A Study of Representative Examples of Art Works Fostered by the Mormon Church With an Analysis of the Aesthetic Value of these Works

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A STUDY OF REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLES OF ART WORKS POSTERED
BY THE MORMON CHURCH WITH AN ANALYSIS OF THE
AESTHETIC VALUE OF THESE WORKS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ............................................. 1

Chapter

I. THE PROBLEM ............................................. 4

Statement of the Problem
Research Methodology
Review of related Mormon literature
Survey for representative examples of
Mormon art
Review of related art literature
Basic Assumptions
Hypothesis of the Study
Significance of the Study
Delimitation of the Problem
Treatment of Data
Preliminary survey
Analytical analysis

II. PURPOSES AND THEMES OF MORMON-FOSTERED ART .... 11

Preliminary Survey
History Glorification
Depiction of Moral Models
Exemplification of the pioneers
Individual moral model
Scriptural Teaching
Aesthetic Purpose
Summary

III. STYLES AND MANNERS OF MORMON-FOSTERED ART .... 27

Definition of Terms
Style Comparisons
Assignment to Styles
General Stylistic Trend in Mormon-
foStered Art
Realism
Art works emphasizing fidelity to
nature and real life
Unimaginative approach in realism
Illusionism
Art works emphasizing illusion
Careful attention devoted to perspective

Idealism
Art works stressing the finer human characteristics
Art works showing highest type of any natural object

Popular Romanticism
Art works stressing family and motherhood
Art works emphasizing courage and hero worship

Stylization
Other Styles

Summary

IV. DATA DEVELOPED FROM THE ART LITERATURE FOR A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH THE REPRESENTATIVE ART WORKS

Plan of Procedure
Didactic and Commemorative Elements in Art
  Negative aspects of didacticism
  Adherence to fundamental art purposes
  Subject matter limitations
  Objectivity limitations
  Limitations of commemorative works
Realistic Elements in Art
  Negative aspects of realism
  Imitative limitations

Illusionism in Art
  Negative aspects of illusionism
  Faults of illusionistic painting

Idealistic Elements in Art
  Limitations of idealism

Popular Romantic Elements in Art
  Limitations of sentimentality

Aesthetic Elements in Art
  Primary purpose of an art work
  Form as a basic aesthetic quality
  Creativity as a basic aesthetic quality

Summary

V. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Comparative Analysis
  Didactic and commemorative art
  Realistic, illusionistic, and imitative art
Idealistic, romantic, and sentimental art
Aesthetic, creative art
Conclusions
Recommendations

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................. 67
APPENDIX .................................. 72
INTRODUCTION

Mormon art was slow in its development, as there was little opportunity for artistic creativity during the early years of the Church. The persecutions, migrations, and other problems which confronted the Mormons did not leave time for much emphasis on the cultural aspects of life. The city of Nauvoo, however, was a fine example of what the Mormons could do artistically, and attested to the fact that the Mormons, generally, sprang from cultural backgrounds.¹

That the Mormons valued artistic things is pointed out by Dr. de Jong when he says:

... when the journey to the West was begun, a special point was made of encouraging craftsmen, artists, and musicians to come along. With space in their wagons at a premium ... the Saints nevertheless included in their cargo choice personal objects, many of artistic value. They loved these things, they had always loved them, and been accustomed to having them in their homes. Living without them, even in the western wilderness, was to them unthinkable. They brought choice musical instruments, including parlor organs, some of which can still be seen in museums and private homes, beautiful dishes of rare design, pottery and even China imported from England, paintings and pieces of sculpture, as well as other kinds of objects of artistic worth.²

It is known that Brigham Young wished the Mormon

²Ibid., p. 206.
people to be exposed to the beauties of art, and perhaps to keep pace with the non-Mormons. The reputation of the old Salt Lake Theater in the dramatic arts is well cited in the literature. President Young's interest in the visual arts is evidenced from his encouragement to the missionaries to convert the artists and artisans so that they might come to Utah and help decorate the church edifices which were to be built.

That the Church, especially through its leaders, recognizes the fact that much benefit can come to the people of the Church through art is attested by the fact that in 1890 four artists were sent by the Church to study art in Paris. The Church paid for their training mainly to insure having artistic mural decorations in the temples.¹

The Improvement Era explains the development of the arts in the Church as follows:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has always promoted music, drama, dancing and speech. Often-times the music, drama and dancing have been products of non-members of the church. There has undoubtedly been good reason for this, since during the past hundred years, our church has been too busy making history to do much creative work. Speech, however, has long been an achievement of everyone in our church.²

It is important to note that in the above quotation no mention is made of visual arts being promoted by the Church. The writer in his examination of the literature found no indication that the Church has stressed visual arts

¹Ibid., pp. 207-208.

²"Centennial Awards in Cultural Arts," The Improvement Era, II, 676.
to the degree that it has the other fine arts. For example, the current Mutual Improvement Association Manual of the Church lists drama, speech, music, and dancing in its program, but no visual or graphic art.

A letter to the supervising architect of the Church, requesting information on the use and installation of art works such as bas-relief sculpture, mosaics, murals, framed paintings, and so forth, in chapels of the Church, was answered as follows: "It is the current Church policy not to allow such works of art in the Church chapels."\(^1\)

In view of the above, recent implications, there is an apparent lack of emphasis being placed on visual arts in the Church at the present time.

\(^1\)See Appendix.
CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to examine certain characteristics of representative examples of visual art fostered by the Mormon Church and to arrive at an estimate of the aesthetic values of these works by means of a comparative analysis with aesthetic values stressed in the art literature.

Statement of the Problem

Representative examples of Mormon art were examined to determine their primary purposes and themes. Each work considered was classified according to the following primary categories developed in a preliminary survey:

1. History Glorification
2. Depiction of Moral Models
3. Scriptural Teaching
4. Aesthetic Purpose

The representative examples were analyzed for their stylistic qualities to determine the types represented, and were classified according to the following primary categories:

1. Realism
2. Illusionism
3. Idealism
4. Popular Romanticism

5. Stylization

An estimate was made of the aesthetic value of these works by measuring the above findings against such points of judgment as were cited by the critics studied in the literature.

Research Methodology

Review of related Mormon literature.--A review of the indexes of the major Church periodicals from the earliest until the most recent was made for articles concerning art in the Church. This review of the literature also included books pertinent to the problem of Mormon Church art.

Little has been written on "art in the Mormon Church." There have been some writings concerning Mormon art from the standpoint of individual Mormon artists, and descriptions of their work, but very little about the visual art used and fostered by the Church.

Devotees and Their Shrines,¹ by Alice Merrill Horne, which is the only book to date on Utah artists, was reviewed and was found to contain much material that was irrelevant, both to this study and to the subject of Utah artists. Few of the facts found therein were applicable to this study.

¹Alice Merrill Horne, Devotees and Their Shrines (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1914).
A chapter in the book, *Utah, the Land of Blossoming Valleys,* by George Wharton James, was entitled "The Artists and Sculptors of Utah." In this chapter the painters and sculptors mentioned were: Harry L. Culmer, Ottinger, Wegge-land, Tullidge, J. B. Fairbanks, Cyrus E. Dallin, William Ward, and Mahonri Young. The information given was primarily biographical and hence did not contribute to the study of representative examples of Mormon art under consideration.

The 1957 Latter-day Saint Sunday School Manual, *Living the Gospel,* by Gerrit de Jong, Jr., gave a brief resume of some aspects of art in the Mormon Church and proved helpful in giving some background to the problem.

The books *A Look at Mormonism,* by Benjamin Alward, and *The Mormon Story,* by Rulon S. Howells, provided many pictorial examples of art fostered by the Church and gave helpful descriptions of some of them.

*House of the Lord,* by James E. Talmage, gave pertinent information and examples of the interior of the Salt Lake City Deseret Bookcraft, 1957.

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2 de Jong, *op. cit.*


Temple.

The Improvement Era and Church News provided photographs of art of the Church which were helpful in the selection of representative examples, and gave some information about the art works.

Survey for representative examples of Mormon art.--
The survey of official publications of the Mormon Church provided representative examples of Mormon art frequently cited in the literature and exhibited at major Church edifices and landmarks. The following examples were selected for study:

1. The Handcart Pioneer Monument
2. The Winter Quarters Monument
3. This Is the Place Monument
4. The Seagull Monument
5. The Mormon Battalion Monument
6. The Cody Mural
7. Thanksgiving Mural
8. Aaronic Priesthood Monument
9. New Life and Frontier Monument
10. Stained glass windows, Salt Lake Temple
11. Baptism of Jesus Murals, Los Angeles and Swiss Temple
13. Murals, Salt Lake Temple, Los Angeles Temple
14. Brigham Young Monument
15. Joseph Smith Monument
16. Hyrum Smith Monument
17. Mural, Eleventh Ward Chapel, Salt Lake City
18. Stained glass window, Seventeenth Ward Chapel, Salt Lake City
19. Book of Mormon paintings

Review of related art literature.--A review was made of the literature of prominent art authorities, including curators of recognized galleries, authors of texts used in leading universities, and individuals eminent in the field of art. The relative aesthetic judgments of these authors were compared with dominant characteristics found in Mormon-fostered art.

Basic Assumptions

The number of representative art works used in this study is sufficiently representative of the art works fostered by the Church and sufficiently numerous to allow for a reasonably valid study.

The judgments of the selected literature are a consensus of the main aestheticians of the present time and form adequate criteria for the evaluation of art works.

Hypothesis of the Study

A study of the arts fostered by the Mormon Church will indicate an implied philosophy toward art works which is in opposition to aesthetic values stressed in the literature.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for the following reasons:

1. It explored an area of research which was
relatively unexplored and upon which little had been written. A specific Mormon philosophy toward art has not, in the writer's knowledge after extensive research, been expressed either orally or in the writings of churchmen.

