

PIONEER IMAGES OF UTAH

ARTIST: Lee Greene Richards (1878-1950) Salt Lake City
TITLE: Dreaming of Zion 1931
MEDIA: oil on canvas
SIZE: 32" x 39-1/2"

ARTIST: Lee Greene Richards (1878-1950) Salt Lake City
TITLE: Murals in the Utah State Capitol Rotunda
MEDIA: oil on canvas
SIZE: 4,500 square feet

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Lee Greene Richards was born in Salt Lake City, July 27, 1878. Originally named Levi, like his father, he changed his name to Lee, preferring that shortened version for "professional reasons." He grew up in Salt Lake City surrounded by artists. His grandmother, Sarah Griffith Richards, was a well-known English watercolorist. His father, Levi W. Richards, was also a painter but did not get much opportunity to paint because of the demands of pioneer life. He was, however, very interested in the art world.

Lee's neighbors included George M. Ottinger, whose studio the young Richards visited often. In addition, Mahonri Young and A. B. Wright lived on the same block and the three artists became known as the "Twentieth Ward Group." They were fellow students

under J. T. Harwood, along with John Sears and Louise Richards. According to Mahonri Young, Lee's academic drawings were the best of the class. Richards claimed that Harwood so effectively taught the academic methods he had learned at the Académie Julian that Richards learned as much from J. T. as from any of his later teachers in Paris. (For biographical information on George Ottinger, Mahonri Young, J. T. Harwood, and Louise Richards [Farnsworth], see SMA Elementary Art Core Posters, 1997)

A mission for the LDS church took 18-year-old Richards to England in 1895, where he was able to visit the British museums and see original paintings by the old masters as well as to sketch and paint the lush English countryside. Richards' perceptions of the English portraitists during his museum visits impressed the young man so much that he aspired to portraiture himself.

After a visit to Paris at the end of his time in England, Lee Greene Richards came home determined to earn enough money to go back and study art in France. Upon returning to Utah, he worked three years at Zions Savings Bank of Utah before realizing his dream and returning to Paris. He studied for three years (1901 - 1904), first at the Académie Julian (which had no entrance exam) and then, after passing the rigorous entrance exam, at the Ecole de Beaux-Arts in Paris.

A successful exhibition career began with the Salon des Artistes Francais in 1903. In 1904, he headed the Salon list for honorable mention, becoming the first Utah artist to receive such a distinction. Following this illustrious beginning, his successful career continued with works exhibited by the International Society of Painters, Sculptors and Etchers in London, Manchester, and Burnley, England; and at the Chicago Art Institute, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco.

After Richards' return to Utah in 1904, he received many commissions for portraits due to a combination of factors—his undoubted and internationally recognized skill, his family connections to important LDS church and community leaders, and the providential move of John Willard Clawson, an accomplished portraitist, to California. In 1908, Richards married Mary Jane Eldredge, the daughter of a well-to-do Salt Lake banker. The money Mary Jane brought to the marriage paid for a long honeymoon in Paris for the newlyweds. Then in 1910, they moved back to Utah and Lee set up a studio in the combination barn and carriage house at the back of the property—his mother-in-law's home.

Lee Greene Richards painted many portraits; for those of family and close friends he used a less formal and looser style than for his official commissions. However, it was his ability to capture some integral essence of the sitter that brought him recognition in the art world. His personal philosophy of art was that art should be firmly based in the traditions of the past but, while based on "certain fundamental principles," it was up to each artist to find the particular adaptation so "he may perfectly reveal himself."

Although best known for portraiture, Richards also painted still lifes, landscapes, and murals. He often painted his children and used them as models in his murals, the children

posed in appropriate costumes. In addition to the images from the Utah State Capitol building included in the his murals grace the walls of LDS Temples in Cardston and Alberta, Canada, in Mesa, Arizona, and in Idaho Falls, Idaho. His daughter, Mary Louise Hauber, said people who knew her recognized her in the Idaho Falls' Temple mural. According to Mary Louise, posing for her father's works was such a regular occurrence, "It was part of the family."

The murals at the capitol building consist of 12 paintings around the arches of the rotunda. These were created as a WPA project in the 1930s. The murals were actually painted on 4,500 square feet of canvas at the State Fairgrounds and then mounted in the rotunda with a paste made of white lead and varnish. Lee Greene Richards designed these murals and was assisted in the execution by fellow artists Gordon Cope, Henry Rasmussen, and Waldo Midgely.

After the paintings were installed in the rotunda, William Slater added clouds and seagulls from atop a 165-foot-high scaffold.

