

Student: Mr. James Burnes

Graduate Field Examination in Art and the American West in the 19th Century

March 7, 2017

- There are three questions to choose from; select two to answer.
 - The examination is open-book and open-notes.
 - The duration of the examination is from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
 - At the conclusion of the allotted time for the examination email the answers to the two questions you chose to Dr. Katherine Pandora at kpandora@ou.edu.
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1. Using specific examples from your reading list, discuss the primary artistic mediums that artists of the American West utilized in the 19th century. Specifically, how did the new technology of photography shape artistic visions of the West? Further, how did artistic visualizations of the American west differ from scientific visualizations in their context, production, and use?

2. Over the past several decades, art historians and other scholars have made new contributions to the study of art and the American West in the 19th century. Please identify the major voices that have contributed to this body of scholarship, and explain how their work impacted the field of study. Next, citing specific examples from your reading list, identify and analyze some of the major themes present in how artists depicted the American West in the 1800s.

3. Discuss the visual imagery created by the U.S. Exploring Expedition (1838-1842) and the U.S. Pacific Railroad Exploration and Survey (1853–1855) as it relates (a) to the goals of these explorations and (b) to the larger context of art and illustration of the American West for the period 1830-1860. Include in your response a discussion of the historiography of these expeditions from the standpoint of visual culture. What major interpretive themes have been developed and what future avenues of inquiry seem promising?

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Exam Question #3

Visions and Representations of the West

In my research I have found it nearly impossible to understand 19th century history without understanding its art. The very establishment of 19th century art *as* American Culture is deeply intertwined with the politics of the emerging Republican ideals. To understand American Art is to understand the American experience. This experience begins before the artist's brush hits the canvas. At once, American Art in the 19th century had to express and prove itself as its own form of expression and strive to create a corpus on par with its long established European counterparts. Whigs and Democrats in the mid 19th century were both striving to arrange the new Republic in a manner that benefitted and represented their constituency. The lack of an actual aristocracy and the expansion of suffrage to those who did not own land drive the Whigs to see control over American Culture where it had lost control over American Politics. Instead of calling themselves Dukes or Lords, they chose the title of "patron" and shifted to constructing reflections of American culture through their patronage of early American Artists and the creation of the American Art Union.

Broadly the development of American art can be explored in comparison with the development of art culture in Switzerland. William Hauptman's essay "Kindred Spirits: Notes on Swiss and American Painting in the Nineteenth Century" does just that. Most specifically, the need for Swiss artists to leave the nation in order to make their reputations art world. The same

was true for early American artists. Switzerland can serve as a microcosm to understand American regionalism as well since according to Hauptman the country “shared more differences than similarities” and that was what led to a multifaceted emergence of Swiss art.

The comparison there is not complete however as Switzerland was a long settled nation and while there were forests and changes of ruling governments there was little in the way of frontier expansion. The American art scene proper begins in Boston before the American Art Union(s) and the “culture” spread through New York and Philadelphia. You cannot separate early American History from Early American Art History and have either discipline provide full and accurate accounts of the period. Even lesser known artists such as John Haberle and William Harnett were involved in some of the largest examples of cultural consciousness in 19th century cities: Trompe L’oeil painting.

For most of the 19th century canvas, paints, and brush were the tools of those presenting the American West. George Catlin’s work to document the “vanishing race” may be the most recognized Native American imagery produced, thanks partly to his self-promotion and showmanship, as well as his critics. The fact that we have a large collection of his work today is due in no small part to his failure as a businessman selling his collection to the Smithsonian. Charles Bird King and John Mix Stanley were more successful in that endeavor and were rewarded by having nearly all their works lost in the Smithsonian fire in 1865. Like many of his contemporaries Catlin was a portraitist. His images of Native life shaped (arguable still shape) the connotations of what the American Indian “was really like.” Many of his portraits, such as his work *The Little Spaniard* are arranged in the classical Greco-Roman style with the subject displaying poise and his battle accoutrements. Another, *He Who Outjumps All* features a horse and rider that visual blend into one another reinforcing the Romantic Literature that described the

American Indian horseman as almost centaur like with the “horse and rider moving as one.”

Some other Catlin works include Buffalo, studies, hunts, and kills as well as a landscape of the pipestone quarry where the mineral used in fashioning famous “Indian pipes” was mined in present day Minnesota. The mineral is officially named Catlinite.

