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Frederic Remington Makes Tracks... Adventures and Artistic Impressions

The art of the American illustrator, painter, printmaker and sculptor Frederic Sackrider Remington (1861-1909) represents a crucial moment in the maturation of America. In terms of his chosen subject matter (the taming of the wild West, and the spirit of Manifest Destiny) the trajectory of his work and career paralleled that of the nation as a whole. The fact that Remington's life was cut short (by a botched appendectomy leading to fatal peritonitis) before he could properly explore the mastery of his first mature period only adds to the sense of "growing up" which his work projects.

Family connections in the federal government seemed destined to lead Remington into an administrative career, but with his father's sudden death and a subsequent loss of direction from the family, the young man soon floundered. He tried his hand at sheep ranching and business, but had little success in either area. Fortunately, his illustration work was picked up by several New York magazines, including Collier's, Harper's and Scribner's.

In his profession as a magazine artist, he was expected to produce a substantial volume of finished art work -- usually pen-and-ink illustration and oil paintings (continued on page 2)



Visitors experience the Remington exhibit



The Great Explorers, Frederic Remington



Dear Old Husbandry, Julius Mössel

German Magic Realist Painter, Julius Mössel (1871 - 1957)

The German artist Julius Mössel was born on October 3, 1871 in Fürth, Bavaria. He is considered a representative of the architecture-bound school of decorative and fine-art painting. Because traditional decorative painting was scarcely still in demand in Germany following the First World War, he emigrated in 1926 to the United States, where he worked as a painter of surrealist and magic realist canvases.

Mössel received his training as a fresco and architectural-decorative painter at the end of the 1880s at the Nürnberger College of Arts and Crafts; and beginning in 1890, as a resident at the Munich Academy of the Plastic Arts, as a student of Rudolf (von) Seitz (1842-1910).

In 1926, motivated by his acquaintance with Julius Rosenwald (1862-1932), the co-founder and president of the department store company Sears Roebuck, Mössel moved, without his wife and children, to the United States and established himself in Chicago. There he married for a second time.

In Chicago he managed to secure numerous large interior-decoration commissions, including several associated with building projects of the architect Albert Kahn (1869-1942; known as "the architect to the auto industry"). Mössel became extremely wealthy, but lost his entire fortune and all of his property as a result of the 1929 stock-market crash.

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BRAITHWAITE

FINE ARTS GALLERY



The Sioux Chief, Frederic Remington



The Scout, Frederic Remington

Remington (continued from page 1)

-- which the publishers would use as the foundation for mass reproductions using a photographic process called rotogravure. The work was highly demanding, but remunerative. His belated success helped to persuade Eva Caten to accept (after two earlier refusals) his offer of marriage.

Oddly, although he made two brief visits to the Western territories, Remington did not enjoy rough travel, and relied in large part on oral and written memoirs and documentary photography as background research for his illustrations. This would change when in 1898, after lobbying for the job, Remington succeeded in getting an "imbedded" assignment for the Hearst newspaper chain, and followed Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders to Cuba for coverage of the Spanish-American War. There he was extremely unhappy, thrust amid the grim reality of battle, and most of his illustrations there treated the "down time" between battles -- and their sometimes ugly aftermath -- rather than the actual heat of war; but these images, and the entertaining written narratives which he was by this time providing as support for his art work, led to a considerable increase in his popularity at home.

At the end of the century Remington developed a keen interest in the Impressionistic style and lighting effects of the expatriate American painter James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), particularly as filtered through the works of Charles Rollo Peters' (1862-1928) series of nocturnal California mission scenes, as well as the atmospheric methods of another New Yorker, Childe Hassam (1859-1935).

The result was seen in a new level of seriousness in Remington's western scenes, and a commensurate darkening of his palette by 1900. Nocturnes, as they were then known, had become a popular genre in American and European art by this time, and Remington led the charge for these ruminative, often uneasily dramatic images. He also gained more control over the quality of the reproductions of his work, and supervised the printing process with greater and greater care. In further evidence of Remington's ever-expanding artistic curiosity and ambition, he also took up sculpture at this time, creating a number of wonderfully free and energetic figure-groups in wax and clay which were used to produce limited editions in silvered bronze.

While there is no doubt that Remington's work proved immensely influential within the school of the American scene, and that his personal style as an artist and illustrator continues to resonate among collectors and practicing artists, his images have always fallen somewhere within the gap between the commercial and so-called fine arts -- a distinction little heeded today, but of keen importance to artists working at the turn of the century. Remington himself felt firmly that his work was taking him swiftly toward a more prestigious place in the gallery world; the drama and vibrancy of the work he left us before his untimely death stands as a fascinating legacy of that journey.

- Andrew Marvick, Associate Professor

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SUU student, Mary Sorensen, views the Remington exhibit

Mössel (continued from page 1)

He became severely impoverished and, threatened by temporary blindness, was forced to sustain himself primarily by painting small-scale easel paintings, mostly of animal subjects.

