

Museum to display artist's 1940s view of Cincinnati

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Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Polly Magrish Stein was 14 when she first saw the 90-foot-long mural reflecting artist Saul Steinberg's whimsical view of Cincinnati. Soon, she will be able to see the mural depicting her city restored to its former glory — 25 years after its last public exhibition.

Stein's first view of "Mural of Cincinnati" created by the famed illustrator for *The New Yorker* and other magazines was in September 1948. She and her family dined at the Terrace Plaza Hotel in front of the wall bearing Steinberg's creation for its Skyline Dining Room.

"It was so exciting to be at the newest hotel in Cincinnati and to be able to see our city represented in art drawn by Steinberg, who did all that great magazine work," Stein said.

The Steinberg mural, donated to the Cincinnati Art Museum in 1965 by Terrace Plaza owner John Emery Jr. when he sold the hotel and displayed at the museum until 1982, will return June 23-Sept. 23.

"A *New Yorker's* View of Cincinnati." will precede the museum's July 21-Sept. 23 exhibition of "Saul Steinberg: Illuminations" — a Steinberg retrospective now at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C.

The Terrace Plaza and its artwork — including a Joan Miro mural and an Alexander Calder mobile — received national attention, and Stein refers to a photograph taken that day of her family as "my 15 minutes of fame."

The oil on canvas mural of Cincinnati — one of only seven murals created by Steinberg (1914-1999) — is one of two



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Conservators from the Intermuseum Conservation Association in Cleveland clean the Mural of Cincinnati by Saul Steinberg. The 90-foot-long mural by the famed illustrator for *The New Yorker* and other magazines was donated to the Cincinnati Art Museum in 1965 and displayed at the museum until 1982.

remaining intact. The other, "The Americans," is at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium in Brussels.

Emery commissioned Steinberg to create the Cincinnati mural for the building that opened in 1948 and was hailed by *Fortune* magazine as the prototype for the mid-century hotel. The magazine called the sleek, modern hotel with little ornamentation other than its artwork "a

triumphant marriage of art and economics."

The Miro mural and the Calder mobile, also donated by Emery, remain on display at the Cincinnati museum.

Steinberg was a diverse artist who also designed fabrics and greeting cards, worked as a fashion and advertising artist and stage designer and produced sculptures and paintings shown in galleries and museums world-

wide. He is best known for more than 1,000 drawings and nearly 90 covers he did for *The New Yorker* over several decades.

One of his most famous illustrations for the magazine was the 1976 cover, "View of the World from 9th Avenue," showing a *New Yorker's* map-like perception of the world with a dominant Manhattan, New Jersey as a small brown strip and the rest of America nothing more than a square green patch with Asia barely visible in the background.

The Cincinnati mural painted with black lines on a white canvas and accented with muted, pastel colors depicts Cincinnati landmarks such as the Roebling Suspension Bridge, Tyler Davidson Fountain and the Ohio River interspersed with sights like traffic lights, dancing couples and women in large plumed hats. It's done with the same sense of humor found in Steinberg's satirical magazine illustrations.

The mural gives the impression that the artist might have been sitting atop a high-rise, looking down on the city and doodling its landmarks and people on a long strip of paper, said Joel Smith, curator of the Steinberg retrospective and curator of photography at the Princeton University Art Museum.

"Steinberg's work almost always has an element of caricature, but almost never an attitude of condemnation," said Smith. "He saw the world as a comedy — sometimes a darker comedy — but never with the implication that people were falling short of what they ought to be."

The Cincinnati mural was put in storage when other exhibits reduced museum space, but visitors have continually asked if it would return, said Stephen Bonadies, the Cincinnati museum's chief conservator.