2. It will indicate the characteristics of visual art fostered by the Mormon Church.

3. It will give some indication of the aesthetic merits of these works with concomitant recommendations.

Delimitation of the Problem

The attention of this study was given to representative examples of art fostered by the Mormon Church. These representative examples were selected on the basis of their frequency of appearance or mention in the Church publications and their exhibition at major Church edifices and landmarks. Attention was not given to the creative works of individual Mormon artists.

Treatment of Data

Preliminary survey.—A preliminary survey arose from the aesthetic evaluation of Mormon literature presented in a thesis by Ross S. Esplin. Using the framework of this study, an examination was made of the selected art works. This comparison gave strong implications that the art of the Church fostered comparable aesthetic values. The framework of the examination of the art works was formed from this analysis.
Analytical analysis.—An analytical analysis was made comparing representative examples of Mormon art with the literature. The basis of comparison was structured on selected categories found in the preliminary survey.
CHAPTER II

PURPOSES AND THEMES OF MORMON-FOSTERED ART

Overview of the Chapter

A survey of the literature and an examination of representative art works were made to delineate dominant purposes and themes of Mormon-fostered art and to classify the findings into logical categories.

Preliminary Survey

A preliminary survey revealed an emphasis on didactic and commemorative themes, a concern for literal and intellectual meanings, and the intentions to convey moral lessons. A thesis by Esplin written in 1949 indicated that the work of Mormon authors also followed the didactic and commemorative trend:

Such prominent writers as Nephi Anderson express the belief that the purpose of fiction should be to teach. Nephi Anderson's opinion is a reflection of the attitude of a good many Mormons toward fiction.¹

The Latter-day Saints understand that this world is not altogether a playground, and that the main object of life is not to be amused. He who reaches the people, and

the story writer does that, should not lose the opportunity of "preaching." . . . A good story is artistic preaching. A novel which gives us high ideals and gives us representation of men and women as they should and can be, exerts an influence for good that is not easily computed.¹

Representative of the comments made in official publications of the Church toward the didactic qualities of art was one noted in The Improvement Era:

This November Era features the Cody Church History Mural, and the accompanying article, "The Saga of Mormonism." The issue tells the story of the Church in words and pictures. (The full-color cover illustration of Joseph Smith receiving the Book of Mormon plates is from the Cody Mural.) We feel that it is a fine missionary aid to be sent to friends and also to be brought to the various classes of the auxiliaries of the Church.²

A grouping into natural categories of the findings of the preliminary survey suggested the following rubrics: (1) History Glorification, (2) Depiction of Moral Models, (3) Scriptural Teaching, and (4) Aesthetic Purpose. These categories became the structure for the survey of the literature and the examination of the representative art works.

History Glorification

The recent publicity in The Improvement Era on the "Cody Mural"³ was indicative of the strong historical purpose for which art has been used in the Mormon Church. A basic

¹Nephi Anderson, "Purpose in Fiction," The Improvement Era, February, 1898, p. 120.

²"A Great New 'Era,'" The Improvement Era, LX (November, 1957), 683.

purpose of the mural was to give a pictorial account of the history of the Church. This purpose was further indicated by Richard L. Evans:

One generation makes history while succeeding generations interpret and glorify it. And while this generation is making its own history it is also perpetuating the achievements of its pioneer founders. Toward this worthy aim the past year has been particularly fruitful, with the erection of heroic monuments, the recovery of old and significant sites, the acquisition of new sites and the marking of old trails.

The historic theme is a dominant one in Mormon art, for Mormonism springs from an unusually historic, religious background. The themes of this art reflect the past more than they do the present. The historical setting of the pioneers and the environment of the Mormon founders are forces that have molded much of their art and have given it something to tell. Toil, tragedy, and strife have left their imprint on Mormon art. The art is a pageantry of covered wagon trains, pioneers pushing handcarts, Indians, seagulls, great leaders, and spiritual personages.

The historic theme is especially noted in the "Cody Mural" described by The Improvement Era as follows:

This great American epoch, the saga of Mormonism, begins when Joseph Smith receives, under the guidance of an angel, gold plates taken from the Hill Cumorah in western New York.

Joseph Smith was 21 years of age when he received the plates, 38 at his death.

In addition to Joseph Smith, eleven men are permitted to see and examine the gold plates from which the translation of the Book of Mormon ... is made. In April 1830

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1Richard L. Evans, "Monuments, Sites and Markers," The Improvement Era, XL (April, 1937), 224.
the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is organized after the pattern of the ancient Church. Missionaries are sent out; the Church grows; and headquarters are moved to Kirtland, Ohio, where a temple . . . is built and dedicated.

Brigham Young, great colonizer, led the Church from 1844 to 1877.

After much persecution, the rapidly growing Church builds the beautiful city of Nauvoo on the Mississippi River in Illinois. Believing Joseph Smith's death will destroy the Church, an angry mob brutally murders the Prophet and his brother Hyrum. Guided by the Lord the Mormon exiles, driven from their homes in midwinter, begin the 1,500 mile exodus to the Rocky Mountains.

John Taylor, wounded by the mob at Carthage, lived to lead the Church from 1877 to 1887.

The Latter-day Saints, demonstrating their loyalty to America respond to a call to recruit 500 volunteers to join the U. S. army and serve in the war against Mexico. With their ranks depleted by a half thousand of their ablest men, the pioneers continue their trek westward over plain, prairie, and mountain, through the lands of the savages, seeking a place of refuge.

Wilford Woodruff, under whose administration the great Salt Lake Temple was completed, led the Church from 1887 to 1898.

On the trail the pioneers meet Jim Bridger who tries to discourage them from settling in the Great Basin, but undaunted they push on through the mountains to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake . . . A city is planned and laid out in the salt grass and the sagebrush; a fort is built as a protection from the Indians; and a site for a temple is selected.

From 1898 to 1901 the Church was guided by Lorenzo Snow.

Flooding the parched land with water--beginning of modern irrigation in North America--makes the ground workable. Crops are planted; houses are built. While the forty-niners rush to California to find gold, the Mormons establish homes, till the soil, and work toward the building of the kingdom of God. When their crops--and their lives--are threatened by hordes of devastating crickets, the Lord sends great flocks of seagulls to deliver them.

Joseph F. Smith, son of the Prophet's brother, Hyrum, was Church President between 1901 and 1918.

Hundreds of converts from Europe walk the entire distance across the plains to the Salt Lake Valley, pulling and pushing handcarts loaded with their earthly possessions. Tragedy befalls two companies which leave too late in the season and are overtaken in the mountains by early snows and freezing weather, and many perish. Little trouble is had with the Indians, most of whom are friendly.
False reports to the U. S. government result in an army being sent to Utah. The troops are successfully repulsed until a treaty is reached.

From 1918 to 1945 the Church was led by Heber J. Grant.

Monuments to the diligence and faithfulness of the Mormon pioneers are the world-famed tabernacle and temple in Salt Lake City. Begun in 1853, the multi-spired temple, made of handcut granite hauled 20 miles by ox team, was forty years in building.

George Albert Smith was President of the Church from 1945 to 1951.1

As one leaves the room, he can see high on the domed ceiling a group of strong, solemn faces representing the pioneers. Appropriately, a caption below the scene reads, "Lest We Forget."2

The "Aaronic Priesthood Monument," recently erected on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, represents the historic event of the restoration of the Aaronic priesthood. It conveys the resurrected John the Baptist in the act of conferring the priesthood on the heads of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.

Three monuments of the Angel Moroni are located in three widespread parts of the United States. One is a monument on the Hill Cumorah, Palmyra, New York, the exact spot where the plates, containing the record which is now the Book of Mormon, were buried. This is the place where the Angel Moroni delivered the plates to Joseph Smith. The second statue of the Angel Moroni is placed atop the east central


spire of the Mormon Temple in Salt Lake City, Utah; and the third sculpture of Moroni is on the steeple of the Los Angeles Temple. These sculptural works are intended to portray the historic initiation of the Mormon Church.

This historic theme is again depicted in the stained glass window in the Sealing Room for the Dead in the Salt Lake Temple.

In the wall of this recess is a bay art window of stained glass, representing with effective and impressive detail the resurrected prophet Moroni delivering the plates to the youthful seer, Joseph Smith. It is a fitting symbol of the actuality of communication between dead and living.1

The "Mormon Battalion Monument" gives tribute to the men of this battalion by depicting their historic trek across southwestern United States. A visitor to the Utah State Capitol at Salt Lake City may see the monument on the south-east corner of the grounds.

If he takes the time to examine this remarkable work of art he will see, carved in enduring stone and bronze, one of the most thrilling stories of western history.

The bronze figure of a soldier confronts the beholder. Flanking him on the left is a scene of pioneers enlisting as soldiers under the flag of the United States; on the right, these soldiers are on the march, some assisting in pulling wagons up and over a precipitous ascent, while still others are ahead, widening a cut to permit the passage of the wagons between the jutting rocks. In the background are rugged mountains. And on the third side of the triangular monument may be seen the end of a great story and the dim receding figure of a vanishing race, the American Indian.

Over the bronze man and the thrilling scene on either side of him, symbolizing the brooding spirit of the mighty

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west, is chiseled a beautiful head and upper body of a woman. She personifies the impulsive power and enduring courage that sustained these men and led them, as a vanguard of civilization, across trackless plains and over rocky defiles.¹

The "Winter Quarters Monument" reminds the viewer of the hardships the Mormons went through at Winter Quarters, Nebraska. The historic theme is again evidenced in this monument.

In February, 1846, the Latter-day Saints were driven from their homes in Nauvoo, Illinois. They crossed Iowa and established temporary "winter quarters" on the west bank of the Missouri River where the city of Omaha now stands. In the terrible winter of 1846-47 more than six hundred of them died of hunger and exposure. The tragedy is depicted in this outstanding monument located at Winter Quarters cemetery. . . .²

The "Seagull Monument" commemorates another historic event of great importance to the Mormon people:

It consists of two bronze birds in flight mounted atop a granite shaft, at the base of which are bronze plaques depicting the history behind this unique monument.

