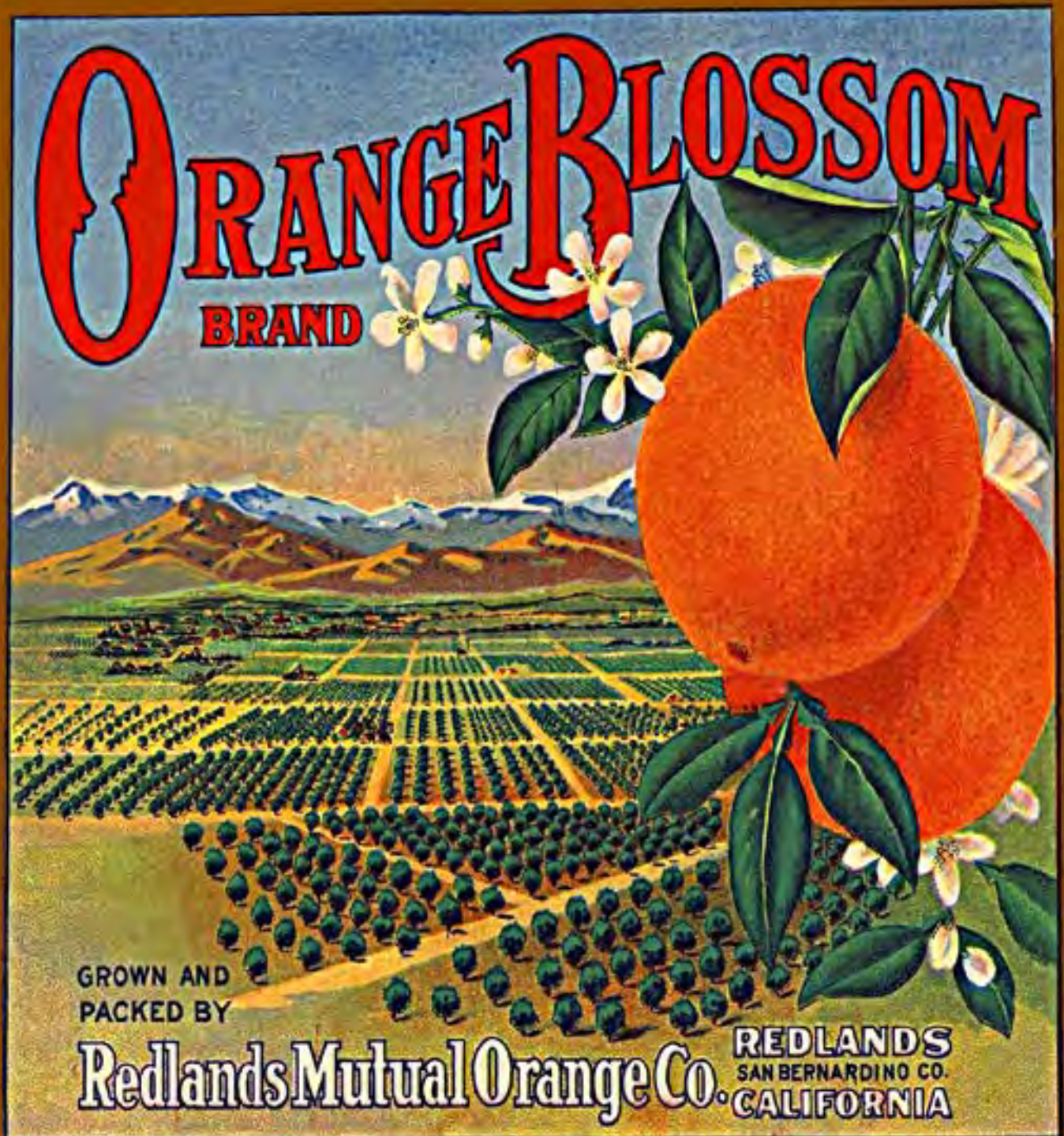


ARTS REVIEW

Wilmette Arts Guild... to inform, stimulate, inspire.

Winter 2020



Orange Crate Art

Microsculpture-Portraits of Insects

by Levon Biss

From the Collections of the Oxford University
Museum of Natural History

Microsculpture, a unique photographic study of insects, is a groundbreaking collaboration between award-winning photographer Levon Biss and the Oxford University Museum of Natural History. The museum's renowned entomology collection contains the world's oldest pinned insect specimens and items collected by pioneering Victorian explorers and biologists such as Charles Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace

Now, for the first time Biss's large-scale photographs of the specimens have been collected. Each breathtakingly detailed photograph is comprised of approximately 8,000 individual images- a painstaking process wherein Biss lights and photographs segments of the specimen, then combines them to spectacular effect.

The vivid colors, unusual features, and never-before-seen details of the insects in Microsculpture capture the true wonders of nature and science.

At the Houston Museum of Natural Science these immense enlargements astounded and enchanted the viewer into a different reality.

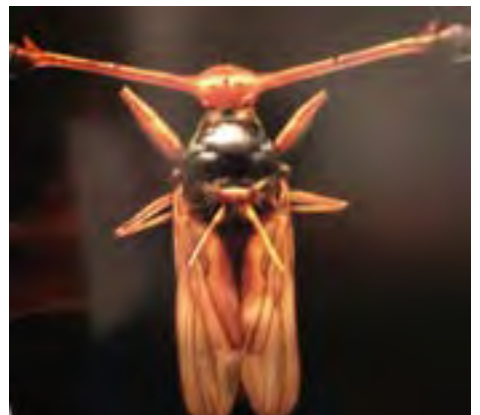
Photographic Process

I photograph the insect in approximately thirty different sections, depending on the size of the specimen. I light each section differently with strobe lights to bring out the microsculptural beauty of that particular section of the insect. For example, I will light and shoot just one antenna, then I will move on to the eye and the lighting set up will change entirely to suit the texture and contours of that part of the body. This process continues until I have covered the whole surface area of the insect.

Due to the inherent shallow depth of field that microscope lenses provide, each individual photograph only contains a tiny slither of focus. To enable me to capture all the information I need to create a fully focused image, the camera is mounted onto an electronic rail that I program to move forward ten microns between each shot. To give you an idea of how far that is, the average human hair is around seventy-five microns wide. The camera will then slowly move forward from the front of the insect to the back creating a folder of images that



Levon Biss at work behind his cameras



Microsculpture-Portraits of Insects

by Levon Biss



each have a thin plane of focus. Through various photo-stacking processes I flatten eight thousand images down to create a single picture that has complete focus throughout the full depth of the insect.

I repeat this process over the entire body of the insect and once I have thirty fully focused sections I bring them together in Photoshop to create the final image. From start to finish, a final photograph will take around three weeks to shoot, process, and retouch.

Levon Biss, FRPS

For more information about Levon Biss and his process for producing these fantastic images of insect, please refer to the following resources:

YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/Oi2Nvp-02v00>

Ted Talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3o655tLnik0>



Chinese New Year 2020: The Year of the Rat

Saturday, January 25, 2020-February 12, 2021

by Julie Ressler



photos by Imaginechina

Created with woodblock printing and colored hand-painting techniques, New Year painting has a history of nearly 2,000 years in China. To the Chinese the Rat symbolizes "Strength, Vitality, Wealth." There is a Chinese saying, "The Rat survives everything!" They are so intelligent.



