



Small Man in a Vast and Wondrous World

High School Curriculum

Developed by the Tom Lea Institute

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Section 1 – Introduction

Throughout Tom Lea's storied career, the artist kept his love of the large expansive landscape a key inspiration to his practice. However, landscapes across the globe have captivated and inspired artists for centuries. This lesson specifically discusses the landscapes created during the Chinese Song Dynasty between 960 – 1279 and its influence on Tom Lea's art and life.

Song Dynasty

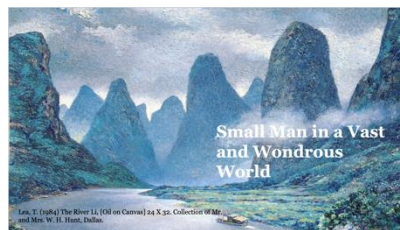
The Song Dynasty in China produced one of the most advanced cultural eras in late Chinese Imperial History. These advancements resulted from the turmoil seen in the collapse of the preceding Tang Dynasty, where the perceived "failure of the human order" compelled artists and poets to retreat into the natural world. The pioneers of this movement valued the "moral order" that existed in nature, a feature that was lacking in human society. The mountains represented a natural hierarchy where the central mountains naturally towered the trees and men. In the early years of the Song Dynasty court, painters from across China developed what art historians now identify as the Song Dynasty School which is characterized by calligraphic brush strokes that depict the landscape descriptively and communicate a stark and linear order.

However, in the late Song Dynasty (c. 1150) society shifted from a hereditary aristocratic government to a central bureaucracy of chosen scholars. It was during this time that those who retired from government service began pursuing artistic careers and began challenging the rigidity of prior calligraphic expressions. This eventually resulted in a new artistic idea that challenges the idea that art must serve the state. Instead, many took up painting as a means of creative expression.

Tom Lea and China

Tom Lea completed four tours as an artist correspondent in World War II for Life Magazine. During Lea's third tour, the artist visited China for a total of 27 days, from October 26 to November 21, 1943. During that time, Lea was an extremely busy man. One of his many endeavors was practicing traditional Chinese calligraphy, despite him being left-handed. Calligraphy was not taught to left-handed people because it was believed that when writing, their hand would smudge the applied ink. Tom Lea successfully practiced calligraphy during his time in China and was even gifted a Chinese seal and inkstick while in Chungking. Lea prized these gifts throughout his entire career and used them in his later works, just as he did the principles of Chinese landscapes. Seven vignettes of Tom Lea's China were published in Life Magazine.

Section 2 – Lesson Plan

Grade Level: 9 – 12	
Unit: Art	
ART TEKS: 117.52(3) Historical/Cultural Heritage: The student understands art history and culture as records of human achievement. 117.53(1) Perception: The student develops and organizes ideas from the environment. 117.53(2) Creative Expression/Performance: The student expresses ideas through original artwork, using various media with appropriate skill. 117.52(4)(B) Response/Evaluation: The student makes informed judgments about personal artworks and the artworks of others.	
Objectives: Students are introduced to significant artistic periods that contributed to Tom Lea's landscape practice. Students identify these influences on specific works of Tom Lea. Students create an original work of art that represents their interpretation of the concepts represented in "Small Man in a Vast and Wondrous World."	
Duration: 50 minutes or one class period	
Overview of lesson: SLIDE 1: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Go over lesson agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify how each artistic period used the Elements of Art and Principles of Design in specific ways to communicate with the viewer. (e.g., calligraphic use of line, limited color pallet, etc.) Introduce four pieces by Tom Lea that echo the previous art historical developments and illustrate his use of both the techniques he learned as an artist correspondent and studying Chinese art at the Chicago Institute of Art. 	SLIDE 1:  <p>Tom, T. (1964) The River 1-1, 1964 (on Canvas) 24 X 36. Collection W.H. Hunt and Mrs. W. H. Hunt, Dallas, Texas</p>

