



University of Wyoming Art Museum 2007
Educational Packet developed for K-12 teachers

*Portrait of a Place:
Wyoming's Red Desert, photographs by Martin Stupich*

Purpose of this packet:

To provide K-12 teachers with background information on the exhibition and suggested age appropriate applications for exploring the concepts, meaning, and artistic intent of the work exhibited, before, during, and after the museum visit.

Curricular Unit Topic:

Perceptions of Place through human eyes and the relationships we have with the land and its resources

The Focus of this educational packet and curricular unit is to **observe, question, explore, create and reflect.**

Observe:

Students will observe the photographs of Wyoming's Red Desert by Martin Stupich. Students will notice all of the different kinds of photos from the Red Desert exhibition and they will notice how the physical landscape and the human landscape have and do intersect, interact, and change the physical and the human.

Question:

Students will have an opportunity to read, write, sketch, listen to the artist/photographer and museum educators, and, then, to come up with questions about the subjects and objects in the work, and the concepts behind the art work, and, next, question the photographic and artistic techniques of the artist with museum educators, and, finally, to question their own responses to the photographs in the exhibition.

Explore:

Students will be encouraged to research any or all aspects of Wyoming's Red Desert:

Cultural and historical areas:

Jack Morrow Hills, South Pass Historical Landscape area, The Oregon National Historical Trail, Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail, The California National Historic Trail, The Cherokee Trails, The Pony Express

National Historic Trail, The Continental Divide
National Scenic Trail, Expansion-era roads

Historic Rock Art areas:

Independence Rock, The White Mountain Petroglyphs
Landscape Features: Oregon Buttes, Crookston Ranch, Native American Cultural Resources, Indian Gap, Chinese Cultural Resources

Paleontology:

Red Desert, Como Bluff, Jack Morrow Hills

Natural resources: Geology, rainfall and water resources, animals, plants, insects, reptiles, climate and weather patterns, unique natural qualities, and more

Political, social, economic, ranch, and environmental problems:

Students may study the effect man has had on this area and its ongoing struggle to maintain life on this fragile high desert.

Students will also be encouraged to research the artist/photographer **Martin Stupich**, his art, his life, his philosophies, and his experience.

Create:

Students will be given time to practice sketching and drawing, and creating their own landscape images that are close to their homes and hearts, whether using cameras to photograph the landscapes or sculpting one out of materials in the Shelton Studio.

Reflect:

Students will evaluate their final art products with other students from their classes and with teachers and museum educators. They will be given feedback on the art work and the concepts behind the making of the art work. After this process, each person will then write an essay about their process of making art and the concepts behind the work. This portion of the museum experience can be carried out in the student's home school and classroom.

Portrait of a Place:

Wyoming's Red Desert, photography by Martin Stupich

Introduction

In this museum experience students will view the work of the photographer and artist, Martin Stupich. Martin Stupich has been documenting the cultural landscape since 1975.

Wyoming's Red Desert is a fifteen thousand square mile arid basin in the central Rocky Mountains. Consisting mainly of state and federal lands, it is the largest unfenced expanse in the continental United States; and historically it has been an unpopulated, almost unknown, wilderness. Recently discovered, directly beneath it, is one of the world's largest untapped natural gas reserves. The desert's open-pit and uranium operations are being revived in response to world pressures. Surveying, blasting, drilling, and mining accelerate now at a pace that is transforming into an industrial landscape.



19th century inscriptions on Independence Rock, marking the emigrants' passing from the Great Plains west into Red Desert country, Sweetwater County, Wyoming 2006, Ultrachrome ink on Epson Premium Glossy paper, 13 x 19 in, lent by the artist

History and Background

This basin straddles the Continental Divide and stretches across what is known today as the I-80 corridor. Many who travel the route between Rawlins and Rock Springs view the barren, high-desert landscape as a featureless, "empty" place with little if any redeeming value. However, the Red Desert is a spectacularly complex place with delicate microclimates and fragile ecosystems, dramatic geology that offers evidence of its origins and life over eons of time, and a home to wild horses and desert elk, unique flora and fauna, and, for seven thousand years, human beings.

Throughout its life, the region has endured all that nature and man have given it: droughts and floods, the ebb and flow of energy booms, settlements, and a myriad of bisecting and transecting overland routes that include the earliest pioneer trails, and the first transcontinental railroad. Today, it is almost exclusively BLM lands with National Forests, National Wilderness Study Areas, and National Recreation Lands.