Alfred Jacob Miller was a commissioned artist for William Drummond Stewart’s foray in to the American West. Stewart was a second born Scottish nobleman who came to the United States to partake of the adventures of the frontier. Miller was hired to document the trip. Miller’s work features Stewart within the frameworks of adventurer and patron. Stewart’s connections spanned the North American continent and he entertained many during his travels, including high-ranking Native American officials, within his large tent complete with Persian rugs. With the death of Stewart’s elder brother, he was forced to return to Scotland and take up his role as lord of the manor. Miller finished his large commissions in Scotland while living with Stewart at his castle.

Miller spent only a few months “out west” and likely stayed in Scotland longer than he had on the American frontier. His real mark of success and how his work dovetails with the development of American culture comes back to his success in Baltimore. Miller established a studio in the center of trade merchants, bankers, and lawyers of Baltimore. These were the wellesst-to-do of New England and were part of a growing trend for the wealthy to breed thoroughbred horses for racing. The choice stock for these thoroughbreds were the Arabian horses similar to the ones that the Spanish had introduced, some directly and some indirectly, to the Plains Indians that Miller had portrayed. In *Sentimental Journeys: The Art of Alfred Jacob Miller* Lisa Strong recounts more than a few lamentations about Miller’s horses being *too* Arabian to accurately portray the wild ponies which the Plains Indians were known to ride. This

is a perfect example of the Artist (and art) in context. Miller's audience was expecting to see their Arabian horses on the canvas, and that is what he produced. Knowing his audience and an astute business sense of location meant that Miller was one of the few American artists who was able to comfortably sustain himself with his artwork.

Drummond had been West before and had met with another European adventurer enjoying North America's "unspoiled" wilderness. It is likely that Drummond's meeting with Prince Maximilian of Weid-Neuwied that led Drummond to seek out an artist for his next expedition. Prince Max employed a Swiss engraver-turned-artist named Karl Bodmer for his two-year expedition across the west. Bodmer, in addition to being one of those multifaceted Swiss artists that Hauptman believes has parallels in the US, maintained his engraver's eye for detail and provided Prince Max's published journals with some of the most accurate portrayals of Native American cultural goods.

When the American Art Union created the standards of *American* artwork it specifically sought scenes of everyday life in addition to any large-scale historical paintings. George Caleb Bingham capitalized in this trend in ways few of his contemporaries did. Bingham is an excellent example of American art from his training, he was completely self-taught through copy books and studying prints of old masters, to his political commentary; he was deeply involved in politics as a Whig only to lose an election by decision. His choice subjects, the flatboatmen, had all but been replaced by steam technology by the time Bingham began capturing them on canvas. Industrious men on the Mississippi River still eked out a living as lighters or wood boats, both of which Bingham painted. Wood boats acted as periodic "filling stations" of fire wood to replenish a ship's stores for firing the boilers. Lighters would take on cargo from a steamboat that had run aground on a sandbar in order to make it lighter to refloat the craft. Works like *Lighter Relieving*

the Steamboat Aground was far more than quaint Americanism, it was direct commentary on Jacksonian democrats' refusal to provide funding for river and other transportation improvements.

Bingham's political paintings are multi-layered allusions as well. He was forever suspicious of the squatters' rights to vote which were temporary votes at best and temporarily democratic at worst. His election series follows country politicians from the back room and the streets to the stump and the polls. These images provide as much information about 19th century politics as they do about American life, at least through a Whig artist's eyes. Bingham's *Stump Speaking* was criticized by some for being "too busy" showing scores of townspeople out to hear the speech even if many are disinterested. In the end the American Art Union purchased it for \$350.

Thomas Cole is known as the father of the Hudson River School of American Painting. Cole is known for realistic representations of the American landscape and wilderness even as it falls under heavy influence of Romanticism. One of Cole's most famous works is actually a collection of five paintings following the rise and fall of a civilization. *The Course of Empire* was more than a depiction of the passage of time it was a direct, and influential, allegory for the trajectory that the American Republic was following. It is at once a celebration of prosperity and a warning of time's unforgiving nature. A true Romantic in the European sense, Cole and his students at the Hudson River school could apply European tenets onto American Art.

