Robert Henri: a Nebraska Legend

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Robert Henri: a Nebraska Legend

The Pink Pinafore, 1926, oil on canvas, 1930.H-41

Selections from the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden

The Twelfth Annual Sheldon Statewide Exhibition 1998-99
GIRL ON BEACH, CONCARNEAU
1889, oil on canvas, 13 x 16 in.
UNL-Gift of Mrs. Olga N. Sheldon, 1984.U-3364

With an impressionist approach, Henri portrays a young Breton woman in archaic peasant dress seated in the blazing light of the morning sun.

BOOTHBAY HARBOR
1910, oil on canvas, 26 x 32 in.
UNL-Gift of Mrs. Olga N. Sheldon, 1966.U-499

The artist's dark palette of blacks and browns appropriate to city scenes was lightened to a brighter, more atmospheric coloration when he painted during the summer months in places such as Boothbay Harbor on the coast of Maine.

MERRY CHRISTMAS CARD
1914, ink and colored pencil on paper, 3 1/2 x 4 1/2 in.
UNL-Gift of Mrs. Olga N. Sheldon, 1984.U-3500

Henri caricatures himself and his red-haired wife, Marjorie, in this holiday greeting of 1914.

QUAY AT CONCARNEAU
1899, oil on canvas, 25 3/4 x 32 in.

At Concarneau, on the coast of Brittany, Henri welcomed a chance to paint out of doors, depicting women in black dresses and white coifs silhouetted against a background of sailboats moored in the distance.

WOODS INTERIOR
1905, charcoal on paper, 12 x 11 3/4 in.

"Landscape is a medium for ideas...the various details in a landscape...mean nothing to us if they do not express some mood of nature as felt by the artist." Robert Henri, in *The Art Spirit.*

HAPPY NEW YEAR 1915
1915, ink and colored pencil on paper, 3 1/2 x 4 1/2 in.
UNL-Gift of Mrs. Olga N. Sheldon, 1984.U-3501

With a simple ink and colored pencil sketch and the greeting, "best of luck in 1915, from us," Henri conveys good wishes from himself and his wife.
NOTES FROM HENRI TO EUGENE SPEICHER  
n.d., ink on paper  
8 1/2 x 5 1/2 in.  
UNL-Gift of Mrs. Olga N. Sheldon  
1984.U-3497

Speicher was an artist who became part of Henri’s “inner circle” after the 1913 Armory Show. In this ink sketch, Henri introduces Speicher to model, Betalo Rubino, the subject of numerous Henri portraits.

ROLAND KNOEDLER RECEIVING HENRI AND TWO OTHERS OF THE EIGHT  
n.d., ink on paper  
10 1/2 x 7 1/2 in.  
UNL-Gift of Mrs. Olga N. Sheldon  
1984.U-3492

Roland Knoedler owned a leading commercial gallery, still in existence, in New York. In this caricature, Knoedler, appearing aloof and imperious, looms over Henri and two others of The Eight.

HOW SLOAN WOULD HAVE WORKED  
n.d., conte crayon on paper  
8 1/2 x 3 3/4 in.  
UNL-Gift of Mrs. Olga N. Sheldon  
1984.U-3493

Henri’s good friend, artist John Sloan, portrayed with top hat and spectacles, is the subject of this cartoon-like conte crayon sketch.

ROBERT HENRI: A NEBRASKA LEGEND  
Statewide Touring Exhibition Program Schedule 1998-1999

Chadron, August 24 - September 25  
Memorial Hall Main Gallery  
Local Sponsor: Chadron State College

North Platte, September 26 - October 30  
The Mall  
Local Sponsors: NebraskaLand National Bank; North Platte Telegraph; Ross Perry Motors and Crossroads Dodge-Cadillac; Oldsmobile, Dodge, Jeep and Eagle; United Nebraska Bank; Western Nebraska National Bank; First Federal Lincoln Bank

Grand Island, November 1 - November 27  
Grand Island Public Library  
Local Sponsors: Grand Island Public Schools; Home Federal

Holdrege, November 29 - January 8  
Phelps County Museum  
Local Sponsors: Dr. & Mrs. Stuart Embury; Dr. & Mrs. Wayne Quincy; Dr. & Mrs. Doak Doolittle; First National Bank of Holdrege; Holdrege School Foundation; National Art Honor Society, Holdrege Chapter

Aurora, January 9 - January 29  
Plainsman Museum  
Local Sponsor: Hamilton Community Foundation, Inc.

Fremont, January 31 - February 26  
Fremont Area Art Association  
Local Sponsor: Fremont Area Art Association

Beatrice, February 28 - March 26  
Gage County Historical Museum  
Local Sponsor: Beatrice National Bank & Trust

Columbus, March 28 - April 23  
Columbus Art Gallery  
Local Sponsors: Columbus Art Gallery; Columbus Area Arts Council; Columbus Public Schools Foundation

McCook, April 25 - May 28  
Museum of the High Plains  
Local Sponsor: McCook Arts Council

Cozad, May 30 - July 2  
Robert Henri Museum and Historic Walkway  
Local Sponsors: Cozad Area Arts Council and Friends of the Henri Museum

Cambridge, August 1 - September 3  
Cambridge Museum  
Local Sponsor: Cambridge Museum Foundation, Inc.

York, September 7 - September 24  
Cornerstone Bank  
Local Sponsor: Cornerstone Bank

Nebraska City, September 26 - October 29  
Morton-James Public Library  
Local Sponsor: Donations to the Library
Glackens, an artist and close friend of Henri's, recalled posing for this portrait. "I have on a gorgeous white vest that I purchased for $1.50 on the way up here." Henri gave this painting and the portrait of Mrs. Glackens to the couple as a wedding gift.

