

# ART *In America*

## A Menagerie Of Museums In Southeastern Pennsylvania

by *K. Bailey Fucanan*

(NAPSA)—You can gain understanding of beauty, talent, hard work and heritage in America's museums. The exhibits may move you, sometimes with tears, sometimes with laughter. And from the breathtaking fine art of The Barnes Foundation to the sheer folly of Three Stooges memorabilia at The Stoogeum, the Valley Forge area of Pennsylvania hosts some of the country's most magnificent collections.

An amazing assemblage of French impressionist, post-impressionist and early modern art, including an unprecedented number of masterpieces by Pierre-Auguste Renoir, is showcased at The Barnes Foundation in Merion Station. All were collected by the late Dr. Albert C. Barnes for education and art appreciation.

Wharton Esherick Studio, atop Valley Forge Mountain, pays homage to the Dean of American Craftsmen and is considered the artisan's autobiography in wood. Everything from the unique cutting boards in the kitchen to the patchwork flooring celebrates the medium. Esherick handcrafted the studio in four stages over 40 years.

The Schwenkfelders were a Protestant sect who fled Germany and Silesia during the 1700s and settled in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Their heritage is preserved at the Schwenkfelder Library and Heritage Center in Pennsburg—the only facility of its kind. The museum's library houses approximately 30,000 volumes of 17th, 18th and 19th century writings on the group, the Protestant Reformation, Pennsylvania German culture, area history and more.

The Philip and Muriel Berman Museum of Art at Ursinus College



**The Stoogeum, featuring Three Stooges memorabilia, is just one of several museums in the Valley Forge area.**

boasts an impressive 52-piece permanent outdoor sculpture collection of works in bronze, steel, granite and marble, which adorn the Collegeville campus landscape. All but two were gifts from the Bermans, area philanthropists and art patrons for more than 50 years. Inside the museum, two ample gallery rooms foster learning by featuring different exhibits every three months.

At The Stoogeum (rhymes with museum) in Spring House, the offering is slightly different. From mass-produced toys, games and air fresheners to rare and one-of-a-kind movie posters and personal effects, it's all Stooges, all the time! Nearly 100,000 pieces of memorabilia are on display in this state-of-the-art facility open by appointment only.

More marvelous menageries in the Valley Forge area include the American Helicopter Museum and Education Center and the Boyertown Museum of Historic Vehicles. For directions, hours and additional information, visit [www.valleyforge.org](http://www.valleyforge.org).

• *Ms. Fucanan is Director of Communications, Valley Forge Convention and Visitors Bureau.*