Chinese New Year 2020: The Year of the Rat



Chinese New Year- 22 Interesting facts

1. The Chinese New Year date changes each year on a lunar cycle.
2. The holiday is also called "Spring Festival".
3. Every Chinese New Year starts a new animal's zodiac year.
4. The festival is celebrated for 16 days till the Lantern Festival.
5. Traditionally, this period was for praying to harvest gods.
6. Billions of red envelopes with cash are exchanged.
7. Today many of these red envelopes are given electronically!
8. Red decorations are everywhere during the Chinese New Year.
9. It is a festival for 1/4 of the world's population.
10. The festival causes the world's largest annual migration...trying to get home.
11. The New Year's Eve Gala is the world's most watched TV show.
12. Washing, sweeping, or taking out the garbage are not allowed.
13. Giving people pears or mirrors as gifts is also taboo.
14. You can, however, give alcohol, tea, or toys
15. There is the world's biggest annual fireworks usage during Chinese New Year.
16. It is now illegal to set off your own fireworks in most cities.
17. But before firecrackers were invented, Chinese people would burn bamboo.
18. On Chinese New Year's Eve, people eat auspicious foods, like buns and dumplings.
19. Oranges and tangerines play a large role in Chinese New Year festivities.
20. Kids love the holiday.
21. It can be tough for some: "old" singles hire fake boy/girlfriends to visit their homes.
22. Chinese New Year is a great time to visit family.





Chinese New Year 2020: The Year of the Rat

New Year painting has a history of nearly 2,000 years in China. Some say it originated from the “Door God” paintings that used to be placed near the doors to fend off evils or ghosts.

According to classical historical records, the tradition of putting paintings of deities in front of the doors dates back to the Han Dynasty (202 BC-AD 220), but some researchers and historians say the standard form of the Door God painting first appeared in the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907).

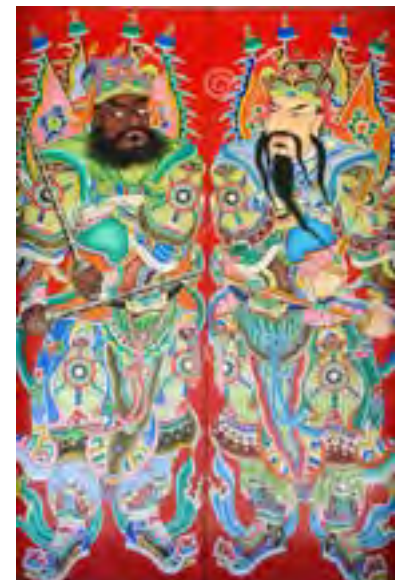
It is said Emperor Taizong (AD 598-649), a co-founder of the Tang Dynasty, used to be startled by wailing ghosts in his dreams. Two of his generals then volunteered to stand outside the door of the emperor’s chamber every night to guard against any evils and ghosts.

The vigil proved effective as the emperor began to sleep peacefully at night. But he worried about the two generals getting exhausted standing vigil every night. Therefore, he ordered the court painters to paint the images of the two generals

and paste the painting on his door and relieve them.

Since then, the Door God paintings caught up with the rest of the country. However, it was not until the Song Dynasty (AD 960-1279) that the Door God painting evolved into the New Year prints that people would paste on their doors, walls, windows or even stoves and wardrobes before the Chinese New Year to bid goodbye to the year and usher in a prosperous year.

6



When History Informs Art: St. Mary the Virgin Church

by Julie Ressler



St. Mary the Virgin Church - Hambleden, Buckinghamshire, England, UK

The first church here almost certainly predates the Norman Conquest, as evidenced by the beautifully carved Saxon font near the south door.



"the finest Saxon font in existence today, dating from the 9th century"

Hambleden Village is the English village that everyone wants to see. Its brick and flint architecture and charming cottages are "perfectly English."

St. Mary the Virgin Church has a marvelous ceiling. In the pews are individually designed and hand needlepointed kneeling cushions made in memory of each of the young soldiers from the village who died in World War I. I was very moved by this sitting next to my son, Thaddeus, who would have been just their age.

I am so grateful to Bernard and Gellie Draper for sharing "Their England" with me.



St. Mary the Virgin Church - Ceiling detail

When ~~Spirit~~ Informs Art: “Austin” by Ellsworth Kelly

Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas at Austin

by Julie Ressler



Ellsworth Kelly was a life long, vociferously declared atheist, but I think he protested too much and got stuck in conventional definitions. He has created a truly transcendent chapel “stripped of any holy narrative” or at least in the ordinary definition of those thoughts....just “Stations of the Cross” and **monstrances, right there for all to see.

When he was a GI in France during and after World War II, he spent a tremendous amount of time sketching the cathedrals and particularly Chartres and Notre Dame. He was particularly interested in the *interstitial spaces and the geometries of the stonework and monstrances. Many of these drawings were in an exhibit entitled “Form into Spirit” at the Blanton.

Kelly wanted to create a “space of calm and light” “a studio of solitude.” This is a common theme for

“seekers” whether it is a “walk in the forest” or sitting on a rock by the sea. Over and over again, Kelly informs us that he was not a seeker.

8



photo by Rachel Corbett



photo by Rachel Corbett

*An interstitial space is an intermediate space located between regular-use floors, commonly located in hospitals and laboratory-type buildings to allow space for the mechanical systems of the building. This is considered to be his greatest work whatever the inspiration.

**Monstrances

A monstrance, also known as an ostensorium, is the vessel used in Roman Catholic, Old Catholic and Anglican churches for the more convenient exhibition of some object of piety, such as the consecrated Eucharistic host during Eucharistic adoration or Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.



photo by Rachel Corbett

When Spirit Informs Art: Matisse Chapel



The Chapelle du Rosaire de Vence is the unique vision of Henri Matisse, as a monument to the gratitude he felt towards his nurse Monique Bourgeois, who became a nun. Matisse was less concerned with the revival of Christian art than with a personal sense of the spiritual – and the creative challenge such a building would present to him. “He wasn’t religious – he was raised Catholic but was not practicing,”

Matisse stated that ‘this work required me four years of an exclusive and entiring effort and it is the fruit of my whole working life. In spite of all its imperfections I consider it as my masterpiece.’ For the walls, Matisse designed three murals to be made by painting white tiles with black paint and then firing the large sections of tile. Each tile measures 12 in. Matisse was so crippled with ailments by this time that he could only work from a wheelchair, and he had a long stick with a brush strapped to his arm and pieces of construction paper placed on the wall. He then drew the images, which were transferred to tiles by skilled craftsmen. It was decorated between 1949 and 1951.

While it is considered the inspiration for Houston’s Rothko Chapel, it is the only building of its kind in which every facet of the building was dictated by the artist’s complete vision. Matisse drew up the plans for the edifice and every detail of the decoration — from the ceramics, stained glass windows, ornaments, and paintings, which Matisse created specifically for the chapel. The white chapel is famed for its stained glass windows that reflect a myriad of exquisite colours onto the white marble floors. It is undoubtedly the highlight of the beautiful old town of Vence, which lies on a hillside above the city of Nice, nine kilometres from the sea.

Chagall bought a home close by and produced his most iconic works for the Met, and the Art Institute to name a few.

9



When Spirit Informs Art: Rothko Chapel, Houston, TX

by Ted Ressler

10



Recently I was visiting a friend in Houston and had the opportunity to visit the Rothko Chapel. I only made this visit to accompany my wife who is an artist with very eclectic tastes in art. I on the other hand am a professional accompanier to any and all museums. The setting for the Chapel was surprisingly quiet. Most of my museum visits have been in large cities with great parking garages. But the Rothko Chapel is right out there in a quiet Houston community with street parking.

