

# *Light from the Sky*

A Tom Lea Retrospective, 1907–2001

## Educational Programming Guide



Tom Lea, *Summer's Green Arcanum*, 1975, Oil on canvas mounted on masonite, framed  
48 5/8 x 71 5/8 x 1 3/4; Collection El Paso Museum Art; gift of Nations Bank

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*Light from the Sky:  
A Tom Lea Retrospective, 1907-2001*

**Programming Guide  
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# Introduction

This programming guide has been developed to provide resources and activity ideas for education curators, docents, and teachers. We hope these materials will provide you with a number of useful tools that will make the exhibition a success for your organization and for your community. This copy is yours to keep. Each venue receives a copy, so please DO NOT pack this guide into the crates. Please contact ExhibitsUSA's Curator of Education, Beth Harris, at 800.473.3872 if you have questions or suggestions regarding the content of this guide.

The programming guide is divided into three sections containing the following:

## **Overview**

This section provides a brief description of the exhibition, a materials checklist, and information about how to contact ExhibitsUSA.

## **Reference Materials**

This section provides copies of text materials that are displayed in the gallery along with information about topics related to the exhibition. It includes:

- Text panels
- Narrative labels
- Introductory readings
- Annotated bibliography, videography, and suggested Web sites

## **Programming Resources**

This section provides ideas and activities for your museum's educational and programming needs. It includes the following resources:

- Speaker list
- Speaker resources
- Educational activities
- Programming suggestions
- Distributor contacts

## **Teacher/Docent Resources**

This section provides resources, including lesson plans, for teachers whose classes will visit the exhibition. It also includes a slide show of selected artwork in the exhibition. This resource can be used by teachers, docents preparing to give tours, or for public programming. It includes:

- Slide show script
- Pre- and post-visit lesson plans
- Glossary
- Historical timeline
- Gallery activities

## Exhibition Description

*Light from the Sky: A Tom Lea Retrospective, 1907–2001* celebrates the life and career of an extraordinary artist who worked as a painter, muralist, illustrator, and author for approximately six decades. This exhibition is curated by William R. Thompson, former curator at the El Paso Museum of Art in Texas and Debora Rindge, professor of art history at North Central College in Naperville, Illinois. Museum visitors will see on display seventy-two selections from the artist's oeuvre, including landscape paintings of the American Southwest, documentation of World War II battles, studies for murals commissioned throughout the United States, sketchbooks, illustrations for writer and folklorist J. Frank Dobie, and novels authored by Lea.

Although a living legend in his native Texas by the time he reached fifty, Lea's fierce artistic independence and his disdain for personal homage and publicity rendered him largely unknown beyond his home state. Born in El Paso, Texas, in 1907, Lea studied for three years at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. It was at the Art Institute where Lea was an apprentice to John Warner Norton, one of the most respected muralists of the 1920s and 1930s. During the Great Depression, Lea painted murals in Washington DC, Texas, Missouri, and New Mexico for the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Like other prominent American regionalists, Lea was less influenced by European modernism and abstract expressionism and generally preferred to render landscape and people in a realistic style. In the late 1930s he expanded his artistic repertoire by illustrating books that attracted the attention of publisher Henry Luce, who hired Lea as a war correspondent for *Life* magazine.

Following World War II, Lea returned to El Paso to paint and to begin a new chapter in his career as a writer. Over the next twenty-five years, Lea completed ten works of fiction and history, illustrating them all, including a two-volume history of the King Ranch in Texas and two best-selling novels. *The Brave Bulls* and *The Wonderful Country* were made into feature films and are now back in print. Although he continued to write, Lea returned to painting as a priority in the early 1970s. The artist continued to work into his nineties, and only retired from his studio when forced by failing vision.

# Educational Materials Checklist

## **Books: Adults**

Chenoweth, Col. H. Avery. *Art of War: Eyewitness U.S. Combat Art from the Revolution Through the Twentieth Century*. New York: Sterling, Friedman, Fairfax, 2002.

Dobie, J. Frank. *The Longhorns*. 1941. Reprint, Edison, NJ: Castle Books, 2003.

Hjerter, Kathleen. *The Art of Tom Lea*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003.

Lea, Tom. *The Brave Bulls*. 1949. Reprint, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002.

———. *Tom Lea: An Oral History*. El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1995.

———. *Tom Lea: Battle Stations*. 1944. Reprint, Dallas: Still Point Press, 1988.

## **Books: Young Adult, Ages 12+**

Chapek, Michael. *Murals: Cave, Cathedral, to Street*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publishing Group, 1996.

## **Books: Children, Ages 8–12**

Blizzard, Gladys. *Come Look with Me: Exploring Landscape Art with Children*. New York: Lickle Publishing, 2001.

King, Penny. *Portraits*. New York: Crabtree Publishing, 1996.

## **Books: Children, Ages 6–8**

Carroll, Colleen. *How Artists See the Elements*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1996.

Carroll, Colleen. *How Artists See America*. New York: Abbeville Press, 2002.

## **Videos**

*Tom Lea: Brushstrokes of Life*. 30 min. Produced by El Paso, Texas, NBC affiliate News Channel 9, 2000. Videocassette.

*Tom Lea: Dignity Beyond Borders*. 27 min. Produced by the El Paso Museum of Art. DVD.

**Teacher Resource**

*Land and Landscapes: Views of America's History and Culture*. Produced by Crystal Productions, 2002. Includes a 27-minute video, study guide, workbook, and fifteen 8 x 10 ½-inch color reproductions of paintings and photographs.

## How to Contact ExhibitsUSA

If you have any questions or comments, ExhibitsUSA is just a phone call away. You can reach us by telephone at 800.473.3872 or by e-mail at the addresses listed below. For questions about specific topics, consult the following list.

<u>If you have questions about...</u>	<u>Contact...</u>
Scheduling an exhibition, exhibition contracts, general questions, problems, or requests	Nicole Forster Exhibitor Relations Coordinator nicole@eusa.org
Shipping, installation, or packing	Angelette Hart Registrar angelette@eusa.org
Educational materials, program resources, or financial support for education programs	Beth Harris Curator of Education beth@eusa.org
Proposing an exhibition	Lin Nelson-Mayson Director lin@eusa.org

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Kansas City, Missouri 64105  
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## Text Panels

### *Light from the Sky: A Tom Lea Retrospective, 1907–2001*

“Light from the sky is the creator of landscape, and any good observer of landscape is most concerned with the wonderful, ever changing light on the structure of the world.”  
—Tom Lea

Tom Lea was one of the Southwest’s most gifted and prolific artists. His career spans much of the twentieth century and includes work as a painter, muralist, illustrator, historian, and writer. Lea was born in 1907 in El Paso, Texas, then a small city nestled in the Chihuahuan Desert between Mount Franklin and the Rio Grande, bordering Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. As a child, Lea demonstrated an aptitude for art and at age seventeen he enrolled at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Lea pursued a rigorous and traditional course of studies there and apprenticed with the acclaimed muralist John Norton, who encouraged him to look to nature for inspiration.

In 1933, Lea returned to the Southwest, first to Santa Fe, New Mexico, and ultimately to El Paso, where he worked primarily as an illustrator and muralist, creating a number of public murals under the auspices of the federal government. During World War II, he traveled the globe and gained national recognition for his work as an artist correspondent for Life magazine. When the war ended, Lea returned home and became a successful novelist and historian, composing vivid stories about Mexico and the Southwest. Lea remained in El Paso for the rest of his life, where he continued to paint and write.

Despite his extensive travels and diverse body of work, Lea remained devoted to his native Southwest. The region’s storied past and stalwart inhabitants, its unique mix of Native American and Spanish influences, and the austere, mysterious beauty of its desert landscape figure prominently within his imagery. Whether using words or pictures, Lea told his stories in an unadorned, narrative style that was ideally suited to the artist and his vision of the world.



### *The War Correspondent, 1941–1945*

In the spring of 1941, Life magazine commissioned Tom Lea to sketch a portrait of a cavalry soldier stationed at Fort Bliss in the artist's hometown of El Paso, Texas. Although the drawing was never published, the editors at Life asked Lea if he would be interested in becoming a war correspondent. He accepted the offer and was dispatched to the North Atlantic, where he served as a civilian observer on board American warships helping to protect supply convoys from German submarines.

While Lea was in the North Atlantic, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and the United States officially entered the war. Lea's next assignment was in the Pacific, where he spent two months on board the aircraft carrier USS Hornet. In sketchbooks, he documented the crew's daily life as well as the chaos and terror of battle. Lea witnessed the destruction of the aircraft carrier USS Wasp and was transferred off the Hornet just days before it, too, was lost. Later, he was present when the U.S. Marines landed on Peleliu, a small island occupied by 13,000 Japanese troops. The battle proved to be one of the bloodiest struggles of the war.

Lea's travels as a war correspondent took him around the globe, from the treacherous waters of the Atlantic and Pacific theaters to China, North Africa, the Middle East, and Italy. The drawings he created in the field served as detailed notes for the easel paintings he would complete back in his El Paso studio. "I didn't paint with any idea of showing war with a capital W," he later remarked. "I went as a reporter who wanted to record exactly what he saw, clearly and concisely, and to make up nothing." Life published reproductions of Lea's drawings and paintings throughout the war. Today, they stand as one of the most extraordinary visual records of World War II.

## *The Muralist*

Tom Lea left his studies at the School of The Art Institute of Chicago in 1926 to create murals in public buildings, hotels, schools, and private homes in the Chicago area. He often worked as an assistant to one of his painting professors, John Norton. In 1933, Lea moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico, the artistic center of the Southwest. The director of the New Mexico Public Works of Art Project (PWAP), established by the federal government to employ artists during the Depression, encouraged Lea to apply, and he won a number of mural competitions.

Relocating to El Paso in 1936, Lea applied to the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts national mural competitions for federal buildings. He won five projects: *The Pass of the North* for the El Paso Federal Courthouse (1938); *Back Home, April 1865 (After the War)* for the post office in Pleasant Hill, Missouri (1939); *Stampede* for the Odessa, Texas, post office (1940); *Comanches* for the Seymour, Texas, post office (1942); and a mural for the ground floor of the Benjamin Franklin Post Office in Washington, D.C. The latter mural, *The Nesters* (1936), disappeared during building renovations in the 1960s. Lea also submitted proposals as part of other mural competitions, including designs for post offices in San Antonio, Texas, in 1937 and St. Louis in 1939, although these entries were not selected.

Lea painted a number of other murals independently in Texas and New Mexico, including those for the West Texas Room, Hall of State, Dallas, Texas—which celebrates the Texas Centennial—and the Branigan Memorial Public Library in Las Cruces, New Mexico, both in 1936. Guidebooks to New Mexico and Texas published in the 1930s and 1940s advised travelers to see Lea's murals. The last mural he completed, *Southwest*, was for the El Paso Public Library in 1956.

### *The Author and Illustrator*

During the late 1930s, Tom Lea illustrated several books, including three by Texas author J. Frank Dobie. Upon his return to El Paso following World War II, Lea shifted his focus from painting to writing and illustrating history and fiction. His first novel, *The Brave Bulls* (1949), follows the character of matador Luis Bello, a rising star in the world of Spanish and Mexican bullfighting. The story developed after Lea conducted extensive research in Mexico, which also led to a series of artistic studies of bulls. A runaway success, the book appeared on the *New York Times* bestseller list for over ten weeks, competing with Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. His second illustrated novel, *The Wonderful Country* (1952), was also a bestseller, outpacing Edna Ferber's *Giant* both critically and in sales. In this story, gringo Martin Brady, born in the United States but raised by a Mexican family in Mexico, travels across the Rio Grande and confronts identity issues and prejudice on both sides of the border.

Book critics lauded Lea's brilliant first novels for their character development, plot, and symbolism. He kept hundreds of letters from readers, who were most impressed by his descriptions of the landscape and how well he captured a sense of place. Both were published in many languages and became Hollywood movies. *The Brave Bulls* (1951) starred Mel Ferrer and Anthony Quinn. *The Wonderful Country* (1959) featured Robert Mitchum and Julie London, with Tom Lea playing a minor role as a barber.

Among Lea's other publications are *The King Ranch* (1957), a history of Texas cattle raising; novels *The Primal Yoke* (1960) and *The Hands of Cantú* (1964); and his autobiography *A Picture Gallery* (1968). In total, Lea wrote sixteen books, and he also illustrated seventeen books and more than twenty articles.

## Narrative Labels

Please see Registrar's packet for suggested display order.

### *Male Indian Standing, Facing Left*

1926

Charcoal on paper

Courtesy Adair Margo Gallery, El Paso, Texas

Tom Lea left El Paso at age seventeen to enroll at the Art Institute of Chicago, where he studied from 1924 to 1926. There he honed his artistic skills in traditional life drawing classes with live models. Recalling figure studies like this, Lea wrote, "I [took] classes in life drawing from [Allan St. John] . . . who was the illustrator of all the early Tarzan books . . . We worked in charcoal; each pose lasted a week."

### *Katcinas from Palülikoñti*

1927

Casein tempera on paper

Courtesy James and Doris Lea

Even while living in Chicago, Lea's thoughts were never far from his native Southwest. "I couldn't get my home country out of my mind," he remarked. "I got to thinking so much about . . . the Hopi pueblo over at Walpi in Arizona. I'd go over to the Newberry Library and study the Bureau of Ethnology reports . . . and there was one that had a wonderful collection of Hopi kachina doll drawings." Lea was so fascinated by these volumes that he asked his father's law partner, newly elected to Congress, to purchase a set for him in Washington, D.C. and to ship it to Chicago. This colorful, stylized rendering of the traditional Hopi figures flattens them into a dynamic graphic design.

### *Snake Dancers*

1933

Oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe

In 1933, during the depths of the Great Depression, Lea and his wife Nancy moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico. It was difficult for the young couple to make a living, but Lea found work through artist Gustave Baumann, the area coordinator for the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP), a government agency that employed artists. He created a number of paintings with southwestern themes, including this abstracted representation of an Indian rain dance. "We were paid by the week," Lea said, "and it gave me the opportunity to do anything I wanted with Southwest material."

***Winter in New Mexico (also known as Deer Hunters)***

1933

Oil on board

Courtesy John Wilbanks, DDS

In Lea's career, he also worked as an illustrator in Santa Fe. This painting was reproduced on the cover of the November–December 1933 issue of *New Mexico* magazine. Lea reported that the subject was inspired by “an annual hunt of my father, where they had put a small buck on the back of the saddle.” Lea first sketched different elements of the picture, such as the deer and horses, before composing the finished painting in his studio.

***El Leñador***

1934

Oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe

Images of labor proved to be popular subjects for artists during the Great Depression. Titled *The Woodcutter*, this highly stylized painting depicts one of the men who sold firewood from door to door in rural Santa Fe at this time. Lea painted the subject using simple earth tones that connect the woodcutter to the landscape. He and his donkey are composed in a flat, geometric manner that further reinforces the simplicity of their labor. Lea may have identified with this figure, for he likewise spent time cutting wood for the fireplace and kitchen stove of the one-room adobe house he shared with his wife.

***Pollination of the Corn, Zuni Myth***

1934

Wood engraving

Courtesy Dee and Adair Margo

Lea had fond memories of childhood summers spent in Santa Fe and watching the traditional Corn Dance at nearby Santo Domingo Pueblo, located about twenty-five miles to the south. The ceremonial dance is held every August 4th at the time of the corn harvest to honor the pueblo's patron saint, St. Dominic. Upon Lea's return to this area as a professional artist, he explored the subject in this wood engraving, rendered with bold lines in a geometrically simplified Art Deco style. It is reminiscent of the engravings of American artist Rockwell Kent (1882–1971), whose work Lea had admired since high school.

***Juarez, Mexico (also known as Lonely Town)***

1936

Pencil on paper

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of El Paso Art Museum Association Collectors Council

Lea viewed drawing as the foundation of his work as an artist. This highly finished pencil sketch is one of several preparatory works for the painting *Lonely Town*, 1937.

***Preliminary Sketch for Mural, West Texas Room, State of Texas Building (scale***

*1"=1')*

1936

Pencil and ink on illustration board

Courtesy Hobby Family

Lea was commissioned to paint a mural representing West Texas for the State of Texas building in conjunction with the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition, the 100th anniversary of independence from Mexico, which was held in Dallas. Three other artists created murals for the North, East, and South Texas rooms. Billed as the first World's Fair in the Southwest, the exposition featured the themes of history and progress. One of the most important structures on the grounds was the new Dallas Museum of Fine Arts constructed nearby. Lea's mural design featured a cowboy standing within an imaginary landscape. Surrounding him are abstracted images of a West Texas ranch, including men on horseback, a herd of cattle, and the cactus plants and mountains that Lea knew so well. This scale study is one of many preparatory works that Lea developed for the project. The mural still adorns the State of Texas building, which today is part of the grounds of the annual Texas State Fair.