During the winter and early spring following the arrival of the "Mormons" in the Salt Lake Valley, the vanguard group planted five thousand acres of grain to insure food not only for themselves but also for the large companies of colonists who were expected to come that summer. With irrigation the grain flourished, and prospects looked bright for an excellent crop. Then one day in the spring of 1848 news was brought from the outlying fields that great hordes of crickets were devouring the grain. Frantically the people fought to stem the tide. They tried burning the insects. They tried drowning them. They

¹William E. Berrett, The Restored Church (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1944), p. 318. From a description of this monument contained in a written report of Samuel C. Park, former Mayor of Salt Lake City, to the Monument Commission after viewing the model done by sculptor G. P. Riswold.

²Alward, op. cit., p. 146.
used every resource at their command, but still the crickets came, leaving behind a desert where only shortly before had been a people's hope for bread. It was a desperate situation. These colonists were in an isolated outpost, with no means of communication other than slow ox teams.

With their own strength exhausted, there was but one power to whom they could turn. They lifted their voices in prayer. Then they heard the cries of sea gulls flying in from the west. At first they thought it another foe to complete the destruction already begun. But the gulls settled on the fields and commenced devouring the crickets, disgorging only to continue eating and not stopping until the grain was cleaned of them. Through the intervention of the gulls, a substantial portion of the crop was saved and the pioneers were enabled to survive the following rigorous winter.\(^1\)

The bronze plaques at the base of the shaft depict the following events:

The Plowing—representing men and women putting forth great effort to get the ground broken for the planting, the women, nearby the field, preparing food for the working men.

The Deliverance—showing the worn and weary pioneer family giving thanks to God for sending the gulls to devour the crickets.

The Harvesting—representing the harvesting of the crops with the crude tools and implements which the pioneers had, both men and women working in the field, and a woman with a nursing baby and another young child.

Another example of the historic theme is the visit of the Heavenly personage to Joseph Smith, Jr. L. A. Ramsey painted his interpretation of the visitations by the Angel Moroni to the Mormon Prophet. The angel, glowing in light,

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 19.
is shown speaking to the boy prophet in a grove of trees.\textsuperscript{1} Other similar scenes appear in chapels throughout the Church. The first scene of the "Cody Mural" depicts a similar picture.

The historic theme is again portrayed in the "Holy of Holies," a room of the Salt Lake Temple.

On the south side of this room, opposite the entrance doorway, and corresponding in size therewith, is a window of colored glass depicting the appearance of the Eternal Father and His Son Jesus Christ to the boy Joseph Smith. The event here delineated marked the ushering in of the dispensation of the fullness of times. The scene is laid in a grove; the celestial Personages are clothed in white, and appear in the attitude of instructing the boy prophet, who kneels with uplifted face and outstretched arms. Beneath is inscribed the scripture, through which Joseph was led to seek divine instructions.\textsuperscript{2}

A stained glass window in the Seventeenth Ward Chapel in Salt Lake City shows a visitation of divine personages to Joseph Smith in the grove. In this art work the two Personages, God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, appear to Joseph Smith.\textsuperscript{3}

\textbf{Depiction of Moral Models}

The purpose and theme of many examples of Mormon art are to depict moral models. The emphasis on such qualities as right and virtuous principles is represented in the

\textsuperscript{1}L. A. Ramsey's painting, Eleventh Ward Chapel, Salt Lake City; shown in Rulon S. Howells, The Mormon Story (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1957), p. 16.

\textsuperscript{2}Talmage, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 295.

\textsuperscript{3}Stained glass window, Seventeenth Ward Chapel, Salt Lake City; shown in Howells, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 13.
following examples:

Exemplification of the pioneers.--In addition to their historical purpose some works of art are intended to inspire the viewer by reminding him of the kind of lives the Mormon forefathers endured. These art works eulogize the pioneers and encourage the viewer to be as enterprising, courageous, and persevering as they were.

The "Winter Quarters Monument" expresses this in its inscription, which reads:

To honor and to keep alive the memory of these courageous souls who suffered and died in the cause of religious devotion this monument has been erected.

That the struggles, the sacrifices and the sufferings of the faithful pioneers and the cause they represented shall never be forgotten, this monument is gratefully erected and dedicated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. First Presidency, Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark Jr., David O. McKay.¹

The "Handcart Pioneer Monument" eulogizes the pioneers who crossed the plains with handcarts and sets them up as moral models of faith, courage and perseverance:

Reminding one of the trials and hardships faced by the pioneer handcart companies, this life-sized bronze replica . . . is located inside the north gate of the Salt Lake Tabernacle grounds.²

The exemplification of the pioneer family is a purpose and theme of both the "New Life and Frontier Monument"³

¹From the inscription on the monument.

²Alward, op. cit., p. 17.

and the "Thanksgiving Mural." These works portray the family as a moral model.

"This Is the Place Monument" exemplifies the Mormon pioneers, as well as other people who were instrumental in the development of Utah in the early years of its history. The purposes and themes of this monument are well stated in the dedicatory speech of President J. Reuben Clark, Jr.:

We are here to pay tribute to the founders of this inland empire in which we live and enjoy plenty.

We are to dedicate a shaft and base, hewn from the eternal granite hills of this mountain refuge of our fathers—a shaft to stand for all time solemnly to witness and to testify of the honor, the respect, and the love we hold for those founders, for their great achievements, and for their sterling virtues that were more unyielding than the granite from which this shaft is wrought.2

The "Mormon Battalion Monument" represents a moral model in that it "typifies that band of pioneer soldiers which broke a way through the rugged mountains and over trackless wastes."3

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1"Thanksgiving Mural," Emerson Ward, Salt Lake City. A copy of the mural appears on the front cover of The Improvement Era, LX (October, 1957).

2J. Reuben Clark, Jr., "This is the Place Monument' Dedication," The Improvement Era, L (September, 1947), 572.

3Berrett, op. cit., p. 318. From a description of this monument contained in a written report of Samuel C. Park, former Mayor of Salt Lake City, to the Monument Commission after viewing the model done by sculptor G. P. Riswold.
The individual moral model.—Several examples of art in the Mormon Church have as their purpose and theme the depiction of the individual as a moral model. Such examples are the monuments to Joseph Smith and Hyrum Smith.

Displayed on Temple Square in Salt Lake City is the "Joseph Smith Monument," to "The Prophet of the New Dispensation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord," who "suffered martyrdom for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus."

The "Hyrum Smith Monument," erected to the memory of the first Patriarch of the Church, and brother of Joseph, also represents the depiction of a model of moral character and strength. The eulogy on this monument reads as follows:

"I could pray in my heart that all men were like my brother Hyrum who possesses the meekness of a lamb and the integrity of Job; and in short, the meekness and humility of Christ. I love him with that love that is stronger than death." Joseph Smith

"If ever there was an exemplary, honest and virtuous man, an embodiment of all that is noble in the human form, Hyrum Smith was the representative." President John Taylor

As he shared in the labors so does he share in the honor and glory of the new dispensation with the prophet brother.

In life they were not divided; in death they were not separated. In glory they are one.

Scriptural Teaching

Many of the art works of the Mormon Church are visual aids to scriptural stories. The purpose of these works of art is to clarify and intensify the understanding of the scriptures which they depict.

Both the Salt Lake and the Los Angeles Temples have
rooms and murals which are corresponding in purpose and theme. The following discussion of the rooms and murals applies to both temples.

The "Creation Room Murals"\(^1\) have the purpose and theme of depicting the scriptural passages of Genesis 1:1-4 in the King James translation of the Holy Bible, and also the scripture in Moses 2:2-7 in the Pearl of Great Price.

The "Creation Room Murals" refer to the gathering of the elements to form the world. In the Los Angeles mural there is an emphasis on the sun, the moon, the clouds and atmosphere, all in turbulent action. In the Salt Lake mural there is stress on the water, rocks, and atmospheric conditions.

The "Garden Room Murals"\(^2\) have the purpose of illustrating the scripture of Genesis 2:8-25 and Genesis 3:1-24 in the Holy Bible and Moses 3:8-25 in the Pearl of Great Price.

In the Garden Room of the Salt Lake Temple the:

. . . ceiling and walls depict . . . the distant glory of sky and cloud, and nearer the beauties of earthly life. Landscape scenes cover the walls from floor to ceiling. There are gardens and glens, hills, valleys and brooks, fruits and flowers, birds and other living things, all appearing amidst a setting of beauty, plenty, and peace. Lions and lambs are reposing in companionship, while insect and bird fly together.

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\(^2\)Ibid., p. 824; also Talmage, *op. cit.*, p. 267.
The room represents the earth as it was before sin entered and brought with it the curse; it is the Garden of Eden depicted in miniature.¹


In the Los Angeles Temple, this room’s murals show Adam and Eve leaving the Garden of Eden and entering the lone and dreary world. The sharp angular rock formations, formidable desert lands, lack of water, few shade trees, sharp and prickly plants are intended to give a mood of wanton despair. Natural things are the theme of these murals. A cloudy sky, weathered hills and vales, rock monoliths, sharp and jagged, sagebrush, and desert plants all give an impression of being in Monument Valley.

Talmage describes the World Room of the Salt Lake Temple:

Here the rocks are rent and driven; the earth story is that of mountain uplift and seismic disruption. Beasts are contending in deadly strife, or engaged in murderous attack, or already rending their prey. The more timorous creatures are fleeing from their ravenous foes or cowering in half concealed retreats. There are lions in combat, a tiger gloating over a fallen deer, wolves and foxes in hungry search. Birds of prey are slaying or being slain. . . The trees are gnarled, misshapen and blasted; shrubs maintain a precarious root-hold in rocky cliffs; thorns, thistles, cacti, and noxious weeds abound; and in one quarter a destructive storm is raging.

