *oeuvre* similar to his oil paintings. He wished for the drawings to remain together as a set, but they eventually were sold separately and are today in nine different private and public collections. Wood's drawing for *General Practitioner* is in the collection of Edward Lenkin.



Grant Wood (1891–1942)
Corn, 1935–1936
Pencil on paper $4 \frac{1}{2} \times 3$ inches
Lent by Childs Gallery, from the Collection of Thomas S. Holman

This drawing features an ear of corn, one of many times Wood used that image in his Regionalist work. The drawing is not signed but was done on a piece of Wood's stationary from when he lived in Cedar Rapids prior to moving to lowa City in conjunction with his marriage to Sara Sherman Maxon in 1935. The drawing is inscribed in the lower right corner "RETURN TO BOHEMIA," which is the title of a planned autobiography on which Wood and his assistant Park Rinard worked for many years without it ever being published.

Scholar Wanda Corn has noted that this work has all the hallmarks of Wood's drawing style, noting its similarities to the stylized ear of corn in the lithograph *Vegetables*, an example of which is in this exhibit. The drawing had been mounted on a gessoed masonite panel, similar to the panels on which Wood regularly painted. Corn noted that the inscription referencing Wood's biography does not seem to be in his handwriting, and she suggested a date of around 1935 based on the assumption that the drawing was to have been an illustration for the uncompleted biography, which was in production at that time.

Childs Gallery of Boston lent the drawing for this exhibit, noting that it was from the collection of Thomas S. Holman (1953–2015). Holman had a long career that started with studies at Macalaster College in St. Paul, Minnesota, and included curatorial work at the Minnesota Museum of American Art and the Norton Museum of Art (West Palm Beach, Florida) and serving as the Director of the Hudson River Museum in Yonkers, New York, and the Marietta/Cobb Museum of Art in Marietta, Georgia.



Grant Wood (1891-1942)

Portrait of a Young Woman Wearing Kerchief, c. 1932-1933

Pencil on paper

12 x 7 ½ inches

Hillstrom Museum of Art purchase, with funds donated by the Reverend Richard L. Hillstrom in memory of his brothers Leland and Rodney

This superb drawing demonstrates Wood's remarkable skill at subtle rendering of images, especially in the sensitive handling of the unidentified woman's fine hair, the delicate highlights that add sparkle to her eyes, and the demure depiction of the gingham fabric of her blouse, just visible below her kerchief, which signals the artist's allegiance to the Regionalist approach in its adherence to homespun imagery and motifs from Midwestern farming.

The drawing was formerly in a Pennsylvania collection and has been authenticated by scholar James M. Dennis, who suggests that the portrait was likely drawn from a photograph. Although Wood is best known for his Regionalist landscapes of the lowa countryside, he also worked in portraiture throughout his career, and among his best known works in the genre is a painting of his mother Hattie Wood holding a potted plant, and a stylish depiction of his sister Nan Wood Graham, done, according to the artist, to make up for how dowdy she appeared when she modeled for Wood's most famous work, *American Gothic* (1930).

Although signed by the artist in the lower right corner, this drawing is not dated. Scholar Wanda Corn suggests it to be a portrait of about 1932 or 1933, comparing it to the mural paintings Wood did at that time for the Montrose Hotel in Cedar Rapids, known collectively as the *Fruits of Iowa*.

Efforts to identify the young woman depicted in this work, including searching through archives related to Wood and consulting numerous scholars of the artist, have so far been unsuccessful.



Grant Wood (1891-1942)

**The Crik"*, 1934

Oil on board

19 ½ x 21 ¾ inches

Lent by Minnesota Museum of American Art, Katharine G. Ordway Fund Purchase

Iowa Landscape "The Crik" dates from a high point of Wood's creativity. Its application of paint is somewhat looser than is often found in Wood's mature works and, although the painting is not marked as a sketch (which the artist at times would do), its handling and relatively small size make it comparable to Wood's sketches, which were very appealing in their spontaneity.

Signed and dated 1934, this painting was made for Eleanor Jessup, whose husband Walter Jessup was the University of Iowa president responsible for Wood's appointment to its faculty in that year, just before he left to direct the Carnegie Foundation in New York City. A letter from Mrs. Jessup to the artist's sister Nan Wood Graham records circumstances of the painting's creation. Dated February 18, 1942, it was sent in response to Wood's death from pancreatic cancer on February 12. In it, Mrs. Jessup calls the artist a "good friend," and describes the painting:

And did you know that I have one of his lovely landscapes? He painted it especially for me when we were leaving. He said, not wanting to remind me of the lowa dust storms, he looked for a green creek bed to paint, so he called it "The Crick" in the middle-western manner. My good fortune in having it seems unbelievable.

The locale depicted by Wood appears may be Indian Creek, a setting in the Cedar Rapids area near where Wood and his mother Hattie lived for part of 1916. The artist painted Indian Creek several times in his career, including in a large painting titled *Nude Bather* from around 1920, of a nude young man who posed for Wood in a remote area alongside the creek. *lowa Landscape* shows steeply cut banks and relatively few trees, consistent with how the area around Indian Creek appeared in the 1930s, when effects of erosion were strong. The creek, which flows into the Cedar River east of central Cedar Rapids, is still often called "Indian Crick." Wood seems to have been fond enough of the regional pronunciation to use the variant "Crik" as the painting's subtitle, although his wife Sara is reported to have derisively inquired about things back in "Cedar Crick" after she and Wood moved from Cedar Rapids to lowa City following their sudden and surprising marriage in 1935.

The recent literature on Wood that considers his sexuality has revisited many of his works. Landscapes had often been compared to the female body in earlier publications, as when Wanda Corn wrote that Wood "turned the landscape into a gigantic reclining goddess, anthropomorphizing the contours of fields and hills so that they look like rounded thighs, bulging breasts, and pregnant bellies, all of them swelling and breathing with sexual fullness." In contrast, R. Tripp Evans cites male imagery in Wood's landscapes, such as his 1930 *Stone City*, which marked the debut of his Regionalist landscape style, noting rolling hills that suggest the nude *male* form, specifically, rounded, upturned buttocks. Evans invites reevaluation of Wood's landscapes to discover such homoerotic forms, and an examination of *lowa Landscape* draws attention to the idiosyncratic phallic shape of the shadow in the center of the painting. Given its proximity to the signature windmill found just above it, Wood may have been covertly signaling some personal significance for him of the area around "The Crik."

Grant Wood (1891-1942)

July Fifteenth, 1938

Lithograph on paper

8 15/4 x 11 15/4 inches

Gift of Dr. David and Kathryn Gilbertson





MAKE YOUR LIFE COUNT*

gustavus.edu/finearts/hillstrom

Events are free and open to the public.
Regular Museum hours:
9 a.m.-4 p.m. weekdays, 1-5 p.m. weekends.
For more information, visit gustavus.edu/finearts/hillstrom.
To be placed on the Museum's email list,
write to hillstrom@gustavus.edu.