Albert Bierstadt became one of the most theatrical students of the Hudson River School. Bierstadt was a German immigrant who returned to Germany to study at the Dusseldorf School of art which decidedly influenced his style when he returned to America. His paintings are lavish, glowing and imposing. All aspects that were used to highlight the peril and promise of the

American West. One of his most famous paintings *Storm in the Rocky Mountains, Mt. Rosalie* is enormous. The painting, a product of accompanying a western expedition, is nearly 8' x 10' and contains a mind boggling level of detail. The beauty of such immense creations lie in not only how they were made, but how they were exhibited. These would have been installed in an exhibit hall, sometimes only one would make up an entire gallery, with benches installed so that 19th century viewers could sit and ponder the moral meaning of the work. The details would have been enjoyed with opera glasses. Small scenes would be encapsulated within the field of view of such devices, just as if you were sitting on a nearby peak watching the scene live.

Most people, however, encountered his works as chromolithographic and other styles of illustration in magazines. Bierstadt was always aiming for government patronage as well as painting for a market. He lived long enough to see his high style go out of favor and criticized for the very romance that it was lauded for when he started. Always conscious of money and living well Bierstadt applied for patents and stayed aware of trends even when not participating in them. He and his brother ran a photography company and many of his paintings are influenced by the stereoscopic images they created. Many of his images have definite foregrounds, midgrounds, and backgrounds that worked in more or less this manner: photo to painting to woodcut trying to capture all one scene.

Bierstadt was not the only grand landscapist of the 19th century, nor was he the only one influenced and effected by photography and the popular press. Thomas Moran was Bierstadt's English counterpart and another fellow of the Hudson River School. Moran began work as an engraver but found it tedious. He moved to watercolor and later produced oil paintings on the same scale as Bierstadt. Moran was also part of the drive west as the accompanying artist for Ferdinand Hayden's USGS Yellowstone expedition. Moran is the best way to explore the

differences in artistic and scientific representation. His paintings of Yellowstone, and other areas, were no *true* representations of nature, but an amalgam of the best of what he had seen. These artistic expressions were offset by the work of the expedition's photographer William Henry Jackson. Moran was essentially a realist with overpowering romantic tendencies honed from Cole's Hudson River school. He never painted a factual transcription of Yellowstone, but moved the scene to stir the emotions. Moran and Jackson worked together to present a more *real* version of Yellowstone; the photographs set the realism and the painting provided the romantic tone that sold the idea of a park to congress and a paradise to the people.

This combination of photography and painting proved that the boiling mudpots, geysers, the kaleidoscope of colors in the hot spring's and mineral waters were far more than just the tall tales of the mountain men and trappers. In addition to helping establish the park, Moran was more successful than Bierstadt at acquiring the coveted governmental patronage. Why did Moran succeed where Bierstadt floundered? They had both been on expeditions, and Moran did his best work when he was on his own, but it was the type of expedition that he accompanied that gave him a more trusted authority. Moran had been an expedition member on a USGS expedition meaning he was a commissioned United States Geological Survey Artist. Most of his work at one time or another hung in the Department of the Interior of the United States and he sold 2 for \$10,000. This was federally funded science *and* art.

One of the most striking images to come out of the Rocky Mountains was direct evidence that God was on the side of, and heartily approved of, Manifest Destiny. The Mount of the Holy Cross was thought to be only myth and legend and had never been captured on canvas or film. As the snow melts natural crevasses in the side of the mountain that, it must be noted, was devilishly tricky to get to, was a blazing snow white cross in the side of the mountain and both

Moran and Jackson caught it. If there was any doubt that the cross existed in physical form and not just in the mind of a romantic landscape painter the expedition's photographer William Henry Jackson's handiwork put those to rest. In stark black and white he captured God's approval of westward expansion. It was this type of pairing—the photograph and the artwork—that sold the area to those holding the purse strings in Washington.

As mentioned above Moran did his most striking work when he was on his own independent trips out west. His connections with the railroad and friendships with the promoters for the Santa Fe Rail Road led to a degree of freedom of travel that any artist would have killed for. His promoter friend ensured Moran had a free pass anywhere the Santa Fe line ran, paid the Moran family's Harvey House tabs, and took care of most of the bookkeeping and other logistics that allowed Moran unparalleled freedom and safety in the west. All this for agreeing to allow the Santa Fe Railroad to hold copyright on one of his works, of his choosing, to use in their advertising campaign. In reality it was a win-win situation if ever there was one in the annals of art patronage and there is no better example of art becoming a distinctly *American* phenomenon.