¹Talmage, op. cit., p. 267.
An art window on the south side of the upper corridor of the Salt Lake Temple also depicts Genesis 3:23-24:

On the south side of the passage is a splendid art window of elliptical shape depicting the expulsion of the first parents of the race from Eden after the Fall. It ... impresses the beholder as a symbol of the great change brought about by the fall of man.¹

In the "Baptism of Jesus Murals,"² located in both the Los Angeles and the Swiss Temples, is described well the scripture Matthew 3:13-17:

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.
But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

Aesthetic Purpose

The major emphasis of the art works examined in this study was didactic and commemorative in purpose and theme. Aesthetic embellishment and artistic enrichment of church buildings and grounds were intended purposes of the art under consideration. However, in but few of the art works do the aesthetic qualities emerge with conviction to overpower the literary, storytelling and imitative connotations. A work in which the aesthetic values are expressed most successfully is the "Angel Moroni Statue" on the Los Angeles Temple. In this work the emphasis is more nearly on originality and form

¹Talmage, op. cit., p. 273.
²Alward, op. cit., p. 56.
rather than on the didactic, imitative elements.

No evidence was found in the literature discussing these works of art that aesthetic achievement was their primary purpose. The themes were more concerned with illustration and the conveyance of information, placing the formal aesthetic values of the art at a minimum.

Summary

The following conclusions were observed from the survey of the literature and the examination of the representative art works:

1. The principal purposes of the art are didactic, illustrative, and commemorative.

2. The lessons and stories which these art works seek to convey are concerned with Mormon history, moral models, and scriptural teaching.

3. The themes reflect the past more than the present.

4. The themes are stereotyped and often repeated in different works.

5. Themes are concerned primarily with the practices and institutions connected with the Mormon people. None of the art works studied are influenced by themes connected with the outside world.

6. Aesthetic purpose has not been ignored in some examples, but this purpose is minimized because of strong didactic emphasis.
CHAPTER III

STYLES AND MANNERS OF MORMON-FOSTERED ART

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the styles and manners evident in art fostered by the Mormon Church.

Definition of Terms

In order to identify the connotations intended in this study, the following definition of terms is noted:

Style--A broad term, derived from the Greek stylos and the Latin stilus, now all-inclusive and transferred to the entire field of the arts. Generally, those characteristics of form or technique which are peculiar to a certain work or group of works, or to an artist, school or movement, period, or locality.¹

Manner--The way in which anything is done or happens; the way of performing or effecting anything; mode of action, method, style, form, fashion.²

It is by style, by the manner of comprehension, of feeling and interpretation, that epochs, races, schools and individuals are separated and distinguished one from the other. In all the arts, analogous differences are to be found; plainly marked, in proportion as a more or less extensive field is offered for the development of artistic personality. Michelangelo and Raphael, Leonardo and Veronese, Titian and Correggio, Rubens and Rembrandt, resembled Rossini; Weber, Mozart; or Wagner resembles Verdi. Each has his own style, his peculiar mode of


²Ibid., p. 1096.
thinking and feeling, and of expressing those feelings and thoughts.\(^1\)

The question of style has considerable importance. We might even say that it includes the whole of esthetics, which is in fact the question of personality in art. \(^2\)

### Style Comparisons

The representative art works were examined in terms of the various styles and manners of art. The styles and manners generally covered in a basic art history class were considered an adequate range, and are listed and defined as follows:

**Abstraction.**—In art, a design which is non-representational in purpose, is more or less geometric, and which presumes to have at least decorative beauty while possibly having cultural meaning and association. It may be derived from natural forms, geometric forms, or be entirely the product of esthetic ingenuity, invention and imagination, with no reference whatever to nature. \(^3\)

**Baroque.**—The art and architecture style prevailing from about 1600 to 1720. \(...\) During this period, sculpture, painting, architecture \(...\) took on a lavish extravagance of design.

Baroque refers to the all-over pattern. It emphasizes dynamic movement, rhythm in ornamentation, but with regard for the structural and masculine qualities. Important painters are Michelangelo, Rubens, and Rembrandt. \(^4\)

**Classicism.**—Generally, the style of art as produced by the ancient Greeks and Romans, stressing impeccable correctness, simplicity, and unostentatious elegance.

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\(^2\)Ibid., p. 97.


\(^4\)Ibid., p. 73.
Any school or movement pursuing the stylistic influence of Greece or Rome is a school, etc., of classicism.\(^1\)

Cubism.--The name derives from the fact that the art is semi-abstract and comparatively geometric, reducing natural forms to their fundamental shapes.

\(\ldots\) The pulling apart of the planes of nature and reorganizing them for structural purposes only.\(^2\)

Expressionism.--An art theory and movement originating in Europe about 1916, having as its motive the stressing of full and free expression of the artist's emotional experiences and reactions rather than the representation of the natural appearance of objects.\(^3\)

Mannerism.--In painting, the term applied by some critics to any distinctive or peculiar method or technique that has been carried to excess; the inartistic extension of manner.

Whenever formal dexterity is dominant at the expense of the rendition of expressive or representative content it may be referred to as manneristic. Its appearance is due to the exhaustion of either the creative impulse or of the ideas underlying creative activity. As a style it applies to European Art between 1520, the end of the High Renaissance, and 1600, the beginning of the Baroque.\(^4\)

Primitive.--In painting, the term applied to an artist active in a rudimentary period in the development of a style or movement, particularly a period prior to the Renaissance. Also, a provincial or naive painter, or one of his works.\(^5\)

Stylization.--Generally, artistic individual distortion.\(^6\)

Realism.--In art and literature, the treatment of subjects as they actually are, rather than as the artist or writer believes, in his imagination, they should or might be; the representation of things actual and real, with strict fidelity to nature and to real life, as distinguished from the abstract, speculative, etc., aspects of idealism.\(^7\)

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 165. \(^2\)Ibid., p. 198.
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 258. \(^4\)Ibid., p. 417.
\(^5\)Ibid., p. 549. \(^6\)Ibid., p. 682.
\(^7\)Ibid., p. 572.
Naturalism.—The doctrine in art proposing that nature should be represented objectively, without interpretation, aberration, or editorializing; that any representation of the natural must appear in such manner that the influence of man is not an obvious feature.¹

Naturalism defined further: in literature, painting, etc., a faithful adherence to nature; realism.²

Illusionism.—The effort in painting or sculpture to create as nearly as possible an illusion of visual reality; the painting or modeling of substitute objects, i.e., objects so like their prototypes as to serve as substitutes for them. Proper illusionism can be executed with careful attention devoted to perspective, foreshortening, chiaroscuro, representational line drawing, and microscopic detail, all of which combined to create the desired effect. Naturalism and illusionism are forms of illusionism.³

Impressionism.—In art, a variety of naturalism . . . it differs from illusionism in that it gives no heed to details . . . it deals with a type of painting with informal subject matter and the effects of light as they impress the artist. It is a method of expressing luminosity with juxtaposed touches of pure color; the effort to present a general impression of an incident, view, or object, rather than to record it in detail or to depict what the eye sees at a glance.⁴

Broadly, the term "realism" has been adopted as a blanket name for the sort of visual art where emphasis is on correct representation, thus including practically all phases that are not essentially form seeking. Impressionism is a special aspect of a sort of realism; and naturalism, specifically, is the phase which exists for the clever, meticulous transcript of nature, for illustration with detail defined.

Popular Romanticism.—A term used in painting and sculpture criticism to describe that type of romanticism (q.v.) concerned with the appeal of popular subject matter,

rather than with the invention of new visual or formal values. Typically the popular romanticist is a naturalist who chooses subjects of romantic appeal... literary illustration in general, and subjects of sentimental interest stressing the home, family, adventure, courage, motherhood, nationalism, hero worship and the like.¹

Idealism.--In art and literature, the representation of subjects on a high ethical plane, devoid of the details which are set forth in the... style of realism; the tendency to represent things as they might or should be, rather than as they are.²

Assignment to Styles

Each art work of the study was carefully categorized in terms of the above definitions. When a work gave evidence of more than one style, the most prominent category was selected. Supporting styles evident in the work were placed in parentheses and will be observed in the analysis. The final tabulation of the preliminary survey classified the works in the following categories:

"Handcart Pioneer Monument" ... Realism

"Winter Quarters Monument" ... Realism (Idealism, Popular Romanticism)

"This Is the Place Monument" ... Realism (Popular Romanticism)

"Seagull Monument" ... ... Realism

"Mormon Battalion Monument" ... Realism

"Cody Mural" ... ... ... Realism (Illusionism, Idealism, Popular Romanticism)

"Thanksgiving Mural" ... ... Realism (Idealism, Popular Romanticism)

¹Ibid., p. 541. ²Ibid., p. 344.
"Aaronic Priesthood Monument" . . . Realism (Idealism)

"New Life and Frontier Monument" . Realism (Idealism)

Stained glass windows,
Salt Lake Temple . . . . . Realism (Idealism)

"Baptism of Jesus Mural,"
Los Angeles Temple . . . . Realism (Idealism)

"Angel Moroni Monument,"
Hill Cumorah . . . . . . . Realism
Salt Lake Temple . . . . . Idealism (Realism)
Los Angeles Temple . . . . Realism (Expressionism, Stylization)

Murals Salt Lake Temple
"Creation Room" . . . . . Realism (Illusionism, Idealism, Stylization)

"Garden Room" . . . . . . Realism (Illusionism, Idealism)

"World Room" . . . . . . Realism (Illusionism, Idealism, Stylization)

Murals Los Angeles Temple
"Creation Room" . . . . . Realism (Expressionism, Idealism)

"Garden Room" . . . . . . Realism (Illusionism, Idealism)

"World Room" . . . . . . Realism (Illusionism, Idealism)

"Joseph Smith Monument" . . . . Realism

"Hyrum Smith Monument" . . . . Realism

"Brigham Young Monument" . . . . Realism

Mural, Eleventh Ward Chapel
Salt Lake City . . . . . Realism (Idealism)

Stained glass window,
Seventeenth Ward Chapel
Salt Lake City . . . . . Realism (Idealism)

Book of Mormon paintings . . . Realism (Illusionism, Idealism)
General Stylistic Trend in Mormon-Fostered art

The representative art works primarily represent the following styles and manners: (1) Realism, (2) Illusionism, (3) Idealism, (4) Popular Romanticism, and (5) Stylization. The compositions under study will be discussed as they fit into these categories.