Lesson:**Introduction:****SLIDE 2 – 4:**

1. Introduce the artistic concepts that developed during the Chinese Song Dynasty (e.g., calligraphic brush strokes, linear order, and contrasted depiction of the landscape.) (See Song Dynasty on pg. 2)
2. Identify the limited color pallet of the Song Dynasty.
3. Explain how the use of line and value in the Song Dynasty communicate the monumentality of the landscape and the political messages of the time (e.g., small humans in the towering mountains to emphasize their low station in the natural order during a time of aristocracy and developments that resulted in art being created for pleasure rather than for the state during the new bureaucracy.) (See Song Dynasty on pg. 2)

SLIDE 5:

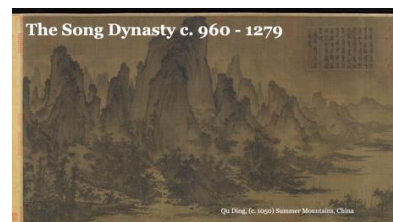
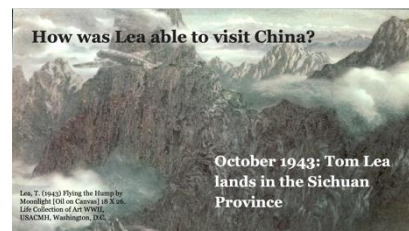
1. Explain Tom Lea's position as a War Correspondent in World War II for Life Magazine. (See Tom Lea in China on pg.2)

SLIDE 6:

2. Identify where the Sichuan Province is on the map of Tom Lea's travels during his four tours as War Correspondent.

SLIDE 7:

3. Explain the significance of Tom Lea practicing calligraphy in China, despite him being left-handed. (See Tom Lea in China on pg. 2)

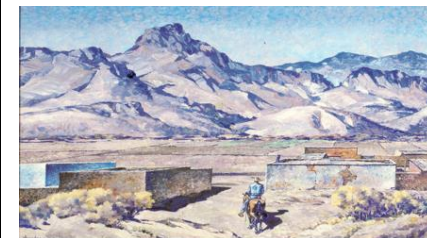
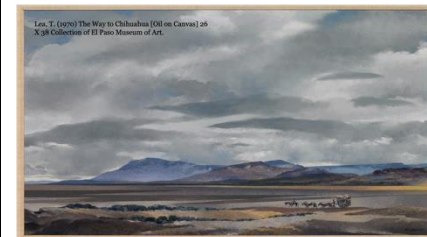
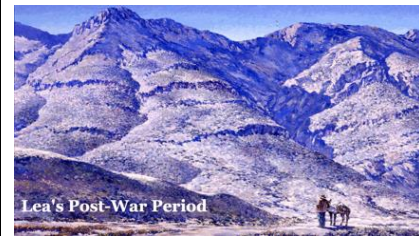
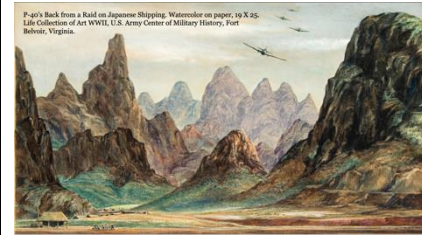
SLIDE 2- 4:**SLIDE 5:****SLIDE 6:****SLIDE 7:**

SLIDE 8 - 11**Questions for each image:**

1. Show four distinctive Tom Lea Landscapes.
2. What elements of art are found in this image?
3. What principles of design are found in this image?
4. Ask to identify which Principles of Design Tom Lea employed to communicate his interpretation of the Southwest landscape in his Post-war period.
5. Encourage students to express their own creative interpretations of the discussed principles by identifying artistic strategies used by Tom Lea.

SLIDE 12:**Closure:**

1. Review the key concepts of the lesson.
2. Emphasize each technique used to aesthetically interpret the natural landscape between the two images.

SLIDE 8 – 11:**SLIDE 12:**

Guided practice:

1. Introduce the theme of their compositions, which is a Southwest landscape.
2. Encourage students to think about the landscape of our region to create a unique interpretation of the theme: "Small Man in a Vast and Wonderous World."
3. Students brainstorm ideas for their own compositions.
4. Allow several students to share their preliminary ideas.
5. Assign due dates for final compositions and go over project timeline.
6. Specify if students are required to use a particular medium.

