

## About the Cover

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Cover image: Albert Bierstadt (American, born Germany, 1830–1902), *North Italian Landscape*, ca. 1856–57, oil on canvas, museum purchase (77.203)

While not of Stresa, Italy, where the September 2025 NMSG meeting was held, the *Northern Italian Landscape* painted by renowned German-American artist Albert Bierstadt and featured on this journal's cover might remind conference goers of the beauty of the Italian landscapes witnessed in between neuromuscular study sessions and reports on related drug trials.

Bierstadt is best known for his large oil paintings of the American West. He first traveled westward from his home and studio in New York City in 1859 with a federal land surveyor, sketching along the way as he gathered inspiration for eventual works. The resulting views were almost always lavishly painted, evoking what might be considered romanticized depictions of the locations chosen by the artist.

The size of Bierstadt's *Northern Italian Landscape* that hangs in our Gallery of European and American Art is much less than the monumental paintings the artist is best known for. But it is no less impressive in showcasing the Bierstadt's ability to paint sweeping views of the outdoors. Our files note that the scene is likely one he chose to paint while staying in Rome in 1856 and 1957.

The expanded label in our gallery, written by the museum's curator of European and American Art, Rima Girnius, PhD, reads as follows:

German-born artist Albert Bierstadt became famous for his expansive views celebrating the majesty of America's western mountain ranges. However, like many of his contemporaries, he refined his technique and established his credibility as an artist when he lived in Europe from 1853 to 1857. This painting is based on sketches executed during one of his excursions through the mountains of Germany and Italy. Although small in scale, it is grand in conception and anticipates his later work. Glowing under warm twilight, this tranquil scene celebrates humankind's harmony with nature. Two figures meet on a country road in the foreground while Italianate buildings sit nestled in the trees on the left.

Museums undertake all varieties of special events and tricks of the trade to entice visitors in to enjoy the art. In our case, the busiest three-day weekend of the year is the annual Art in Bloom. The event has become a perennial favorite of

mid-Missourians, having first been presented in 2005. We bill it as a pairing of fine art and flowers. How lucky we are to partner on it with a multitude of generous and creative florists, professional and student, to undertake the big weekend.

The basics are that florists each select a work of art that most interests them and then design florals for delivery at a prescribed time. The arrangements – 18 of them this past April – are installed in our galleries near the works that serve as the inspiration for each. They are first revealed to museum members at an evening event called Flowers After Hours.

Over the next two days, we offer expanded public viewing hours and related special events like a floral-themed Family Day at the Museum. In all, more than 1,300 came through our doors to enjoy Art in Bloom 2026, a record for us.

Bierstadt's *North Italian Landscape* was selected this year by Columbia, Mo.-based Kent's Floral Gallery as their inspiration for Art in Bloom. Floral designer Brittani Williams offered this when asked what drew her to the painting:

"The colors caught my eye first thing. They are inviting and made me want to stop to take a closer look. The more I look at it, the more I want to be in the painting, taking it all in. I love designing in a way that can highlight natural lines and curves and add structure to emphasize the beauty that is already there."



Art in Bloom 2026 floral arrangement created by Kent's Floral Gallery, Columbia, Mo., as a pairing to Albert Bierstadt's *North Italian Landscape*, a painting in the permanent collection of the University of Missouri's Museum of Art and Archaeology.

All weekend of Art in Bloom, the public is invited to vote on the arrangements as they stroll the galleries. Awards are announced Sunday afternoon, a few hours before the close of Art in Bloom. For her work, Brittani was awarded Best Use of Color (professional category). Please enjoy this photograph of her floral creation as it was in our European and American Art Gallery, on a pedestal within view of the Bierstadt painting.

Photos of all 18 of the Art in Bloom 2026 submissions can be viewed on [our website](#). The images are accompanied by descriptors from each florist about their selections.

If you are reading this from a screen in central Missouri, please visit the museum to see Bierstadt's *North Italian Landscape* in person, as works of art are best viewed. If you live and work further away, I hope you'll plan a trip to Columbia.

As I have written in past columns, please ask for me at the museum's visitors services desk if you stop in during

regular work hours. I will tour you through our galleries with a special stop to admire Bierstadt's painting.

The Museum of Art and Archaeology (MA&A) is located in the lower east side of Ellis Library, with entrances off Hitt Street, Lowry Mall, and from within Ellis. Regular hours during the week are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and noon to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Admission to the museum is always free.

For more information about the MA&A, in general, including a calendar of events and a searchable database of the museum's permanent collection of more than 16,000 objects, visit [maa.missouri.edu](http://maa.missouri.edu). If you want to experience the beauty and fun of Art in Bloom, mark your calendar now for April 24-25, 2027.