Realism

A re-examination of the Mormon-fostered art works was made to determine the extent of realism in evidence.

Art works emphasizing fidelity to nature and real life.--A majority of the examples studied have the general characteristics of a realistic style for they epitomize "the representation of things actual and real, with strict fidelity to nature and to real life." Examples of the realistic style are as follows:

The "Handcart Pioneer Monument," depicting a pioneer family with handcart crossing the plains, is authentic in its portrayal. It depicts the details of the episode from the representation of the natural sagebrush to that of the carefully modeled clothing.

The "Winter Quarters Monument" is a facsimile reminiscent of the more than six hundred Mormons who died from hunger and exposure in the tragedy at Winter Quarters.

The "This Is the Place Monument" has figures done in a realistic manner to depict likenesses of the people represented. Bas-relief sculpture done in bronze are true-to-life
representations of pioneers, horses, oxen, Indians, and covered wagons.

The "Seagull Monument" has entablatures at the base of the monument which tell in visual terms the realism and actuality of the cricket plague. The two seagulls at the top of the monument are faithful depictions of their natural forms.

The "Mormon Battalion Monument" depicts the realism of a battalion man.

The "Cody Mural" is a series of pictorial episodes in a montage technique. It is one large composition depicting several realistic themes. The characters and scenes are painted with strict fidelity to natural aspects and to real life. Each component part follows this style.

The "Thanksgiving Mural" is a realistic impression of people, mountains, valleys, animals, trees, harvested crops, fruits and vegetables. All subjects are painted in great detail with fastidious delicacy.

The "Aarmonic Priesthood Monument" presents objectively represented figures, with much stress placed on anatomy and clothing details.

The Book of Mormon paintings also convey realistic objectivity with photographic precision.

The "New Life and Frontier Monument" is a pioneer family depicted in actuality.

The stained glass windows, Salt Lake Temple, are attempts to represent things as they actually are in the medium of glass.

The "Baptism of Jesus Mural" depicts John the Baptist
and Jesus in a scene of a stream, hills, and trees actualizing natural things.

"Angel Moroni Monuments" on the Hill Cumorah, Salt Lake Temple, and the Los Angeles Temple are all realistic in varying degrees. The Hill Cumorah monument is ultra-realistic while the other two have characteristics of other styles.

Murals in the Salt Lake Temple are all faithful reproductions of nature. The "Creation Room" shows the treatment of subjects as they actually are. Water, rocks and atmospheric conditions are represented in naturalistic detail to give a visual effect of the creation of the world. The "Garden Room" treats the natural subjects of trees, mountains, water and animals according to the doctrine of reality. The "World Room" depicts animal life with an emphasis on the "struggle for survival" among the animals of the world.

The murals in the Los Angeles Temple are, first, the "Creation Room," which emphasizes the sun, the moon, the clouds and atmosphere as they are in nature. Second, the "Garden Room" mural is an attempt at portraying the Garden of Eden so that a peaceful serenity of nature is conveyed. It is an effort in painting to create as nearly as possible an effect of visual reality. In this mural the viewer is confronted with all of the visual phenomena of nature. Third, the "World Room" mural depicts a desert land, with sharp rock monoliths and worn hills and vales, mountains, sky, trees and shrubs, represented objectively as they would be found in nature. The overall effect is a picturesque realism.
The "Joseph Smith," "Hyrum Smith," and "Brigham Young" Monuments are all realistic portraits in sculpture of the men they represent. The facial, body, and clothing details are in strict representative form.

The mural in the Eleventh Ward Chapel, Salt Lake City, depicts Joseph Smith and the Angel Moroni in an objectively real manner, surrounded by a picturesquely natural scene of trees and plants.

The stained glass window, in Seventeenth Ward Chapel, Salt Lake City, gives a strict adherence to a realistic interpretation especially in the facial features and hands of the individuals. In those areas of the window the lead sections used to divide the window in all other parts have been eliminated and the glass of the hands and faces has been shaded to distinguish these features. This is an obvious stress on realism.

Unimaginative approach in realism.—The unimaginative approach characteristic of realism is seen in many of the art works and is characterized by a style that is commonplace and restricted. A lack of new conception and style is evident in many of the art works.

This lack of imagination is shown in the Seventeenth Ward stained glass window in which the medium of glass lends itself to new possibilities of design, form and expression, but in which this opportunity for imagination is passed by for an unconvincing realistic effect.
The "Atonic Priesthood Monument" lacks imagination in its symmetrically balanced arrangement, which becomes trite and static. The lines, shapes, and arrangements are generally what is expected. The unexpected is seldom used in this work to challenge and surprise the viewer.

Some of the other compositions that show an unimaginative approach in realism are: "Winter Quarters Monument," "New Life and Frontier Monument," "Handcart Pioneer Monument," "Thanksgiving Mural," and the "Cody Mural." Few of the works studied depart from true representation, and many times evidence repeated formulas in their delineation.

**Illusionism**

The examination of the art works further shows that much of the art studied is an effort in painting or sculpture to create as nearly as possible "an illusion of visual reality," showing "objects so like their prototypes as to serve as substitutes for them."

**Art works emphasizing illusionism.**—A look at the several examples of Mormon art convinces one that illusionism is one of its characteristics. Examples of illusionism are the murals in the "Creation Rooms," "Garden Rooms," and "World Rooms" in both the Salt Lake and the Los Angeles Temples. In these murals the viewer is confronted with an illusion of visual reality, almost to the extent that he feels he is actually in the surroundings that the murals depict. This illusion may cause the viewer to disregard the
walls as though they were non-existent. His eye is confronted with great distances in space, as well as with things close to the picture plane.

Careful attention devoted to perspective. The illusion of distance in these murals is done primarily with an effect usually referred to as atmospheric or aerial perspective.

Aerial perspective concerns effects of distance upon the color and distinctness of objects. The air, especially when hazy, makes far objects appear bluer, grayer, less distinct in edges and with less contrast of light and shade than if seen nearby.¹

The perspective illusion is aided in the murals by the psychological phenomenon of retreating and advancing colors, and by the overlapping of objects as they recede into the illusionary distance. Linear perspective is also a device which helps give these murals depth.

Linear perspective pertains to effects of distance upon the appearance of size and form.²

This characteristic is evident in the murals as objects in the pictures grow smaller in size, finer in texture, and grayer in color as they retreat into the distance, as contrasted with foreground features which become larger in size, coarser in texture, and warmer in color as they come forward.

Other works displaying the illusionistic effect and concern with perspective are the "Cody Mural," the

"Thanksgiving Mural," and the painting in the Salt Lake Eleventh Ward Chapel. The painting in the Eleventh Ward Chapel is the only composition described as illusionistic which does not allow the eye to travel into infinite space. The distance in the picture is restricted.

**Idealism**

Further survey of Mormon-fostered art reveals idealism as a common characteristic of the art, as it represents subjects on a high ethical plane.

Art works stressing the finer human characteristics. Much of the art indicates the cherishing of the finer human characteristics. Idealism is exemplified in the symmetrical "Aaronic Priesthood Monument," with its depiction of handsome, tender individuals, with perfect facial and body features and proportions. The "Angel Moroni" on the east-central spire of the Salt Lake Temple is depicted as an idealized, lithe person with flowing robes. The finer human attributes are stressed in a graceful version of what an angel might be like. The sculpture is composed of a series of curved volumes and delicate treatments.

The "New Life and Frontier Monument" is idealistic in manner as it depicts the perfect in human characteristics. The figures portrayed are prototypes done with great stress on handsome features and noble expressions.

Art works showing highest type of any natural object. The highest type of any natural object is portrayed in the
"Garden Room" mural in the Los Angeles Temple. The imperfect elements are eliminated from the landscape, animals, trees and mountains, which are all prototypes of their kind done with the utmost in perfection. Idealism is very evident in the "Thanksgiving Mural," in which the perfected man, woman, and children are surrounded with an atmosphere of sweet, ideal beauty. The landscape and the individuals portrayed are idealized versions representing life, not as it is, but as it might be in its most ideal condition.

Other examples which show idealistic elements are the "Winter Quarters Monument," "Cody Mural," "Baptism of Jesus Mural," and Salt Lake Temple murals.

Popular romanticism

The survey of the art showed concern for the appeal of popular subject matter, rather than for the invention of new visual or formal values. It emphasizes the naturalistic, literary illustration of subjects of sentimental interest, stressing:

The family and motherhood.—The subjects of family and motherhood are evidenced in the depictions of the "Winter Quarters Monument," "New Life and Frontier Monument," the "Thanksgiving Mural," and in the "Seagull Monument" plaques, where the sentimental and moralistic connotations of family strength and mother-love are conveyed.

Courage and hero worship.—The popularly romantic is stressed in a number of art works which show the courage and
faith of the pioneers and set them up as heroes whose attributes should be revered. Examples of such are the "Handcart Pioneer Monument," "This Is the Place Monument," and "Mormon Battalion Monument."

Stylization

The art indicates some tendencies for stylization as it attempts "artistic distortion." This was noted in three examples.

The "Creation Room Mural" in the Los Angeles Temple has a semi-stylized quality in its bold use of color and in its flattening of form in the clouds, moon, sun and rays. An inconsistency is noted as some forms are kept flat while others retain a three-dimensional effect.

The "World Room Mural" of the Los Angeles Temple is a slightly stylized interpretation of a desertland with sharp rock monoliths and worn hills and wales. The stylization is created by emphasis on sharp edges and sudden, rather than gradual, beginning and ending of shadow areas. The sky includes clouds which show a slight flattening of form but which in general retain a voluminous effect.

The "Angel Moroni" on the Los Angeles Temple is semi-stylized in sharp contrast to the other two versions of this personage. This work indicates a more contemporary Mormon approach to art. The Los Angeles Moroni is an impression of an ancient warrior, dressed in clothes reminiscent of Mayan costume, done in massive, angular volumes and planes, its
huge, muscular arms and shoulders tapering gradually to a narrow base.

Other styles

There is no significant indication of other stylistic types in the art works studied.