We entered the building and then the main exhibition room. On the main wall were three enormous black panels with benches in front of them. More black panels and benches on the walls to the right and left. I looked around to see where they were exhibiting the art, but those black panels were the Rothko masterpiece. With my wife's elbow to my ribs, I quickly gave up all thoughts of ridicule.

This to me was modern art at its best. Huge black canvases on the wall. Nothing but black. I was instructed to be quiet and sit on one of the benches and stare at one of the black panels. I smirked but decided to behave and continue my charade as a sophisticated art lover. I was not alone in my ignorance. Others entered the room and had no idea what to do. My wife helped another lost soul giving him the same instructions she gave me, "Sit, be quiet and look at the panels. Be still!"

I sat quietly, very well behaved. I stared at one of the panels. I stared for many minutes and then I started to see images within all that blackness. It wasn't all black! The longer I stared, the more I could see. I didn't know if I was actually seeing those images or if I had drunk the same Kool-Aid as the rest of the art world cognoscente. But as the minutes passed, I saw more and more and fell in love with the Rothko Chapel. It will definitely be on my list of places to visit again on my next trip to Houston.

When Spirit Informs Art: Bjorklunden Chapel

by Marge Meyers Graham



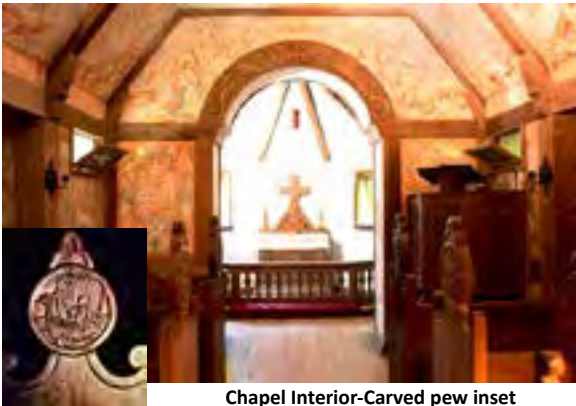
On the wall above the elaborately carved baptismal font, Grandma frescoed the Biblical passage that inspired her most of all: "Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God; arise therefore and build ye the Sanctuary of the Lord God." She did just that in her lifetime. She spent nine long years, including the span of World War II, to build her private sanctuary of peace and prayer in the north woods of Door County, Wisconsin. It remains intact today, thanks to the loving ministrations of Lawrence University and their dedicated Boynton Society.

So here I am, in Grandma's chapel at Bjorklunden vid Sjon (Norwegian for "birch trees by the water"), at dawn with my cup of tea. As the daylight creeps in the open door, it illuminates that key passage which instructed or empowered her to create this beautiful sanctuary, where I was both baptized and married. It is here in her chapel that I feel my grandmother's presence most strongly, sitting inside the work of her hands and listening for her spirit's guidance.



Winifred Boynton: designer, painter, carver

Years ago I felt her encouraging me to follow my dream of creating a retreat center dedicated to inspiring and nurturing creativity in other women, and so I opened A Woman's Place in New Buffalo, Michigan. Now I'm engaged in developing programs centered on creativity for The Wilmette Arts Guild. I feel a sensation of "turning the tapestry over." As I look at my personal tapestry, I can see the mostly messy working side of my life so far; it is a bit chaotic and full of multicolored loose ends. But for this moment, I seem to be



Chapel Interior-Carved pew inset

able to look at the "finished" side, and to check my life's progress. How are the pieces fitting together? While I'm here at Bjorklunden for a few days of my own personal creativity retreat, I can let Grandma lead me and feed me. Perhaps she has become like my personal Mother Goddess, or one of them - the source of life and birth and my guide toward death.



Cronehood is definitely upon me, in the best sense. I am feeling more and more able to understand where I fit in and how all my parts work together. I'm bursting with ideas and desires and dreams. Grandma told her amazing story in her book [Faith Builds a Chapel](#) and I've tried to spread her story and her beliefs as a sort of granddaughterly disciple. One summer I taught a weeklong Lawrence University seminar up here completely devoted to the Chapel, and at home I occasionally present a slide lecture based on her book. My hope is to inspire art-lovers to venture up to Baileys Harbor to experience the Chapel for themselves. Because of my fascination with female creativity, I see feminine and nature-based (pagan) imagery throughout Grandma's non-denominational Chapel. Dedicated to world peace, she refused to portray any scenes of violence, including the crucifixion of Christ. Within the frescoes and carvings of Biblical stories and her favorite scriptures are juxtaposed images from medieval Nordic tales, embellished with animals ranging from bear cubs to dragons. Around all of it grows abundant flowering and fertile vegetation. And the most eclectic touch of all was her inclusion of her pet dogs, Paddle and Jigger, as well as our family members disguised as angels and cherubs. When I was in eighth grade, my mother, sister and I attended a special ceremony at the Norwegian Consulate where my lovely and soft-spoken grandmother was awarded a large medal sent from the King of Norway for

her special contribution to Norwegian Culture. Grandma Boynton's Bjorklunden Chapel in Door County is as inspiring and beautiful today as ever, and it's little wonder that I continue to feel grateful to her everlasting spirit for her unique female spiritual expression, vision and creativity. This was a personal meditation at dawn written on June 14, 2005 in the Boynton Chapel at Bjorklunden vid Sjon, Baileys Harbor, Wisconsin.

When Existence is Enough: Sosua Synagogue, Dominican Republic

by Ted Ressler



Image of Sosua Synagogue circa 1940



Recent image of Sosua Synagogue

Sosua is a small, pretty coastal resort on the gorgeous north shore of the Dominican Republic. It is not very famous; most people have never heard of it. For some, however, it was their only hope of survival and a safe haven from Nazi Germany.

The Dominican Republic was one of very few countries willing to accept mass Jewish immigration during World War II. At the Évian Conference Trujillo offered to accept up to 100,000 Jewish refugees. It is estimated that 5,000 visas were actually issued, and the vast majority of the recipients did not reach the country because of how hard it was to get out of occupied Europe.

The Dominican Republic Settlement Association was formed with the assistance of the JDC, and helped settle Jews in Sosúa.

About 700 European Jews of Ashkenazi Jewish descent reached the settlement where each family received 82 acres of land, 10 cows (plus 2 additional cows per child), a mule and a horse, and a US\$10,000 loan (about \$174,000 at 2020 prices) at 1% interest.

In 1943 the number of known Jews in the Dominican Republic peaked at 1000.

The temple's simple pine interior now has the patina of age and the lustre of continuous and passionate words of the ancient tradition, Boruch atah Adonoy...

ברוך אתה ה' א-לֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם...



My son Jason's Bar Mitzvah at the Synagogue in Sosua, 1986

What I remember most vividly about the Sosua was the smell of the huge yellow montequilla blossoms at first light and the marvelously pungent aroma of coffee, fresh and cooked over a charcoal fire that would also produce breakfast for the workmen. The softness of the morning air that would stiffen up as the sun rose until it became unbearable around 11:00 AM.

One morning in Sosua, we awoke to find wild horses sleeping on the grass in our front yard. They groaned as they rose realizing they would have to begin their day. The humans were stirring. The smell of the sea was narcissus long into the morning.