***Texas Centennial issue of the El Paso Times***

1936

Graphite on illustration board

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mrs. Frances Roderick Axelson

Centennial celebrations were held across the state of Texas in 1936, and many newspapers issued special editions honoring the event. The *El Paso Times* commissioned Lea to create this drawing for its centennial issue. Like his mural for the State of Texas building, it features a modern cowboy centered within a desert landscape with a cavalcade of Texas characters. The cowboy waves a friendly greeting while ghostly figures from the state's early frontier days and the era of Spanish settlement hover to his right and left respectively.

### ***Lonely Town***

1937

Oil on canvas

Courtesy Sarah D. Lea

In 1936, Lea returned home to El Paso with his wife Nancy, who had developed a serious infection following an emergency appendectomy in New Mexico. She died in April of that year. A few months later, in June, Lea's grandmother passed away, followed closely by his mother in December. In the span of a few short months, Lea lost the three most important women in his life. He would rarely speak about these tragic events again, but the painting *Lonely Town* reflects the deep sense of sorrow and isolation that he experienced during this time. "One summer evening I looked up one of the side streets off Avenida Juárez, past the houses to the edge of Juárez. In those days there wasn't much, just the *acequia madre* and these little houses and the Juárez mountain. It was something that grabbed me."

### ***Riding Shotgun (study for Stage Men mural)***

1937

Ink and crayon on paper

Courtesy Dr. George and Ambassador Pamela Willeford

Lea's murals of the 1930s were often populated with larger-than-life characters and archetypes from the American West. He occasionally reconfigured imagery from past projects into new compositions. The figure in *Riding Shotgun* is closely related to a 1937 mural design that Lea proposed for the post office in San Antonio, Texas, a commission offered by the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts that he ultimately lost. A similar figure is visible in his 1935 design for *The Western Frontier, 1st Phase, 1830–1860* mural, which was also never realized in its proposed form.

### ***Studies for Pass of the North mural***

1937

Pencil and ink on paper

Courtesy Bill and Ann Kiely

The second project that Lea won in a Section of Fine Arts competition was *Pass of the North*, a mural in the El Paso federal courthouse. It would become his most important public work. "I was tickled to death to get [the commission] because I didn't have to leave town," the artist noted. Measuring more than fifty feet in length, *Pass of the North* is a monumental representation of the people who shaped El Paso's history, from the days of the Spanish conquistadors to the early frontier. Lea spent four months preparing drawings for the project and spent five months painting the mural on a wall in the courthouse's lobby. A number of local residents posed for Lea in period costumes. "The old prospector's pants were my grandfather's buckskin britches that he used when he was a surveyor," Lea reminisced. "I used a buckskin jacket . . . from Hollywood for the

plainsman, and I got a *charro* from Juárez to pose. I had a very serious ascetic looking man [from St. Anthony's Seminary] pose in the cowl with his rope and his rosary."

***Adams Finds the Diggings***

1939

Watercolor and ink on illustration board

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mr. Erwin H. Will

In 1937, Lea began a fruitful collaboration with the Texas folklorist J. Frank Dobie, providing illustrations for a number of his books. At the end of their first meeting, Lea recalled that Dobie said, "Well, I'm writing a book now, and Tom, I think you could do the illustrations." This work is one of five watercolors and an additional forty-five pen-and-ink drawings that Lea created for Dobie's 1939 book *Apache Gold and Yaqui Silver*. All were exhibited in 1939 at the Centennial Museum at the campus of what is now the University of Texas at El Paso. In the exhibition brochure, Dobie praised Lea: "I would like to dwell on the creative force revealed in such imagination-compelling pictures as that of the great Naranjal mine lost in a lost world, the Naranjal of the golden oranges and the orange gold."

**Studies for the St. Louis Post Office mural, 1939**

In 1939, after installing a mural for the post office in Pleasant Hill, Missouri, Lea drove to St. Louis, following part of the Old Santa Fe Trail along the way, where he conducted research for another mural competition sponsored by the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts. The project called for a cycle of nine large panels for a new post office in St. Louis. Lea spent three months devising an ambitious proposal, which explored the city's historic role on the frontier as a point of convergence for different cultures from the continent's north, east, south, and west. He was at first disappointed when he lost the commission, but it allowed him to pursue a number of other equally fulfilling projects back home in Texas, including the mural *Stampede* for the post office in Odessa, Texas. Although faded, these eight surviving studies from the St. Louis competition beautifully illustrate Lea's concept for the mural.

***The Field* (study for St. Louis post office mural)**

1939

Tempera, ink, and pencil on paper

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mrs. Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., in memory of Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., and Cecily Schwartz Prestridge

***The Forest* (study for St. Louis post office mural)**

1939

Tempera, ink, and pencil on paper

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mrs. Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., in memory of Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., and Cecily Schwartz Prestridge



***The French from the North* (study for St. Louis post office mural)**

1939

Tempera, ink, and pencil on paper

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mrs. Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., in memory of Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., and Cecily Schwartz Prestridge

***Here at the Destined Heart of a Continent and Richest Artery of a New World* (study for St. Louis post office mural)**

1939

Tempera, ink, and pencil on paper

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mrs. Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., in memory of Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., and Cecily Schwartz Prestridge

***The Indians of the West* (study for St. Louis post office mural)**

1939

Tempera, ink, and pencil on paper

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mrs. Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., in memory of Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., and Cecily Schwartz Prestridge

***The Plain* (study for St. Louis post office mural)**

1939

Tempera, ink, and pencil on paper

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mrs. Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., in memory of Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., and Cecily Schwartz Prestridge

***The River* (study for St. Louis post office mural)**

1939

Tempera, ink, and pencil on paper

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mrs. Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., in memory of Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., and Cecily Schwartz Prestridge

***The Spanish from the South* (study for St. Louis post office mural )**

1939

Tempera, ink, and pencil on paper

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mrs. Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., in memory of Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., and Cecily Schwartz Prestridge

***Longhorn Trail Driver, 1875***

c. 1940

Ink on paper

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mr. Jose Cisneros

Lea was an extraordinary draftsman, and he used drawing as a visual form of note taking while conducting research for many of his projects. In the summer of 1940, Lea embarked upon a trip through longhorn country in central Texas with the historian and writer J. Frank Dobie. "The trip . . . made me a better painter . . . It sharpened my

sentience of seeing things seen, and things beyond seeing.” This sketch of a nineteenth-century longhorn trail driver was likely made around the time that Lea was working on the illustrations for Dobie’s 1941 book *The Longhorns*.

***Medicine Eagle***

1940

Oil on canvas

Collection Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Lea remained deeply interested in Native American culture throughout his life. He painted this portrait of an Indian accompanied by an eagle spirit for his father, who was an avid collector of Native American artifacts and pottery. Lea once wrote: “Every Indian warrior carried an animal fetish in his medicine bag, a part or a symbol of the animal that was his secret medicine . . . It represented a warrior’s potency to cope with the mysteries of life, of war, of nature, of death.” *Medicine Eagle* was displayed in the Lea home for thirty years.

**Scale study for *Stampede* mural**

1940

Oil on canvas

Collection Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin; gift of C. R. Smith, 1976

Lea painted *Stampede*, a dramatic homage to the Texas cattle drivers of the late nineteenth century, following his travels with J. Frank Dobie. Similar in sentiment to a painting by Frederic Remington, it captures the extraordinary drama of a stampede of Texas longhorns terrorized by a violent thunderstorm. Lea was commissioned by the Treasury Department’s Section of Fine Arts to recreate this scene as a 15 ½-foot mural in the post office in Odessa, Texas, where it remains today. The painting was also reproduced for the dust jacket and frontispiece of Dobie’s book *The Longhorns*, an epic history of this legendary breed of cattle, which also included illustrations by Lea.

***The Sorrel Horse Set Back and Jumped, and the Youngster's Pistol Banged and Kicked Back in His Hand***

1941

Watercolor and ink on illustration board

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mr. Erwin H. Will

This theatrical illustration was created for H. L. Davis’s short story “A Sorrel Horse Don’t Have White Hoofs,” published in the December 27, 1941, issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*. Printed across the top of the first two-page spread, the illustration fills half of each page. Thumbing through the magazine, this effective design featuring the

dramatic confrontation of the story's characters creates an eye-catching pause. As with the figures in *Pass of the North*, Lea modeled the characters in this work after people he knew.

**First color study for *The Death of the Wasp***

1942

Oil on canvas

Courtesy James and Doris Lea

When Lea returned home from his tour on board the USS *Hornet*, he executed this oil painting showing the destruction of the USS *Wasp*. He modified the image in a second painting, which was reproduced in the April 5, 1943, issue of *Life*. In his autobiography, Lea described watching the ship's tragic end through a telescope: "The fires in *Wasp* reached her forward bomb magazine: a tremendous explosion just forward of the island structure sent a livid sheet of flame hundreds of feet in the air. Through the big glass it seemed to explode right in my face. It sent a monster pillar of smoke boiling toward the zenith. It sealed *Wasp's* fate. Through the glass I could see the minute figures of men moving on the after part of the listing flight deck. Little black dots were going down lines over the fantail into the sea, abandoning the ship."

**Sketchbook from USS *Hornet***

1942

Pencil, ink, and watercolor on spiral-bound paper

Courtesy Adair Margo Gallery, El Paso, Texas

While in the field, Lea kept a number of spiral-bound sketch books, such as this one from his stay on board the USS *Hornet*, which he used to document the events unfolding around him. While some of these drawings were quick and gestural, others were more finely rendered. Lea took these visual notes back to his studio in El Paso, where he completed the easel paintings that would eventually be reproduced in *Life* magazine. Before he could bring them home, however, Lea's sketch books had to be approved by the U.S. Naval Censor, whose stamp is visible on each page. Lea was transferred off the *Hornet* just days before it sank on October 26, 1942, following a battle near Santa Cruz Island.

**Study for *The Death of the Wasp* (initial pencil sketch)**

1942

Pencil on paper

Courtesy James H. Clement

On September 15, 1942, while the *Hornet* was in the Coral Sea, Lea witnessed a torpedo attack on the aircraft carrier USS *Wasp*, which eventually ignited bombs stored below the flight deck. He made this small, gestural sketch during the attack. "I found something for

my own hands,” he later wrote. “I did have a stub pencil. I had a dog-eared fliers’ chart of the Solomon Islands folded in my shirt pocket. On the back of the sweat-damped chart, with a shaky hand I made a sketch-diagram of Wasp dying, and wrote notations about the light and the color, as if I might forget.”

**Study for *The Death of the Wasp***

1942

Pencil on paper

Courtesy James H. Clement

The day after he witnessed the sinking of the USS Wasp, Lea executed this highly finished drawing as a prelude to the painting he would later execute.

**Study for *The Death of the Wasp***

1942

Pencil and ink on paper

Courtesy Adair Margo Gallery, El Paso, Texas

Back in his El Paso studio, Lea produced several other preparatory studies depicting the Wasp, including this ink sketch of the vessel prior to the attack.

**Study for *Fantasma de Guerra***

1942

Pencil and watercolor on paper

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mr. and Mrs. Roy Chapman and Family

This small painted study depicts one of the ships accompanying *Hornet* when it was in the Coral Sea just south of the Solomon Islands, an area that sailors named “Torpedo Junction.” The same vessel appears in a drawing from a page in one of Lea’s other sketchbooks. *Fantasma de Guerra* (Spanish for “Ghost of War”) refers not to the ship in the painting but to the unseen but ever-present threat of torpedoes from Japanese submarines.

***Chinese Hillside***

1943

Casein tempera on paper

Collection Wells Fargo Bank

During the summer of 1943, Lea embarked upon a five-month trip that took him around the globe through England, North Africa, India, and China. It was an arduous and lonely journey for the artist, but his visit to China proved to be particularly significant. The mystical Yangtze River and the tranquility of the surrounding countryside mesmerized

Lea and provided a brief but welcome respite from the war. “China made an impression that would never ever die in me,” he later wrote.

***Grandfather China***

1943

Oil on canvas

Collection Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Perhaps the most moving work that resulted from Lea’s visit to wartime China is this painting, based on a series of sketches of an elderly man with his son and grandson, grinding grain with a millstone near the grave mounds of their ancestors. Like much of Lea’s southwestern imagery, the work explores the cyclical nature of life and humanity’s primal connection to the fertile earth.

***Illustrations from A Grizzly from the Coral Sea***

1944

Ink and pencil on paper

Courtesy Steve Feinberg

In 1944, Lea collaborated with his close friend, the El Paso printer Carl Hertzog, to publish *A Grizzly from the Coral Sea*, a short story based on his recollection of life on board the USS *Hornet*. The book featured this series of ink illustrations by Lea. The coin, which depicts a grizzly bear, was a prominent symbol in the story. It was given to the artist by one of his shipmates.

***El de Córdoba en uno de sus pases cumbres el tarde de 29 Diciembre de 1946 en Ciudad Juárez (The Córdoba Performing One of His Masterly Passes on the Afternoon of December 29, 1946, in Juárez City)***

1946

Ink on paper

Courtesy Carlos and Elsa Villa

In February 1946, Lea drew a portrait of the famed Spanish matador Manolete (Manuel Rodríguez, 1917–1947) in Torreón, Mexico. Months later, he watched Manolete perform in the ring in Juárez and documented the match in this dramatic sketch. In 1949, Lea published a twenty-four-page bullfighting manual to educate spectators at corridas in Juárez; it was also serialized in the *El Paso Herald-Post*.

***Hills of Mexico***

1946

Casein tempera on paper

Collection Wells Fargo Bank

This painting was completed at a time when Lea was traveling frequently to Mexico, researching material for his first novel, *The Brave Bulls*. The subject—a lone figure on horseback in a radiant landscape—appears in a number of Lea’s other works. When asked about his feelings for the Southwest, the artist replied, “First I say I was born in it, and then I say, furthermore I love it for the intensity of its sunlight, the clarity of its sky, the hugeness of its space, its revealed structure of naked earth’s primal form, without adornment.”

***The Killing Floor, Swift & Company, Chicago***

1946

Conté crayon on paper

Courtesy Mr. and Mrs. Jim Haines

After the war, Lea completed one last project for *Life*: a series of paintings on the history of beef cattle in America. Lea traveled to Illinois, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas while researching the project. Although the magazine never published the paintings, it donated them to the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts in 1950. This drawing of a Chicago slaughterhouse is a preparatory study for the last painting in the series. Lea recalled, “I spent two working days in butcher’s white clothes and rubber boots on the killing floor at Swift & Co. sketching every step of the process.”

***Study for Sarah in the Summertime (also known as Sarah)***

1946

Pencil and ink on paper

Courtesy James and Doris Lea

Throughout World War II, Lea carried a small photograph of his wife Sarah in his wallet. He looked at it often to remind himself of home and the people he loved. When he returned to El Paso after the war, he immediately began working on a life-size portrait of Sarah, which would take him some two years to complete. The finished oil painting, titled *Sarah in the Summertime*, depicts her in a flowered dress standing in front of a mountainous landscape. Lea described it as “a painter’s votive offering made in the gladness of being home.” When finished, he gave the portrait to his wife. This pencil-and-ink sketch is a study that Lea made in preparation for *Sarah in the Summertime*, which he always referred to as his most cherished work.

***Study for Sarah in the Summertime***

c. 1945–1947

Watercolor on paper

Courtesy Sarah D. Lea

Lea most likely created this intimate portrait of his wife Sarah around the time he painted the life-size portrait known as *Sarah in the Summertime*. In this delicate watercolor, shared with the public for the first time in this exhibition, Sarah stands outdoors but is dressed in a gossamer nightgown. This tender portrait is made ever more poignant when juxtaposed to the grim scenes Lea recorded as a war correspondent. Painting these portraits of his wife helped Lea to distance himself from the trauma of war and to return to his life as a husband, father, and artist.

***Toro Caliente***

1946

Conté crayon and pastel on paper

Courtesy Sarah D. Lea

Lea spent several years researching the subject of bullfighting for his 1949 novel *The Brave Bulls*. During that time he created hundreds of drawings and paintings of bulls and bullfighters, such as this sketch of an “Angry Bull,” a type that was bred for its fierceness in the ring. Lea discussed the animal in his 1949 bullfighting manual: “It is born angry and all its life nurses within itself a quickly aroused primal fury. The breeding and handling of such wild beasts is a profession in itself, little known, exceedingly interesting, and hazardous.”

***Toro Quieto***

1946

Watercolor, ink, and pencil on paper

Courtesy Jason Schoen Fine Arts, Miami, Florida

Birds dare to gather in this tranquil drawing of a “Calm Bull,” the counterpoint to Lea’s rendition of *Toro Caliente*. Lea duplicated this quiet scene in one of his ink illustrations for *The Brave Bulls*.