Summary

1. Much of the art studied is realistic in style. The realistic approach creates an illusionistic effect in much of the painting with strong adherence to perspective. Many of the murals and sculptures are characterized by a style and manner of technical dexterity with stress on finish and polish, and the adventitious values such as photographic cleverness, likeness, and charm. Many works show an unimaginative approach.

2. Idealism is a characteristic of the art. The idealistic style is shown by the concern in the art to render a scene poetical, to interpret it with a refined sentiment, or to give a figure a noble attitude and outlines of the utmost purity. There is a tendency to portray the highest type of any natural object by eliminating all of its imperfect elements. In seeking for this high type of portrayal, the style has become stereotyped.

3. The "popular romantic" style is shown as subjects of sentimental interest, stressing the family, motherhood, courage, faith and other human values are depicted.
4. There is an evidence of stylization as some few works attempt artistic distortions by flattening form and stressing angular relationships.

5. Most of the works are correct in technique and craftsmanship, but they evoke little element of the unique.
CHAPTER IV

DATA DEVELOPED FROM THE ART LITERATURE FOR
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH THE
REPRESENTATIVE ART WORKS

The purpose of this chapter is to survey the art literature for data on the specific categories developed in the research of representative art works, in order to evaluate the qualitative aspects of the art.

Plan of Procedure

The Brigham Young University Library was regarded as an adequate source of reference from which to develop data for the assessment of art works. Literature was selected which represented contemporary viewpoints on aesthetics. Books were selected for their coverage of the particular areas to be examined and for the prominence of their authors. Prominence was assessed by the positions of the authors as curators of recognized galleries, authorship of texts used in leading universities, winners of national honors and citations, and general acceptance in the field.

The following categories developed in the research of representative art works for dominant characteristics of Mormon-fostered art were used as a research focus with the

44
art literature:

1. Didactic and commemorative elements in art.
2. Realistic, illusionistic, and imitative elements in art.
3. Idealistic, romantic and sentimental elements in art.
4. Aesthetic, creative elements in art.

Didactic and Commemorative Elements in Art

As Chapter II indicated, didacticism is a dominant characteristic of Mormon-fostered art surveyed. A study of the art literature for opinions and judgments of the values of didacticism indicated negative reactions toward this purpose. The opinions of art authorities follow:

Negative aspects of didacticism

Upjohn, Wingert, and Mahler, of Columbia University Fine Arts School, come sharply to the point on didactic art in the opening line of their recent publication:

A fundamental human demand calls art into being. Its primary purpose is to add to the completeness of life. It may be and at times has been made to serve other ends, the glorification of religion, propaganda, symbolism; but these aims, whether laudable or not, are foreign to its main goal. They may even hinder artistic achievement.¹

The most significant artists and critics of this century support the claim that the function of art is not for

propaganda and the reproduction of facts. Many writers claim that pictures which attempt to portray mental ideas and physical appearances of nature infringe on the essential field of literature or drama. They say that too often this is the case, and that it is true that each of the arts has a peculiar means of communication and each should function within its own natural techniques.

Adherence to fundamental art purposes

Didacticism in art is not in keeping with fundamental art principles:

If one believes, as many of us do, that art is primarily a creative activity on the part of the artist, that it is one of the few ways in which divinity is constantly reasserting itself, that it has its own peculiar way of giving us pleasure, of bringing us to ecstasy, by the conveying of a definite aesthetic emotion, then one must soon come to realize that the choice of subject-matter is of secondary importance...a literary element...simply has nothing to do with the fundamental problem on hand.

Subject matter limitations

Subject matter is stressed as a limiting factor in art by many aestheticians:

1Rader, op. cit., p. xi. Artists and critics supporting this claim are: Nietzsche, Hiri, Croce, Bosanquet, Maritain, Parker, Bell, Fry, Carpenter, Ortega y Gasset, Munsterberg, Puffer, Ogden, Richards, and Wood.


A dramatic idea alone is never a sufficient motive for making a picture. To be led away in this manner and to be intent upon depiction because of dramatic or eventful qualities, is, to say the least, artistic laxity.\(^1\)

Howell presents the following analogy:

In literature, the private letter is accepted as something created for the purpose of communicating facts. Art is not looked for in it, although it may be there. Neither with its greater evidence, is it sought in journalism, which also is factual in purpose. Yet it has become a convention to look upon the presentation of form when executed in paint, ink or crayon, or even bronze, primarily as art, although we deliberately create records with these materials for no other purpose than that of journalism.\(^2\)

Sheldon Cheney says that subject-matter is somehow an inseparable part of the completed picture, and he stresses that there must be a linking with life, but that the heart of creative work really lies beyond subject-interest, beyond picturesqueness, sentiment, and slices of life.\(^3\)

**Objectivity limitations**

It has been pointed out by many writers that any coherent conception of art extending beyond the Renaissance in Europe, and open to the appeal of other cultures such as Byzantine art, Oriental art, African art, or Paleolithic art, or of art wherever and whenever it issues from the clear perceptions and instinctive expressions of man, is based on

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\(^2\)Ibid., p. 201.

\(^3\)Cheney, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
aesthetic sensibility, and not on historical objectivity.\textsuperscript{1}

Melvin Rader feels this very strongly:

\ldots{} The substance of art, then, is value, not fact, law, or implication. Even realistic art should not be judged correct or incorrect as report of fact. We should only judge it deep or shallow as revelation of the value-character of life. For art is never merely objective; apart from our human bias, there could be no art and no esthetic experience. As Eugene Veron declares: "Art consists essentially in the predominance of subjectivity over objectivity. . . ."\textsuperscript{2}

Clive Bell points out the limitations of objectivity in his reference to "descriptive painting":

We are all familiar with pictures that interest us and excite our admiration, but do not move us as works of art. To this class belongs what I call "Descriptive Painting"—that is, painting in which forms are used not as objects of emotion, but as means of suggesting emotion or conveying information. Portraits of psychological and historical value, topographical works, pictures that tell stories and suggest situations, illustrations of all sorts, belong to this class. That we all recognize the distinction is clear, for who has not said that such and such a drawing was excellent as illustration, but as a work of art worthless? Of course many descriptive pictures possess, amongst other qualities, formal significance, and are therefore works of art; but many more do not. They interest us; they may move us too in a hundred different ways, but they do not move us esthetically. According to my hypothesis, they are not works of art. They leave untouched our esthetic emotions because it is not their forms but the ideas or information suggested or conveyed by their forms that affect us. . . .


\textsuperscript{2}Rader, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. xvi-xvii.

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., pp. 251-252, as quoted from Clive Bell.
Limitations of commemorative works

It has been stressed by some critics that most commemorative works of art should not be taken too seriously as art. To do so would be upholding them as representative of something for which they were never intended—artistic creations—instead of accepting them for what they are—records or souvenirs to commemorate facts and to preserve the memory.¹

Several authorities have expressed the view that all literary, dramatic, and psychological interest need not be taken out of the art works. It is when the story becomes the supreme expressional aim, however, that the aesthetic value of the work is depreciated.

Realistic Elements in Art

As the study of Mormon-fostered art indicated in Chapter III, realism is a major style of the art surveyed. The art literature was examined for statements on the value of realism. The general opinion of contemporary art critics toward strict realistic expression is negative, as the following excerpts indicate.

Negative aspects of realism

Philip C. Beam speaks of the limitations of realistic art:

We can easily determine the merits and limitations of realistic painting by measuring against Konody's definition of art. The actual evidence contained in the history of art. Konody said, "Art begins where the artist departs from strict imitation of nature, imposing on her a rhythm of his own creation." If an artist conceived realistic painting only in terms of a strict imitation of nature, his works would not be artistic at all, according to Konody's definition.

Osborne states:

... In the general opinion of contemporary criticism Realism, in the sense of representing or accurately describing an actuality other than itself, is neither a necessary nor a sufficient requirement for any artefact to be classed as a work of art. ... Nor are those works of art which are representative commonly judged to be excellent in accordance with the degree or extent of their Realism.

The most general statement that aestheticians have made on realistic-naturalistic art is that the closer the presentation approaches natural form the less it is an art-form. They say that to reproduce objects exactly as we see them leaves us, at the end, exactly with what we had before. This is imitation. They indicate that when the aim is imitative, art has fallen to a craft; and that though it may be viewed aesthetically, this does not make it an art-form.

Imitative limitations

The imitative purpose in art may be likened to the novel of extreme naturalism of which the writer, for want of imaginative power, adds little to what is a mere description

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2Osborne, op. cit., p. 109.

3Howell, The Meaning and Purpose of Art, pp. 207-208.
of his own and his observed happenings. This is the equivalent to the painter's naturalistic illustration and is not great writing. Therefore, painting of this type is not considered great art.\(^1\)

As another art critic states:

Merely to set up a mirror to nature is not enough. To imitate it or transfer the object or view from one place to another. In doing this, nothing is said. Taking an image from one place and transplanting it (either all or in part) to another place neither communicates nor gives meaning. It merely says, "There it was, now it is here." It gives room neither for individuality, for organization, for expression of mood, nor for meaning.\(^2\)

Further credence is given by Eugene Veron in his citation that:

If an artist were really able to reduce himself to the condition of a copying machine; if he could so far efface and suppress himself as to confine his work to the servile reproduction of all the features and details of an object or event passing before his eyes; the only value his work would possess would be that of a more or less exact *proces verbal*, and it would perforce remain inferior to reality. Imitation is no more the aim of art than a mere collection of letters and syllables is the aim of a writer who wishes to express his thoughts and feelings by the aid of the words which they form.\(^3\)

Realism in its strictest sense is frowned upon by most contemporary aestheticians. However, they point out that realism may have values when the aesthetic purpose is its ultimate goal.

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\(^2\) Rasmussen, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

\(^3\) Rader, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
Illusionism in Art

Illusionism, frequently found in Mormon-fostered art as indicated in Chapter II, is often regarded as an extension of realism, and most critics feel that it abandons artistic function.