Beneath the Red Desert's expansive and sparse landscape lie mineral reserves and one of the largest known natural gas reserves. A time of increased energy demands and changes in U.S. energy policies makes for an uncommon time in the life of the desert. Over the last two decades, mineral extraction has accelerated dramatically, and more recently, the tapping of natural gas reserves is transforming the Red Desert from a place of wonder and wildness to one of commodity at an unprecedented pace.

Since 2000 Martin Stupich has photographed extensively in the Red Desert with an urgency to record it in the midst of its changing. Through his images, we see an expansive landscape, diverse geology, evidence of the earliest human occupation, boom and bust towns, and present day industry. Collectively, a portrait of this place emerges, revealing the human history of our connection to the landscape –this landscape. It is a complicated and fragmented portrait, one that tugs at the perception that this is a barren place of little value and one that encourages us to look again at the Red Desert in all its wonder and wildness.

Artist Statements

Genesis

In 1996, a mountain bike crash in the central Rockies gave me a titanium femur and a sudden intimate relationship with the southern Wyoming landscape. Within a year of ditching my crutches, I moved from Boston and using John McPhee's 'Rising from the Plains' as my atlas, settled on the edge of the high windy Great Divide Basin in Wyoming Red Desert country.

The landscape seems stark, the horizon crisp and always a day away. The desert is populated by scores of herds of rare desert elk, wild horse, and antelope. It is home to exotic species of finch, eagle, hawk and owl. Humans live there, too, in tiny numbers in small settlements around the basin's rim.

Recently discovered directly beneath the Red Desert is one of the world's greatest gas reserves. In the last three years, the empty, and remote half-million acres has flipped, transformed in one historic flash from wilderness steppe to industrial landscape.

British Petroleum, Halliburton and others have arrived. Surveyors, blasting and grading crews, rig operators and geologists now sweep the basin from edge to edge. Caravans of heavy equipment barrel across pristine playa and mesa, leaving a dense crosshatching of new roads in their wake. What had always been a blank spot on the map is now frantic with activity. When the dust clears in a decade or two—after the place has been scraped clean and pumped dry—the boom will end. The gas rigs will move on to the next sweet spot. The poisoned water table will begin to recharge. But anyone keeping time using a clock where a second is a lifetime, will not see the desert heal.

The Revelation

IN 2005, after scores of trips crisscrossing the landscape—camping, photographing, documenting, the geography of this wondrous raw place—it hit me like a skillet. They are not plundering the place. We are. I am. I look down to see that my tracks in the dust merge with theirs. They maybe mining the coal and poisoning the groundwater, but they do it in our name. I am accomplice and beneficiary. Now what? Do I turn myself in—and to whom?

—excerpt from Martin Stupich's essay in
FOTOFEST 2006 catalogue



Half of the buildings in Dad, Carbon County, Wyoming 2003, Ultrachrome ink on Epson Premium Glossy paper, 13 x 19 in, lent by the artist

Lesson Overview

Students will learn about the work of the photographer Martin Stupich. They will learn about his photographic techniques, skills, and style. They will learn about how he came to photograph the Red Desert and

why. They will learn about his life and philosophy of art. They will learn about diverse aspects of the Red Desert. They will explore the Red Desert from numerous points of view. They will explore the land and its resources and how this area has become a hot-bed of discussion. Students will look to see what new and original ideas come from these photographs. Students and teachers will consider the concepts behind Stupich's work and what these concepts mean to us, the viewers.

In the Shelton Studio students will be given the opportunity to work on their own landscape images. They will draw and sketch them, paint them, sculpt them, or use a camera to photograph them. While doing this work they will be thinking about all the connections and issues they have with their own relationships to landscapes.

Students and teachers may research and engage in conversations about the work of Stupich before arriving at the art museum, using study guides (available online) to explore ideas about the Red Desert and the photographs of the Red Desert. While in the museum they will spend time in the galleries closely observing the work, discussing it, writing about it, and sketching it. They will begin conversations on the techniques you might use to photograph a landscape you feel deeply about and more conversations about issues surrounding that landscape. These conversations will hopefully lay the groundwork for future opportunities to pursue these ideas in their home classrooms and schools.

Essential Questions

Grades K-6

- What do you see in these photographs? (Pick your favorites, 3-5 photographs, since there are over 70 of them.) Make a list of all you see.
- What looks new in the photographs?
- What looks old in the photographs?
- What do you think about the photographs after you read the text next to each image? Does it change your perceptions of the photographs in any way?
- How do we know if the photographs are beautiful? What is it that makes them beautiful?
- How do we know if the photographs are unappealing or not beautiful? How is that so?
- What objects in the photographs are manmade?
- What in these photos of landscapes looks or appears to be pristine or untouched by man?
- How do Nature and Human affect each other in the photos?
- What makes these photographs works of art?