***Working a Brave Bull into the Box, for Shipment to the Ring (also known as Shipping Fighting Bulls to the Bullring)***

1946

Conte crayon on paper

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mr. And Mrs. Calvin G. Adams

In addition to depicting the drama of the bullfight, Lea also explored the action that took place behind the scenes, such as this drawing of men transporting a bull to the ring. He

wrote, “Fighting bulls are shipped to the ring in heavy individual cages, like tigers. By regulation they are sent to the ring when they are four years old, of a certain minimum weight, and without defects of limb, horn, or eye. They weigh from 900 to 1200 pounds, and stand from 44 to 55 inches high at the shoulders. They are remarkably light and nimble on their small hooves, and can outdistance any horse for 20 yards. They are usually black in color and lethal in spirit.” Lea’s inscription in the lower right corner of this drawing indicates that the scene depicts Hacienda del Sauz in Mexico.

### ***The Airplane***

1950

Ink on paper

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mr. C. R. Smith

A year after completing his first novel, *The Brave Bulls*, Lea made this ink drawing for his friend C. R. Smith, the CEO of American Airlines and a major collector of art from the American West. In this work, Lea depicts a West Texas cowboy pondering an airplane flying overhead. The drawing is both a statement about the rapid pace of modern life and a telling self-portrait of the artist. “The horseman was thinking about [the airplane], gazing,” wrote Lea. “Exactly what he was thinking—whether he was glad to be on the ground, right there, or whether he wished he were up in that machine flying someplace far—you couldn’t tell. I thought, when I drew him, that he was glad to be right where he was: I felt that way myself. I was riding my own kind of range in my own way, at work on another novel.”

### **Scale study for *Southwest* mural**

1956

Oil on canvas

Collection Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase through the Catherine Walden Myer Endowment and the Philip Desind Memorial Fund and gift of Mr. James H. Clement, Jr.; Mrs. James H. Clement, Sr.; Mr. Billy Bob Crim; Marsha Lea Daggett, PhD; Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Decherd in honor of the President of the United States George W. Bush and Mrs. Laura Bush; Mr. and Mrs. James F. Dicke II; Ms. Jennifer S. Dicke; Mr. and Mrs. H. David Herndon; Mrs. Jean J. Kemp; Mr. and Mrs. William L. Kiely; the Carl B. and Florence E. King Foundation; the King Ranch, Inc.; Mr. Al Lowman; Adair Margo Gallery, Inc.; Mr. and Mrs. Ellis O. Mayfield; Mr. and Mrs. I. T. Schwartz; and the Summerlee Foundation

This painting is the scale study for the twenty-foot-long mural titled *Southwest* that Lea painted for the public library in downtown El Paso. The artist worked on the mural in April and May of 1956 in collaboration with his wife Sarah, who also signed the finished work. “[*Southwest*] took shape simply as a luminous window looking out upon its birthland,” wrote Lea. “It spoke of space, sun, cloud, rain, wind, mountain, mesa, rock, sand, soil, and of living growth nurtured by them. The only human habitant of this



elemental landscape was the viewer of the mural . . . It was the earth, inhabited only by the viewer's mind.”

***Rendezvous, Norwegian Sea***

1960

Oil on canvas

Collection Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Lea maintained close ties with friends he made during his days as a war correspondent. In 1960, he spent six weeks on board the aircraft carrier USS *Saratoga* as the guest of skipper Alan Fleming, whom he had gotten to know while stationed on the USS *Hornet*. On this voyage, *Saratoga* cruised along the western coast of Europe, from the Mediterranean Sea to the North Atlantic. This large canvas depicts the vessel's rendezvous with an armada of ships and jet airplanes in the dark waters of the Norwegian Sea. Such displays of naval power were an important part of American military strategy during the Cold War. Lea recorded with considerable detail the complex antennae arrays and radar equipment on the tower in the foreground but rendered the planes more abstractly.

***Portrait of Dick Kleberg***

1962

Ink on paper

Courtesy Mary Lewis Scott Kleberg

Lea spent five years preparing a two-volume, illustrated history of the celebrated King Ranch in South Texas, which was published in 1957. During this time, he became close friends with several members of the Kleberg family, including Dick Kleberg, who was particularly supportive and encouraging while the artist struggled to complete the project. Painted with Chinese ink, one of Lea's favorite mediums, the portrait is one of the artist's finest. Lea made relatively few portraits during his career and almost always declined such commissions. He preferred to create portraits only of his close friends and family and often gave them to his subjects. “I reserve portraiture for my own pleasure. I select my subjects, they don't select me,” he once quipped.

***Toribio: Conquistador***

1962

Oil on canvas

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; bequest of Charles H. Leavell

In 1964, Lea published the novel *The Hands of Cantú*, a fictional tale about horsemanship set in late sixteenth-century New Spain. As with all of his books, Lea conducted methodical research—including trips to Argentina, Florence, and Malta—to convincingly

portray his characters and their historic setting. He also created an ambitious series of painted illustrations to accompany his text. This painting, depicting one of the lead characters on horseback, served as the frontispiece and book jacket.

***Sr. don Vito Cantú***

1963

Ink on paper

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mary Lewis Scott Kleberg and children in memory of Richard Mifflin Scott Kleberg, Jr.

Before writing the text for *The Hands of Cantú*, Lea first sketched the novel's characters in order to visualize them. "When I was working on [it], I started really thinking [in terms] of the characters' faces. I could see these faces, the old soldiers and the first *vaqueros* and the noblemen that came over. I did the portraits [before I wrote the text] and hung them over my work table, and I'd see them every morning and they'd speak, and I was back in the story." This portrait, used as an illustration for the book, depicts Don Vito Cantú, the master horseman and horse breeder whose skilled hands are referenced in the book's title.

***Toribio***

1963

Ink on paper

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mary Lewis Scott Kleberg and children in memory of Richard Mifflin Scott Kleberg, Jr.

*The Hands of Cantú* is narrated by the character Toribio de Ibarra, a handsome young Spaniard employed by Don Vito Cantú, who learns the art of horsemanship in the New World. This portrait of Toribio was likewise reproduced in Lea's novel.

***Riders Into the Valley of Goodness***

1964

Ink on paper

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mary Lewis Scott Kleberg and children in memory of Richard Mifflin Scott Kleberg, Jr.

Lea's previous books were illustrated with linear pen-and-ink drawings, printed in simple half tones. For *The Hands of Cantú*, Lea's editor allowed him to create more lavish painted illustrations using Chinese ink, which were reproduced using the lithographic process.

***Tordillo and the Mares of Guatimpe***

1964

Ink on paper

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mary Lewis Scott Kleberg and children in memory of Richard Mifflin Scott Kleberg, Jr.

The horses that Lea described in *The Hands of Cantú* were a special breed from Old Spain that were brought to the New World. Don Vito Cantú trained them not with force but with a gentle, respectful hand. In this dramatic illustration from the book, Lea depicts Don Vito's saddled horse, Tordillo, with a herd of mares.

***The Visible Enormity of Earth's Space***

1964

Ink on paper

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mary Lewis Scott Kleberg and children in memory of Richard Mifflin Scott Kleberg, Jr.

The virtuoso ink paintings that Lea produced for *The Hands of Cantú* are among the most beautiful illustrations of his career. This panoramic illustration, one of Lea's masterpieces, shows Don Vito and his party dwarfed by the majestic expanse of New Spain's desert landscape. It is a motif that appeared in many different forms in Lea's paintings and illustrations.

***Black Stallion, Black Bull***

1965

Ink and watercolor on paper

I. T. Schwartz Family Collections

When not writing or illustrating books, Lea painted in his studio. His imagery often paralleled themes or subjects in his novels. Lea painted this dramatic watercolor of a bull and stallion beneath a lightning-filled sky not long after the publication of *The Hands of Cantú*. It reveals the artist's respect for nature's primal forces.

***The Way to Chihuahua***

1970

Oil on canvas

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Lea

An independent spirit, Lea never paid much attention to contemporary art movements like pop art and minimalism, which dominated the art world in the 1960s and early 1970s. By this time, Lea was in his sixties and had enjoyed a remarkable career as both artist and writer. He returned to his studio and produced a series of western-themed easel paintings for a loyal circle of patrons and admirers. Lea continued to draw inspiration

from his native Southwest, favoring wistful subjects and desert landscapes such as this one showing travelers en route to Chihuahua, Mexico.

***Yesterday***

1974

Watercolor on illustration board

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of William Peterson Family

This nostalgic watercolor depicts a well-known El Paso landmark that still stands in the city's historic Sunset Heights neighborhood. During Lea's childhood, the building housed a small grocery on the ground floor with apartments above. "I painted the picture in 1974 hoping to record and help preserve a boyhood memory of mine," Lea recalled. "I painted the building as if it were about 1916 and I was a kid in knee pants coming out the door with a loaf of bread my grandmother had sent me for . . . At the curb on the corner I put a 1915 model T with a brass radiator . . . and I think the man driving the livery rig (from Longwell's) in the background might be my dad wearing a Stetson and smoking a good cigar."

***Contemplando***

1975

Oil on canvas

Collection Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin

In his later years, Lea's painting style changed and his brush work became much looser and more textured. His penchant for southwestern subjects, however, remained constant. He observed, "There's a recurring theme in most of my paintings, a horseman riding alone . . . That's the way the land is connected to the human being."

***Summer's Green Arcanum***

1975

Oil on canvas mounted on masonite

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Nations Bank

Lea included a portrait of himself and his wife Sarah in the center of this majestic landscape, one of his largest. It is a vivid, bucolic refuge, charged with private symbolism. On the back of the painting, Lea inscribed the definition of his Latin-derived title: "a secret; a mystery . . . an extract of the ulterior or vital nature of something."

***Durango Design***

1977

Oil on canvas

I. T. Schwartz Family Collections

This highly stylized rendering of Durango, Mexico, recalls several of Lea's early works, such as *Lonely Town*, 1937. The abstracted patterns of the adobe buildings and surrounding desert suggest the influence of Cubism or perhaps the geometric designs of Native American pottery, which likewise influenced Lea.

***Invocation***

1987

Oil on canvas

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of BDM International. Commissioned by John D. Williams Company

For his last major canvas, Lea painted a prospector standing at the foot of a mountain, gazing toward its summit. The subject is strongly autobiographical, as Lea spent virtually his entire life at the foot of El Paso's Mount Franklin, the southernmost ridge of the Rocky Mountains, which bisects the city. "Old Mount Franklin, with the light changing every moment, stands yet against the sky, just outside the studio window," wrote Lea. "Sarah and I live on the east side of our mountain. It is the sunrise side, not the sunset side. It is the side to see the day that is coming, not the side to see the day that is gone. The best day is the day coming, with the work to do, with the eyes wide open, with the heart grateful."

**Publicity poster for *The Brave Bulls***

1951

Poster

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mr. and Mrs. James H. Clement

As testament to the popular appeal of *The Brave Bulls*, Columbia Pictures produced a film adaptation of Lea's novel starring Mel Ferrer and Anthony Quinn. Lea recalled, "[*The Brave Bulls* book] turned out to be a great success and I remember the editor sent a telegram that said, 'Count your chickens. We've just sold *The Brave Bulls* to Hollywood.' . . . Columbia Pictures then paid me to go out and write a script . . . [They] didn't like it at all." Another writer was hired to craft the screenplay, and the film premiered at the Plaza Theatre in El Paso in 1951.

**Publicity poster for *The Wonderful Country***

1959

Poster

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mr. and Mrs. James H. Clement

In 1959, United Artists released a film adaptation of Lea's *The Wonderful Country* starring Robert Mitchum and Julie London. The film departed considerably from Lea's story and was not as well received as the novel. Lea recalled, "All the money I ever made out of the movie . . . was as an actor. I took a very small part. I was Peebles, the barber. I gave Bob Mitchum a shave and a bath. We had old Mitch in the tub and he was expecting some warm water . . . We had this old, beat-up Mexican tub and absolute ice water. And I poured it on him and he jumped out of there!"

***New Mexico* magazine**

November–December 1933

Courtesy John Wilbanks, DDS

Lea recalled how difficult it was to earn a living as an artist during the Great Depression, particularly in rural Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he and his wife Nancy were living at the time. He recalled how grateful he was to receive the commission for this magazine cover: "I was literally hungry . . . doing everything I could to make a buck. And \$35 wasn't bad back then."

***The Longhorns***

1941

Book

Private collection

Pleased with Lea's illustrations for his 1939 book *Apache Gold and Yaqui Silver*, author J. Frank Dobie asked the artist to create the artwork for his next project, a history of the Texas longhorn. To prepare for the task, Dobie invited Lea to join him on an excursion through Texas hill country to research this legendary breed of cattle. "I never had a better time," noted Lea. "We looked at brush country of the brushiest kind. We found longhorns; I think we saw most of the surviving examples of the unimproved old Texan breed. There were not many. At night we made camp alongside cow tracks on grassy ground." Back in his El Paso studio, Lea painted *Stampede*, which ultimately served as the frontispiece and book jacket of Dobie's *The Longhorns*, and then created the forty-three pen-and-ink illustrations reproduced in the book.

***Life* magazine (“Tom Lea Aboard the USS *Hornet*”)**

March 22, 1943

Private collection

Lea’s wartime imagery included portraits of officers, pilots, and sailors, such as these depicting the command of the aircraft carrier USS *Hornet*. Many of the men seen in Lea’s sketches became his close friends. He left the ship only a few days before it was lost in the Battle of Santa Cruz in autumn of 1942. Lea’s drawings of *Hornet* and her crew are among the last surviving images of the vessel.

***Life* magazine (“Sinking of *Wasp*: A Painting for *Life* by Tom Lea”)**

April 5, 1943

Private collection

This issue of *Life* magazine features Lea’s second and final version of *The Death of the Wasp*, now in the collection of the U.S. Army Center for Military History. The magazine published the image seven months after the USS *Wasp* was hit by Japanese torpedoes and sunk. Lea never forgot this terrible scene, which he watched through a telescope from the USS *Hornet*. His depictions of the battle of the Solomon Islands, where both carriers were sunk, provide the only visual documents of some of these engagements, as the photographs on board the carriers were lost. In June 1943, Lea’s war paintings were exhibited in Washington, D.C.

***Life* magazine (“Peleliu: Tom Lea Paints Island Invasion”)**

June 11, 1945

Private collection

In August 1944, Lea returned to the Pacific theater and joined with the 1st Marine Regiment assigned to capture Peleliu, a small island in the Palau group that was occupied by some 13,000 Japanese troops. The battle for the island began on September 12, 1944, with intensive naval bombardment followed by a direct assault on the beach. Lea witnessed firsthand the twenty-six-day battle and its aftermath, which ranked among the bloodiest struggles of the war: 1,250 Marines were killed and another 5,275 were wounded; the Japanese lost more than 11,000 soldiers. The paintings that Lea made for *Life* after his return home are sobering reminders of the misery and human cost of war.

***The Brave Bulls***

1949

Book

Private collection

Lea spent months researching the subject of bullfighting in Mexico, resulting in his first novel, *The Brave Bulls*, published by Little, Brown and Company in 1949. The author

later reminisced: “I started writing *The Brave Bulls* around March of ’47 . . . And then I said, ‘I want to make illustrations.’ . . . You know, that just wasn’t done. They didn’t have novels with illustrations since Victorian times.” *The Brave Bulls* was serialized in abridged form in several issues of the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1949, and it debuted as a book in April of that year to showers of critical praise. In Texas, the Institute of Letters recognized *The Brave Bulls* as the best book of 1949, and it was subsequently reprinted in numerous editions and languages. The *New York Times Book Review* noted: “Read as a straight story, this is a vivid, intense, colorful narrative, with its technical details impressively accurate. This is bullfighting from the inside, the way it looks to the people who make it a profession, and not even Ernest Hemingway at his best has ever done a better job of getting the whole thing on paper.”

### ***The Wonderful Country***

1952

Book

Private collection

In 1952, Lea published his second illustrated novel, *The Wonderful Country*. The title was inspired by nineteenth-century Texas Ranger James Gillett, whose words appear at the beginning of Lea’s novel: “Oh, how I wish I had the power to describe the wonderful country, as I saw it then.” Lea expressed his own intentions accordingly: “I wanted to do something that had been on my mind since I was a kid: write about this borderland and the people on both sides of the river.” He financed the writing of *The Wonderful Country* with his profits from *The Brave Bulls*, and it, too, became a best seller. It was adopted by the *Literary Guild* and received highly favorable reviews.

### ***The King Ranch***

1957

Book

Private collection

Lea spent five years writing and illustrating this two-volume history, commissioned by the Kleberg family to celebrate the 1953 centennial of the King Ranch. The first volume features a biography of founder Richard King (1824–1885), while the second volume addresses the history of the million-acre ranch and the three generations of the Kleberg family who developed it following King’s death. Lea collaborated with Holland McCombs and Francis L. Fugate, who provided the historical and statistical data, and printer Carl Hertzog, who designed the publication. Two versions of the book were published—a limited edition of 3,000 copies and the trade edition, displayed here, of 30,000 copies. Before the book was released in September 1957, segments were published in the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Life*. The book appeared on the bestseller lists of both the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald Tribune* in the month following publication.