**Independent practice:**

1. Students will work independently to create an original work of art that communicates their interpretation of the "Small Man in a Vast and Wonderous World" Southwest concept.
2. Students are required to submit a printed label with these items attached to the back of their piece: Name, Highschool, Year, Title, and Why they were inspired? (1-2 sentences)

Specifications:

- Event theme: "Small Man in a Vast and Wondrous World" Southwest Landscapes.
- Open to students grades 9-12.
- One art piece per student
- ENTRIES ARE FIRST COME FIRST SERVE. EXHIBITION IS LIMITED TO 80 ENTRIES.
- Any medium (if teacher does not specify)
- Framed or hangable objects
- Black matted

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Label consisting of: Name, Highschool, Year, Title, and Why they were inspired? (1-2 sentences) • 18in x18in maximum size <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pedestals for sculptures are approximately 25 inches. • Cash prizes: 1st place - \$300, 2nd place - \$200, 3rd place - \$100 • No charge to enter the event, a collaboration with the El Paso International Museum of Art. • Please read and sign the submission form. See Submission form for ‘Small Man in a Vast and Wondrous World’ Student Exhibition and reception 2023 	
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CALENDAR

March 22 – March 25, 2023, Deliver Artwork at El Paso International Museum of Art.
Hours of operation: Open Wed-Fri 10:00 am- 5:00 pm and Sat-Sun 1:00 pm-5:00 pm

March 29, 2023, Preliminary Selection Process.

March 30 – March 31, 2023, Installation

April 1, 2023, 1:00 pm- 4:00 pm, Juried by Manuel Guerra, Dr. Melissa Warak, and Tom Birkner.

April 1, 2023. 5:30 pm- 7:30 pm, Reception.

April 23, 2023, Last Day.

Winners will exhibit their artwork the following month (May) in the Turney Youth Gallery.

Section 4 – Supplementary Materials

TOM LEA CELEBRATION 2022-23



“But something I know—when I am on the other side of the earth, the days I have spent in China will rise up in memory always.”
— TOM LEA



SCAN ME! For Curricula, Submission Form and additional information.

1 SATURDAY | 5:30 PM SMALL MAN IN A VAST AND WONDROUS WORLD STUDENT EXHIBIT & RECEPTION

As part of our Tom Lea Celebration, we are partnering with the International Museum of Art in April 2023 to hold a juried exhibit of student art. First, art teachers all over El Paso will give a lesson about Tom Lea's landscapes on the theme "Small Man in a Vast and Wondrous World." Then, students will create artwork based on the theme. Please join us for the opening reception on April 1 at 5:30 p.m. where the cash-prize winners will be announced. Winning students will have their work displayed in the International Museum of Art's Youth Gallery. The exhibit runs April 1-23, 2023.

EL PASO INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART 1211 Montana Ave., El Paso, TX 79902

**THEME: LANDSCAPES,
"SMALL MAN IN A VAST
AND WONDEROUS
WORLD."**

**OPEN TO ANY ART
MEDIUM**

**CASH PRIZES!
1ST PLACE-\$300,
2ND-\$200, 3RD-\$100
HONORABLE
MENTION-CERTIFICATE**

Calendar

Lesson Plan available!

March 22 – March 25, 2023. Art Drop off at El Paso International Museum of Art.

Hours of operation: M-Tuesday Closed, W-F 10:00 am- 5:00 pm and Sat-Sun 1:00 pm-5:00 pm

March 29, 2023. Preliminary Selection Process.

March 30 – March 31, 2023. Artwork will be set up during this time.

April 1, 2023. 1:00pm- 4:00 pm. Jurie by Manuel Guerra, Melissa Warak, Tom Birkner.

April 1, 2023. 5:30pm- 7:30pm. Reception.

April 23rd, 2023. Last Day.

Winners get to exhibit their artwork the following month (May) in the Youth Gallery.

[Song Dynasty Supplemental Information](#)

[Dynastic Context of Song School](#)

[Link to Tom Lea's Oral History Transcript](#)

[Link to the Tom Lea Website](#)

Reference Materials

Department of Asian Art. "Landscape Painting in Chinese Art." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–.

http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/clpg/hd_clpg.htm (October 2004)

Department of Asian Art. "Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127)." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–.

http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/nsong/hd_nsong.htm (October 2001)