Grades 7-12

- How does the visual landscape affect our ideas of what art is?
- How does a close physical relationship with the land influence our ideas of art and the world?
- Does this exhibition give you a 'portrait' of the Red Desert? Explain.
- Does viewing and observing the photographs closely make you want to find out more about the Red Desert?
- Do you want to go to the Red Desert after seeing the photographs?
- If you have been to the Red Desert and you know it quite well, how do you feel about the perspective this artist takes in these photographs?
- What do these photographs make you think about?
- What do these photographs make you feel?
- Do you know about the cultural and historical areas in the Red Desert?
- Do you know about high desert eco-systems and their evolutionary processes?
- Do you want to know more about the Red Desert?
- What do you think Martin Stupich is saying to us through his photographs?
- Does this exhibition make you want to photograph a landscape or place dear to your own heart?
- Do you want to sketch, sculpt, paint, or write about a special place?
- What other ways could you express the way you feel and think about a special place?



Off road vehicle tracks and hill, Moffat County, Colorado 2006, Ultrachrome ink on Epson Premium Glossy paper, 20 x 30 in, lent by the artist

Art questions to consider

- What is appealing to you about the photographs? Composition, forms: linear and circular, colors, contrast, textures, lines, perspective and symbols?
- What is unappealing to you about the photographs? Composition, forms: linear and circular, colors, textures, lines, perspective and symbols?
- What is missing from the photographs, if anything?
- What patterns do you find in the photographs? Are there any?
- Are the photos in focus or out of focus?
- Do you see any repeated images, colors, textures, objects, etc.?
- Does the photographer shoot his images close-up, at a distance, from above, from below, from side angles?
- Do you think Martin Stupich has changed any of the original images digitally?
- Has he removed anything or added anything?

Pre-visit Activities

In order to prepare students for their museum visit and extend learning possibilities, we suggest that teachers and students **consider** the following activities.

- Students will read and research about the Red Desert in magazine articles, in books, on the internet, or in newspapers.
- Students will choose specific cultural and/or historical areas in the Red Desert to research.
- Students will research the ecology of the fragile high Wyoming desert.

- Students will research the photographer, Martin Stupich, and his techniques and philosophy of photography.
- Students will research photographic techniques.

Possible Areas of research:

- Jack Morrow Hills
- Boar's Tusk
- Killpecker Dunes
- Steamboat Mountain
- Honeycomb Buttes
- Adobe Town
- South Pass Historic Landscape Area
- The Oregon national Historic Trail
- Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail
- The California National Historic
- The Cherokee Trails
- The Pony Express National Historic Trail
- The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail
- Expansion-era roads
- Independence Rock
- The White Mountain Petroglyphs
- Oregon Buttes
- Crookston Ranch
- Native American Cultural Resources
- Indian Gap
- Chinese Cultural Resources
- Paleontology
- Como Bluff
- Natural and biological resources in the Red Desert:
 - Big Game
 - Endangered Species
 - Vegetation types
 - Wetlands
 - Others
- Oil and gas resources in the Red Desert

Vocabulary to know

- adaptation
- archives
- basin
- coal bed-methane
- coal seam
- commodity
- Continental Divide
- controlled burn
- creek
- cross country gas pipeline
- cultural landscape
- drought
- ecosystem
- Endangered species
- energy development
- eons
- geology
- grasslands
- habitat
- high-desert
- historic trails
- landmark
- landscape
- microclimate
- millennia
- mineral extraction
- natural gas
- open pit mine
- perception
- pioneer
- portrait
- power plant
- reservoir
- reserves
- rim
- species
- transformation
- vegetation
- wetlands
- wilderness

Prerequisite skills/knowledge

Museum staff will work with teachers to ensure that all projects are age and skills appropriate. At the very minimum:

- Students should have some familiarity with sketching and drawing objects.
- Students should know how to use a simple camera.
- It would be helpful if students read some history and biology of the Red Desert.
- Students can look up the vocabulary words below:



Trench with forty-two inch gas pipeline, capped, near Walcot Junction, Carbon County, Wyoming 2006, Ultrachrome ink on Epson Premium Glossy paper, 13 x 19 in, lent by the artist

Gas pad marker from 1970s, shaped like the ill-fated Super sonic transport of that era, west of Dad, Carbon County, Wyoming 2003, Ultrachrome ink on Epson Premium Glossy paper, 13 x 19 in, lent by the artist



Museum activities

Part 1 – Time frame: 45 minutes

- Students will closely observe the photographs of Martin Stupich in the gallery.
- Students will be given a worksheet so they can respond in writing or drawing to the work they see by recording their observations and their own thoughts about the work.
- Students will discuss what they see with museum educators.
- They will explore the history and evolution of the Red Desert, and the relationships with man, which have changed both man and the Red Desert.
- They will explore the perspectives from which the photographer, Martin Stupich shot the photos.
- Students will answer questions on a museum worksheet.
- Students will develop questions on a museum worksheet.
- Students will engage in discussions about their observations and their answers, questions, and sketches with one another and with the teachers and artist/s.