***The Primal Yoke***

1960

Book

Private collection

Inspired by camping trips in the Wind River Mountains of Wyoming, Lea published his third illustrated novel, *The Primal Yoke*, in 1960. The book tells the story of Hank Spurling, a Marine hero who fought in the Pacific. He returns from war to his family's trail guide business in the fictional Cloudrock Mountains of Wyoming, where he begins an ill-matched love affair with a woman from Chicago. Lea described the narrative framework accordingly: "I had been reading some of the Greek writers about the structure of the drama and I tried to make the mountains like the gods who were handling human destiny."

***The Hands of Cantú***

1964

Book

Private collection

Set in the New World in 1580, Lea's final illustrated novel, *The Hands of Cantú*, traces the origin of the horses that arrived in the Americas with the conquistadors. It begins in central Mexico with the celebrated horse breeder Don Vito Cantú and follows the Ibarra horse breed north through New Spain. The *New York Times* praised the book warmly: "Tom Lea has written a poem in prose about horses and horsemen. He has adorned his lyric tale with his own drawings. They heighten the drama and glorify the setting." Despite this critical accolade, *The Hands of Cantú* was not as popular as Lea's other novels set in the modern Southwest.

***A Picture Gallery***

1968

Book/portfolio

Private collection

Lea's publisher, Little, Brown and Company, asked the artist to prepare this memoir combining his artwork and prose. "This is not an autobiography and I have no desire to write one," Lea remarked. "Yet this text to accompany these pictures partakes of autobiography necessarily: work and life are too inextricably joined to write of one without the other. They shape each other and they explain each other. They are each other, in fact, writing each other's own autobiography as they go along."

# Exhibition Checklist

Checklist summary: 72 items

Dimensions given in inches, height preceding width preceding depth

1. ***Male Indian Standing, Facing Left***  
1926  
Charcoal on paper  
Frame: 42 3/8 x 32 x 3/4  
Courtesy Adair Margo Gallery, El Paso, Texas
2. ***Katcinas from Palülüköñti***  
1927  
Casein tempera on paper  
Frame: 31 1/8 x 22 5/8 x 3 1/4  
Courtesy James and Doris Lea
3. ***Snake Dancers***  
1933  
Oil on canvas  
Frame: 62 1/2 x 42 1/2 x 1 1/2  
Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe
4. ***Winter in New Mexico (also known as Deer Hunters)***  
1933  
Oil on board  
Frame: 26 1/8 x 22 1/8 x 1 1/8  
Courtesy John Wilbanks, DDS
5. ***El Leñador***  
1934  
Oil on canvas  
Frame: 41 1/4 x 35 1/4 x 2  
Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe
6. ***Pollination of the Corn, Zuni Myth***  
1934  
Wood engraving  
Frame: 17 x 13 11/16 x 9/16  
Courtesy Dee and Adair Margo
7. ***Juarez, Mexico (also known as Lonely Town)***  
1936  
Pencil on paper  
Frame: 16 7/8 x 20 7/8 x 1  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of El Paso Art Museum Association Collectors Council
8. ***Preliminary Sketch for Mural, West Texas Room, State of Texas Building (scale 1"=1')***  
1936  
Pencil and ink on illustration board  
Frame: 28 1/4 x 39 1/4 x 2  
Courtesy Hobby Family Collection
9. ***Texas Centennial issue of the El Paso Times***  
1936  
Graphite on illustration board  
Frame: 41 x 33 x 1 3/4  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mrs. Frances Roderick Axelson
10. ***Lonely Town***  
1937  
Oil on canvas  
Frame: 36 1/4 x 46 1/4 x 2 3/4  
Courtesy of Sarah D. Lea
11. ***Riding Shotgun (study for Stage Men mural)***  
1937  
Ink and crayon on paper  
Frame: 22 1/4 x 18 1/4 x 2  
Courtesy of Dr. George and Ambassador Pamela Willeford

12. **Studies for *Pass of the North* mural**  
1937  
Pencil and ink on paper  
Frame: 19 7/8 x 44 7/8 x 7/8  
Courtesy Bill and Ann Kiely
13. ***Adams Finds the Diggings***  
1939  
Watercolor and ink on illustration board  
Frame: 24 7/8 x 20 7/8 x 1  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mr. Erwin H. Will
14. ***The Field* (study for St. Louis post office mural)**  
1939  
Tempera, ink, and pencil on paper  
Frame: 20 3/4 x 24 3/4 x 1 1/4  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mrs. Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., in memory of Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., and Cecily Schwartz Prestridge
15. ***The Forest* (study for St. Louis post office mural)**  
1939  
Tempera, ink, and pencil on paper  
Frame: 20 3/4 x 24 3/4 x 1 1/4  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mrs. Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., in memory of Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., and Cecily Schwartz Prestridge
16. ***The French from the North* (study for St. Louis post office mural)**  
1939  
Tempera, ink, and pencil on paper  
Frame: 20 3/4 x 24 3/4 x 1 1/4  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mrs. Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., in memory of Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., and Cecily Schwartz Prestridge
17. ***Here at the Destined Heart of a Continent and Richest Artery of a New World* (study for St. Louis post office mural)**  
1939  
Tempera, ink, and pencil on paper  
Frame: 20 3/4 x 24 3/4 x 1 1/4  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mrs. Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., in memory of Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., and Cecily Schwartz Prestridge
18. ***The Indians of the West* (study for St. Louis post office mural)**  
1939  
Tempera, ink, and pencil on paper  
Frame: 20 3/4 x 24 3/4 x 1 1/4  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mrs. Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., in memory of Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., and Cecily Schwartz Prestridge
19. ***The Plain* (study for St. Louis post office mural)**  
1939  
Tempera, ink, and pencil on paper  
Frame: 20 3/4 x 24 3/4 x 1 1/4  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mrs. Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., in memory of Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., and Cecily Schwartz Prestridge
20. ***The River* (study for St. Louis post office mural)**  
1939  
Tempera, ink, and pencil on paper  
Frame: 20 3/4 x 24 3/4 x 1 1/4  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mrs. Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., in memory of Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., and Cecily Schwartz Prestridge

21. ***The Spanish from the South*** (study for St. Louis post office mural )  
1939  
Tempera, ink, and pencil on paper  
Frame: 20 3/4 x 24 3/4 x 1 1/4  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mrs. Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., in memory of Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., and Cecily Schwartz Prestridge
22. ***Longhorn Trail Driver, 1875***  
c. 1940  
Ink on paper  
Frame: 24 7/8 x 20 7/8 x 1  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mr. Jose Cisneros
23. ***Medicine Eagle***  
1940  
Oil on canvas  
Frame: 32 3/8 x 31 5/8 x 3  
Collection Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin
24. **Scale study for *Stampede* mural**  
1940  
Oil on canvas  
Frame: 15 5/8 x 35 1/2 x 1 1/4  
Collection Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin; gift of C. R. Smith, 1976
25. ***The Sorrel Horse Set Back and Jumped, and the Youngster's Pistol Banged and Kicked Back in His Hand***  
1941  
Watercolor and ink on illustration board  
Frame: 25 x 31 x 1 3/4  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mr. Erwin H. Will
26. **First color study for *The Death of the Wasp***  
1942  
Oil on canvas  
Frame: 33 x 49 3/4 x 1 3/8  
Courtesy James and Doris Lea
27. **Sketchbook from USS *Hornet***  
1942  
Pencil, ink, and watercolor on spiral-bound paper  
5 x 7 1/8 x  
Courtesy Adair Margo Gallery, El Paso, Texas
28. **Study for *The Death of the Wasp***  
1942  
Pencil on paper  
Frame: 11 3/4 x 14 3/4 x 3/4  
Courtesy James H. Clement
29. **Study for *The Death of the Wasp***  
1942  
Pencil on paper  
Frame: 18 3/4 x 30 1/2 x 1  
Courtesy James H. Clement
30. **Study for *The Death of the Wasp***  
1942  
Pencil and ink on paper  
Frame: 14 x 18 3/4 x 3/4  
Courtesy Adair Margo Gallery, El Paso, Texas
31. **Study for *Fantasma de Guerra***  
1942  
Pencil and watercolor on paper  
Frame: 20 7/8 x 16 7/8 x 1  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mr. and Mrs. Roy Chapman and Family
32. ***Chinese Hillside***  
1943  
Casein tempera on paper  
Frame: 32 5/8 x 35 3/8 x 2 1/2  
Collection Wells Fargo Bank
33. ***Grandfather China***  
1943  
Oil on canvas  
Frame: 40 5/8 x 36 1/2 x 3 3/8  
Collection Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin

34. **Illustrations from *A Grizzly from the Coral Sea***  
 1944  
 Ink and pencil on paper  
 Frame: 35 1/4 x 33 1/4 x 2 1/4  
 Courtesy Steve Feinberg
35. ***El de Córdoba en uno de sus pases cumbres el tarde de 29 Diciembre de 1946 en Ciudad Juárez (The Córdoba Performing One of His Masterly Passes on the Afternoon of December 29, 1946, in Juárez City)***  
 1946  
 Ink on paper  
 Frame: 35 1/2 x 41 1/2 x 2 3/8  
 Courtesy Carlos and Elsa Villa
36. ***Hills of Mexico***  
 1946  
 Casein tempera on paper  
 Frame: 32 1/2 x 35 1/4 x 3  
 Collection Wells Fargo Bank
37. ***The Killing Floor, Swift & Company, Chicago***  
 1946  
 Conté crayon on paper  
 Frame: 34 1/2 x 44 1/4 x 1 1/2  
 Courtesy Mr. and Mrs. Jim Haines
38. **Study for *Sarah in the Summertime* (also known as Sarah)**  
 1946  
 Pencil and ink on paper  
 Frame: 15 1/2 x 12 3/4 x 1  
 Courtesy James and Doris Lea
39. **Study for *Sarah in the Summertime***  
 c. 1945-1947  
 Watercolor on paper  
 Frame: 25 1/2 x 17 x 3/4  
 Courtesy Sarah D. Lea
40. ***Toro Caliente***  
 1946  
 Conté crayon and pastel on paper  
 Frame: 34 1/2 x 38 3/4 x 3  
 Courtesy Sarah D. Lea
41. ***Toro Quieto***  
 1946  
 Watercolor, ink, and pencil on paper  
 Frame: 22 x 27 x  
 Courtesy Jason Schoen
42. ***Working a Brave Bull into the Box, for Shipment to the Ring* (also known as *Shipping Fighting Bulls to the Bullring*)**  
 1946  
 Conte crayon on paper  
 Frame: 25 1/2 x 26 3/4 x 1  
 Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mr. and Mrs. Calvin G. Adams
43. ***The Airplane***  
 1950  
 Ink on paper  
 Frame: 25 1/16 x 30 7/8 x 1 3/4  
 Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mr. C. R. Smith
44. **Scale study for *Southwest* mural**  
 1956  
 Oil on canvas  
 Frame: 19 1/2 x 41 1/4 x 2  
 Collection Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase through the Catherine Walden Myer Endowment and the Philip Desind Memorial Fund and gift of Mr. James H. Clement, Jr.; Mrs. James H. Clement, Sr.; Mr. Billy Bob Crim; Marsha Lea Daggett, PhD; Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Decherd in honor of the President of the United States George W. Bush and Mrs. Laura Bush; Mr. and Mrs. James F. Dicke II; Ms. Jennifer S. Dicke; Mr. and Mrs. H. David Herndon; Mrs. Jean J. Kemp; Mr. and Mrs. William L. Kiely; the Carl B. and Florence E. King Foundation; the King Ranch, Inc.; Mr. Al Lowman; Adair Margo Gallery, Inc.; Mr. and Mrs. Ellis O. Mayfield; Mr. and Mrs. I. T. Schwartz; and the Summerlee Foundation

45. ***Rendezvous, Norwegian Sea***  
1960  
Oil on canvas  
Frame: 44 1/2 x 70 9/16 x 1 1/4  
Collection Harry Ransom Humanities  
Research Center, The University of Texas  
at Austin
46. ***Portrait of Dick Kleberg***  
1962  
Ink on paper  
Frame: 34 x 41 x 2  
Courtesy Mary Lewis Scott Kleberg
47. ***Toribio: Conquistador***  
1962  
Oil on canvas  
Frame: 54 x 44 1/16 x 1 15/16  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art;  
bequest of Charles H. Leavell
48. ***Sr. don Vito Cantú***  
1963  
Ink on paper  
Frame: 20 3/4 x 16 3/4 x 1 1/4  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of  
Mary Lewis Scott Kleberg and children in  
memory of Richard Mifflin Scott Kleberg,  
Jr.
49. ***Toribio***  
1963  
Ink on paper  
Frame: 20 3/4 x 16 3/4 x 1 1/4  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of  
Mary Lewis Scott Kleberg and children in  
memory of Richard Mifflin Scott Kleberg,  
Jr.
50. ***Riders Into the Valley of Goodness***  
1964  
Ink on paper  
Frame: 24 7/8 x 20 7/8 x 1  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of  
Mary Lewis Scott Kleberg and children in  
memory of Richard Mifflin Scott Kleberg,  
Jr.
51. ***Tordillo and the Mares of Guatimpe***  
1964  
Ink on paper  
Frame: 33 1/8 x 40 15/16 x 1 15/16  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of  
Mary Lewis Scott Kleberg and children in  
memory of Richard Mifflin Scott Kleberg,  
Jr.
52. ***The Visible Enormity of Earth's Space***  
1964  
Ink on paper  
Frame: 24 7/8 x 31 x 1 7/8  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of  
Mary Lewis Scott Kleberg and children in  
memory of Richard Mifflin Scott Kleberg,  
Jr.
53. ***Black Stallion, Black Bull***  
1965  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
Frame: 39 x 49 x 4  
I. T. Schwartz Family Collections
54. ***The Way to Chihuahua***  
1970  
Oil on canvas  
Frame: 39 1/2 x 51 1/2 x 2  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of  
Mr. and Mrs. Tom Lea
55. ***Yesterday***  
1974  
Watercolor on illustration board  
Frame: 26 3/4 x 21 1/4 x 1 1/2  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of  
William Peterson Family
56. ***Contemplando***  
1975  
Oil on canvas  
Frame: 42 1/2 x 50 1/2 x 2 1/2  
Collection Harry Ransom Humanities  
Research Center, The University of Texas  
at Austin

57. ***Summer's Green Arcanum***  
1975  
Oil on canvas mounted on masonite  
Frame: 48 5/8 x 71 5/8 x 1 3/4  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Nations Bank
58. ***Durango Design***  
1977  
Oil on canvas  
Frame: 33 3/4 x 45 x 3  
I. T. Schwartz Family Collections
59. ***Invocation***  
1987  
Oil on canvas  
Frame: 51 3/4 x 63 1/2 x 2  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of BDM International. Commissioned by John D. Williams Company
60. **Publicity poster for *The Brave Bulls***  
1951  
Poster  
Frame: 26 1/2 x 31 9/16 x 1 1/16  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mr. and Mrs. James H. Clement
61. **Publicity poster for *The Wonderful Country***  
1959  
Poster  
Frame: 40 1/8 x 19 1/2 x 1  
Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mr. and Mrs. James H. Clement
62. ***New Mexico magazine***  
November–December 1933  
Magazine  
Frame: 19 1/2 x 16 1/4 x 1 1/4  
Courtesy John Wilbanks, DDS
63. ***The Longhorns***  
1941  
Book  
8 3/4 x 6 x 1 3/4  
Overall with mount: 9 x 15 1/2 x 8  
Private collection
64. ***Life magazine ("Tom Lea Aboard the USS *Hornet*")***  
March 22, 1943  
Magazine  
Frame: 21 1/2 x 28 1/4 x 1 1/4  
Private collection
65. ***Life magazine ("Sinking of *Wasp*. A Painting for *Life* by Tom Lea")***  
April 5, 1943  
Magazine  
Frame: 21 1/2 x 28 1/4 x 1 1/4  
Private collection
66. ***Life magazine ("Peleliu: Tom Lea Paints Island Invasion")***  
June 11, 1945  
Magazine  
Frame: 21 1/2 x 28 1/4 x 1 1/4  
Private collection
67. ***The Brave Bulls***  
1949  
Book  
8 1/4 x 5 3/4 x 1 1/4  
Overall with mount: 7 x 6 1/2 x 9  
Private collection
68. ***The Wonderful Country***  
1952  
Book  
8 1/4 x 5 1/2 x 1 3/8  
Overall with mount: 8 1/2 x 12 x 9  
Private collection
69. ***The King Ranch***  
1957  
Book  
9 1/2 x 7 1/2 x 2 7/8  
Overall: 9 x 23 x 23  
Private collection
70. ***The Primal Yoke***  
1960  
Book  
8 1/4 x 5 1/2 x 1 1/2  
Overall with mount: 8 1/2 x 12 x 9  
Private collection

71. ***The Hands of Cantú***  
1964  
Book  
9 1/8 x 6 3/8 x 1 1/4  
Overall with mount: 7 1/2 x 7 x 9  
Private collection

72. ***A Picture Gallery***  
1968  
Book/portfolio  
Book: 11 1/4 x 8 3/4 x 7/8  
Two horizontal portfolios: 11 x 15 1/2  
Four vertical portfolios: 15 1/2 x 11  
Overall with mount: 11 x 82 x 30  
Private collection

### Wall Panels

- P1. **EUSA Credit Panel**  
25 1/4 x 21 1/4 x 1 1/4
- P2. **Introduction Panel**  
*Light from the Sky: A Tom Lea  
Retrospective, 1907-2001*  
25 1/4 x 21 1/4 x 1 1/4
- P3. **Panel**  
*The War Correspondent, 1941-1945*  
25 1/4 x 21 1/4 x 1 1/4
- P4. **Panel**  
*The Muralist*  
25 1/4 x 21 1/4 x 1 1/4
- P5. **Panel**  
*The Author and Illustrator*  
25 1/4 x 21 1/4 x 1 1/4



## Educational Material Checklist

Several support materials will be traveling with the exhibition. Should any of these materials be missing or fail to arrive, please call ExhibitsUSA's Curator of Education, Beth Harris, at 800.473.3872 and we will locate or replace the missing items as soon as possible. Please repack these items in the crates before you send the exhibition to the next venue.