Following the development of photography into the field of Art and/in the American West neatly parallels the same development of accurate, scientific visualization as well as a tool or finding “place” for the American settler. In *Meaningful Places: Landscape Photographers in the Nineteenth Century American West*, Rachel McLean Sailer highlights that print making and mythmaking went hand in hand. Few of the landscapes photographed outside government surveys are void of human life or activity. To the contrary, many settlers used photographs of themselves in their new spaces as vindication for the success and progress of American culture. Photographs provided constant reassurance that people were indeed where they belonged. A sense of place for people who had left their cities or even countries in the case of foreign-born

immigrants was something that most settlers struggled to maintain, but photography, according to Sailer was instrumental in calming some of those unspoken fears.

Similar to Jackson's "realizing" Moran's Romantic landscapes in Yellowstone, other photographers provided hard data for their reports. Robin E. Kelsey's December 2003 *Art Bulletin* article "Viewing the Archive: Timothy O'Sullivan's Photographs for the Wheeler Survey, 1871-74" look at the photographs as a new form of graphic representation. That is a more precise way of expressing the landscapes, forms, materials, etc. that the survey encountered. "Pictorial Rhetoric" became the tool for people like Ferdinand Hayden in order to increase or sustain federal appropriations for their continued surveys. To this end William Trachtenberg explains it best in *Reading American Photographs*: "Thus O'Sullivan placed the survey camera among the instruments of practical science, allowing the history and meaning of the Western surveys (the conjunction of "pure" science and imperial economic enterprise) to reveal their contradictions" (289).

Photographs are rarely (if ever) pure scientific visualizations or data. Photographs are important not because they are photographs, and not even because the subjects of the photographs, but because they represent a distinct moment in time of an ever-changing culture. The contextual culture of regional and temporal data is frozen in time just as the faces of early portraits. Each work provides its own examples of why this is an important shift in thinking about images. As Martha Sandweiss points out in *Print the Legend* sometimes what isn't photographed or what was photographed and then lost can reveal as much, if not more, about a certain moment in the past.

The story of forgotten photographs rediscovered are as much the legend as Edward Curtis as his "quixotic" quest to capture native life. Timothy Egan's *Short Nights of the Shadow*

Catcher: The Epic Life and Immortal Photographs of Edward Curtis is a popular book that follows the drama of Curtis' life as he moved across the West capturing moments that were fading away. The renaissance of his work in the 1970s installed Curtis at the forefront of historical photography. Even as historians in the 80s attacked his work for being staged or "playing dress up." Egan points out that Curtis heard these attacks during his life, and never denied it. His defense provides insight into his work and the importance of photography in the late 19th century: he wanted to represent the past, not document the present of the future. His time in Oklahoma in the 1920s saw many of the natives already fully remodeled into Euro-American culture and his pace in his "race against time" hastened.

The arc of American art seems to follow the arc of America itself. It begins by distinguishing itself as distinct from Europe, but succeeding on European terms. It takes its cues from art schools like Dusseldorf in Germany and recounts forging moments in great history paintings in the style of Emanuel Leutze. Early artists represent America as what it can become, a vast wilderness in need to Cole's march of progress. The everyday lives of the rivermen show American industry at the forefront of expansion while still pale in awe of the grandeur of western nature. Finally, as the West closes, photography provides a way for more introspection, for a closer reading of America "as it really was." Photographs may have brought technological authority but there are many instances where the authenticity is as loose as the greatest of Romantic artists. Like American History and Art History, understanding the impacts of any historical visualization requires that we explore paintings, printing, and photography as one holistic enterprise.

New Scholarship of the Old West

In the early 1990s the restructuring of the American West mythos began in earnest. The strongest testament to that change can be found in *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920*. Published in 1991 to accompany what became a very contentious art exhibit, editor William Truettner's collection can serve as a textbook for image use in promoting the west to settlers and to modern museum visitors. The exhibit repositioned and refocused attention from the standard Manifest Destiny narrative and presented a more nuanced narrative of settling the west.

The following year William Cronon edited a volume entitled *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past*. Martha Sandweiss's points out how art should be considered as primary source material within its cultural context and it should not be taken at face value. In *Print the Legend* Sandweiss has also succinctly expressed the need for cross and interdisciplinary work within historical context. In fact, this explains why one of my PhD fields is Art History:

“A lingering bias in historical training teaches would-be historians to value the literary over the visual or material, and teaches them how to query, challenge, and interpret literary documents, while leaving them few analytical skills for the interpretation of visual records (7).”