Negative aspects of illusionism

As Cheney states:

... the heart of creative work ... lies beyond cleverness of transcription, beyond illusion. The photographic element, the factor that makes a picture beloved for its "perfect likeness," is equally incidental. No doubt a painting skillfully done can go farther than photography in getting a transcribed image; but if it does, it abandons its artistic function.¹

According to Rader:

The point is that the effects of distance are not of the slightest importance unless they function in terms of value-expression ... . When with Bouguereau space becomes only a trick of copying we do not have a depth-experience that is significant or esthetic; when with Cezanne space is a harmony of deep solid, and subtly related masses, the distance-thrust yields an inner, imaginative order—an expression of values and therefore the very stuff of art.²

Faults of illusionistic painting

... the most blatant fault of many murals is a violation of the flat nature of the wall on which they are placed. Figures or other objects fall forward past the front picture plane; naturalistic perspective takes the eye far into distant places; holes are recessed through the back plane because of a lack of volume, color, or textural foils. Essential wall flatness is best retained, the same as in easel painting, by limiting the total depth to a shallow range and flattening all forms to a bas-relief effect. ... ³

¹Cheney, op. cit., p. 10.
²Rader, op. cit., p. xii.
³Rasmussen, op. cit., pp. 72-73.
The literature points out in many instances that perspective projection has both virtues and faults. First among its virtues is its emphasis on the orderliness in perception of distance in nature. Secondly, it is capable of conveying a sense of natural spaciousness and an illusion of great depth beyond the picture plane. However, this may be a serious fault when a painting that purports to be decorative competes with the architectural plane it is supposed to enhance by puncturing an imaginary hole in the wall.1

A scientific grasp of perspective came in with the Renaissance. It was a mathematical rather than an aesthetic discovery and as such was part of man's successful attack on his environment. This accurate placing of objects in space (instead of simply seeing the further objects higher up like people sitting in a theater) had an enormous impact on the artist. Later—we could almost say "lately"—we have re-evaluated the Renaissance point of view, and we have judged art as emotional communication, rather than as the surveyor's conquest of territory. We have seen perspective do injury to the solid two-dimensional wall which is the very prop and support of a work of art, and we have seen it invite an illusionistic trickery which destroys the very possibility of great painting.2

Illusionism is considered by most art authorities as an overemphasis on the photographic element, and they feel that it more often hinders than helps the aesthetic value of an art work.


Idealistic Elements in Art

Idealism is another characteristic of the Mormon-fostered art discussed in Chapter III. The art literature was examined for opinions of the art authorities as to the use of idealism in art. Their reactions to the use of this style are revealed below.

Limitations of Idealism

The literature indicates that the difficulties of idealistic art lie in the fact that the artist should keep away, on the one hand, from the single living individual, and on the other hand, from some inanimate pattern. It is difficult for the idealist to keep his work from becoming generalized, conforming to a standard pattern.¹

The idealistic and classical represent a need for order, but we also discover in Carlyle’s Metaphor that the idealistic has become the conventional and that often in it the spiritual aspirations are starved, and the secular impulses are confined.²

According to the art literature, idealism does not contribute to the value of art when it becomes stereotyped and sentimental, and many critics feel that it has a tendency to become standardized.


²Read, op. cit., p. 113.
Popular Romantic Elements in Art

Popular romanticism deals mainly with sentimental subjects and themes. Sentimentality was found to be a characteristic of the Mormon-fostered art studied. The art literature examined indicates the following reactions to sentimentality.

Limitations of sentimentality

Sentimentality has been applied to art as a term suggesting that the social or sympathetic emotions have been excessively or otherwise wrongly used. It connotes tenderness, compassion or naive faith in human nature which may have pervaded the work in such a way as to produce a pathetic rather than an ethical experience and attitude toward life.

... generally we may say that sentimentality is the display of emotion unchecked by rational judgment. Sentimental art in this sense is art which arouses these unchecked emotions, either directly or by association.¹

To many critics, the test is whether the picture exists rather as a sentimental diversion than as an aesthetic entity with a life of its own.

One warns only against a primarily literary and mental approach. A special fondness for anecdotal pictures, for story pictures, for the composition that tugs at the heartstrings or evokes sentimental recollections is nowadays considered a danger signal if you wish to penetrate the heart of the visual arts.²

¹Read, op. cit., p. 169.

Thus the mementos of a lost friend do not become beautiful by virtue of the sentimental associations which may make them precious. The value is confined to the images of the memory; they are too clear to let any of that value escape and diffuse itself over the rest of our consciousness, and beautify the objects which we actually behold. We say explicitly: I value this trifle for its associations. And so long as this division continues, the worth of the thing is not for us aesthetic.

Most of the art authorities are of the opinion that the sentimental approach to art expression produces a pathetic rather than an aesthetic value in an art work.

**Aesthetic Elements in Art**

According to Chapter II, the aesthetic purpose is not a major consideration in Mormon-fostered art studied. However, in the examination of the literature, the aesthetic purpose has been repeatedly stressed as the primary reason for any work of art. With this in view the survey of the literature was made to determine the importance of the aesthetic element.

**Primary purpose of an art work**

Koffka stresses that a work of art is specifically created for its aesthetic effect. Here "aesthetic" refers to "taste and standards of value in judging art; a theory or consistent attitude on art matters; and experiencing art...."  

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Herbert Read notes that:

At the end of many centuries of critical consideration, and in virtue of a vast amount of accumulated wisdom, there seems no avoiding the conclusion, that . . . judgments must be based on the operative sensibilities, and on those sensibilities alone. . . . The virtue of any art wholly inheres in its appeal to the senses and to the 'non-discursive' or 'imaginative' reason, and all other criteria, whether moral or sociological, are aesthetically irrelevant.\(^1\)

Howell defines aesthetic perception as being reaction to form in its own right, and he further reasons that any object or form when apprehended as presence in its own right, without criticism or ulterior motive, is aesthetic form.\(^2\)

Sheldon Cheney supports this view further by stating:

Art is an activity, inextricably bound up with life but only incidentally concerned with the surface aspects of nature, with an emotional realm of its own, concerned with expression rather than representation, with creation rather than imitation and characterized in each separate work by a particular and essential quality in the nature of emotionally expressive form. . . . \(^3\)

This statement concurs with other writers in the literature in stressing the importance of form, creativity and expression to the aesthetic element.

Form as a basic aesthetic quality

Many of the modern aestheticians, Nietzsche, Hirn, Croce, Bosanquet, Maritain, Parker, Bell, Fry, Carpenter, Ortega y Gasset, Munsterberg, Puffer, Ogden, Richards, and

\(^1\)Read, op. cit., p. 172.

\(^2\)Howell, \textit{The Meaning and Purpose of Art}, p. 45.

\(^3\)Cheney, \textit{A Primer of Modern Art}, pp. 36-37.
Wood, all emphasize form as a basic factor in art.  

Form is the most appropriate organization of the forces of relationships felt by the artist, that he can put down with some objective material.

A real consensus of opinion is given in the above definition, for this is precisely what Marin, Cezanne, Matisse, and Kandinsky in general say: the creative or expression product is one that has form—the creative act is one that achieves form.

Characteristics of form

Organization.—The most generalized criterion, the most all-embracing one, is "organization." Here the consensus is clear. To Danz: "Form denotes organization" . . . "by form he means an expressive organic whole." Allan Abbott, discussing "A New Integration for Literature," indicates the role of organization as follows:

It is this new creation, this large or small universe self-centered in its own integrity, and taking form appropriate to express its inner life that constitutes art, that makes literature.

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1 Rader, op. cit., pp. xvix-xxx.


3 Ibid.

Economy, or simplicity.—Louis Danz's simple definition of Form satisfied my criterion of economy better than any other I have found: "Form is that kind of organization to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be taken."¹

Functionality.—Louis Sullivan gave his life to the search for a principle of form in architecture "that would have no exceptions." . . . he asked . . . "What is this thing to do?" . . . and he derived the principle, "form and function are one."²

Creativity as a basic aesthetic quality

Actually the term "creative" is redundant, because no expression is really art unless it is creative. But because of the widespread ignorance concerning art and imitation, the term is used here as a label for the authentic instead of the false.

Creative art, being based on freedom and originality, knows no boundaries except those inherent within itself and the limitations necessary to quality, which we label unity. It plays no favorites with styles or isms. It is a timeless gauge for measuring art of ancient, modern, or future days, including all significant, creative, and more or less unified human expressions of the material and spiritual world in which we live.³

Harold Rugg, speaking on creativity, points out that the creative act has three outstanding characteristics: The Self's Expression, The Self's Imagination, and Designed Form.⁴

¹Rugg, op. cit., pp. 459-460.
²Ibid., p. 460.
³Rasmussen, op. cit., p. 82.
⁴Rugg, op. cit., p. 460.
The Self's Expression--A personal statement.

This characteristic is expressed by other writers in the following:

It is for each individual to find his own means of expression, not by copying or imitating the work of any artist or school, ancient or modern, but by arriving at a personal philosophy consistent with his own time and place, and developing an original technique and form by which it can best be expressed.¹

What, then, is art: It is the beginning of all true freedom, self-awareness, spirituality: the symbolic expression of feeling.²

Melvin M. Rader further states concerning the expressive:

Whether the qualities that the artist embodies in creation are to be found in nature, in the medium, or in the imagination, they all become spiritually expressive if his work as an artist is to be complete.³

The Self's Imagination--Saying what they think their unique way.⁴

As Rasmussen states:

Imagination is one of the most important attributes of the artistic mind. Without it there can be little of creation, expressive meaning, or originality; with it one is able to reach beyond the ordinary, creating powerful reality out of the merest obscurity, making the most fantastic convincingly real.⁵

¹Rasmussen, op. cit., p. 82.


³Rader, op. cit., p. xii.

⁴Rugg, op. cit., p. 452.