### Books: Adults

Chenoweth, Col. H. Avery. *Art of War: Eyewitness U.S. Combat Art from the Revolution Through the Twentieth Century*. New York: Sterling, Friedman, Fairfax, 2002.

Dobie, J. Frank. *The Longhorns*. 1941. Reprint, Edison, NJ: Castle Books, 2003.

Hjerter, Kathleen. *The Art of Tom Lea*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003.

Lea, Tom. *The Brave Bulls*. 1949. Reprint, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002.

———. *Tom Lea: An Oral History*. El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1995.

———. *Tom Lea: Battle Stations*. 1944. Reprint, Dallas: Still Point Press, 1988.

### Books: Young Adult, Ages 12+

Chapek, Michael. *Murals: Cave, Cathedral, to Street*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publishing Group, 1996.

### Books: Children, Ages 8–12

Blizzard, Gladys. *Come Look with Me: Exploring Landscape Art with Children*. New York: Lickle Publishing, 2001.

King, Penny. *Portraits*. New York: Crabtree Publishing, 1996.

### Books: Children, Ages 6–8

Carroll, Colleen. *How Artists See the Elements*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1996.

Carroll, Colleen. *How Artists See America*. New York: Abbeville Press, 2002.

### Videos

*Tom Lea: Brushstrokes of Life*. 30 min. Produced by El Paso, Texas, NBC affiliate News Channel 9, 2000. Videocassette.

*Tom Lea: Dignity Beyond Borders*. 27 min. Produced by the El Paso Museum of Art. DVD.

### Teacher Resource

*Land and Landscapes: Views of America's History and Culture*. Produced by Crystal Productions, 2002. Includes a 27-minute video, study guide, workbook, and fifteen 8 x 10 ½-inch color reproductions of paintings and photographs.

# Tour Schedule

September 01, 2004 –October 20, 2004

**First Division Museum at Cantigny**  
Wheaton, Illinois

November 04, 2004–December 18, 2004

**J. Wayne Stark University Center Galleries**  
College Station, Texas

January 28, 2005–March 16, 2005

**Museum of the Southwest**  
Midland, Texas

April 06, 2005–May 25, 2005

**Art Museum of South Texas**  
Corpus Christi, Texas

November 10, 2005–February 12, 2006

**Austin Museum of Art**  
Austin, Texas

March 01, 2006–April 17, 2006

**El Paso Museum of Art**  
El Paso, Texas

## Artist Biography

Tom Lea was born on July 11, 1907, in El Paso, Texas, across the Rio Grande from Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. His father, a lawyer, served a term as mayor from 1915 to 1917 during the Mexican Revolution. Lea's high school teacher encouraged him to attend art school, and at age seventeen he enrolled at the Art Institute of Chicago. Lea studied there from 1924 to 1926 and was strongly influenced by one of his esteemed professors, John W. Norton. Lea spent the next six years working for Norton on mural projects in the Chicago area. In 1927, he married a fellow student, Nancy Taylor. The couple traveled to Europe in 1930, where Lea was deeply moved by Italian Renaissance artists. He shared with them a number of stylistic traits, including close observation of nature and anatomy, meticulous brushwork, and classically inspired compositions. Although exposed to modernist styles, Lea was a traditionalist at heart and always remained connected to his native Southwest.

In 1933, the Leas moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico, the artistic center of the Southwest. Lea worked as a painter and illustrator and created art for the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA), government agencies that employed artists during the Great Depression. In 1934, Nancy Lea developed a serious illness and died in 1936 following the couple's return to El Paso. A few months later, Lea's grandmother passed away, followed closely by his mother. Grief-stricken, Lea chose to remain in his hometown. In 1936, Lea applied to the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts, which sponsored a series of competitions to design murals for government buildings around the country. He eventually won five projects, including the *Pass of the North* mural for the El Paso federal courthouse. In 1938, Lea married Sarah Catherine Dighton and later adopted her young son, Jim. He also began illustrating books for Texas folklorist J. Frank Dobie, including two of his classics: *Apache Gold and Yaqui Silver* and *The Longhorns*.

In 1941, *Life* magazine asked Lea to become a war correspondent. He was first dispatched to the North Atlantic, where he was stationed as a civilian observer on destroyers patrolling the waters between Greenland and the Grand Banks. After the United States officially entered the war, Lea was sent to the Pacific and spent two months on board the aircraft carrier USS *Hornet*. He recorded his experiences in a series of studies and sketchbooks, which served as visual notes for the paintings he produced in his El Paso studio for the pages of *Life*. It was from the *Hornet* that Lea witnessed the destruction of the aircraft carrier USS *Wasp*. In 1943, he embarked upon a lengthy trip through England, North Africa, India, and China. In August 1944, Lea joined with a U.S. Marine division assigned to capture Peleliu, a small Pacific island occupied by some 13,000 Japanese troops. He documented this harrowing experience in dozens of drawings and paintings. *Life* later donated Lea's wartime imagery to the U.S. Army Center for Military History in Washington, D.C.

After the war, Lea completed one last project for *Life*—a series of paintings on the history of beef cattle in America—which was never published. Back home in El Paso, he began a life-size portrait of his wife, *Sarah in the Summertime*, 1947, and returned to

painting images of the Southwest. Lea discovered that the art world had changed considerably during his absence. While he had been overseas, Abstract Expressionism had become the dominant style, displacing the figurative vernacular of Lea and other Regionalist artists. Lea decided to embark on a new career as a writer of fiction and history. He spent months researching the subject of bullfighting in Mexico, resulting in his 1949 novel *The Brave Bulls*. Lea created the pen-and-ink illustrations for the book, which became a bestseller and a 1951 film starring Mel Ferrer and Anthony Quinn. In 1952, Lea published his second illustrated novel, *The Wonderful Country*, which was likewise well received and adapted by Hollywood. The 1959 film starred Robert Mitchum and Julie London, with Lea making a cameo appearance as a barber. Among Lea's other major publications are *The King Ranch*, 1957, an illustrated history of the Kleberg family's south Texas farming and cattle operation; the illustrated novels *The Primal Yoke*, 1960, and *The Hands of Cantú*, 1964; his memoir *A Picture Gallery*, 1968; and *In the Crucible of the Sun*, 1974, a history of the King Ranch's Australian operation.

When not writing, Lea painted in his studio and continued to produce western-themed works for a loyal circle of patrons and admirers. His remarkable accomplishments did not pass unnoticed in his home state of Texas. Major exhibitions of his work were presented at the Fort Worth Art Center (1961), El Paso Museum of Art (1963, 1971, and 1994), and the Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio (1969). In 1976, Lea donated a collection of his work to the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin, which dedicated several rooms to the artist. Lea was further honored in 1998, when the El Paso Museum of Art inaugurated a permanent gallery showcasing his work alongside that of other major American artists. Lea maintained a busy routine in his later years until his deteriorating eyesight gradually caused him to curtail his activities in the studio.

Lea died at the age of ninety-three on January 29, 2001. Shortly thereafter, the El Paso Museum of Art loaned one of its prized Lea paintings, *Rio Grande*, 1954, to the White House, where it was installed in the Oval Office at the request of President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush.

## Introductory Readings

Davidson, John. "Larger Than Life." *Texas Monthly* 150 (May 1983): 150–155, 229–232.

Johnson, Patricia. "The Art and Times of El Paso's Tom Lea." *Texas Houston Chronicle Magazine*. (July 5, 1998): 8–12.

Lowman, Al. "Remembering Tom Lea, Fellow, Texas State Historical Association." *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 105, no. 1 (July 2001): 1–13.

Margo, Adair. "The Art of Tom Lea." *Texas Highways* 51, no. 1 (January 2004): 44–51.

Patten, Mike. "Tom Lea." *El Paso, Inc.* (6 October 1996): 10a–11a.

Tillapaugh, J. "Tom Lea: An Artist Correspondent in World War II." *The Journal of America's Military Past* 26, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 36–47.

## Bibliography

Annotated list. Materials accompanying the exhibition are marked with an asterisk (\*).

### Articles

Bonansinga, Kate “Sarah’s Relevance” *ArtLies: A Texas Art Journal*, Fall 2001 issue.  
[www.artlies.org/Lea.html](http://www.artlies.org/Lea.html)

This is an online article critiquing Tom Lea’s drawing *Sarah in the Summertime* (1947). Kate Bonansinga discusses the relationship of the subject to Tom Lee, as well as providing a short summary of his career.

Byrnes, Edward L. “Moral Sting: How the U.S.S. Hornet Cured the Imperial Japanese Navy of its ‘Victory Disease.’” *Foundation* 23, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 96–103.

This article provides a description of the *USS Hornet’s* activities during World War II. The *USS Hornet* played a pivotal role in defending the Pacific after the invasion of Pearl Harbor. It contains reproductions of Tom Lea’s drawings and paintings of the ship.

\*Davidson, John. “Larger than Life.” *Texas Monthly* 13, no. 1 (May 1983): 150–156, 229–232.

This biographical essay surveys the life and career of Tom Lea. John Davidson discusses Lea’s beliefs in heroism, fantasy, and sentiment—none of which would be possible under intense scrutiny.

Dingus, Anne. “War Paint.” *Texas Monthly* 22, no. 8 (August 1994): 88–93.

This is a short article on Tom Lea’s paintings of Peleliu. This piece was published on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the invasion. It also contains many annotated reproductions, including *That 2,000 Yard Stare*.

\*Johnson, Patricia C. "The Art and Times of El Paso's Tom Lea." *Texas Houston Chronicle Magazine* (July 5, 1998): 8–12.

This is a profile of Tom Lea at age of ninety-one. The article was published on the opening of the Tom Lea Gallery at the El Paso Museum of Art. The author discusses his life as a muralist, a war correspondent, and a writer.

\*Lowman, Al. "Remembering Tom Lea, Fellow, Texas State Historical Association." *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 105, no. 1 (July 2001): 1–13.

This article is a tribute to Tom Lea, including an overview of his career. Written shortly after his death in January, this article covers details not seen in other biographies. Information on his personal relationships and character is highlighted.

\*Margo, Adair. "The Art of Tom Lea." *Texas Highways* (January 2004): 44–51.

Adair Margo, chair of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities and gallery owner, explores Tom Lea's life and career, citing his experiences growing up in El Paso, Texas, and his vast career as an artist.

Old, Joe. "Restoration Job Required Care." *El Paso Herald-Post*, February 28, 1987.

This is a brief article on the conservation of Tom Lea's mural titled *Pass of the North* in the El Paso Federal Courthouse.

\*Patten, Mike "Tom Lea." *El Paso Inc.*, October 6, 1996, A10–A11.

This is an interview with artist Tom Lea before his ninetieth birthday. He talks about his desires surrounding his work, in addition to the affects of aging. Although his sight was impaired, he still managed production in his studio.

\*Tillapaugh, J. "Tom Lea: An Artist Correspondent in World War II." *The Journal of America's Military Past* 26, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 36–47.

J. Tillapaugh provides an overview of Lea's work as a World War II correspondent. He discusses Lea's experiences while aboard the *USS Hornet* in addition to Lea's time in Peleliu. Editorial decisions regarding timing and censorship are also included.

\*Yardley, Jim. "At 93, Texas Artist Gains National Spotlight Anew." *New York Times*, August 16, 2000, A18.

This is a biographical article, with quotations used in an acceptance speech by then presidential nominee George W. Bush, Jr., at the Republican National Convention. George W. Bush quoted Tom Lea's passage in his book, *A Picture Gallery*.

### **Books Authored by Tom Lea**

\*Lea, Tom. *Battle Stations: A Grizzly from the Coral Sea, Peleliu Landing*. 1944. Reprint, Dallas, TX: Still Point Press, 1988.

This is a reprint of Tom Lea's illustrated books: *A Grizzly for the Coral Sea* and *Peleliu Landing*. These books were written and illustrated while Lea served as a war correspondent for *Life* magazine.

\*———. *The Brave Bulls*. 1949. Reprint, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2002.

This novel follows the career of young matador Luis Bello, a rising star in the world of Spanish and Mexican bullfighting. Although it describes both the violence and elegance inside the ring, it also contains Tom Lea's insights into the world of bull ranching, breeding, and bullfight promotion. It includes pen and ink chapter heading illustrations.

———. *The Wonderful Country*. 1952. Reprint, Fort Worth, TX: TCU Press, 2002.

This novel features gringo, Martin Brady, who was born in the United States but raised by a family in Mexico. He travels across the Rio Grande, facing identity issues and prejudice on both sides of the border.

\*———. Craver, Rebecca McDowell, and Adair Margo. *Tom Lea: An Oral History*. El Paso, TX: Texas Western Press, 1995.

In 1994, Tom Lea recorded a series of interviews with art historian and gallery director Adair Margo for the University of Texas at El Paso's Institute of Oral History. This memoir developed from the interviews and is illustrated with Lea's artwork and personal photographs.



## **Books Illustrated by Tom Lea**

\*Chenoweth, H. Avery. *Art of War: Eyewitness U.S. Combat Art from the Revolution Through the Twentieth Century*. New York, NY: Sterling Friedman/Fairfax, 2002.

Avery Chenoweth, a retired USMCR colonel and artist of military subjects, surveys the art history of American war. This book includes a section devoted to Lea's war imagery while serving as a World War II correspondent for *Life*.

\*Dobie, J. Frank. *The Longhorns*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Company, 1941

Author J. Frank Dobie is a folklorist, historian, and naturalist. This tale of cattle and wild western men follows the breed history of longhorn cattle from the conquistadors, through colonial ranchers, to cowboys. Tom Lea illustrates the text.

\*Hjerter, Kathleen. *The Art of Tom Lea*. College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 1989.

This book provides an overview of the artist's life and career in chronological order, beginning with his career as a student. It follows through his career as a writer and easel painter. This book is illustrated with color plates and black and white photographs.

Lanker, Brian and Nicole Newnham. *They Drew Fire: Combat Artists of World War II*. New York, NY: TV Books, 2000.

This book is used in conjunction with a PBS documentary on World War II artists, of the same title. It follows a number of artists and their variety of stylized or gruesome perspectives during World War II. The cover features Tom Lea's painting titled *That 2,000 Yard Stare*, in addition to discussing his work.

## **Books: Young Adult, Ages 12+**

\*Chapek, Michael. *Murals: Cave, Cathedral, to Street*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publishing Group, 1996.

This is a collection of murals that range from cave painting to contemporary graffiti. In it, Michael Chapek briefly discusses the process, technique, and impact, of each type of mural. The book covers a large variety of historical information, as well as aesthetic concerns.

### **Books: Children, Ages 8–12**

\*Blizzard, Gladys. *Come Look with Me: Exploring Landscape Art with Children*. New York: Lickle Publishing, 2001.

Gladys Blizzard places landscape works in chronological order, accompanied by questions to promote discussion. In addition, information about the artists and their works are also contained.

\*King, Penny. *Portraits*. New York: Crabtree Publishing, 1996.

This book examines the technique of several famous works of portraiture. Penny King focuses on capturing the personality; the exact rendering of a figure is de-emphasized. Several suggestions for projects are listed next to interpretations of famous works.

### **Books: Children, Ages 6–8**

\*Carroll, Colleen. *How Artists See the Elements*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1996.

This book reproduces a variety of popular paintings in order to discuss observational techniques. Similar subject matter (earth, air, water, and fire) is interpreted by a variety of artists, resulting in a plethora of vantage points in which children may appreciate more than an exact rendering of the visual world.

\*Carroll, Colleen. *How Artists See America*. New York: Abbeville Press, 2002.

A number of famous works are reprinted in order to capture a sense America. Each region (midwest, east, west, and south) contains art that possesses traits unique to the specific areas. This book encourages youth to see the country for individual and distinct properties instead of generalizing the locale.

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## Videography

Annotated list. Materials accompanying the exhibition are marked with an asterisk (\*).

