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Robert Fishko, *Director*

OSCAR BLUEMNER

(1867-1938)

German-born American

Between 1886 and 1892, Oscar Bluemner attended technical high schools in Hanover and Berlin, Germany. He held two jobs as an architect before immigrating to the United States in 1892. For the next eight years, Bluemner moved back and forth between Chicago and New York, working on a variety of architectural projects. By 1900 he was married and settled in the New York City area where he would live until 1926.

Bluemner painted and sketched landscapes. His 1910-11 color drawings of New Jersey and New York scenes display a chromatic vibrancy equal to that of the Post-Impressionists, especially Vincent van Gogh. In 1912, Bluemner gave up architecture to devote all his energies to painting. That same year, during a seven-month stay in Europe, he had his first solo exhibition in Berlin.

During 1914-15, back in America, Bluemner radically transformed his artistic concepts and techniques, incorporated simplified architectural and landscape forms into interlocking architectonic grids of color planes, the result being brilliantly prismatic work. Although the use of bright color in these works resembles that of the American Synchronists or French Orphists, Bluemner claimed the early 19th century color theories of Goethe were more influential on him.

In 1926 the artist moved to South Braintree, Massachusetts. In his late work, Bluemner abandoned the geometric grid format and his landscapes became more naturalistic. He developed a system, based in part on Goethe's principles, that ascribed meaning to specific colors, and thus fully realized the emotive symbolism he had always sought.

In 1938, bedridden and in great pain as a result of an automobile accident Bluemner, took his own life.



Oscar Bluemner, March 3, 1928. Photograph by Arnold Genthe, Library of Congress