Julie Ressler

When Spirit Is Ignored By Art: The Refurbished Madonna of Chartres

by Julie Ressler



13

The Black Madonna of Chartres has fallen victim to the changing understanding of sin brought to bear by the modern world views. Most of the old “sins” have disappeared and strong emotions become discredited... “understood in a different way.” Psychoanalyses etc. From the vernacular... “Shit happens.” So this is a more generous way of understanding how the French “Intelligencia” could “transform the Mother of God into a simpering pink kewpie doll” (NY Review of Books) in the name of “authentic” artistic renovation. They never thought of Chartres as religious sanctuary anyway... simply an historical work of art discolored by time. That it was barely touched by two world wars and revolutions is not miraculous to them. Miracles are from a different time.

As Jean Markale argues in Cathedral of the Black Madonna: The Druids and the Mysteries of Chartres (1988)—an intriguing study of the links between the Christian sanctuary and the Druidic shrine it superseded—there was a direct precedent for Our Lady of the Pillar in the Celtic black mother goddess Sulevia, another case of early Christianity co-opting indigenous beliefs to attract pagans. Whenever and however Chartres’s Black Madonna did acquire its mysterious patina—through oxidation or smoke from candles and incense or hearing the sorrows and “the sins of the world”, her darkness led to confidence that she would “know” and “forgive” and “protect.”

More relevant to those who sought anonymity and comfort in her darkness – those women in shawls I saw leaned over and weeping quietly- now their grief is lit as on a stage and public. Unbearable! They are not there. The Black Madonna knew what they told her because she had heard it so often over the centuries. She knew what to let us know in return and we walked away relieved.

The Arts Review depends solely on your generosity. In order to continue our print and online versions we ask for any donation that you are able to send, be it \$5 or \$500 or \$5000. Please send your check to: Wilmette Arts Guild · P.O. Box 902 · Wilmette, IL 60091

or Donate online at: www.wilmetteartsguild.org then go to menu item “Arts Reviews” then click “Donations”

(on this page you can read back issues of the Arts Reviews)

Editor: Julie Ressler

Printing: Central Avenue Printing

Graphics: Ted Ressler

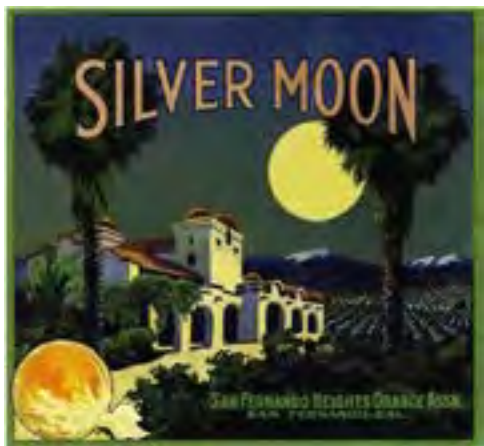


Orange Crate Art California's Legacy

by John Orr

To be fair, California historians can hardly claim Currier and Ives lithographic prints as a significant part of their state's Left Coast art legacy. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, Currier and Ives produced countless numbers of lithographic prints in its New York City headquarters on Spruce Street. Based largely on paintings and drawings purchased from well-known artists, Currier and Ives's offered affordable images of everyday lives, historical events, landscapes, and political satire to hang on the walls of modest homes all over America. Nathaniel Currier and James Ives were not ashamed to describe their New York art factory as "the Grand Central Depot for Cheap and Popular Prints."

Currier and Ives' lithographic prints attracted nouveau riche collectors in mid-century San Francisco. Eventually it employed agents and artists to establish a presence there. Still, their images of Northern California experiences and landscapes usually had to be shipped to New York City for lithographic fabrication and coloration.

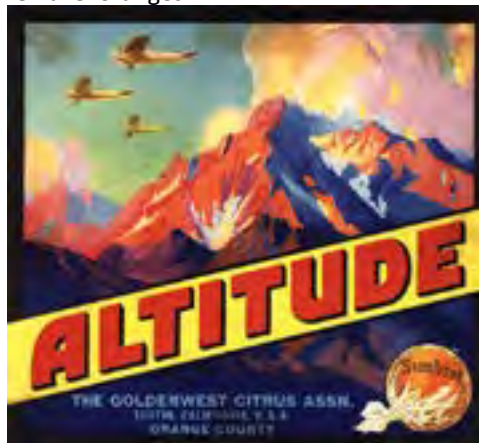


Max Schmidt, an immigrant printmaker who brought lithographic skills from Germany to his new home in San Francisco, established Schmidt Lithograph Company in 1872. It was easy for him to see that a niche could be created for a homegrown version of Currier and Ives. For a while, he sold cheap lithographic prints of Northern California scenes that were virtually indistinguishable from those produced in New York by Currier and Ives. He quickly recognized, however, that his newly adopted state offered another, more promising opportunity—the need for crate labels in California's expanding agricultural industry, especially for orange crate labels.

The Union Pacific Railroad and other transcontinental railroad companies were expanding their use of refrigerated boxcars that could guarantee the arrival at distant locations of fresh, beautiful, health-promoting oranges. Likewise, the newly created California Fruit Growers Association was pouring advertising funds into the production of brochures, billboards, posters, and especially orange crate labels that promoted tourism and the consumption of California's signature navel oranges.



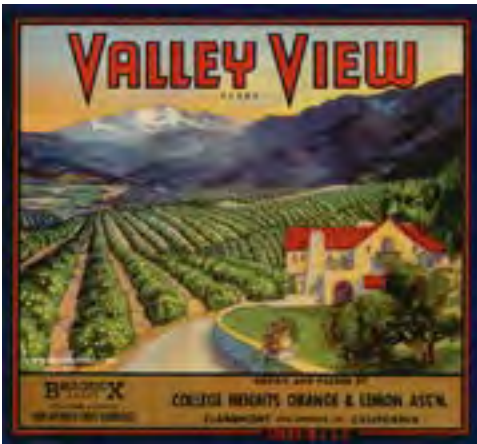
Schmidt Lithography did not stand alone in its efforts to profit from the growth of California's orange industry by printing orange crate labels. Multiple lithography companies with similar interests could be found in New York, Boston, Detroit, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Fresno, St. Louis and in other urban centers. Lithography companies routinely acquired other lithography companies. The names of these companies often changed, reflecting changes in ownership and geographical location.





Orange Crate Art

Orange crate label producers relied on stone lithography (and, later, on mechanical innovations in lithographic printmaking) to produce thousands of branded orange crate labels. These labels were made for fruit grower associations and packing houses all over the state, especially in California's San Joaquin Valley, Southern California, Ventura County, and Santa Barbara County. The labels were glued to the ends of wooden orange crates, placed in refrigerated boxcars, and shipped to distant cities.



Orange crate labels were never intended to be fine art. They were not printed to be hung on walls. They were a straightforward form of commercial art. Artists never signed them. But many of the labels had a character and quality that transcended their commercial function. Some, for example, displayed beautifully crafted, romanticized images of a California in-the-making, whose exotic landscape, history, and lifestyles



could and should not be resisted. Some recorded historical events, e.g., the Depression, World War II, the development of airplanes, the opening of the Los Angeles Coliseum.



Some extolled oranges as spiritualized symbols of a human desire to live healthy, energized lives. Some utilized images that were associated with the immigrant origins of orange grove owners and packers. Many were simply odd, even playful, e.g., the image of a unicorn running across grasslands, with foam falling from its mouth.