⁵Rasmussen, op. cit., pp. 81-82.
To create is to select or invent elements significant to a given purpose and organize them into a new and unique form. It means originality. It means individuality. It means freedom of action. The opposites of creation in art are imitation, academicism, intellectual and emotional slavery. Creativeness depends on a certain attitude of mind. It is democracy in practice—an invitation to free thinking, exploration, and progression. Its opposite, imitation, spells conformity, reaction, and decadence.¹

Described form.—Our age of expression has produced a definite consensus on the third and last of our profound measures of the creative act. This is "form."... Philosophers agree on form as a basic concept of art; witness Edman: "to the extent life has form it is an art."²

The art critics have said that a work of art is especially created for its aesthetic effect. They also emphasize form, creativity, expression, and imagination as basic qualities of the aesthetic element.

Summary

Relative aesthetic judgments of the art literature concerning characteristics of the representative examples of Mormon-fostered art are as follows:

1. Didacticism in art is not in keeping with fundamental art principles.
2. Subject matter may be a limiting factor in art.
3. Art consists essentially in the predominance of subjectivity over objectivity.
4. The closer a presentation approaches natural form, the less it is an art form.

¹Rasmussen, op. cit., p. 82.
²Rugg, op. cit., p. 452.
5. Imitation does not produce an experience of aesthetic significance.

6. Standardized or stereotyped formulae inhibit aesthetic qualities in art.

7. Sentimental associations in art inhibit aesthetic values.

8. Art exists primarily for its aesthetic effect, for creativity, expression, and designed form.
CHAPTER V

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to compare the categories of dominant characteristics in the representative examples of Mormon-fostered art with the data developed from the art literature concerning the same characteristics.

Comparative Analysis

**Didactic and commemorative art**

The study has revealed that the principal purposes and themes of the Mormon-fostered art are didactic and commemorative. They are primarily concerned with story telling, conveying moral lessons, and giving eulogy to persons and events. Emphasis on these characteristics does not find support in the art literature, which stresses that the main goal of art is aesthetic expression. In fact, such emphasis may hinder artistic achievement. "Art consists essentially in the predominance of subjectivity over objectivity." In contrast to art aims, Mormon-fostered art shows a predominance of objectivity over subjectivity. By doing so, the Mormon art works "leave untouched our esthetic emotions because it is not their forms but the ideas or information suggested or
conveyed by their forms that affect us."

Realistic, illusionistic, and imitative art

Much of the art studied is realistic and illusionistic in manner and oftentimes imitative. In comparison, the art literature stresses that the closer art comes to strict realism the less it is an art form. Illusionism abandons artistic function when it becomes only a trick of copying and thus does not produce an experience that is significant or aesthetic.

Idealistic, romantic, and sentimental art

The representative examples of art have shown that a standardized idealism pervades many of the works. The art literature reveals that idealistic art should avoid falling into a standard pattern, as this would tend to inhibit or prevent an aesthetically creative art work.

The sentimentality exhibited in Mormon-fostered art opposes views in the literature, which stress that if an art work is valued primarily for its sentimental associations it is of little aesthetic worth.

Aesthetic, creative art

The study has revealed that the aesthetic qualities in the representative examples of Mormon-fostered art do not emerge with conviction to overpower the literary, imitative, stereotyped and sentimental connotations that permeate the
works. This is in opposition to Koffka and many other art authorities who stress that "a work of art is specifically created for its aesthetic effect," and that "the virtue of any art wholly inheres in its appeal to the senses and to the 'non-discursive' or 'imaginative' reason, and all other criteria, whether moral or sociological, are aesthetically irrelevant."

Conclusions

1. The principal purposes and themes of Mormon-fostered art are didactic, illustrative, and commemorative.

2. The art is primarily realistic in style and shows characteristics of illusionism, idealism, popular romanticism, sentimentalism, and stylization.

3. Emphasis on these styles has resulted in unimaginative, stereotyped, and sentimental qualities in the art works.

4. The tendencies toward stylization in a few recent works show more concern for form and creative aspects than previous art works have displayed.

5. The comparison of art literature with the characteristics of Mormon art has revealed that the majority of the representative examples of Mormon-fostered art do not exhibit qualities of significant aesthetic worth.

6. The art does not add anything aesthetically new to mankind's knowledge.

7. Some examples have hopeful qualities which
indicate that a more aesthetic approach may be achieved in the future.

6. For the most part, the art is of value for the reason that it preserves the attitudes, historical happenings, and doctrinal details of the Mormon Church.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. That more emphasis be placed on art in the Mormon Church.

2. That more emphasis be placed on the aesthetic, expressive, creative, and form seeking aspects in art, minimizing the literary, didactic, story telling purposes and themes.

3. That broader subject areas be encouraged in Mormon art, including themes of the present day.
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Unpublished Material

March 24, 1958

Mr. Monte B. DeGraw
204 Solana Vista Drive
Solana Beach, California

Dear Sir:

This is in answer to your letter of inquiry regarding the installation of art works such as bas-relief sculpture, mosaics, murals, framed paintings, etc., etc., in chapels of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

It is the current Church policy not to allow such works of art in the Church chapels.

Yours very sincerely,

THE CHURCH BUILDING COMMITTEE

By: /S/ Harold W. Burton

Harold W. Burton
Supervising Architect
Pictorial examples of the representative Mormon art works studied are found in the following publications:

1. Handcart Pioneer Monument

2. Winter Quarters Monument

3. Seagull Monument

4. This Is the Place Monument
   Rulon S. Howells, The Mormon Story (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1957), p. 149; also J. Reuben Clark, Jr., "This Is the Place Monument Dedication," The Improvement Era, L (September, 1947), 572.

5. Mormon Battalion Monument

6. Cody Mural


8. Aaronic Priesthood Monument
   Front cover, The Improvement Era, August, 1957.

9. New Life and Frontier Monument

10. Stained glass windows, Salt Lake Temple
11. Baptism of Jesus Mural
   Benjamin Alward, A Look at Mormonism (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1956), p. 56.

12. Angel Moroni Monuments
    Hill Cumorah
    Salt Lake Temple
    Los Angeles Temple
    The Improvement Era, April, 1956, pp. 226-27.

13. Murals
    Salt Lake Temple
    Los Angeles Temple

14. Brigham Young Monument

15. Joseph Smith Monument

16. Hyrum Smith Monument

17. Mural, Eleventh Ward Chapel, Salt Lake City

18. Stained glass window, Seventeenth Ward Chapel, Salt Lake City

19. Book of Mormon paintings
    The Instructor, September, October, November, and December, 1954.
A STUDY OF REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLES OF ART WORKS FOSTERED
BY THE MORMON CHURCH WITH AN ANALYSIS OF THE
AESTHETIC VALUE OF THESE WORKS
(72 pages)

An Abstract of the Thesis of
Monte B. DeGraw
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
Master of Science
in
Department of Art

Richard L. Gunn
Warren B. Wilson
Chairman, Advisory Committee
Member, Advisory Committee

Brigham Young University
July 1959
ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine certain characteristics of representative examples of visual art fostered by the Mormon Church and to arrive at an estimate of the aesthetic values of these works by a comparative analysis with aesthetic values stressed in the literature.

Statement of the Problem

Representative examples of Mormon art were examined to determine their primary purposes and themes. Each work considered was classified according to the following primary categories developed in a preliminary survey: (1) History Glorification, (2) Depiction of Moral Models, (3) Scriptural Teaching, and (4) Aesthetic Purpose.

The representative examples were analyzed for their stylistic qualities to determine the types represented and were classified according to the following primary categories: (1) Realism, (2) Illusionism, (3) Idealism, (4) Popular Romanticism, and (5) Stylization.

An estimate was made of the aesthetic value of these works by measuring the above findings against such points of judgment as were cited by critics in the art literature.
3

Research Methodology

A review was made of Mormon Church periodicals and books concerning art in the Church. This survey provided the representative examples of Mormon art which were used in the study. A review was also made of the literature of prominent art authorities for relative aesthetic judgments to compare with dominant characteristics found in Mormon-fostered art.

Summary

The following general conclusions were observed from the examination of the representative art works:

1. The principal purposes of the art are didactic, illustrative, and commemorative.

2. The themes reflect the past more than the present.

3. The themes are stereotyped and often repeated in different works.

4. Aesthetic purpose has not been ignored in some examples, but this purpose is minimized because of strong didactic emphasis.

5. Much of the art studied is realistic in style and becomes imitative and unimaginative.

6. Idealism is a characteristic of the art. In seeking for this high type of portrayal, the style has become stereotyped.

7. The style exhibits sentimental tendencies as it stresses naturalistic depiction of "popularly romantic" subjects.
8. There is evidence of stylization in some works. This shows concern for more formal aesthetic elements.

Relative aesthetic judgments of the art literature concerning the characteristics noted in the representative examples of Mormon-fostered art are as follows:

1. Didacticism in art is not in keeping with fundamental art principles.
2. Subject matter may be a limiting factor in art.
3. Art consists essentially in the predominance of subjectivity over objectivity.
4. The closer a presentation approaches natural form, the less it is an art form.
5. Imitation does not produce an experience of aesthetic significance.
6. Standardized or stereotyped formulae inhibit aesthetic quality in art.
7. Sentimental associations in art inhibit aesthetic values.
8. Art exists primarily for its aesthetic effect--creativity, expression, and designed form.

Comparative Analysis and Conclusions

In view of the comparative analysis of the dominant characteristics in the representative examples of Mormon-fostered art with the data developed from the art literature concerning the same characteristics, the following conclusions are made:
1. The representative art works do not exhibit qualities of significant aesthetic worth.

2. The art adds little aesthetically new to mankind's knowledge.

3. Some examples have qualities which indicate a more aesthetic approach may be achieved in the future.

4. For the most part, the art is of value in that it preserves the attitudes, historical happenings, and doctrinal details of the Mormon Church.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. That more emphasis be placed on art in the Mormon Church.

2. That more emphasis be placed on the aesthetic, expressive, creative, and form-seeking aspects in art, minimizing the literary, didactic, story-telling purposes and themes.

3. That broader subject areas be encouraged in Mormon art, including themes of the present day.

ABSTRACT APPROVED BY:

[Signature]

Warren S. Wilson