As a WPA project, the required subject matter of the murals was the American scene. Richards' murals depict important events in Utah history.

The large murals show the following events:

- A social gathering in the bowery
- Seagulls saving the crops
- Driving the Golden Spike, 1869
- Irrigation
- Peace with the Indians, 1852
- Pony Express and Stage
- General Patrick Conner
- Ensign Peak

Smaller paintings depict:

- The Escalante and Dominguez 1776 Expedition
- John C. Fremont sights Great Salt Lake
- Peter Skene Ogden on the Ogden River, 1824
- Brigham Young entering the Salt Lake Valley, 1847

Information about the murals was gathered from the "Welcome to the Utah State Capitol Building" brochure published by the Utah Travel Council, Utah Art of the Depression, Essay by Dan E. Burke, and docent notes from the Utah State Capitol Tour, Solveig J. Coles, Capitol Guide Manager.

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

TITLE: Dreaming of Zion 1931

MEDIA: oil on canvas

SIZE: 32" x 39 1/2"

QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING

(History, Aesthetics, Criticism)

What do you think the young girl is thinking about as she sits on the mountainside?

Identify foreground and background in this painting. How is movement shown in this painting? What do you see in this picture that reminds you of the pioneer era? How has the artist used warm colors, cool colors, and contrast? To what part of the painting is your eye drawn?

Does this painting have any symbolism in it? What do you think the symbols stand for or mean?

The model for this painting was Mary Louise Richards (Hauber), who was 14 years old at the time. She says, "I remember posing for the painting on the little rise under the apricot tree in our yard. Father added the wagons later. The painting was done for the centennial celebration. Father had the dress made for me--I didn't wear it otherwise."

Hauber said that her father painted the whole family, and that the "family grew up posing." She remarked, "He would

see the kids doing things and would want to paint us. While we were posing, he would talk to us about anything about books we had read, or school . . . He was very well read."

ACTIVITIES

Art--Aesthetics

Objective: The students will demonstrate their understanding of aesthetics by discussing, making, and defending aesthetic judgements.

Background Information on Aesthetics

Explain to the students that there are various approaches to art and that some artists intend for their art to look one way and others intend for theirs to look another way. One approach is not better than any other; they are just varying views of how the artists perceive what they think art should be.

Stress that there are differing views about what art should be and that these views change often. The branch of philosophy that tries to define these varying views or approaches to art is called **aesthetics**.

Aesthetic theories are developed to help define "What is Art?" or sometimes, "When is it Art?" Aesthetics does not decide if art is "good," as that is what Art Criticism does. Usually artworks do not fit entirely into one aesthetic stance, rather they include combinations of several views. The following are simplified definitions of several prominent aesthetic theories or approaches to art:

These views hold that an object is considered to be art when it meets the following criteria:

1. **Realistic:** Art should look real or life-like. It imitates, mimics, or copies the real object. Quality is judged by faithfulness to the model. Originally, artworks were idealized; later works included accurate or realistic representations of nature or life.
2. **Expressive:** Art should communicate strong feelings, ideas, moods, or emotions of the artist. It can be ugly, because it's based on a truth. Quality is based on the ability to arouse the greatest emotions. It can use symbols.
3. **Pleasure:** Art is valued for its ability to give individual pleasure. It is based on the idea that pleasure is good and pain is bad. Quality is based on degree of individual pleasure achieved, not on how much everyone gains pleasure from it. The art usually presents an idealized view.
4. **Formalist:** Artworks are mainly concerned with the portrayal of the elements and principles (i.e. line, color, shape, balance, unity). Quality is based on degree of coordination between all parts and doesn't rely on subject matter or the viewer's past experiences.
5. **Institutionalist:** Objects become art because they are exhibited, displayed, or promoted. An institution (gallery, museum, or publication) calls it art; therefore, it is art. Quality is based on status or recognition of the institution.

6. Instrumentalist: Art should serve a social, political, moral, or economic purpose. Quality is based on the greatness of its purpose. Art is an instrument to produce effects and should portray vivid and extensive experiences or purposes.

There are several other theories (i.e. feminist, sociological, neo-rationalist) that are not discussed. New theories are constantly being developed to help define "new" aspects of art. The field of aesthetics is constantly evolving. Encourage the students to have their "views" of art evolve too.

Teach the students an age-appropriate number of aesthetic theories and then show them the slide of *Dreaming of Zion* and discuss which aesthetic theory it best fits. Encourage the students to determine the "degree" the artwork fits a theory. For example, an artwork might be 60 percent realistic but have 30 percent expressive concepts and 10 percent instrumentalist.

