

## “LES SANTOS” - FRENCH FOLK ART OF PROVENCE

(October 25 – November 23, 2021)

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Director, The Art Gallery at Rivier University

### New at THE ART GALLERY

Welcome to our first exhibition of the academic year. On view are over fifty hand-painted *terra cotta* figurines artisanally made in the Provence region of southeastern France. Selected from a vintage collection, the pieces, with a standing height of about 12 inches, represent various characters, trades, and activities from typical late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century pre-industrial Provençal village life—the baker, wine maker, fishwife, lace maker, woodcarver, potter, etc. With attention to detail, expressive faces and postures are combined with traditional costuming made from regionally designed fabrics.



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Historically, *santons* are an outgrowth of the celebration of Christmas. During the French Revolution, when churches were forcibly closed and large nativity scenes prohibited, villagers developed methods of crafting smaller and more discreet household figurines of the Biblical characters, adding to them characters that represented themselves as a community united by both a common faith and a communal dependence on one another for daily sustenance and security. In effect, through such *crèche* scenes, the community, with deeply imbued life values and a shared spiritual imagination, positioned itself within the Biblical narrative of the Christmas event.

Today *santons* continue to be produced throughout Provence, with new characters, plus variations on earlier designs, introduced regularly. The craft has been handed down from generation to generation, thereby supporting a cultural tradition that has caught the attention of collectors and those engaged in the study of folk arts.

**Open hours: M-Th 10:00 AM-4:00 PM, and by special arrangement for groups (x8280)**

**Location: Memorial Hall, second floor landing**

**COVID requirements:**

**Masks**

**Full Vaccination**

**Preference for groups: no more than 6 persons at one time**