Each work provides examples of why this shift in thinking about images is important. Sandweiss is particularly concerned with photography however I believe this improved methodology of looking at art as object and art as culture within their historical context will also easily cover

other visual culture studies as well. *Reading American Art* (Marianna Doezema and Elizabeth Milroy) is a survey that runs from the colonial period through to Jackson Pollock and provides analysis of the early 19th century establishment of art as American. There is much lamentation over the fact that Americans had little pride in their own form of art. These early collections and studies from the mid-late 1980s all remark that this period in Art History has fallen under that research of American Cultural History and American Studies departments.

Claire Perry's essay "Cornucopia of the World," in *Pacific Arcadia: Images of California, 1600-1915* explores the trouble western promoters faced when the gold mines ran dry. The focus shifted from mineral to agricultural wealth. This was not an easy 1:1 substitution as the arid areas of California could never be farmed in any way remotely resembling farming practices in the East or the Midwest. The visualizations that western promoters used turned from golden mineral wealth to golden agriculture bounty. California was sold as a veritable Eden waiting for anyone willing to make the travel west. Interestingly enough, this shifting focus would play out again with the turn of the century tourist boosterism that came as Americans became more mobile thanks to personal automobiles.

Barbara Novak provides one of the strongest voices in the new scholarship. Her book *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century: Realism, Idealism, and the American Experience* is in its third edition (1980, 1995, 2007) which proves that understanding American art in its own context is still not a simple project. The strength of Novak's work is intensified when you can look at it in tandem with the David Reynolds work on 19th century American Cultural History. Novak provides the in depth artistic analysis to Reynolds' larger cultural background to help frame it. Novak's other work, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape Painting, 1825-1875*, presents the analysis of visual aid as science. The idea of scientific representation within

government reports might not seem revolutionary at first thought, but where Novak succeeds is providing the general context for the artists—specifically landscape artists—on the government expeditions. For greatest impact *Nature and Culture* should be paired with Rebecca Bedell's *The Anatomy of Nature: Geology and American Landscape Painting, 1825-1875*. Reading the two together provide a perfect example of how American Geology and American Landscape painting go hand in hand. Another point worth noting is that both these books span the same 50-year period, which reinforces my belief that American Art and American Science followed nearly the same trek west.

The American public were also following that cultural arc in the 19th century. Without an active audience or participants neither art nor science would have expanded.

Wendy Bellion uncovers that audience within *Citizen Spectator: Art, Illustration and Visual Perception in Early America*. The work is a collection of early American art styles and art cultures. The book distills the fact that spectators are active lookers—"participants" in art. Far from passive observers, that audience, individually and as a whole, were making decisions about and utilizing their own positions within the republican value system that was the early American experience. Participating in these exhibits, art illusions and allusions were what shaped the citizenry, hence "citizen spectator."

This active participation was not limited to landscapes and historical paintings. Natural history illustrations were some of the most widely distributed bits of art or science. Ann Shelby Blum's *Picturing Nature: America Nineteenth-Century Zoological Illustration* focuses on scientific representation outside of the main thoroughfare of historical enquiry. She puts John James Audubon in a natural history, and thus scientific, perspective. Considering the history of natural history as the history of science should not be that revolutionary, but here we are. The

collected *Art and Science in America: Issues of Representation*, edited by Ann Meyers, is a collection of papers from a symposium which focused on the Huntington's collection and how two-dimensional images can provide primary source material for understanding the early decades of the 19th century. The book was published in 1998 and was reviewed as part of the "rebirth" of studies in historical natural history.

Another widely viewed visual artifact in the 19th century were maps. *Mapping the Nation: History and Cartography in Nineteenth-Century America* by Susan Shulten explores the history of cartography not from the technological side as much from the cultural side of how thinking with and about maps has changed. The changed was sculpted and molded through active history making. This is perhaps one of the best representations of how scientific visualization has changed and the power that such imagery possesses. Tying this back into Bellion's theories on spectatorship as a means of reinforcing citizenry and the power of images becomes obvious. Maps may fall under a different context than the wildlife imagery in Blum's *Picturing Nature* but they are all politicized in their own ways and are important to consider as products of scholarship and not merely visual aids.