Continue the activity by showing slides of other artworks and having students determine the degree each artwork fits various theories. (Several good examples are included in this packet) Teach the students more theories as you proceed. This activity can be used repeatedly, expanding the students' knowledge of aesthetic theories and their sophistication in applying that knowledge.

In aesthetic discussions encourage the following behaviors:

Students:

- should learn how to present reasons or arguments in support of their view
- must try to respond (politely) to what someone else says
- should be allowed to stray from the original decision

Teachers:

- clarify what has been said
- encourage everyone to be involved in some way
- ask questions, present varying views or opposition
- summarize arguments, positions, and develop closure
- remind students that aesthetics is not a defined science and is therefore open to change

Art

Objective: The students will create a painting or drawing in which an object is used as a symbol.

As you read and discuss the information on the painting *Dreaming of Zion*, ask the students if they can recognize any symbolism the artist uses to depict an ideal. For example, the 14-year-old girl depicts the "fair young daughters of Zion" who came to

Utah to establish the Kingdom of God (religious ideal). The 14 year-old girl is also an ideal pioneer girl. What kinds of characteristics would an "ideal pioneer girl" have? The figure and dress of the young girl equal purity and strength of pioneers (moral ideals). If your class completed the previous activity on aesthetics, the students should be able to link the ideas in that activity with the objective of this activity. You may also show the slide of *Madonna of 1847*, which has some similar characteristics.

Have the students choose an ideal or value they feel they can depict in an artwork. Students may use any medium to do this activity, depending on the maturity of the students.

Ideas for this project include: patriotism, making correct choices, service to others, completing goals, reaching potential, purity, loyalty, friendship, peace, etc.

Social Studies

Objective: The students will compare the lives of a pioneer girl, a girl growing up in the Great Depression, and a contemporary girl.

Dreaming of Zion is a painting of the artist's daughter, Louise Richards, as a 14-year-old girl. Although the painting depicts a pioneer girl among the first wagons to enter Salt Lake, the painting was actually done near the beginning of the Great Depression. Imagine you were a boy or girl living in each of these eras in history. Compare and contrast your life as a 14 year old coming to a new home in the Salt Lake Valley, entering the Great Depression, and finally, facing the problems of current times.

Science

Objectives: The students will be introduced to Utah wild flowers. The specific objectives are included with the various lesson descriptions.

Many kinds of wild flowers grow in Utah. In the painting, *Dreaming of Zion*, the young girl holds Indian Paintbrush, a red wild flower. Ask the students if they know the names of other kinds of wild flowers which grow in Utah. List as many as they know. You may want to gather (legally) some samples of other flowers. Use this short activity to introduce a science lesson. Some possible lessons follow:

1. Identify parts of a flower. Teach the children the basic parts of a flower. Then, using actual flowers, have the students make a sketch of the flower and label the parts.
2. Learn native plants. Have the children name as many native plants as possible. Bring in or take the students to a place where they can see native plants growing.
3. Learn to identify wild flowers of Utah. Have pictures or examples of several of the wild flowers that grow locally. Teach the children the names and have them practice identifying them. You may want to stretch their learning experience by adding a couple

flowers that are different varieties of the flowers the students have already learned to see if they can generalize and apply their knowledge in new situations. Older students can learn the names of many flowers and plants and should be able to apply that knowledge to unknown plants.

4. Learn the differences between wild flowers and cultivated or hybrid species. Discuss the reasons for hybridizing or cultivating specific plants to develop or to strengthen specific characteristics. You may want to try growing some wild flowers and some hybridized plants to illustrate the differences. The students can record the differences in performance as the flowers grow.

5. Learn the differences among perennials, annuals, biannuals, etc. Use the indian paintbrush and other examples of plants to introduce and to illustrate the different growth patterns of flowers.

6. Ecology. Structure a lesson or series of lessons on the ecological effects of introducing non-native species of plants. Areas to cover or to focus on include competitiveness of species, water and care requirements, diversity, or loss of species.

Language Arts/Music

Objective: The students will write poems about the trek to Salt Lake and set the works to music.

Pioneers often sang and danced at the end of a long day's journey. These activities helped make the journey more enjoyable. Have the students write a poem telling about crossing the plains in a wagon train. They can write the poem from the point of view of this 14-year-old girl depicted in *Dreaming of Zion* or allow the students to use a character from one of the other images included in this packet.

When the poems are finished, have the students set their poetry to music. Have the students write an original song using one verse from their poem as the lyrics. Take turns letting the students perform their songs. Groups can work together on this project.