### Videos

*They Drew Fire: Combat Artists of World War II.* 57 min. Produced by Home Vision Arts, 1999. Videocassette.

This video follows several World War II artist correspondents. It contrasts their varied approaches of depicting the war. During this time censorship dealt primarily with war secrets rather than gruesome detail; the result was anywhere between heroic or horrible, balancing the portrayal of World War II.

\**Tom Lea: Brushstrokes of Life.* 30 min. Produced by El Paso, Texas, NBC affiliate News Channel 9, 2000. Videocassette.

This is a biography featuring Tom Lea's art. Included are instances of living in El Paso, and a clip of his role as a barber in the United Artists film based on his novel, *The Wonderful Country*.

\**Tom Lea: Dignity Beyond Borders.* 27 min. Produced by the El Paso Museum of Art. DVD.

Produced by the El Paso Museum of Art, this DVD explores the life and career of Tom Lea.

### Films made from Tom Lea's books

*The Brave Bulls.* 106 minutes. Produced by Rossen Enterprises Inc., 1951. Film.

This film, based upon Tom Lea's novel, follows the career of young matador Luis Bello, a rising star in the world of Spanish and Mexican bullfighting. Although it depicts both the violence and elegance inside the ring, it also contains Tom Lea's insights into the world of bull ranching, breeding, and bullfight promotion. This is a story of courage, death, family relationships, and fear.

*The Wonderful Country.* 98 min. Produced by United Artists, 1959. Film.

This film was based on Tom Lea's novel of the same title. This film features a gringo, Martin Brady, who was born in the United States but raised by a family in Mexico.



(Brady is played by actor Robert Mitchum.) He travels across the Rio Grande, facing identity issues and prejudice on both sides of the border.

## Web Sites

### **ArtLies: A Texas Art Journal “Sarah’s Relevance” from the Fall 2001 issue**

[www.artlies.org/Lea.html](http://www.artlies.org/Lea.html)

This is an online article by Kate Bonansinga critiquing Tom Lea’s drawing *Sarah in the Summertime*, 1947. Kate Bonansinga discusses the relationship of the subject to Tom Lee, as well as providing a short summary of his career.

### **El Paso Times**

[www.elpasotimes.com/photogallery/special10.shtml](http://www.elpasotimes.com/photogallery/special10.shtml)

The *El Paso Times* has put together images of Tom Lea and his work in remembrance of his life, which ended January 29, 2001.

### **Military History Network**

[www.milhist.net/global/2000yard.html](http://www.milhist.net/global/2000yard.html)

This Web site provides information on Tom Lea’s painting titled *That 2,000 Yard Stare*, a portrait of a man in Peleliu, which was a famous World War II battleground.

### **Tom Lea Collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center The University of Texas at Austin**

[www.hrc.utexas.edu/collections/art/holdings/texas/lea/](http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/collections/art/holdings/texas/lea/)

On this site, visitors can obtain biographical information on Tom Lea in addition to works specific to the collection at the University of Texas. Additional links to informational Tom Lea Web sites are provided, including the research collection of Tom Lea Papers, which lists fiction, non-fiction, correspondence, and other articles authored by Tom Lea.

### **Tom Lea Gallery at El Paso Museum of Art**

[www.elpasoartmuseum.org/fs\\_gallery.html](http://www.elpasoartmuseum.org/fs_gallery.html)

This Web site provides a description and virtual tour of works within the Tom Lea Gallery in the collection of the El Paso Museum of Art.

### **Tom Lea Mural: Back Home in the Pleasant Hill, Missouri, Post Office**

[www.wpamurals.com/plsnthll.html](http://www.wpamurals.com/plsnthll.html)

This site briefly discusses Tom Lea's commissioned mural focusing on a farm couple rebuilding their lives after the Civil War.

**Tom Lea Mural: Comanches the in Seymour, Texas, Post Office**  
[communitydisc.westside66.org/html/colette/muralsSIG/seymour.htm](http://communitydisc.westside66.org/html/colette/muralsSIG/seymour.htm)

This link provides several views of Tom Lea's mural, *Comanches*, in a post office in Seymour, Texas. There is a brief description of the work and its impact on the surrounding community.

**Tom Lea Mural: *Comanches* the in Seymour, Texas, Post Office**  
[www.cityofseymour.org/city\\_sights\\_mural.htm](http://www.cityofseymour.org/city_sights_mural.htm)

This link pertains to Tom Lea's mural, *Comanches*, in a post office in Seymour, Texas. Additional information regarding the *Comanches* commission is provided, including size and cost.

**Tom Lea Mural *Stampede* in the Odessa, Texas, Post Office**  
[www.odessahistory.com/tomleapg.htm](http://www.odessahistory.com/tomleapg.htm)

This Web site contains information on Tom Lea's mural, titled *Stampede*, created for the post office in Odessa, Texas. Influences for the artist's commissioned work are discussed.

**Tom Lea Mural *Stampede* in the Odessa, Texas, Post Office**  
[www.texasbob.com/travel/tbt\\_odessa\\_po.html](http://www.texasbob.com/travel/tbt_odessa_po.html)

This Web site contains information on *Stampede*, in Odessa, Texas. Additional information on *Stampede* is provided, including a brief statement of art patronage programs for post offices across the United States.

**World War II Lecture Institute**  
[www.wwiilectureinstitute.com/art/lea.htm](http://www.wwiilectureinstitute.com/art/lea.htm)

This Web site is a select collection of images painted by Tom Lea, depicting the realities of war. This site includes *Explosion*, *Pilot*, *The Price*, *Ready Room*, and *Sundown on Peleliu*.

## Speaker List

One of the best ways to enhance the exhibition and to engage the community is to host a program with a speaker. This can include the curators of *Light from the Sky: A Tom Lea Retrospective, 1907–2001* exhibition, or other experts on the life and career of the artist. It is also recommended that venues contact individuals in their communities or at their local college or university who have similar knowledge or expertise. Please contact the individuals listed below directly regarding fees, transportation, housing, and availability.

Adair Margo  
Adair Margo Gallery  
415 E. Yandell  
El Paso, Texas 79902  
915.533.0048  
amargo@adairmargo.com  
Fee: no speaker's fee

Adair Margo is a gallery owner and Chairman of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. She is the exclusive representative of the estate of Tom Lea and the recorder of his oral history, *Tom Lea: An Oral History*, published by Texas Western Press in 1995. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in art history from Vanderbilt University and a Masters of Art in art history from New Mexico State University. She also studied renaissance art and Italian in Florence through Syracuse University.

Becky Duval Reese  
Director  
El Paso Museum of Art  
One Arts Festival Plaza  
El Paso, Texas 79901  
915.532.1707  
duvalreeseb@elpasoartmuseum.org  
Fee: \$500

Becky Duval Reese earned both a Bachelor of Arts and Masters of Art in art history from New Mexico State University where she graduated Summa Cum Laude. She has over twenty-five years experience working in art museums at New Mexico State University, the University of Texas at Austin, and the El Paso Museum of Art in Texas. She has published over thirty exhibition catalogs, articles, and essays on American art, particularly Texas art. Reese has lectured widely and participated in panel discussions, and has made presentations to both state and national museum groups. Additionally, she has written and produced over ten video/film productions with emphasis on art and art education. Reese is the recipient of a number of publication awards from the Texas

Association of Museum and from the American Association of Museum, and she is the recipient of the 1999 Women of Influence Award from the National Council of Jewish Women.

Deborah Rindge  
Department of Art History  
North Central College  
P.O. Box 3063  
Campus Box 334  
Naperville, IL 60566-7063  
630.637.5545  
drindge@aol.com  
Fee: \$500

Deborah Rindge, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Art History at North Central College in Naperville, IL. She specializes in American art history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and has a special interest in art of the American West. Her research includes the relationship of geology to landscape painting and photography, on which she has published chapters in books for the American Philosophical Society and Pennsylvania State University Press. She has also written on American Art collections for the National Gallery of Art, the Columbus Museum of Art, and the El Paso Museum of Art. She has lectured extensively for art museum audiences around the country, and was the first Fulbright Scholar in American Art to teach at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London.

William R. Thompson  
Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art  
7380 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Scottsdale, AZ 85251  
480.874.4654  
billt@sccarts.org  
Fee: \$500

William R. Thompson is one of the curators for the exhibition. He earned a Bachelor of Arts with honors in art and Russian and Eastern European studies in 1991 from Grinnell College in Iowa and a Masters of Art in art history in 1997 from Rice University in Houston, Texas. Thompson has curated more than twenty exhibitions and has written numerous essays, articles, and reviews on the subjects of modern and contemporary American art and photography. His most recent publication is the monograph *Land and Light in the American West: Photographs by John Ward* (Trinity University Press, 2004).

Thompson served as curator of the El Paso Museum of Art from 2002 to 2002 and as a curatorial assistant at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, from 1994 to 1997. He was also the publicist for the Menil Collection in Houston from 1997 to 1998 and the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas at Austin from 1998 to 1999. Currently based in Phoenix, Arizona, Thompson is the marketing and public relations managers for the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art.

Becky Duval Reese  
Director  
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El Paso, Texas 79901  
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Fee: \$500

Becky Duval Reese earned both a Bachelor of Arts and Masters of Art in art history from New Mexico State University where she graduated Summa Cum Laude. She has over twenty-five years experience working in art museums at New Mexico State University, the University of Texas at Austin, and the El Paso Museum of Art in Texas. She has published over thirty exhibition catalogs, articles, and essays on American art, particularly Texas art. Reese has lectured widely and participated in panel discussions, and has made presentations to both state and national museum groups. Additionally, she has written and produced over ten video/film productions with emphasis on art and art education. Reese is the recipient of a number of publication awards from the Texas Association of Museum and from the American Association of Museum, and she is the recipient of the 1999 Women of Influence Award from the National Council of Jewish Women.

## Speaker Resources

An effective program can be built around a local scholar, art historian, or artist. The following organizations may be able to help you locate those experts who would be willing to be involved in an event at your museum. Contact the national organizations to determine if there are members in your area.

State arts and humanities councils often have traveling speakers who may meet your needs or be able to refer others in your state to speak at your museum. Locate your state and local arts or humanities council at the following Web sites:

- A list of state arts councils can be found at [www.arts.endow.gov](http://www.arts.endow.gov) or call the National Endowment for the Arts at 202.682.5400.
- A list of state humanities councils can be found at [www.neh.gov/whoweare/statecouncils.html](http://www.neh.gov/whoweare/statecouncils.html) or call the National Endowment for the Humanities at 800.NEH.1121.
- A list of local arts organizations, by state, can be found at [www.neh.gov/whoweare/statecouncils.html](http://www.neh.gov/whoweare/statecouncils.html) or contact Dinah Walls, Locals Specialist, at 202.682.5429, or e-mail her at [wallsd@arts.endow.gov](mailto:wallsd@arts.endow.gov).

## **Educational Activities**

The following activities are provided to extend the themes of the exhibition: journal writing, literature, and art making. Teachers of all levels may adapt these activities for their own lesson plans.

Some of these activities were adapted from the El Paso Museum of Art in Texas and are reproduced here with permission.



## Landscape Collages

Ages 6+

Paintings are usually made on a flat surface, like paper or canvas made from cloth. But even though the painting is flat, the picture often looks like it extends into the distance (or recedes). Think about how artists like Tom Lea can make paintings look like they have depth and how he uses space in his paintings. This activity can be done following a gallery tour, in a classroom, or as an outdoor activity.

### Suggested Materials:

- assorted colored paper: construction, tissue, etc. (some cities have recycling centers that have an abundance of different types of paper for free)
- light- or medium-weight cardstock for the base
- glue medium or glue sticks
- scratch paper
- pencil
- scissors
- Art tips guide located in the programming guide
- Balance in art guide located in the programming guide

### Directions:

1. Begin with a thinking exercise while looking at Lea's landscape paintings. Ask the children to explain how the picture is divided. Have them identify the foreground, middle ground, and background. What is in the foreground, or looks closest to you? What is in the middle ground? What is in the background, or looks farthest away?
2. Continue with a thinking exercise by having the children identify how Tom Lea makes objects look as though they go back in space. Are all of the trees the same size or different sizes? Are the biggest trees in the foreground or background? Where are the smallest trees? Is there anything else in the foreground that gets smaller in the middle ground or background? (Some pictures have roads that recede in the distance.)
3. Finally, have the children think about how artists overlap objects to make things look closer or farther away. What has the artist overlapped? Does the background look less detailed than the foreground?
4. Discuss with students the importance of balance when creating art and how artists use balance in their work. Pass out the Balance in Art guide to the students and have them answer the questions while looking at either portrait, or another painting in the exhibition. Also have them identify scale of the portrait. Is there a foreground or background? Is the portrait of the person large or small?

5. As an outdoor exercise, have the children look far in the distance. Have them answer the same questions posed in the gallery. Have them look at the colors in the landscape. What colors do you see? Are there any colors repeated in the landscape and in the sky? What looks like it overlaps?
6. Use the Art Tips guide to assist students in visualizing perspective in landscapes.
7. Use a piece of scratch paper and pencil and first sketch a landscape. Make the picture show space by:
  - putting the foreground at or near the bottom of the page
  - placing things or objects in the middle ground
  - making things or objects in the foreground the largest and things in the background the smallest
  - overlapping things or objects
8. Now have the students create a collage landscape using assorted colored papers. They can tear or cut the paper. Have them think about the use of colors by using stronger colors for the foreground and lighter colors for the background. They can also cut out shapes of people, animals, trees, buildings, or whatever else they would like to put in their pictures. Make sure they think about the size of these objects and how different sizes create depth in the picture.

## Portrait Making

### Ages 6+

Tom Lea painted portraits during his career, usually of close friends or family. A portrait is an image where a person, or an animal, is the main idea. Generally, a portrait conveys something about the person: good-natured, funny, bad, rich, poor, important, serious, thoughtful, etc. Portraits usually include items associated with the person: hats, clothing, jewelry, etc. Portraits can also be set inside a building or outside in the natural environment.

#### Suggested materials:

- 9 x 11-inch construction paper
- glue
- scissors
- 4 x 6-inch and smaller pieces of construction paper of assorted colors
- assorted color pencils
- slide show located in the programming guide
- Art tips guide located in the programming guide
- Balance in art guide located in the programming guide

#### Directions

1. For younger students, ask the students to identify different emotions; they can act out certain emotions or they can describe them. For example, ask them to describe or act out happy or sad looks like. Repeat this step with several different emotions.
2. Display Tom Lea's portrait *Dick Kleberg* for the students. Ask students to list what they see in the portrait. Have the students identify the mood or emotion they see in the portrait. If in the gallery, have the students look at other portraits that include animals, such as *Toro Quieto* and have them list what they see in the portrait. Then have the students identify the mood or emotion they in the portrait.
3. Discuss with students the importance of balance when creating art and how artists use balance in their work. Pass out the Balance in Art guide to the students and have them answer the questions while looking at either portrait, or another painting in the exhibition. Also have them identify scale of the portrait. Is there a foreground or background? Is the portrait of the person large or small?
4. Discuss with students the relationship between geometric shapes and facial features. For example, eyes are roughly in the shape of circles, the nose looks like a triangle, and the head usually looks like the shape of a circle or oval. Talk about how eyebrows are curved lines and hair can look like wavy or straight lines.
5. For the portrait making activity, have the students pick a classmate, friend, or family member for their portrait. Before making the portrait, have them identify qualities of

that person to include in the portrait; what is their personality? Have them also identify where they would place their person in their portrait; inside or outside?

6. Students can either draw or use construction paper to create their portrait. For older students, use the Art Tips guide to assist students in creating accurate proportions. Remind students that geometric shapes can be the basis for their portraits.
7. Distribute a large sheet of paper and inform students they can create their portrait either horizontally or vertically. Have students cut out their shapes for their portrait and have them arrange their portrait by identifying how to create balance in their work. For older students they can draw their portrait by using colored pencils or drawing pencils.
8. After the students have created their portrait, have them display their work in class and discuss their portrait. Have them discuss the mood or emotion they conveyed in their portrait, what details or objects they incorporated in their portrait.

## Story Time: Poems and Nature

### Ages 10+

Using literature or poems is a great way to engage students in looking at artwork and in gaining a greater appreciation of the art itself. This activity will engage children in looking closely at the colors Tom Lea uses in his paintings, and in writing a poem about the mood and feeling of the atmospheres depicted in his paintings.

#### Suggested Materials:

- pencils
- poem worksheets location in the programming guide

#### Directions:

1. Start by looking at several paintings by Tom Lea. Suggested paintings include *The Field* (study for St. Louis post office mural), *Grandfather China*, and *Invocation*.
2. Have the students think about the colors. Are they bright or soft? Or, do you see bright and soft colors? Where do you see warm colors? Where do you see cool colors? How do the colors make you feel? Answers may vary depending on the landscape.
3. Have the children think about the Lea's landscape *Invocation*. Does the space look small or large? Where is the artist standing when he painted the landscape? He's looking out at the mountains from a low point, wouldn't you agree? How does the space make you feel?
3. Discuss two different styles of writing a poem: acrostic and diamante. These are short styles that can be done as a gallery activity, in the classroom, or as an outdoor project.