Four years old when this portrait was painted, Ira, son of William and Edith Glackens, recalls his terror at the "dizzy height of the model stand - I felt as if I were on top of the Eifel [sic] Tower!"

Henri began this full-length portrait when Edith Dimock was a Hartford, Ct. socialite. It was completed two years later when she became the bride of Henri's friend, William Glackens.

Many of Henri's late portraits were devoted to children whom he befriended while staying at Achill Island off the coast of Ireland. Mary Ann Cafferty, pictured here in a pink apron over her dark blue dress, was a favorite subject.

Henri's painting of his brother conveys a strong sense of the subject's physical presence, with the right side of the face and collar highlighted against a dark background. Notice the resemblance to Henri's mother in the Portrait of Mrs. R.H. Lee.

Painted in the summer of 1916 during Henri's first visit to Santa Fe, this portrait reflects a sympathetic bond he felt with the environment and with a diversity of ethnic traditions.
Rows of red lanterns sparkle above the crowds in Robert Henri's interpretation of a nighttime celebration of Bastille Day in Paris.

The subject of this portrait is Theresa Gatewood Cozad (Mrs. John J. Cozad), Robert Henri's mother. She took the name Mrs. Richard Henry Lee in 1882 when the family adopted new identities following her husband's indictment for murder in Cozad, NE.

Henri painted several portraits of this young Spanish gypsy woman and her child who presented themselves at his studio in Madrid in the summer of 1906. The subjects are depicted with a rich palette and robust painting style.

Using an earlier sketch titled Street in Paris, the artist produced his first etching of a bustling thoroughfare. The linear shading process with etching needle on copper plate was too slow for Henri and he did not continue to work in this medium.
Robert Henri: a Nebraska Legend, the twelfth in a series of Sheldon Statewide exhibitions, is a result of the uniquely successful partnership between the staff of the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden and our principal funding support group, the Nebraska Art Association, a nonprofit volunteer membership organization dedicated to the advancement of the visual arts in Nebraska, and twenty-two Nebraska communities that have served as exhibition venues since the inception of the program in 1987. Local sponsors who support the exhibition in their communities, and volunteer docents who disseminate important information to the school children and adults of Nebraska have been equally invaluable to the success of Sheldon Statewide. Robert Henri: a Nebraska Legend serves as a primary example of the University of Nebraska’s outreach mission in sharing the renowned Sheldon Gallery collection of American art with the citizens of Nebraska. Following are excerpts from an essay for a Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery exhibition catalogue, “Robert Henri and the Eight,” 1971, by noted Henri scholar William Innes Homer:

“Robert Henri (born Robert Henry Cozad) was one of the great personalities in the history of American art. He was a talented painter, a dedicated teacher, and an influential writer. Most important historically is the role that he played in bringing about profound changes in American art around the turn of the century. Because he believed in the freedom of the individual and progress in art, he fought vigorously against blind obedience to established artistic standards and championed a more liberal attitude which gave free rein to the artist’s creative instincts.”

“Since a great part of Henri’s influence resulted from the strength of his personality, an understanding of the man and his background is essential. Until recently, the facts of his early life were unknown to the public. However, since 1955, this knowledge has come to light and it can now be seen that his formative years played a crucial role in shaping the character of the man who became a central motivating force for artistic progress in this country.”

“Henri’s father, John Jackson Cozad, grew up in Ohio and, as a young man, earned his living as a gambler, an occupation which was at that time considered an honorable profession among gentlemen. In 1857 he married Theresa Gatewood, an attractive young lady from West Virginia (the painting in this exhibition shows her as a mature woman) and took her to Cincinnati to live. There Cozad gave up professional gambling, turned to real estate promotion, and founded a town called Cozaddale near Cincinnati. In Cincinnati his two sons were born: John Cozad in 1862 (John became a medical doctor in Philadelphia; the portrait in the exhibition depicts him in his early forties, after he had changed his name to Frank L. Southern) and Robert Henry Cozad in 1865. The family remained in Cincinnati for several years and then moved to the great plains of Nebraska, where the father established another town, named Cozad, in Dawson County. The town was inhabited primarily by farmers, and because their farms were occupying choice grazing land, Henri’s father encountered difficulties with the established cattle ranchers who had been there before him. One evening in 1882, a [rancher] attacked the elder Cozad with a knife, and, in self-defense, Cozad drew a pistol and shot him. Fearing for his own life, he fled from the town that he had founded, never to live there again. (Later a coroner’s jury cleared him of the charge.) Several months after this incident, the Cozads were reunited in Denver. To conceal his family’s true identity and to be free of any hint of scandal in the future, John Jackson Cozad changed his name to Richard H. Lee, his son John’s to Frank L. Southern, and Robert’s to Robert Earl Henri, and passed them off as his adopted children.”

The effects of Henri’s tumultuous early years have been the subject of speculation among various authors. His strong humanist leanings and respect for the individual have been attributed to his early life in the west. More important perhaps is the fact that he overcame those unsettled early years to become a visionary teacher and vanguard artist of the early twentieth century. Robert Henri’s art spirit is alive today in this comprehensive documentation of his illustrious career. We welcome viewers to learn more about Henri and his little known roots in Nebraska.

Nancy H. Dawson, Community Programs Coordinator

Sheldon Statewide is sponsored in part by the Nebraska Art Association. Nebraska Art Association programs are supported in part by a Basic Support Grant from the Nebraska Arts Council, a State agency. The University of Nebraska’s Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden is one of only 750 of the nation’s 8,000 museums to be accredited by the American Association of Museums.