But orange crate labels, like Currier and Ives prints, effectively functioned as "cheap and popular prints" in places far beyond orange industry sites. During the first half of the twentieth century, they were incorporated into a wide variety of everyday life settings. In my own Fillmore and Long Beach, California neighborhoods during the 1930s' Depression, for example, people were using orange crates (with their affixed labels) as dining room chairs, toy boxes, storage containers, coffee tables, end tables, and bookshelves. In grocery stores, oranges were often sold directly out of crates that were still adorned by glued-on labels. Orange crates were laughingly regarded as college dormitory furniture.



I have recently discovered that elderly friends from various parts of the United States had similar experiences. They fondly and nostalgically remember the orange labels that graced their childhood and adolescent lives. They did not hang these labels on their walls. They sat on them.





Orange Crate Art

by John Orr

them. They even lugged orange crates off to college, and some even carried them into early adulthood apartments. Orange crate labels were not regarded as collectible until World War II's labor and resource shortages forced packing houses to turn to cardboard crates, and until orange groves were bulldozed in Southern California to make way for postwar housing tracts and industrial parks.



By the mid-1950s, California's great lithographic printmaking companies were closing. Thousands of unused orange crate labels were consigned to storage boxes in packing house closets, waiting to be rediscovered by collectors in the 1960s and 1970s, by antique stores, and by entrepreneurs who encased labels in plastic table mats. A few archives were established in California museums and public libraries to preserve the labels for a later artistic assessment.



Irony abounds! Lithographically-produced orange crate labels were a commercial phenomenon, designed to bring money into the pockets of agricultural entrepreneurs. In contrast, the 1960s' revival of lithography-based cheap art printmaking in Southern California began as an anti-establishment, feminist protest against barriers that made it difficult for women to function successfully in the Los Angeles' art scene.

June Wayne, a Los Angeles artist, wanted to create an institution that would mentor aspiring female artists, and she concluded



that the best way to do this would be to revive the use of lithography in the fine arts printmaking. Lithography did not require that expensive materials be used by starving female artists. A lithography-based printmaking revival promised to grow new markets for new artists through an expanded supply of affordable prints.

Using a grant from the Ford Foundation, Wayne opened Tamarind Lithography Workshop in 1960, and Tamarind's success led to Los Angeles' printmaking renaissance of the 1960s and 1970s. A network of printmaking lithography centers prospered in Los Angeles. Galleries that specialized in affordable prints (e.g., the Upstairs Gallery) thrived in low-rent areas of Southern California. Auctions of affordable fine arts prints multiplied as fund raising events for churches, schools and other nonprofits.

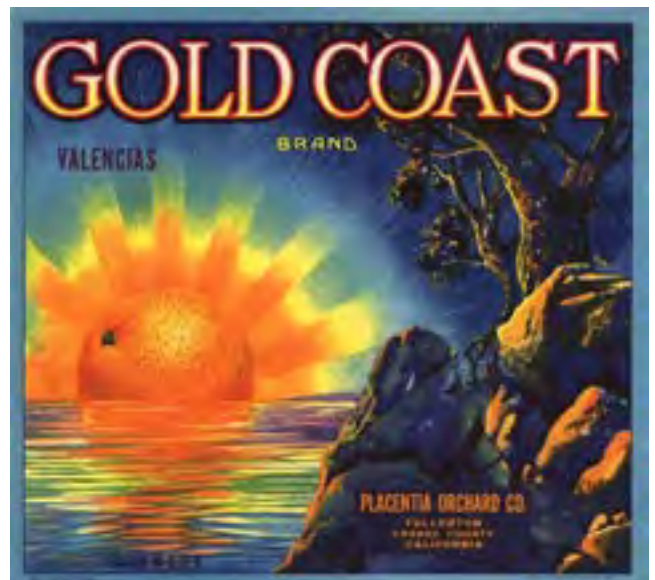
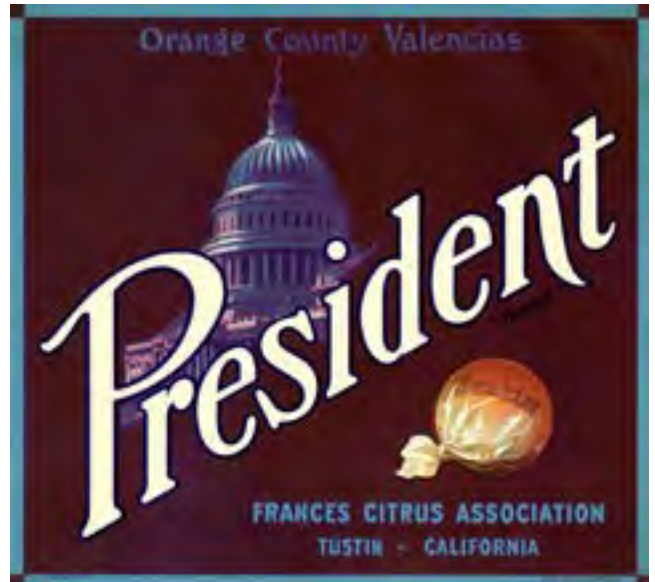
The new era of affordable fine art prints was supported by a period of radical social/cultural change in America. Sister Corita Kent at Hollywood's Immaculate Heart College, for example, used silk screen "cheap art" techniques for her text-dominated posters ("To-day is the first day of the rest of your life.") During San Francisco's Summer of Love, affordably produced, artistically significant posters advertised events at places like the Fillmore Theater. They subsequently were granted exhibit space in California galleries and museums.



Sadly, the historic ties of today's fine art prints to Currier and Ives' cheap art and to orange crate labels have not been sufficiently explored. Although the prices of art prints produced in the 1960s and 1970s continue to rise, the fruits of California's emotionally powerful cheap art legacy still provide at least a modest restraint on the exclusion of middle class art collectors from the extremes of our currently inflated art market. Middle class art lovers should acknowledge their debt to cheap art predecessors, warts and all.



Orange Crate Art



Abracadabra !

by E.L. Traven

....orange crate label to art collection!

Back in the 1880's many California orange growers began advertising their fruit on labels attached to the shipping crates. Commercial artists designed colorful images depicting farms, landscape and of course oranges. These labels were mass produced by a process of lithography in which the artist drew a picture directly on a special kind of stone using a grease pencil. Then the lines were set by an etching process and color was added. This required a separate stone for each color and exact registration of the stones as they were applied to make the complete image.

Gradually there were more and more growers using these labels. Eventually the workshops making them centered in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Over time other folks began to commission similar labels advertising all kinds of fruit and even cigars. The artists who designed them were skilled craftsmen but anonymous. No one reproduced those images as fine art. Highly skilled and well paid in the manner of technicians they created a huge volume of art which was thought of as advertising and disposable.



Sometime in the 1920's aluminum was found to be a substitute for those heavy lithography stones (often weighing as much as three hundred pounds) and the process of making labels expanded even further. While the prime reason for making such labels was to illustrate oranges they were in number of ways to present the picture as a product of beautiful California, as being associated with people living wonderful, healthy lives, illustrating the American Dream. Some images were surreal showing genies out from the bottle or imaginary landscapes etc. to further this ideal scenario.

18 When World War II came along there was a big demand for aluminum and all metals. Cardboard boxes replaced wooden crates. The era of crate labels drew to a close. Soon most folks forgot about all those beautiful labels and new mechanization replaced the old processes. During that entire span from 1880's to 1945 a lot of artists produced work which was identified as commercial advertising and never presented as fine art. By that time photography and offset printing had taken over as the medium for commercial advertising.