Landscape paintings, photography, and natural history illustrations may be seeing a rebirth of interest and studies, but some areas remain a bit dated. Robert Taft's *Artists and Illustrators of the Old West: 1850-1900* was published in 1953 and is still the best collection of artists and illustrators for public presses during the last half of the 19th century. One of the artists included in Taft's survey was William Jacob Hays who produced one of my favorite paintings which is housed at the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa: *Herd of Buffaloes on the Bed of the River Missouri*. The sheer mass of the megafauna portrayed in the river bed give an idea of how many buffalo there were. Thinking back to the environmental histories by Roderick Nash, it serves as

an artistic version of John Burroughs' poetry about nature and descriptions of the Passenger Pigeons.

Reframing artwork and images as objects themselves can provide a means of reanalyzing the common themes present in depictions of the American West. Many of these depictions are neither wholly artistic representations nor simple market forces but reflect a more cultural consciousness surrounding the American Western mythos. The best single work that explains the major themes in Art of the American West is Robert Cushing Aiken's "Painting of Manifest Destiny: Mapping the Nation" published in 2000 in *American Art*.

Many depictions of the American West in general and Manifest Destiny in particular include the arrangement of the image from right to left. Due to natural orientation when facing an image left equals west. Examples of this can be found in Emanuel Leutze's paintings *Washington Crossing the Delaware* and *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its way*, John Gast's print *American Progress*, and Albert Bierstadt's *The Oregon Trail* among others. The sun setting in the west in Bierstadt's painting not only symbolizes a direction but is an avatar for *the* west itself. This was a mark of most artists trained in the Hudson River School.

Many times fate smiles on the industrious settlers as the floating providence accompanies the technological march west including wagon, rail, and farm. Other instances include the marginalization of native people's as progress pushed forward. Most instances included the natives in the same areas as other beasts of nature that are fleeing what Catlin called the "splendid juggernaut of civilization." Even as painting gave way to photography many of the same framing devices remained part of the artist's (photographer's) toolkit. William Henry Jackson's *Westward American* does not graphic depict any one place but provides a grander version of the American West in its entirety.

As Annette Kolodny analyzed in *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters*, the country and countryside were described as feminine either as motherly and providing or as virgin and unspoiled. These themes are explored in American art as well. The West specifically was seen as God's Country. Progress was westward, and that movement was divinely ordained. These themes arise again and come to fruition with Moran's and Jackson's depictions of the Holy Cross emblazoned on the side of the Rocky Mountains. Not only was God leading Americans west, he was there waiting for them. Bingham's major themes were faith, progress, and (Whig) democracy.

Native Americans portrayed as the "noble savage" is another common theme among the 19th century artists. These depictions range from the Natives as part of the unspoiled nature, with no thought to how they might have altered their own environments to the George Catlin's Pigeon's Egg head that depicted its subject within two worlds. Such romantic-esque imagery was rarely questioned, but Catlin's accounts of the Mandan ceremonies were deemed too fanciful to be real.

Possibly the most common theme among western art might be that of an epic struggle. That struggle could be between man and beast, man and nature, or man and man. Catlin and Alfred Jacob Miller both painted buffalo hunts while Thomas Cole's work explored the stages of civilization from wilderness to pastoral to civilization. Near the end of the 19th century at the heights of the Indian Wars the struggle was often depicted between settlers or the Calvary and the Native Americans. In Frederick Remington's painting *Dash for Timber* depicts the European Americans as the hunted. They are firing back over their shoulders at their Indian pursuers. In other instances, such as Charles Russell's *For Supremacy* the struggles were between warring Native tribes, in both instances it is the immediacy and the aspect of life and death that is at the

forefront of the work. Another prime example the struggle comes from Charles Deas 1845 work *A Death Struggle*. Death was lurking behind every rock and tree in the West it was again at once inviting and threatening for the settlers. Safe passage had to be divine providence.

Following the trajectory of art as object and art as culture studies has revealed that artwork must be understood within the context of its creation as well as the context after it was created. Paintings, prints, and photographs are not merely visual aids or a source of research, they are, in fact an end result of technological, cultural, and often times political forces at play within a large historical perspective. The loudest voices in this restricting historiography belong to Martha Sandweiss and Barbara Novak. The major themes of western art: Go West, God's Country, Man's Country, Progress, Epic Struggle, the Noble Savage, and the Great Outdoors have maintained prominence throughout the changed historiography of their own representations. Art, whether highbrow or popular, must be explained and expressed within its own historical and cultural context as part of the culture. At the same time that same art must be used in order to fully understand that same historical and cultural context. I believe what Martha Sandweiss states about photographs applies more broadly to pieces of art: "they are primary source documents that can be encountered both *in* history and *through* history" (*Print the Legend*, 9).