

Thornton Oakley (1881-1953), The Wonderland of Oil, ca. 1942, Pastel and gougche on paper, 30 x 40 in n-Meyer Collection of American Art. Courtesy of the Grohi

The exhibition at the Grohmann Museum, "A Time of Toil and Triumph," will be the first significant display of the Shogren-Meyer collection in Milwaukee. The St. Paul couple visited the Grohmann in 2020 and "we realized that their collection was made for our museum," says Director James Kieselburg.

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The cover of the exhibit's catalog is emblematic. The image, The Waterfront, was painted in 1935 by Milwaukee's Edmund Lewandowski, an instructor at the locally seminal Layton School of Art. The central figure is a heavily muscled buoy tender, manhandling a heavy metal navigation marker into the water against a Lake Michigan backdrop of a lighthouse and a passing laker.

Kieselburg chose 113 paintings and photographs from the couple's enormous collection. He picked artwork in line with the museum's mission of depicting "productive work," including social realist and heroic regionalist representations of industrial laborers and farmers but also plowed fields, tractors and industrial landscapes. The exhibit, which celebrates the Grohmann's 15th anniversary, will occupy nearly half of the museum's second floor. Shogren and Meyer, like the Grohmann, "have an admiration for the context in which the work was created," Kieselburg says.

"A Time of Toil and Triumph: Selections from the Shogren-Meyer Collection of American Art," opens with a reception and gallery talk, 6-8 p.m., Sept. 9 at the Grohmann Museum, 1025 N. Broadway. The exhibit will be up through Feb. 26, 2023.





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Main Stage 7 PM Saturday, May 20, 2023

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