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A Milton Geis Retrospective



"Artist's Work Table" was painted by Geis in 1985. The watercolor was a first place winner in the 1986 St. Louis Artists' Guild Show.

The St. Louis Artists' Guild is currently presenting 60 years of paintings — 1943-2003 — by the late Crestwood artist Milton Geis. The artist created over 250 paintings during his life, and received considerable recognition for his diverse, creative style.



Artist Milton Geis died in 2005.

by Jacob Barker

Watercolor, oil, acrylic, landscapes, cityscapes, sketches, etchings, he did them all. Crestwood artist Milton Geis, who died in 2005, is currently being honored with an exhibit of his works at The St. Louis Artists' Guild.

The exhibit showcases his 60-year career with 58 pieces of Geis's artwork, including watercolor, oil, acrylic and etchings. Geis made his home in Crestwood for 42 years.

The St. Louis Artists' Guild, located at Big Bend and Clayton roads, is open Tuesday through Sunday, noon to 4 p.m. The Milton Geis exhibit runs through March 3.

"I wanted to set up the show to have the exhibit display the broad range of work he did over so many years," Donna Geis, Milton's widow, said. "He painted differently as a 17 year old than he did as a 77 year old, but he was good right from the beginning. His talent showed up early."

Geis was born in Milwaukee in 1926 and

began painting when he was 17.

"He was very lucky to get a really top-notch art teacher in high school, Mr. Tillotson, who was really an inspiration to my husband," Donna said. "To have such an excellent teacher in high school was really a rare gift."

Geis later served with the artillery in World War II for two years in Italy. After the war he remained in Italy to study art at the University of Florence. He returned to Milwaukee and graduated from the Layton School of Art in 1951.

Geis began his career as a television art director soon afterwards, while television was still in its infancy. He helped get the second Wisconsin television station on the air in the early 1950s. It was in Green Bay in 1953 that he met his wife.

They moved from Milwaukee to St. Louis in 1959. In St. Louis, Geis worked for KMOV-TV (formerly KMOX-TV) until retiring in

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The Artistic Diversity Of Milton Geis

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1985 to pursue his passion for painting on a full-time basis.

During his commercial career Geis won four Emmy awards for his work as director of design at KMOV-TV. His private work, however, was put on hold for his first 13 years in St. Louis while he focused on his commercial career.

Throughout his career, Geis loved to paint cityscapes and buildings. Most of his cityscapes depict scenes in St. Louis, Door County, Wisc. and New York City. He also experimented with abstract, non-objective styles early in his career.

"My main influence on Milt's work was to encourage him to paint realistically rather than totally non-objective," Donna said.

Geis began painting again after a 13-year hiatus in 1973 and struggled to regain his finesse, Donna said. He began to paint realistically using watercolors because he needed a new challenge, she said.

"A lot of people give up on watercolors because they're so hard to work with," Donna said.

Geis's watercolor paintings were soon winning awards and were shown all over the country. Most of the paintings in the Artists' Guild exhibit are watercolor. Geis was known for his incredible control of watercolor, St. Louis Artists' Guild Gallery Director Robyn Conroy said.

In 1978, Geis was added to Who's



Milton Geis captured the historic Kirkwood Train Station in acrylic. The popular painting is from 1980.

Who In American Art, and Who's Who in America in 2005. He continued painting until 2003, two years before his death.

Geis's legacy lives on through his daughter Kalen Leimberg, a graphic designer who also paints.

"My father was a huge inspiration to me," Leimberg said. "It was really great to grow up with a father with such amazing talent. He was a very

versatile artist. A lot of painters just have one style, but he experimented with everything and was successful, which encouraged me to try new things."

Leimberg's two sons are also very passionate about art.

"They looked up to their Grandpa so much," she said. "It was such a pleasure for them to watch him paint and see his paintings."

Leimberg's son, Jeremy, 13, is already thinking about a career in art.

"He draws constantly," Leimberg said. "It's almost like he has a force driving him where he feels compelled to draw."

The entire Geis family is thrilled about the exhibit at the Guild. More

than 400 people attended the exhibit on opening day. The exhibit displays Geis's art beginning when he was 17, to later pieces created at age 77. His cityscapes, including his famous picture of the Kirkwood Train Station, and the award-winning "Village Afternoon, NYC," are included in the exhibit. There are also several pieces inspired by his service in World War II, along with a few abstract paintings.

"There's been a tremendous amount of interest in the exhibit," Conroy said. "There's something to be learned from his technique, detail and variety. There's something for everybody at the exhibit."



"Village Dusk, NYC-Twin Towers, is an oil painted by Geis in 1986. Buildings and landscapes were among Geis' favorite subjects.



More than 400 people attended the Dec. 17 opening of the Milton Geis Retrospective Exhibition.