*Acrostic:* Acrostic is a verse where a word is selected and each line begins with each letter in the word. First, spell the word vertically down the left side of the page. For each line of the poem, the student describes something about that word. Have the students choose a word that best describes the landscape they look at.

V  
A  
S  
T

Q  
U  
I  
E  
T

*Diamonte*: The text of the poem is printed or written in the shape of a diamond and is written using the following structure:

Line 1: Noun or subject

Line 2: Two adjectives

Line 3: Three words that end in *ing*

Line 4: Four words about the subject

Line 5: Three words that end in *ing*

Line 6: Two adjectives

Line 7: Synonym for the subject

## **Creative Book Journals**

### **Ages 12+**

While working as a war correspondent in World War II, Tom Lea used a sketchbook to record what he saw on the *USS Wasp*. Using a sketchbook, Lea worked out ideas for paintings, and he recorded personal thoughts, feelings, and impressions. Journals or sketchbooks are highly personal, but they are also a great aid in thinking through the process of creating art. In this activity, students will make a small journal by making an origami card case.

#### **Suggested Materials:**

- 8.5 x 11” fabric paper
- textured paper
- acrylic paint
- brushes
- sequins
- colored pencils
- fabric glue
- pastels
- scissors
- rulers
- glitter
- colored thin wire, yarn, twine, or any thin string material
- strong sewing needle

#### **Directions:**

1. After touring the exhibition and looking at Tom Lea’s paintings, discuss how artists get their ideas about their paintings. Have the students look at several of the pencil studies for *Death of the Wasp*, the sketchbook for *USS Hornet*, and the first color study for *Death of the Wasp*. How are the pencil studies different from the painting? Are the brushstrokes more detailed or looser? Does it look like he took his time or did he paint the scene quickly? Share with the students how artists will make quick sketches before making a finished painting.
2. Follow the directions on the template for a card case located in the programming guide to make a cover for a small journal. Use heavy fabric paper that can hold acrylic paint or is conducive to pastels or colored pencils.
3. Follow the directions and determine which side of the card case that the students can paint or draw on.
4. Unfold the card case and have the students design the outer side of the paper that is exposed when refolded.

5. Have students first decide if they want to paint or draw a landscape scene on the side that will be exposed on the outside of the card case. Students can alternatively design this side with patterns of colors and shapes. A variety of materials can be used.
6. Allow surface to dry before folding the paper. Hairdryers are handy if there are time limitations.
7. Have the students refold the card case according to the template instructions. Use the edge of a pencil or a pen to burnish the folded edges on the card case.
8. Set the card holder aside.
9. Have the students make the journal pages. Take a sheet of textured paper and turn it into a landscape position. Fold in half and divide the folded half in two. Cut lengthwise. Measure each folded half so it is 4 inches in width and 4 ¼ inches in height, and cut to the measurements.
10. Repeat step number nine four or five times.
11. Take the folded halves and stack on top of each other. Use the edge of a pencil or a pen to burnish the folded edge.
12. Use a heavy yarn needle to make two sets of holes on the fold of the pages.
13. Place the folded pages inside the card case.
14. Use the heavy yarn needle to make two sets of holes through the fold of card case.
15. Use a piece of thin colored wire, yarn, twine, or any thin string material and pull the string through the holes in the journal pages and the fold of the card case. Tie the wire or string on the outer edge of the card case.
16. Encourage the students to use the journal pages to record at least one thought a day for the next week.



## Distributor Contacts

### Art Education

Crystal Productions  
Box 2159  
Glenview, IL 60025-6159  
Phone: 1.800.255.8629  
[www.crystalproductions.com](http://www.crystalproductions.com)

Davis Art Education Materials  
50 Portland Street  
Worcester, MA 01608  
Phone: 1.800.533.2847  
[www.davis-art.com](http://www.davis-art.com)

### Art Supplies: General

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For Crayola® products, call 1.800.CRAYOLA  
For InkTank products, call 1.866.INKTANK  
For Silly Putty®, Portfolio Series, and all other Binney & Smith products, call  
1.800.272.9652  
[www.binney-smith.com](http://www.binney-smith.com)

Dick Blick Art Materials  
P.O. Box 1267  
Galesburg, IL 61402-1267  
Phone: 1.800.828.4548  
Fax: 1.800.621.8293  
Product Info: 1.800.933.2542  
[www.dickblick.com](http://www.dickblick.com)

Sax Arts and Crafts  
2725 S. Moorland Road  
New Berlin, WI 53151  
Phone: 1.800.558.6696  
Fax: 1.800.328.4729  
[www.saxarts.com](http://www.saxarts.com)

Utrecht Art Supplies Online Store  
Phone: 1.800.223.9132  
[www.utrechtart.com](http://www.utrechtart.com)

## **Film Distributors**

Bullfrog Films  
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Oley, PA 19547  
800.543.3764  
[www.bullfrogfilms.com](http://www.bullfrogfilms.com)

The Cinema Guild  
130 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10016  
800.723.5522  
[www.cinemaguild.com](http://www.cinemaguild.com)

Kino International  
333 W. 39th St., Ste. 503  
New York, NY 10018  
800.562.3330  
[www.kino.com](http://www.kino.com)

Women Make Movies  
462 Broadway Suite 500WS  
New York, NY 10013  
212.925.0606  
[www.wmm.com](http://www.wmm.com)

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Thank you.

# Slide Show Script

## Introduction

*Light from the Sky: A Tom Lea Retrospective, 1907–2001* celebrates the life and career of an extraordinary artist who worked as a painter, muralist, illustrator, and author for approximately six decades. This exhibition is curated by William R. Thompson, former curator at the El Paso Museum of Art in Texas and Debora Rindge, professor of art history at North Central College in Naperville, Illinois. Museum visitors will see on display seventy-two selections from the artist's oeuvre, including landscape paintings of the American Southwest, documentation of World War II battles, studies for murals commissioned throughout the United States, sketchbooks, illustrations for writer and folklorist J. Frank Dobie, and novels authored by Lea.

Although a living legend in his native Texas by the time he reached fifty, Lea's fierce artistic independence and his disdain for personal homage and publicity rendered him largely unknown beyond his home state. Born in El Paso, Texas, in 1907, Lea studied for three years at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. It was at the Art Institute where Lea was an apprentice to John Warner Norton, one of the most respected muralists of the 1920s and 1930s. During the Great Depression, Lea painted murals in Washington DC, Texas, Missouri, and New Mexico for the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Like other prominent American regionalists, Lea was less influenced by European modernism and abstract expressionism and generally preferred to render landscape and people in a realistic style. In the late 1930s he expanded his artistic repertoire by illustrating books that attracted the attention of publisher Henry Luce, who hired Lea as a war correspondent for *Life* magazine.

Following World War II, Lea returned to El Paso to paint and to begin a new chapter in his career as a writer. Over the next twenty-five years, Lea completed ten works of fiction and history, illustrating them all, including a two-volume history of the King Ranch in Texas and two best-selling novels. *The Brave Bulls* and *The Wonderful Country* were made into feature films and are now back in print. Although he continued to write, Lea returned to painting as a priority in the early 1970s. The artist continued to work into his nineties, and only retired from his studio when forced by failing vision.

## Slide #1

### *Lonely Town*

1937

Oil on canvas

Courtesy Sarah D. Lea

In 1936, Lea returned home to El Paso with his wife Nancy, who had developed a serious infection following an emergency appendectomy in New Mexico. She died in April of that year. A few months later, in June, Lea's grandmother passed away, followed closely by his mother in December. In the span of a few short months, Lea lost the three most important women in his life. He would rarely speak about these tragic events again, but

the painting *Lonely Town* reflects the deep sense of sorrow and isolation that he experienced during this time. “One summer evening I looked up one of the side streets off Avenida Juárez, past the houses to the edge of Juárez. In those days there wasn’t much, just the *acequia madre* and these little houses and the Juárez mountain. It was something that grabbed me.”

**Slide #2**

***Summer's Green Arcanum***

1975

Oil on canvas mounted on masonite

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Nations Bank

Lea included a portrait of himself and his wife Sarah in the center of this majestic landscape, one of his largest. It is a vivid, bucolic refuge, charged with private symbolism. On the back of the painting, Lea inscribed the definition of his Latin-derived title: “a secret; a mystery . . . an extract of the ulterior or vital nature of something.”

**Slide #3**

***Toro Quieto***

1946

Watercolor, ink, and pencil on paper

Courtesy Jason Schoen Fine Arts, Miami, Florida

Birds dare to gather in this tranquil drawing of a “Calm Bull,” the counterpoint to Lea’s rendition of *Toro Caliente*. Lea duplicated this quiet scene in one of his ink illustrations for *The Brave Bulls*.

**Slide #4**

***The Field* (study for St. Louis post office mural)**

1939

Tempera, ink, and pencil on paper

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mrs. Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., in memory of Jonathan David Schwartz, Sr., and Cecily Schwartz Prestridge

In 1939, after installing a mural for the post office in Pleasant Hill, Missouri, Lea drove to St. Louis, following part of the Old Santa Fe Trail along the way, where he conducted research for another mural competition sponsored by the Treasury Department’s Section of Fine Arts. The project called for a cycle of nine large panels for a new post office in St. Louis. Lea spent three months devising an ambitious proposal, which explored the city’s historic role on the frontier as a point of convergence for different cultures from the continent’s north, east, south, and west. He was at first disappointed when he lost the commission, but it allowed him to pursue a number of other equally fulfilling projects back home in Texas, including the mural *Stampede* for the post office in Odessa, Texas.

Although faded, these eight surviving studies from the St. Louis competition beautifully illustrate Lea's concept for the mural.

**Slide #5**

***Katcinas from Palüliükoñti***

1927

Casein tempera on paper

Courtesy James and Doris Lea

Even while living in Chicago, Lea's thoughts were never far from his native Southwest. "I couldn't get my home country out of my mind," he remarked. "I got to thinking so much about . . . the Hopi pueblo over at Walpi in Arizona. I'd go over to the Newberry Library and study the Bureau of Ethnology reports . . . and there was one that had a wonderful collection of Hopi kachina doll drawings." Lea was so fascinated by these volumes that he asked his father's law partner, newly elected to Congress, to purchase a set for him in Washington, D.C. and to ship it to Chicago. This colorful, stylized rendering of the traditional Hopi figures flattens them into a dynamic graphic design.

**Slide #6**

**First color study for *The Death of the Wasp***

1942

Oil on canvas

Courtesy James and Doris Lea

When Lea returned home from his tour on board the USS *Hornet*, he executed this oil painting showing the destruction of the USS *Wasp*. He modified the image in a second painting, which was reproduced in the April 5, 1943, issue of *Life*. In his autobiography, Lea described watching the ship's tragic end through a telescope: "The fires in *Wasp* reached her forward bomb magazine: a tremendous explosion just forward of the island structure sent a livid sheet of flame hundreds of feet in the air. Through the big glass it seemed to explode right in my face. It sent a monster pillar of smoke boiling toward the zenith. It sealed *Wasp's* fate. Through the glass I could see the minute figures of men moving on the after part of the listing flight deck. Little black dots were going down lines over the fantail into the sea, abandoning the ship."

**Slide #7**

**Sketchbook from USS *Hornet***

1942

Pencil, ink, and watercolor on spiral-bound paper

Courtesy Adair Margo Gallery, El Paso, Texas

While in the field, Lea kept a number of spiral-bound sketch books, such as this one from his stay on board the USS *Hornet*, which he used to document the events unfolding around him. While some of these drawings were quick and gestural, others were more finely rendered. Lea took these visual notes back to his studio in El Paso, where he completed the easel paintings that would eventually be reproduced in *Life* magazine. Before he could bring them home, however, Lea's sketch books had to be approved by the U.S. Naval Censor, whose stamp is visible on each page. Lea was transferred off the *Hornet* just days before it sank on October 26, 1942, following a battle near Santa Cruz Island.

**Slide #8**

**Sketchbook from USS *Hornet***

1942

Pencil, ink, and watercolor on spiral-bound paper

Courtesy Adair Margo Gallery, El Paso, Texas

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**Slide #9**

**Illustrations from *A Grizzly from the Coral Sea***

1944

Ink and pencil on paper

Courtesy Steve Feinberg

In 1944, Lea collaborated with his close friend, the El Paso printer Carl Hertzog, to publish *A Grizzly from the Coral Sea*, a short story based on his recollection of life on board the USS *Hornet*. The book featured this series of ink illustrations by Lea. The coin, which depicts a grizzly bear, was a prominent symbol in the story. It was given to the artist by one of his shipmates.

**Slide #10**

**Publicity poster for *The Brave Bulls***

1951

Poster

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of Mr. and Mrs. James H. Clement

As testament to the popular appeal of *The Brave Bulls*, Columbia Pictures produced a film adaptation of Lea's novel starring Mel Ferrer and Anthony Quinn. Lea recalled, "[*The Brave Bulls* book] turned out to be a great success and I remember the editor sent a telegram that said, 'Count your chickens. We've just sold *The Brave Bulls* to Hollywood.' . . . Columbia Pictures then paid me to go out and write a script . . . [They] didn't like it at all." Another writer was hired to craft the screenplay, and the film premiered at the Plaza Theatre in El Paso in 1951.

**Slide #11**

***Portrait of Dick Kleberg***

1962

Ink on paper

Courtesy Mary Lewis Scott Kleberg

Lea spent five years preparing a two-volume, illustrated history of the celebrated King Ranch in South Texas, which was published in 1957. During this time, he became close friends with several members of the Kleberg family, including Dick Kleberg, who was particularly supportive and encouraging while the artist struggled to complete the project. Painted with Chinese ink, one of Lea's favorite mediums, the portrait is one of the artist's finest. Lea made relatively few portraits during his career and almost always declined such commissions. He preferred to create portraits only of his close friends and family and often gave them to his subjects. "I reserve portraiture for my own pleasure. I select my subjects, they don't select me," he once quipped.

**Slide #12**

***Invocation***

1987

Oil on canvas

Collection El Paso Museum of Art; gift of BDM International. Commissioned by John D. Williams Company

For his last major canvas, Lea painted a prospector standing at the foot of a mountain, gazing toward its summit. The subject is strongly autobiographical, as Lea spent virtually his entire life at the foot of El Paso's Mount Franklin, the southernmost ridge of the Rocky Mountains, which bisects the city. "Old Mount Franklin, with the light changing every moment, stands yet against the sky, just outside the studio window," wrote Lea. "Sarah and I live on the east side of our mountain. It is the sunrise side, not the sunset side. It is the side to see the day that is coming, not the side to see the day that is gone.



The best day is the day coming, with the work to do, with the eyes wide open, with the heart grateful.”

## Lesson Plans

The pre- and post-visit lesson plan are designed as introductory learning activities for teachers interested in taking their students to see *Light from the Sky: A Tom Lea Retrospective, 1907–2001*. These lesson plans can be adapted to many age groups, but they are primarily designed for middle school and higher school groups. In advance of the exhibition's arrival at your museum, send program announcements to secondary schools inviting them to set up a tour. Provide teachers with the slides and slide show script, the exhibition catalogue, introductory readings, or other information that comes with this programming guide. Educators can also access this information through the ExhibitsUSA Web site at [www.exhibitsusa.org](http://www.exhibitsusa.org).

# Pre-Visit Lesson Plan

## Lesson #1: Landscape Paintings: Discovering America's History and Culture

### Overview

American landscape painting has a long tradition in the history of art. As with most artistic genres, or trends, landscape painting has evolved and changed over the course of several centuries. Artists' motivation in making landscape paintings has changed from using art to convey a sense of national identity and pride to an artform that expresses personal desires or expressions about the beauty found in nature. In this lesson plan, students will be introduced to early American landscape painters and to the artwork of Tom Lea, a regional artist who has painted the Texas landscapes for the last four decades. Students will learn:

- to understand the art historical context of American landscape paintings;
- to understand the diverse nature of the American landscape and its role in the nation's social, cultural, and political history;
- to develop critical thinking and interpretation skills.

### Student Objectives

- *Art History and History:* Students will learn how artists convey a broad understanding of history and culture through subject matter in their artwork. Students will also explore how a regional artist conveys an understanding of the history and culture of his native state through his artwork.
- *Art Criticism:* Students will understand that although some landscape paintings are realistic and figures are easily identified, landscapes can be used to symbolically and metaphorically convey different meanings.
- *Aesthetics:* Students will learn how artists make art to convey history and culture.
- *Art Production:* Students will produce a sketch of the local landscape and learn how to create depth with a foreground, middle ground, and background.