Thanks to two operations, Mössel regained his vision. As the economy slowly revived, he was able to build on his earlier successes with an ambitious decorative plan for Chicago's Natural History Museum. He made only modest progress in the sale of his easel-paintings, which he offered at Chicago exhibitions throughout the 1930s. The topics of these pictures were predominantly Surrealist, or perhaps more accurately Magic Realist, and were mostly confined to the field of animal subjects, a genre which had much interested him in Germany. These paintings, which he considered his most serious personal work, were little understood by the American public, and it is fair to say that even now they are likely to be seen not only as works of fine art, but as curiosities as well. The last exhibition of his paintings during his lifetime took place in 1955. Julius Mössel died in Chicago in straitened circumstances on August 13, 1957 at the age of 85. His most impressive output in the United States, a group of thirteen large-scale murals in the Hall of Food Plants may be seen at the Field Museum in Chicago.

Mössel was described by a friend as "a little fellow, sharp as could be," and nostalgic about his life among the artistic intelligentsia of Weimar-era Germany. He was fond of telling stories about pleasant evenings playing skat (improvisatory singing) with the famous German composer Richard Strauss (1864 – 1949)

The present collection of sixteen oil paintings by Mössel were donated as a group to Southern Utah University (then Southern Utah State College) by Mr. And Mrs. Erwin P. Thomys, of Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1977. The Thomyses had been collectors of Chicago art for many years.

[This information was gathered mainly from the catalogue of an exhibition on the subject of emigration from Bavaria to North America undertaken by the Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte (the House of Bavarian History) in Augsburg in 2004; and from "Rediscovering Julius Moessel," by Mark Alvey, In the Field, May/June 1999, Vol. 70, No. 3). Edited and with translations by Dr. Andrew Marvick.]



Balance of Power, Julius Mössel

The Braithwaite Fine Arts Gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday from **noon to 7:00 p.m.** The Gallery is located on the ground floor of the Braithwaite Liberal Arts Center building, at the east end of the beautiful SUU campus. Admission is free. For more information please contact the Braithwaite Gallery at **435.586.5432**, or visit the Gallery website www.suu.edu/pva/artgallery

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Iron County students take part in the Remington exhibit

65 Local Classes Experience Gallery Education

Hands were waving like flowers in the wind. Cries of “I know! I know!” filled the room. Finally a child was chosen to respond, “It’s a shield.” No, that wasn’t it. Another child guessed, “You hang it on your wall for decoration.” That would be a good use for it today, but in the old west it wasn’t used for decoration. What could it be? “It’s a bear skin.” Closer. “It’s a beaver skin.” Right! Karen Gale, education specialist, explained to students that it was a handmade frame holding a beaver skin that had been trapped. She then went on to show and demonstrate other tools used by mountain men and explorers of the old West.

This was just one of the many activities Iron County students were able to experience as they participated in the Frederic Remington exhibit at the Braithwaite Fine Arts Gallery on the SUU campus. As education specialist, Gale chose educational goals to integrate the study of Remington

with the Utah State Core Curriculum. She focused on literature and history. Because much of Remington’s history comes directly from his own writings, Gale concentrated much of the literature activities on journaling. She created packets for teachers that included lesson plans and activities to help teachers prepare their students for a visit to the gallery. Several classes used the lesson ideas for journal making and even brought their journals to gallery, writing and drawing what they experienced during their visit.

Shawn Webster, a local professional mountain man, loaned several artifacts to the exhibit in order to create a more realistic environment for understanding the historical time period of Remington’s work. In addition to the beaver skin, students were able to study beaver traps, hatchets, powder horns, and other tools. These activities tied directly to history requirements from the Utah State Core Curriculum.

After hearing about what it was like in the old West, and learning about Remington and his artwork, students were sent off to explore the gallery with a scavenger hunt. Many teachers commented that it helped students stay engaged in artwork and look deeper into his pictures than if they had just come and walked around looking. Several students wrote comments in the galleries register. One student summed it up perfectly, “It was a delight to see Remington’s art after a hard day’s work!”

Students weren’t the only ones to benefit from the educational activities in conjunction with the Remington exhibit. Carrie Trenholm organized and facilitated an Evening For Educators. Mary Wells, a popular Utah bookmaker, was invited to spend an evening working with teachers on book making. Sharing her talents with local teachers was a highlight of the evening. Teachers became excited students as they created their own books. Ideas flew around the room as they exchanged thoughts on how to use the book ideas in their own classrooms.

How does one determine success? There are many ways, but it is easy to see that the success of the educational activities can be measured in the 65 classes who attended the gallery, the enthusiasm of the students who attended, the appreciation of the teachers who brought their students to the gallery, and excitement of the teachers who participated in the bookmaking activities.

-Karen Gale

CALENDAR *of* EVENTS

January 7–19
*High School Fine Art
Competition Exhibit*

February 7–March 15
Faculty Art Exhibit

April 1–May 3
Senior Portfolio Show

June 19–August 30
*The Tempest: Anatomy
of a Production*

June 26–August 30
*Cedar City Art Committee
65th Annual Art Exhibit*

September 11–November 1
*In Focus: National Geographic
Greatest Portraits*