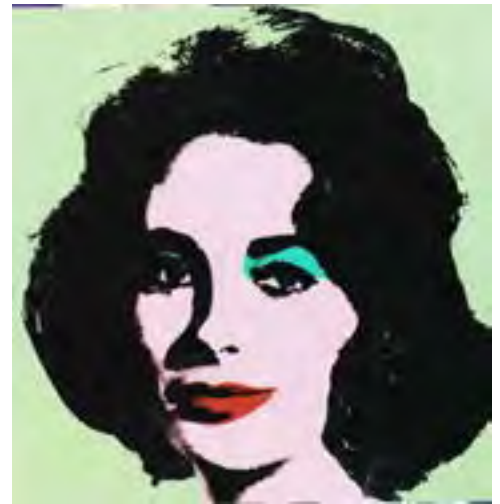
All of that changed abruptly in 1964 when a brash newcomer to the world of art presented a standard commercial image, a Brillo box, as fine art. The irony is that the actual Brillo label had been designed by a real artist who did abstract work. He did the box image for pay as a commercial project for the Brillo company. But Warhol was the guy who said, "Hey! This image is ART----admire it for what it is!"



So, what made Andy Warhol a fledgling artist with no prior reputation think that he could use a commercial image, namely a Brillo box, as an original artwork? To answer that we have to look over the world of modern art in the 1950s. The Abstract Expressionists had pretty much exhausted all the ways to be different from traditional art. One professor explained to his class that if you want to make it in the art world, first start doing something - painting landscapes, portraits, still life, whatever. Then start modifying what you do, that means that gradually you either get more and more reduction until there is nothing left, or else you go the other way, make it more and more complicated until you have a mess. That was well illustrated by color field painters like Rothko who simplified the picture down to few rectangles of color or guys like Pollack who went the other direction adding and adding dabs of paint until it was all one mass of splattered paint. Well that type of art may have been "progress" but it took a small army of critics, Clement Greenberg or Harold Rosenberg to explain it to the public. Gradually the cottage industry that arose of such critics and collectors wasn't far behind. While each artist of that generation did something original, there was one constant feature, namely there was no content in the work. What do we mean by content? Content is something that the viewer can identify, can relate to visually. It can be landscape, figures, objects or whatever. There can be abstract content, like visual illusions or designs, but when seen for the first time, a viewer goes away with an image that has some meaning to him.

Warhol made a major breakthrough by reintroducing content. At first, he did this by appropriating images that had already been created, such as the Brillo box design. So, what

makes that ART if it had already been done before? That is a key point: he changed the context of the image from a commercial advertisement into a work of fine art. By changing the image? No, by changing the context. That was a revolutionary idea which has been done by lots of artists who claim they are simply “expropriating” other images. What else was remarkable was the fact that modern technology allows the artist to re-create images without ever touching the canvas! No, Warhol never used a pen or brush to make the Brillo image or for that matter the Campbell soup label, dollar bill or any of the celebrity portraits which he did as multiples –Elvis, Marilyn, Liz etc. One famous piece was the copy of a car crash taken from Newsweek magazine and blown up to become a wall size print. After spray painting it green it became an iconic work that eventually sold for \$70,000,000! So, there you have it: take an image, any image but preferably one well recognized by the public, then reproduce it. Once that shtick gets a little old, (like anybody can do that) carry the trick to the next stage by doing very large size pieces, introduce psychedelic colors, anything to catch attention.



The only thing you can't do is to make an image that has sentimentality, that has feeling. Nothing like the way old Currier and Ives prints showed village life in a favorable light. No,! Any kind of sentimentality was a cardinal sin. That is exactly where the old orange crate labels and the progeny which followed them are polar opposites to this new application of commercial advertising. What sets those labels apart, in fact far apart, from the labels Warhol has used is the fact that every one of those labels showed some happy, optimistic picture of beautiful farm land, prosperous farmers, healthy fruit etc. In a word, it smacked of sentiment. When Warhol and others appropriated those images, it was in a new universe. Nothing 'feel good' about it. If something seemed to be life affirming and cheerful that was only to be used as an ironic statement.

So how to categorize all this re-contexturized work. Since all the development from the 1890's fell under the rubric of "Modern Art" a new category was created called "Contemporary Art". What did that mean? Mainly, it meant that it was art created in the contemporary time period, like within the lifetime of the artists and whoever was consuming it. Nothing could be more general than that! That means that anything, I do mean anything (Traci Emmon's Unmade Bed) can be part of the world of Contemporary Art. The most ridiculous example has to be the banana taped to the wall at the Miami Art Fair entitled "Comedian". The claim is that what the artist is selling is not the object, it is the "idea". So be it. The art form on orange labels was about the object itself, namely delicious, ripe fruit in the land of plenty, not the idea of it. So, we have come full circle from ART as an image to look at, something with a message about commercial products, to ART that isn't really about anything except an artist's statement and by extension the collector's wishes.

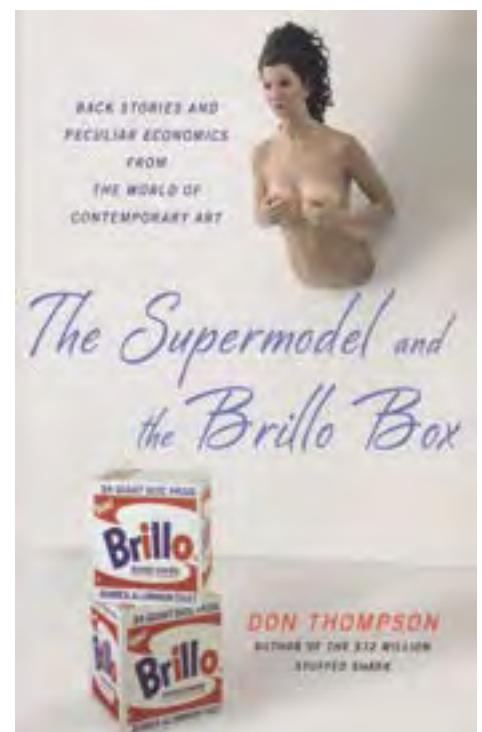
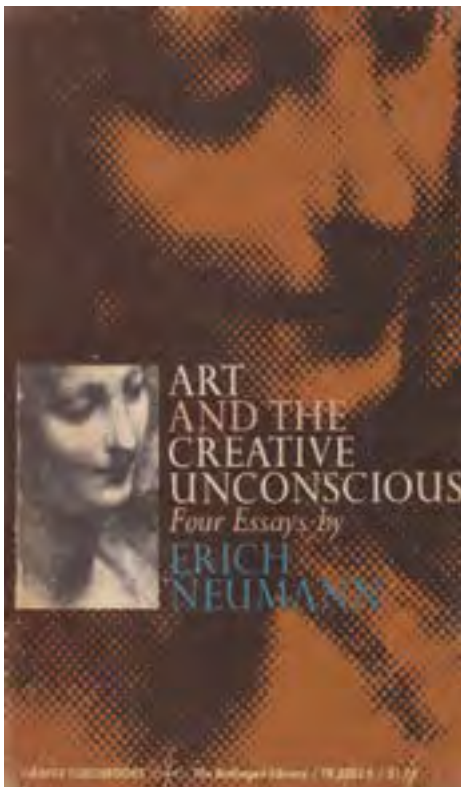
19



20



Must Read!