Part 2 – Time frame: 45 minutes

The following projects may be considered individually, or combined, or museum staff will work with teachers to develop specific projects which support ongoing classroom work.

- Students will explore the idea of place and landscape by either photographing, drawing, painting, using pastels, printmaking, or sculpting a landscape they know well.
- Students will create a drawing, painting,

photo print or sculpture with a specific landscape of their choice in mind.

- Students will explore techniques in the making of a photograph, a drawing, painting, or sculpture.

Post-visit activities

We have found that students achieve maximum benefit from a museum visit when time is scheduled for post-visit activities. Here are some suggestions:

- Students might consider writing a paper using the Red Desert as Metaphor. Most folks drive by the Red Desert on I-80 and think that there is nothing there, nothing to see, nothing to experience or learn about. Like the desert some students feel like other kids at school walk by them every day and never really “see” them or “know” them. Students could write about how nobody at school really knows much about them and they could explore their own histories.
- Students discuss or write about their museum experiences, reviewing what they have learned, what has special meaning for them, and how they will use new information and skills.
- Students continue to research the work of the photographer, Martin Stupich.
- Students research other landscape photographers.
- Students continue to research one or more aspects of the Red Desert.
- Students continue to research and explore photography.

Suggested use in the curriculum

The study of Martin Stupich's *Portrait of a Place: Wyoming's Red Desert*, and its historical, cultural, artistic, biological, and geological aspects will tie to multiple curricular areas, including; the study of geography, the arts, math, science, history, English, reading and writing, debate, anthropology, and philosophy. Museum staff will work with teachers to address specific Wyoming Teaching Standards and to align museum projects and studies with ongoing classroom curricular units.

Some recommended resources

Clifford, Hal, "Methane to their Madness." Grist.org 09 Jan. 2002
<<http://www.grist.org/Library/reports.cfm>>

Clifford, Hal, "The Last Lonesome Place." *OnEarth* 22 Sept. 2002, Vol. 24., Natural Defense Council, Inc.

Western EcoSystems Technology, Inc., Cheyenne, Wyoming, "Resources of the Red Desert and the Jack Morrow Hills."
<http://www.reddesert.org/documents/west_report.pdf

On-line sources:

Agricultural Research Service
ars.usda.gov/pand/people/place

Amazon.com
Amazon has a selection of government documents on the Red Desert for sale.

Biodiversity Conservation Alliance
Contact: erik@voiceforthewild.org

Bureau of Land Management: Wyoming Offices
www.blm.gov/wy/st/en.html

Friends of the Red Desert
Contact: info@reddesert.org

Mountain Prairie Information Node <http://mpin.nbj.gov/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=234&PageID=281&cached=true&mode=2&userID=2>
Provides Geographically-based information at regional, state, and other scales; thematically organized information concerning topics of regional interest; tools and processes that facilitate data integration.

Wyoming Game and Fish
www.gf.state.wy.us

Wyoming Outdoor Council
Contact: bpendery@pcu.net

Wyoming Wildlife
Contact: joyowen@wyomingwildlife.org

Materials to be supplied to each student

Materials for selected Shelton Studio projects are provided by the art museum.

Assessments and documentation of museum tour and studio experiences

In order to ensure that our museum tour program is meeting the needs of teachers and students, we ask that participants complete evaluation surveys. Surveys will be distributed to teachers and students, but they are also available on-line as a *pdf* file to be downloaded, or they may be requested via e-mail (wbredehft@uwyo.edu).

1. Students will self-assess using a quick survey that asks them to consider their response to the gallery discussions and research, and their studio experience.
2. Teachers will assess the overall visit by completing a quick survey that asks for their observation and assessment of students' experiences, as well as assessment of the overall process of the museum visit.
3. Museum staff and artists/teachers will record their observations and assessments.
4. When studio time permits, we will ask students to briefly discuss their art work completed in the Shelton Studio visit.
5. Museum staff may take photographs of students and teachers to document the learning taking place and the work produced during a museum visit. These are available upon written request to teachers who would like to use them as art of teaching and student portfolios.