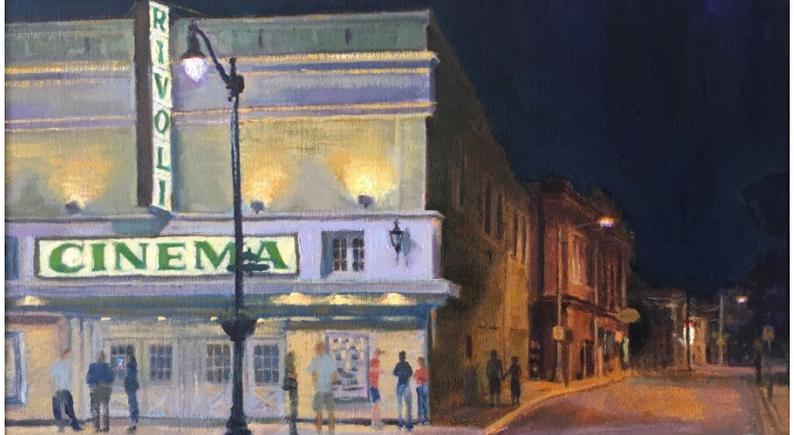


John Koenig's Love of Cedarburg is Expressed in his Art Collection

"For the Love of Cedarburg: The John W. Koenig Collection" is a Cedarburg Art Museum exhibition that demonstrates how one's love for historic and contemporary aspects of one's own community can drive the creation of an art collection. Cedarburg resident John Koenig began his art collection in 2003 by acquiring a few artworks of historic landmarks in his adopted hometown. By 2006 John has become an ever faithful and earnest patron of Cedarburg's annual Plein Air Event in June. In more recent years Koenig has also commissioned or acquired artworks that are historic re-creations of earlier times in Cedarburg. Thirty-eight selected artworks by 21 artists represent Koenig's accumulation of art of natural and architectural landmarks of Cedarburg, past and present, in this exhibition.

One of Koenig's more interesting early purchases was a painting "The Late Show" of the Rivoli Theatre (pictured here). The Rivoli was in its last year of operation by the Marcus Corporation in 2006 when the painting was created by James Hempel and purchased by Koenig. The façade shown in that work was from a 1975 remodel by the Marcus Corporation. After this painting was created, later in that year an historic renovation took place by the Cedarburg Landmarks Preservation Society that committed to purchase and restore the theatre to its former 1930s era glory. A Vitrolite Art Deco façade, complete with a re-designed marquee jutting over the sidewalk returned the then-70-year-old, single-screen theatre to its original look. Koenig also owns a print of the 1936 Edward Rappold photographic image of the Rivoli Theatre in its inaugural year. Koenig knew the value of Hempel's contemporary painting that would soon show a different point in the theatre's history, and in the early days of bidding for paintings at the Plein Air Event, he was firmly committed to acquiring the painting, no matter the price.



Koenig became more interested in Cedarburg's history by taking Sunday walks along the main street, attending the Cultural Center's fireside chat series of talks, and investigating the historic photography books of Harold Dobberpuhl and Edward Rappold. "I became curious about how certain buildings used to be in the past compared to now. The one that intrigued me the most was the Roebken House because of the major change to [add] a store front," stated Koenig.



Koenig did his research and came up with two earlier black-and-white photos of the historic home, one of which was an enlargement of an early 20th Century postcard of the Wittenberg-Jochem Mansion revealing its next-door neighbor, the Roebken Home. "I had seen and admired the work of Bill Suys when was still doing Cedarburg Plein Air, and approached him about doing a historic re-creation of the Roebken home," reports Koenig. "Turns out he enjoyed doing the re-creations as much as I liked researching and then having the result." Koenig likes that an oil painting can bring to life the colors of the earlier building, something that

black-and-white photos cannot do. The photo here shows Koenig with the Suys oil painting of the Roebken Home while Samantha Landre holds an enlarged historic postcard image that served as a guide for the historic re-creation painting.

Koenig went on to commission four more historic re-creation paintings from Suys, a Wisconsin artist with a national reputation. In addition, Koenig had also acquired two other paintings of interurban train subjects by the late Bill Gutzwiller and by Jerry Steingraeber that reveal views of the electric commuter railway that used to run between Sheboygan and Milwaukee with stops in Cedarburg and other communities from 1905 to 1951. Seven historic re-creation paintings are in this exhibition along with many other more contemporary renderings of Cedarburg scenes by plein air artists showing one collector's love of Cedarburg, one artwork at a time.