From Tolkien

Maker of Middle-Earth

by Catherine McIlwaine

J.R.R. Tolkien Newspaper Doodles

Perhaps unsurprisingly for a philologist and a professor of the English language, Tolkien was a keen solver of crossword puzzles. He read two national daily newspapers, The Times and the Daily Telegraph, often taking both on the same day, and he saved each newspaper so that he could complete the crosswords at his leisure. Whilst filling in the clues (there is not an unfinished crossword in the Bodleian archive), he would doodle intricate designs and patterns alongside them. The drawings were mostly in ballpoint pen and include geometric designs, borders or friezes with repeated patterns, paisley designs, scrolls, stylized flowers and plants and abstract curving designs. There are 183 drawings on newspaper and the majority can be dated to either 1960 or 1967. It is perhaps not surprising that they proliferate after his retirement in 1959, when he was released from the pressures of the academic timetable. Some of the designs were incorporated into his legendarium and are attributed to artefacts from Númenor dating for the Second Age of Middle-earth.

Available Bodleian Library Shop, UK



Mouth and Foot Painting Artists

article suggested by Elizabeth V. Nelms



Their feet treat their toes like fingers.



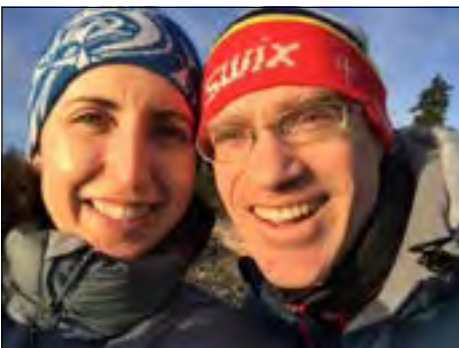
Mouth painting in Germany



Foot painting in India



17 year old and her "mouth-terpiece"



WAG's Troy Scott with wife Dorothy

The roots of the MFPA go back to 1956, when Erich Stegmann, a polio-stricken mouth painter, gathered a small band of disabled artists from eight European countries. Their ultimate goal was to make their living through their artistic efforts, and to obtain a sense of work security that until then had eluded them.

Coupling his creative abilities with business acumen, Stegmann established the MFPA as a co-operative organisation that reproduces its artists work mainly in the form of cards, calendars and books.

From the small group he gathered for the inaugural meeting of the Association of Mouth and Foot Painting Artists, the group has now grown to represent nearly 700 members, from 74 countries around the world.

One of the main themes of Stegmann's credo was that the MFPA must never be regarded as a charity simply because its members are disabled.

To Stegmann, the word "charity" was as abhorrent as the word "pity." The Association maintains that it is not a charity and does not qualify for charitable assistance.

To this Day, The MFPA's Motto Worldwide Remains

"Self Help – Not Charity."

For more information on the Association, or products for sale by the MFPA, please contact:

*MFPA - Mouth and Foot Painting Artists
Att: Kate March
2070 Peachtree Industrial Ct., Suite 101
Atlanta, GA 30341
877-637-2872 email: mfpa@mfpausa.com*



Troy Scott

WAG has been helping artist Troy Scott come back to art after devastating injuries from being hit by an automobile while running with a friend. His buddy died and Troy was paralyzed from the shoulders down.

He has made tremendous progress this year. Your donation to WAG is 100% tax deductible and will go directly to Troy if that is your wish.



Mouth Painting



Foot Painting



Foot painting in India



Foot painting in China



Maria Huppi, Oregon Mouth Painter

Mary Krebs Smythe

In Memoriam

She may be gone but her “Krebs Heads” are still with us, and so much more!

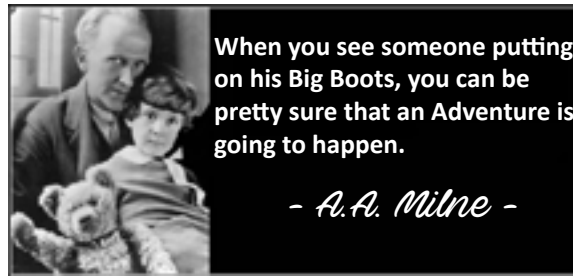
But Oh How We'll Miss Her!

A unique woman and a great heart!

23



Cowboy Boots



When you see someone putting on his Big Boots, you can be pretty sure that an Adventure is going to happen.

- A.A. Milne -

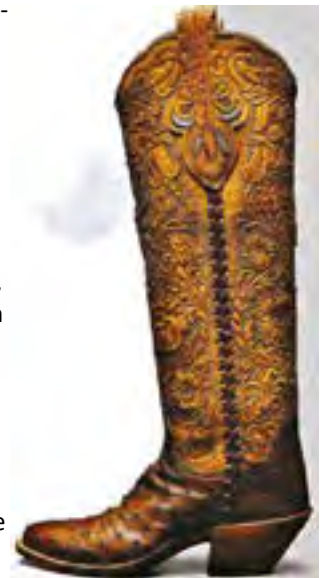
No one really knows who the original inventor of cowboy boots was. According to several different stories and legends, the first pair of cowboy boots was made by either a shoemaker in Kansas, or by one in Texas. Either way, the story is still the same. After the Civil War was over in 1865, the cowboys who were driving cattle across the country discovered that they needed a different style of boots. The ones worn



during the war just didn't suit the long hours riding on the trails: blazing through the brush and brambles, splashing through creeks and rivers, and riding with their feet in stirrups for hours at a time.

Around 1870 some ingenious cowboy took his boots to a shoemaker and asked for a pointy toe so he could get his foot into the stirrup more easily; a taller shaft to protect his legs; and a bigger, thicker, underslung heel so his foot wouldn't come out of the stirrup during the rough riding on the trails. The knee-high design protected his legs from the thorns of mesquite trees, barbed wire, snakes, and other dangers. The cowboy boots were pulled on with long mule-ear straps but were loose enough on the top so that they could be wiggled out of easily if the cowboy was hung up in the stirrup and needed to get out in a hurry.

The tough leather that the cowboy boots were made from also protected the cowboy's ankles from being bruised by the wooden stirrups, and his legs from rubbing against the stirrup leathers. The cowboy boots were stitched on the outside to keep the leather from buckling and eventually rubbing against the cowboy's leg.



The high, underslung heel of the cowboy boot also served to protect the cowboy. He could dig that heel into the ground when pulling a stubborn mule or when leading his horse down a steep and rocky trail. The heel also kept the cowboy's foot from going all the way through the stirrup so that if he were thrown from his horse he wouldn't get stuck in the stirrup and drag on the ground. And just like that, the first pair of cowboy boots was born. The first pairs of cowboy boots had very little style and were for working purposes only. They were a tool that helped keep the cowboy safe and quickly became a part of any cowboy's everyday life. At first, cowboy boots were only custom made.

A cowboy would have to go to a cobbler who would measure his feet and make a pair of cowboy boots just for him. Later, the first mail-order boot companies came about. Getting a pair of cowboy boots in this way was much more humble, but a cowboy down on his luck had to do whatever he could to get his boots. Cowboy boots began as a practical tool for the cowboy, but soon became a fashion statement. The stitching on the outside usually done in a plain black or brown soon gave way to more colorful thread, and designs and pictures were sewn into the boots. From there, bootmakers began to experiment with inlays and overlays, and suddenly boot designs became limitless. The more extraordinary the cowboy boot could be, the better.