Extension: Have the students create or organize a dance the pioneers might have danced at the end of the day.

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES for Murals in the Utah State Capitol Rotunda

QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING (History, aesthetics, criticism)

How does art impact our understanding of historical events and people? What does art tell us about the character of historical figures? How can art help us understand the day-to-day life in historical times? Can an artist exaggerate history? How?

What artistic elements such as line, color, value, shapes and forms, textures, and use of space can you find in these murals?

Select one mural to use in answering the following questions: Can you find the area of dominance in the work? What contributes to the balance of the work? Is the balance symmetrical or asymmetrical? What mood does the work suggest? How well does the work express subject, idea, or theme?

ACTIVITIES

Art

Objective: Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of how symbols, ideas, subject matter, meanings, and/or purposes of art are used by an artist by working on a class project to create a mural that reflects a positive part of past or present American culture

The following major steps will need to be included:

1. Selection of subject matter.
2. Planning and design of the mural including all elements and their placement in the mural.
3. Preliminary drawing.
4. Execution. Who does what?

(These steps can be broken down into more specific steps.)

The mural could be made on a large sheet of paper mounted in the classroom which can be easily rolled up when not in use. If the opportunity exists, perhaps a wall of the school needs to be brightened up and this could become an art project for the entire school.

This activity will of necessity be a long-term project and can also include any other aspects of art such as line, blocking-in, color value, texture, perspective, selection of appropriate media, and etc., which are part of your curriculum. In short, let your and your students' imagination run free.

Arts & Activities magazine for March, 1991, contains an article entitled "A Hall Awash in Warm, Brilliant Hues" by Heide Kraps describing one school's experience in creating a mural for the school.

Adventures in Art (3) by Laura H. Chapman, also has a module on "Creating a Mural" which though very simple, has some good ideas. Both of these resources should be

helpful in the project. However, keep in mind that this project can be used in a variety of ways to cover a variety of art and social studies curriculum.

Art

Objective: Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of murals as an art form by writing a report that defines what a mural is, includes ways murals can be created, and some particular features of murals by a specific artist.

Students will pick one muralist such as Lee Greene Richards, Minerva Teichert, Diego Rivera, or Michelangelo and research that artist's history. Based on their research, the students will write a report that includes a definition of a mural, the artist's methods such as fresco, painting directly on a wall, or as in the case of Richards, painting on another medium and attaching it to the wall. The report also should discuss the artist's reasons and purposes in creating the murals and any particular characteristics of the muralist's works.

The Visual Experience by Jack Hobbs and Richard Salome contains a section on how fresco is created and pictures of works by Diego Rivera. In addition, any biography of Diego Rivera is likely to contain examples of his work. Images of Faith by the Museum of Church History and Art contains good information about Minerva Teichert.

Variation for young students: Show the class some examples of murals such as Richards' and Teichert's works. Discuss what murals are, their purposes, characteristics, typical locations, and the differences between murals and art meant to be displayed in a more intimate setting. (For this last consideration, you will need to show the students some art, reproductions of art, or slides of artwork that would be appropriate for a typical home. Many examples are available in past Educator Evening packets, in the newly released posters, or your school, your own or a friend's home may contain useable art—just make sure the art is of high quality.)

Encourage students to use whatever vocabulary and understanding they have of the elements and principles of art in their discussion.

Language Arts

Objective: Students will increase their skills in the writing process by imagining themselves in any one of the scenes in the murals by Lee Greene Richards and describing life during that time.

Discuss with students what life was like during the given time period. Also review or have students research the historical event depicted in one or more of the murals.

Students will then write about one of the scenes depicted by imagining themselves as part of the scene. The format can be a journal entry, a description of the event that is depicted, a description of daily life in that time period, or a "How I Spent My Summer

Vacation" type essay.

Social Studies

Objective: Students will be able to illustrate their understanding of the Great Depression by creating a written or oral report on one of the following topics: the Great Depression and its causes, the role government assumed to bring the country out of the Depression under Hoover and under Roosevelt, the WPA and similar public works programs created by Roosevelt during this time, or how government decisions made during the Depression impact us today. This can be a group project.

Have each student or group of students research one of the above areas and create a written or oral report. As an alternative format, students may want to visually represent some aspect of the Great Depression.

Many Utah artists took part in Works Projects during the depression and the Springville Museum of Art was built as part of a partnership which included the WPA. Information is available in the biographical information of individual artists and on the Museum's homepage at the following address: <http://www.sma.nebo.edu/museum.html>