

# An environment for art



Curator Nathan Harpaz takes a closer look of a print made from the original Leon Garland painting hanging above it, called "Morgan Street." Garland painted it in 1941.

BOB CHWEDYK/bchwedyk@dailyherald.com



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The Koehnline Museum of Art exhibit of the Art of Leon and Sadie Garland.

By focusing on local artists, OCC's Koehnline Museum teaches us about ourselves



A historic exhibit currently hangs on display at the Koehnline Museum of Art at Oakton Community College in Des Plaines: The Art of Leon and Sadie Garland.

It is the first major exhibit that celebrates the work of this married artist couple, who met, married and painted many of their pieces at Jane Addams' Hull House during the Great Depression. Reportedly, Jane Addams herself organized their wedding.



**Eileen O. Daday**  
*Good News*

The nearly 60 paintings in the exhibit were covered by multiple news outlets, and most recently on a segment of WTTW's Chicago Tonight.

It is one of a number of major exhibits shown over the last decade at the Koehnline (pronounced Ken-line) that have featured Chicago artists and their contributions during the Great Depression.

One of last year's shows featured the work of Morris Topchevsky, one of the most radical political activist artists in Depression-era Chicago.

All of which prompts the question: How does a suburban community college land exhibits of this scope and quality?

It starts with its curator, Nathan Harpaz, who helped direct the



COURTESY OF NATHAN HARPAZ  
**A portrait of Sadie Garland, done in 1929 by William Jacobs, working with charcoal and pastel on paper.**

growth of the gallery when he came from Tel Aviv some 15 years ago to accept the role.

"He's the man," says Janet Spector-Bishop, senior marketing manager. "He's developed the museum into quite an asset for the college."

Since taking over the museum in 1998, four years after it was added to the college, Harpaz has created its mission, which in part looks to showcase important artists from Chicago and Illinois.

He also has developed a relationship with private collectors who have generously donated works to the museum's permanent collection as well as its



COURTESY OF NATHAN HARPAZ  
**A portrait of Leon Garland, 1929, done in oil on canvas by Nicholas Poliakoff.**

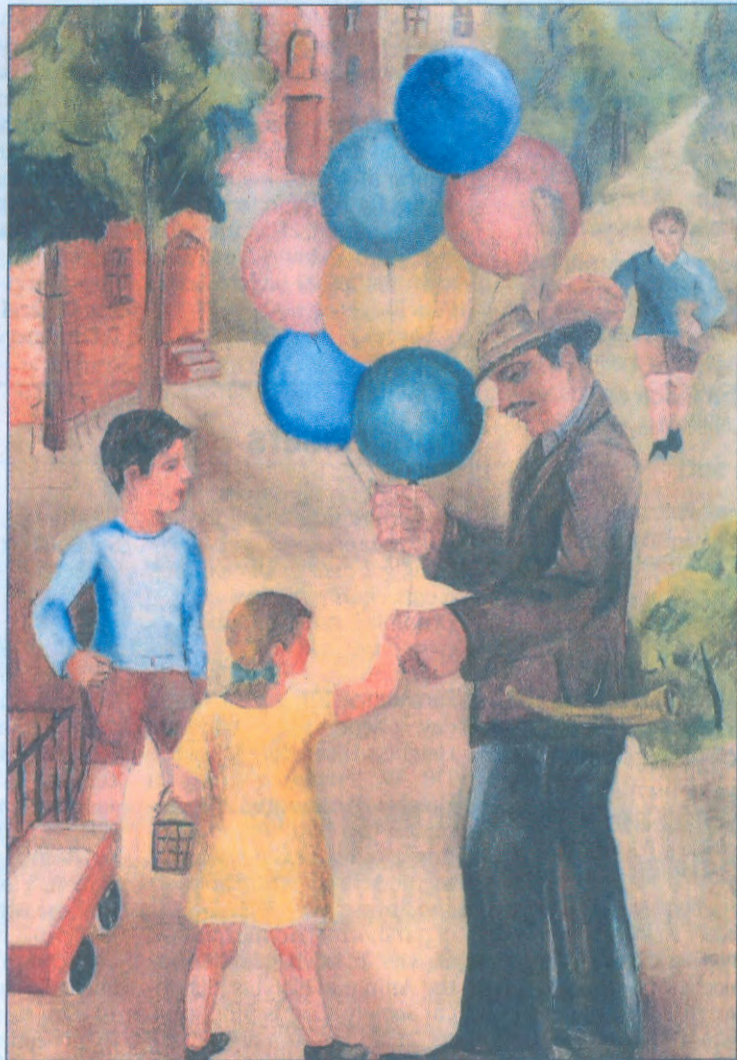
temporary exhibits, including Sadie Garland's daughter, Eva Dreikurs, who provided the core of the Garland show.

"A lot goes into it," Harpaz concedes in looking around the museum. "It has evolved over the years, but it starts with our collectors who donate to us. They are very generous."

Next up, the museum will feature an eclectic array of work by women artists who take up the issue of how women adorn themselves and modify their bodies, in an exhibit called: Bodies by Design: Modification, Coercion, and Resistance.

An all-woman panel of artists

See **DADAY** on **PAGE 2**



BOB CHWEDYK/bchwedyk@dailyherald.com  
**"Balloon Man," painted by Leon Garland in the 1930s. It is one of his WPA works commissioned by the Chicago Park District.**



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# Daday: Garland exhibit captures Depression era life in Chicago

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has juried the show and its opening reception alone is expected to draw hundreds of people.

The subject matter seems in sync with the museum's mission, which is to "establish and encourage an adventure-some environment for art."

The Garlands' exhibit includes paintings, prints and drawings, from subjects that vary from the bustling Maxwell Street in Chicago and life at Hull House itself, to those in Europe, where the pair studied extensively after their marriage.

They returned to Chicago in 1929, at the start of the Great

Depression. Consequently, while still living at Hull House, Leon Garland began working as an artist for the Works Progress Administration.

Among his WPA paintings are those commissioned by the Chicago Park District to decorate their field houses, consequently, they feature circus themes and are much different in tone than his earlier works.

Their work also features a variety of styles, including social realism that was prevalent during the Depression, as well as post-impressionism and even cubism.

Harpaz explains that the Garlands' work is important, in part, because of the

extensive body of work they created before Leon Garland died in 1941, in his mid-40s.

After his death, Sadie Garland went on to marry noted psychologist, Rudolph Dreikurs, an Adlerian psychologist, who influenced Sadie to take up her art once again and incorporate Adlerian principles. She ultimately is credited as being a pioneer in the field of art therapy.

**"Man with Guitar" was painted in oil on canvas by Sadie Garland in 1930. It represents how she ventured into modernism, ahead of her husband, after their three-year trip in Europe.**



COURTESY OF NATHAN KARPAZ