10 Weird Facts about Old West Cowboy Boots

posted on weirdomatic.com on May 23, 2018 By Rick Johnson



Big hats, bigger dresses, and of course, the iconic look of old west cowboy boots. The wild west had a unique sense of fashion that still resonates to this day. But do you know the whole story behind the West's most iconic type of footwear?

Here are 10 weird facts about old cowboy boots that you may not have heard.

1. The History of Cowboy Boots Begins in Britain. The first reported archetype of the cowboy boot actually didn't come from the west at all, but instead came from England. We owe the cowboy boot to the Arthur Wesley, the first Duke of Wellington. Wesley loved how comfortable and stylish the boot was and it quickly became a symbol of aristocracy.



2. The Final Design Has a Spanish Influence. England wasn't the only country that contributed to the overall design of old cowboy boots. In fact, Americans may owe more to the Mexicans and Spanish than the English. Reportedly, cattle ranchers in Mexico and Spain used a similarly designed boot, though the flat-bottomed shoes made it hard to chase after cattle.



3. The Pointed Design Serves a Purpose. Have you ever wondered why nearly all cowboy boots have a pointed toe? It's not just a fashion statement, but a matter of practicality. The pointed toe made it easier for cowboys to get in and out of the saddle.

Previously, if a cowboy was trapped in a saddle and dragged behind their horse, they'd end up gravely injured or dead.

4. American Cowboy Boots Originated in Kansas. While there's quite a bit of debate over who exactly created what we've come to expect from a cowboy boot, much of the credit is given to Kansas' Charles Hyer. As the story goes, a farmer from Colorado stopped by to inquire about riding boots. Hyer created a customized boot for the rider, which was so handy that the cowboy evangelized Hyer's work to anyone who would listen.



5. You Can Make a Boot From Just About Anything. We tend to think of cowboy boots as leather, but it's possible to make a boot from nearly any animal hide. From snakeskin to bullfrog to shark, there are boots made from just about any animal you can imagine.

6. The Bend Near the Toe Has a Name. Most cowboy boots have a slight curve near the toe known as the toe wrinkle.

7. Spurs Are For More Than Just Looks. If you've ever seen a western movie, you've probably seen the rounded wheels with jagged edges on the end. These boot additions, known as spurs, help cowboys maximize their horse's speed. To make the horse go faster, they simply kick the spur into the side of the horse. It's not the most humane treatment, to put it mildly, but apparently, it works.

8. Most Modern Cowboy Boots Are Used For Line Dancing. Sure, old cowboy boots were more about utility than looks, but the line dancing community has adopted the West's favorite footwear as its own. Go to any country bar or line dance and you're sure to see plenty of cowboy boots.

9. Hollywood Brought Them Back. Cowboy boots never disappeared, per say, but their popularity did wane for a while. Until that is, Hollywood's obsession with cowboy culture began. Thanks to the popularity of westerns, cowboy boots came back in style in the 1940s.

10. They're Sticking Around. The cowboy boot industry is so popular that you can buy them anywhere that sells footwear. There's No Denying The Popularity of Old West Cowboy Boots. Whether you're a fan of the old west cowboy boots style or the sleeker, refined offerings of today, it's clear that cowboy boots are one of the most enduring types of footwear available for a reason.

Thanks to their comfort and practicality, they're a great choice to cut a rug or wrangle some cattle.



The Art of the Cigar Label

by Joe Davidson from Dick W. Davis

Reading about Orange, Fruit and Vegetable crate art labels, there was a reference to [The Art of the Cigar Label](#), which I purchased second hand.

The word amazing is now overused, but I was amazed to find that there was such a large home industry, over 70,000 registered, broadly scattered across the U.S., East Coast, South and Mid-West, using mostly American tobacco, turning out cigars and identifying and promoting them with labels. The themes, as if Sherman Williams, covered the earth, in all its peoples, myriad subjects, animals, flowers, biases. Few cigars came from where I thought, Cuba. Not only were the cigar makers dispersed but the lithographers too.

Cigar sales peaked at 8.2 billion in 1920, 80 cigars per man-woman-child. Women and kids didn't get their share. Cigarettes did not overtake cigar sales until after 1920 when machines rolled and packaged cigarettes.



In the golden age of cigar label art, literally thousands of subjects were used to attract the eyes and nickels of our forefathers. Since most cigars were smoked by men, it is no surprise that the various themes shown on the labels were what the lithographers thought men liked. Used as a historical record, men liked pretty ladies, patriotism, sports, cowboys and Indians, animals, famous people and various forms of transportation, not necessarily in that order. They also provide us with an insight into the culture of that era, reflecting the values and spirit of the times. They picture a man's world, a Victorian world, with idealized images of reality. You see pictures of a proud and patriotic America, a time when achievements and heroes were admired and celebrated.

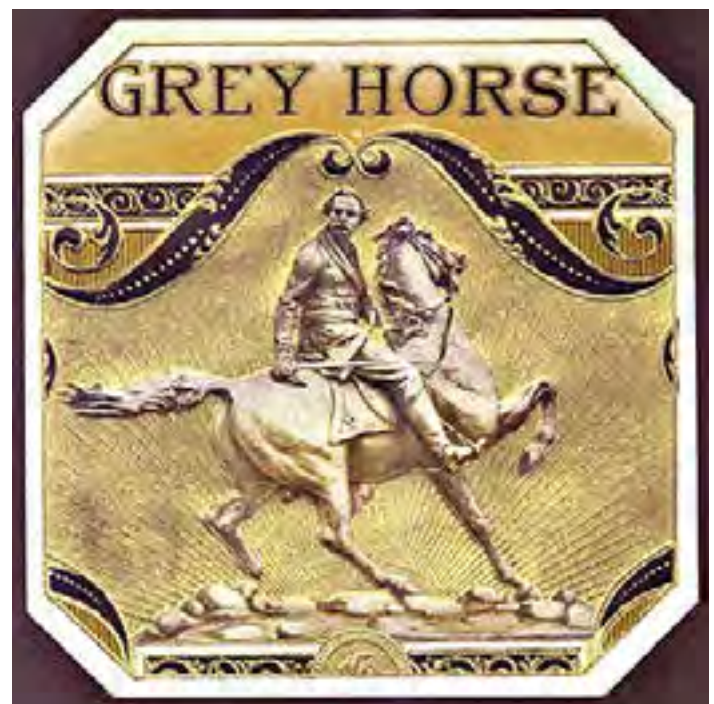
You also get a glimpse of their humor and their sly double-entendres which still make you laugh today. We can see what the people wore, from hairstyles to shoe styles, their hobbies, and the leisure pastimes they enjoyed.

In depicting minorities, those featuring Blacks were generally humorous and insulting, the Chinese were depicted as something less than human, and the Irish in many cases as drunken bums. The American Indian, on the other hand was usually shown as a noble warrior, possibly because he no longer remained a threat to us and our politicians had already taken anything of possible value from them.

Using appeal-to-pride psychology, many labels associated cigar smoking with the good times, showing ladies and gentlemen of the upper class known as "swells" or "dandies," attending parties and living the high life in lavish surroundings. After the Depression began, few cigar makers were anxious to picture such lifestyles on the working man's cigars.



Cigar Label Art





Wassily Kandinsky on the Spiritual Element in Art and the Three Responsibilities of Artists

"In each picture is a whole lifetime imprisoned, a whole lifetime of fears, doubts, hopes, and joys. Whither is this lifetime tending? What is the message of the competent artist? ... To harmonize the whole is the task of art."