### Assessment Guides

- *Young children:* Students understand the concept of culture and history, and make a landscape drawing.
- *Middle school:* Students understand the concept of culture and history, may give examples of symbols, allegory, or sublime; and make a landscape painting.
- *High school:* Students understand the concept of culture and history; identify examples of symbols, allegory, or sublime; and make a landscape painting. Students may also provide personal reflections to enrich our understanding of history and culture.

## Materials

- *Land and Landscape: Views of America's History and Culture* teaching guide included in the traveling exhibition. This teaching guide has four different units. This lesson plan adapts a few concepts from each unit. However, teachers may adapt and utilize the entire guide in their classroom instruction. The teaching guide also includes a video and workbook. The workbook can be reproduced for student use in classroom instruction.
- pencils
- paper
- colored pencils
- pastels
- acrylic paints
- brushes

## Part I:

### *Land and Landscape: The Early Years*

## Directions

- Step One: Introduce students to the history of the North American continent. Ask students to identify the year the continent was discovered. Have them consider the land before progress and development.
  - How would people have gotten around?
  - What kind of transportation did they use to explore the landscape?
  - Would this have been hard or easy?
  - If traveling by land, how would explorers perceive the land they were covering?
  - Would the landscape have looked small or vast?
  - How do think that made them feel?

By the early nineteenth century, people gained a new appreciation for the American scenery and its natural beauty. People began to associate progress with the belief that the continent was “blessed by God,” and there was a divine right to occupy and settle the land. Additionally, many considered the vastness and fertility of the land as symbolic for new economic opportunities that were developing in the new industrial nation.

- Step Two: Have the students look at two painting reproductions from the teaching guide: Alvan Fisher’s *A General View of the Falls of Niagara*, dated 1820, and Thomas Cole’s *The Subsiding of the Water of the Deluge*, dated 1829.
- Step Three: First, have students look at Alvan Fischer’s painting.
  - What do you see?
  - What is the center of interest? Or, what does the artist want you to see first?
  - Who is in the near foreground?

- Who do you see?
- Are they big or small?
- What do you see in the upper right corner?
- They are storm clouds, wouldn't you agree?
- How does a storm make you feel? Are storms comforting or scary?

This painting was made over two hundred years ago. The country was developing into an industrial nation, meaning people were beginning to move away from farming and agriculture to live in cities to work in factories. There were a lot of new advancements: trains, architecture, etc. Trains were able to transport people and goods from the East Coast across the nation, so new cities could be created farther into the interior of the nation.

- What did the artist paint? Do you see any trains or cities?

Alvan Fisher is one of the first professional landscape painters who painted distinct American scenes. He was also commissioned by a Massachusetts judge to paint the Niagara Falls. This painting was made when James Monroe was president of our nation, and the time of his presidency was described as the “Era of Good Feelings” because there was a period of prosperity and national pride. Niagara Falls was becoming a favorite vacation site because visitors could see and feel the *sublime* power of nature. Because of its vast size, Niagara Falls was also a symbol of power and the divine presence of God. Artists like Alvan Fisher were influenced by this romantic view of the land and often painted landscapes that conveyed these beliefs.

- Step Four: Now have students look at Thomas Cole's landscape painting. This painting was made eight years after Alvan Fisher's painting.
  - What similarities do you see?
  - What differences do you see?
  - What objects do you see in the foreground?
  - How would you describe the scene in the foreground?
  - What do you see in the middle ground?
  - How would you describe the background?
  - Is the scene clear or hazy?
  - What color is the haze in the background?
  - Where do you see light?
  - Where is the light coming from?
  - What is the mood of the entire scene?

Thomas Cole was a leader of a group of painters that was known as the Hudson River School of painters. Their motivation to paint the landscape was slightly different from Alvan Fisher's. Cole and other artists wanted to capture the splendor and vastness of the mountains, rivers, and forests of the Northeast, but they also wanted to warn against the destruction of the land that comes with development and progress. Cole also captured the *sublime* of the mountain ranges by contrasting dark colors with a thinly lighted haze. The big scale of the landscape is beautiful and scary at the same

time. The painting depicts the aftermath of a flood, and there is a skull washed up on the bank in the foreground along with an untied boat floating in the middle ground. The skull represents a *memento mori*, or a symbol that reminds the viewer of death. If you look closely, you will also see the small outline of a bird. The bird and faint color of purple in the background are symbolic of the presence of God, which is believed to represent the cleansing of sins. As an *allegory*, viewers would associate the scene as the Great Flood as described in the Old Testament of the Bible. Cole was strongly influenced by the prevailing religious and moral philosophies of the period.

- Step Five: Teachers have the option of exploring other themes on the changing genre of landscape painting that are available in the teachers guide.

## **Part II:**

### *Current Landscape Painting*

- Step One: Show two slides of Robert Sudlow’s landscape paintings from the slide show section located in the programming guide: *Invocation*, *Lonely Town*, and *Summer’s Green Arcanum*.
  - How are these landscapes different?
  - How are they similar?
  - How has the artist conveyed the vastness of the land?
  - What colors does the artist use?
  - How are they different from Cole’s and Fisher’s colors?
  - What kind of mood has the artist conveyed?

Where Cole and Fisher evoked a national pride in their landscape paintings, Tom Lea evokes a regional pride in his work. Lea also continues in the tradition of landscape painting by celebrating the beauty found in nature. He does this with color as he attempts to capture the light found in nature.

Teachers should copy the artist biography section of the programming guide for more information about the artist’s career and artistic influences.

## **Part III:**

### *Landscape Drawing*

- Step One: Before visiting the museum to see the exhibition, have the students draw a landscape. This does not necessarily need to be a landscape of a prairie, but it can be a short outdoor activity.
- Step Two: Have the students think about depth when drawing on a flat, two-dimensional surface.
  - How did Thomas Cole or Alvan Fisher make paintings showing the landscape receding, and how did they use space?

- Are the trees the same size?
  - Where are the bigger trees in the landscape?
  - Are they in the foreground or background?
  - What have the artists overlapped?
- 
- Step Three: Use a piece of paper and a pencil to sketch a landscape. Have the students make the picture show space by putting the foreground at or near the bottom of the page, by placing things or objects in the middle ground, by making the things or objects in the foreground the largest and objects in the background the smallest, and by overlapping things or objects.

# Post-Visit Lesson Plan

## Lesson #1: Landscapes: Atmosphere and Light in Nature

### Overview

One of Tom Lea's motivations to paint the Southwest landscape is to capture patterns of light that occur at any given moment. He is also keenly interested in capturing elements of the atmosphere. Students will look at the work by impressionist painter Claude Monet as an art historical example and see how he captured different types of weather, and they will look at Tom Lea's landscape paintings to compare and contrast similarities and differences. Students will learn:

- to identify and describe elements of art in the works selected (color, line, shape and form, space, and value);
- to analyze and interpret meaning from works of art, including their own, according to elements of art, principles of design, and aesthetic qualities;
- to demonstrate their understanding by making a watercolor painting based on their observation of the environment and atmosphere.

### Student Objectives

- *Art History:* Students will understand the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.
- *Art Criticism:* Students will understand how to reflect and assess the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others.
- *Art Production:* Students will understand and apply media, techniques, and processes when making their own art.

### Assessment Guides

- *Young children:* Students understand the concept of weather in landscape paintings by identifying colors that convey mood, and make a simple landscape painting or drawing.
- *Middle school:* Students understand the concept of weather in landscape paintings by identifying and describing colors and light that convey mood, can describe appropriate weather vocabulary, and make a watercolor landscape painting.
- *High school:* Students understand the concept of weather in landscape paintings by identifying and describing colors and light that convey mood, can describe appropriate weather vocabulary, and make a watercolor landscape painting. Students also demonstrate the ability to critique and evaluate the content of their peers' work by using elements of art terminology.



## Materials

- watercolor paper
- watercolor paints
- paper cups
- salt
- brushes
- construction paper
- scissors
- pencils
- eraser
- Scotch tape
- relief globe of the world
- Internet access
- slides of Tom Lea's landscape paintings

## Part I:

### *Introduction: Weather Observation*

## Directions

- Step One: Have students look outside or go outside if the weather permits. If they are young students, have them describe the weather.
  - What is the weather like today?
  - What was it like yesterday or last week?
  - How does the weather make you feel today?
  - How does the weather influence what you do daily? Give an example or examples.
  - What is your favorite kind of weather?
  - Describe why.
- Step Two: Access the Monet at WebMuseum at [ww.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/monet](http://ww.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/monet) and have the students look at the following images: *Poppies*, *Near Argenteuil*, *The Seine at Argenteuil*, and *The Floating Ice*.
  - What kinds of weather patterns are in the images?
  - What colors do you see?
  - Are these cool or warm colors?
  - How would describe the colors? Are they dull or bright?
  - How are the colors used to convey lightness or darkness?
  - What lines do you see?
  - How has the artist used lines to draw your eye through the painting?
  - How has the artist balanced the image?
  - How has he used space?
  - How is light expressed in the paintings?
  - What kind of feeling or mood does the painting convey?
  - Where would the artist have made the painting? Do you think he worked inside or outside?

- Would he have used a camera to take a picture? Why not?
- Step Three: Provide contextual information from the Web site about Claude Monet, impressionism, and the paintings.
- Step Four: Have students compare and contrast the landscape paintings made by Claude Monet and Tom Lea. Use slides from the education programming guide to remind students of his work.

## **Part II:**

### *Activity*

- Step One: Have students identify weather patterns in their geographic location.
  - Describe different weather patterns.
  - What is the summer like? Fall? Winter? Spring?
- Step Two: Access either weather Web sites for images of weather patterns: [www.education.noaa.gov](http://www.education.noaa.gov) or [www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov). If images are downloadable, tape various pictures around the classroom that demonstrate a variety of weather conditions. Try and pick conditions from different geographical areas.
- Step Three: Have students analyze the images and weather conditions by discussing color, space, balance, texture, and line.
- Step Four: Have students select their favorite picture and weather condition and break them into groups accordingly. Have the students discuss color, shape, line, space, balance, and texture and share their observations with the class.
- Step Five: Have students choose their favorite weather condition to paint using watercolors. Demonstrate the technique of painting a weather/landscape scene using salt and watercolors: texture can be created by lightly sprinkling salt over the surface of wet watercolor paint. Have the students pick an image based on the following: think of their favorite day based on the weather condition, or paint a weather/landscape scene based on a particular experience.
- Before beginning the painting, have students decide which colors best describe the weather and the mood of the scene. Have them think about how to fill space and balance the picture. Have them think about depth and how images that are larger in the foreground and smaller in the background make the scene look like it is receding in space.

**Part III:**  
*Wrap Up*

**Directions**

- Step One: Divide the students into working groups to evaluate and critique the paintings of other students. Define criticism for the students and how it has been used art historically. Have them first identify why feedback is important.
  - What can be gained from feedback?
  - How does it inform our art?
  
- Step Two: Have the students answer the following questions when critiquing someone's painting.
  - What colors were used?
  - Are the colors high value or low value?
  - What mood does the painting convey?
  - Does the mood match the weather condition or atmosphere?
  - How is space used?
  - Does the painting look balanced or unbalanced? Explain your answer.
  - How is line used?
  - How is texture used?

# “Reading” a Work of Art

## **Description**

What is the name of the artist who created the artwork?

What kind of artwork is it?

What is the name of the artwork?

When was this artwork created?

List the literal objects in the artwork (trees, people, animals, etc.):

Does the artist use the entire space of the canvas or paper?

What are the main colors used in the artwork?

Are there any textures other than paint included in the piece? If so, what are they?

What is the subject of this painting?

What lines draw your eye to the subject of the painting?

Is the painting’s subject real or imaginary?

## **Analysis**

What is the center of interest—that is, the part that stands out as being most important?

Is anything in the piece altered, distorted, exaggerated, or rearranged? If so, what?

What mood does the work set?

### **Interpretation**

What do you think the artist is trying to say in this artwork?

From the object label, are there any clues as to why the artist created the artwork?

Are there things in the artwork that represent other things (symbols)? If so, what?

### **Judgment**

What was your first impression of the piece?

What else did you discover when you looked at it again?

Do you like this artwork?

Would you display this art in your home? Why or why not?

Why is this art good enough to put in a museum?

# Glossary

## **Abstract**

Abstract describes a work of art that focuses on shape, line, or color instead of depicting a narrative story or representing a person, place, or thing.

## **Abstract expressionism**

Abstract expressionism is a term used to describe an art movement beginning in the mid-1940s through the 1950s that has roots in both Europe and the United States. Abstract expressionist artists from this period synthesized sources from earlier modern painters, as well as fiercely attaching themselves to self-expression and the exploration of the human psyche. The movement is also broadly divided into two groups: the action painters and the color field painters.

## **Aesthetics**

Aesthetics is a term used to describe the philosophy, theory, or the perception of beauty found in nature. Finding something pleasing or enjoyable is considered an aesthetic experience.

## **American Regionalism**

Also known as American scene painting, American Regionalism is a style of art that was popular in the United States during the 1930s. Instead of being part of any one art movement, such as abstract expressionism or modernism, regional artists were a group of rural artists, mostly from the Midwest, who depicted scenes of everyday life.

## **Balance**

Balance in artwork means the distribution of the visual weight of elements, and it is described based on whether the artwork is symmetrical or even, asymmetrical or uneven, or nearly symmetrical.

## **Composition**

Composition is the arrangement of various parts to form a unified whole.

## **Cool colors**

Colors are often described as having temperature—as warm (purples, reds, oranges, and yellows), neutral (violets and greens), or cool (blue-greens and blues). Cool colors are often associated with water, sky, spring, and foliage, and suggest cool temperatures. They appear on one side of the color wheel, bordered by the neutral colors, and opposite the warm colors. Psychologically, cool colors are said to be calming and unemphatic. Optically, they generally appear to recede.

## **Elements of art**

Elements of art is the basic vocabulary of an artist. They are the components used when creating a work of art: color, value, line, shape, form, texture, and space. The elements of

art are the literal qualities found in artwork, and when used in varying degrees make up the principles of design.

### **Emphasis**

The emphasis, or center of interest, in an artwork is the area that attracts your eye. Artists use a variety of means in creating a center of interest, such as using colors that stand out from other colors or using lines that direct the eye from one point to the next.

### **Illustrator**

An illustrator is an artist who creates designs and pictures for books, magazines, or other print or electronic media.

### **Landscape**

A landscape is a painting, photograph, or other work of art that depicts scenery such as mountains, valleys, trees, rivers, or forests.

### **Line**

Line is an element of art that is a mark, path, or edge characterized by its length. Lines are described as long, short, horizontal, vertical, diagonal, zigzag, curving, dotted, jagged, crisp, or fuzzy.

### **Mural**

A mural is a large design or picture, mostly created on a wall of a public building.

### **Portrait**

A portrait is a work of art that represents a specific person, a group of people, or an animal. Portraits usually show what a person looks like as well as revealing something about the subject's personality. Portraits can be made of any sculptural material or in any two-dimensional medium. Portraiture is a field of portrait-making and portraits in general.

### **Principles of design**

The principles of design is the way an artist manipulates the elements of art to create a work of art: unity, repetition, contrast, balance, movement, emphasis.

### **Self-portrait**

This is a portrait an artist makes using himself or herself as the subject, typically drawn or painted from a reflection in a mirror.

### **Shape**

In two-dimensional work, shape is an area enclosed by lines or delineated by a change in color, value, texture, etc. As an element of art, shape is described as geometric or natural/organic.

**Space**

In art, space is a physical or visual relationship between objects and their surroundings. Space is often described as being open, enclosed, tight, shallow, or deep.

**Symbol**

A symbol is something such as a letter, character, icon, or object that is used to represent something else.

**Tone**

Tone is a quality of a color arising from its saturation (purity and impurity), intensity (brilliance and dimness), luminosity (brightness and dullness), and temperature (warm and cool); or to create such a quality in a color. To tone down is to make a color moderate or less vivid, harsh, or violent. To tone up is to make one become brighter or more vigorous.

**Unity**

Unity is a principle of design that describes how a piece works together as a whole by the use of elements of art. This can include any number of the following elements: line, shape, form, color, value, texture, or space.

**Value**

The value of a color ranges from light to dark depending on the amount of white or black that is added or subtracted. A lighter color is described as having a high value, and a darker color is described as having low value. High-value colors are described as cheerful, and low value colors are described as somber.

**Warm colors**

Colors are often described as having temperature—as warm (purples, reds, oranges, and yellows), neutral (violets and greens), or cool (blue-greens and blues). Warm colors are often associated with fire and sun. They appear on one side of the color wheel, bordered by the neutral colors, and opposite the cool colors. Psychologically, warm colors are said to be stimulating and passionate. Optically, warm colors generally appear to advance, coming toward the viewer.



## Gallery Guide

There a family gallery guide and activity for *Light from the Sky: A Tom Lea Retrospective, 1907–2001* designed for families or adults with children who visit the exhibition. The gallery guide is inquiry based, designed to help visitors focus on the paintings in the exhibition. It is not designed as a substitute for a docent-led tour or other educational activities.