



TITLE: *Jewish Cemetery*
 ARTIST: Patrick Nasmyth/c. 1786/1787-1831 (after Jacob van Ruysdael)

DATE: 19th century
 SIZE: 24 x 36 1/2 inches
 MEDIUM: Oil on Canvas

ACQUISITION #: 58.9

Additional works in the collection by the artist?
 Yes ___ No X



Ruysdael, *Jewish Cemetery* 1655-60

STATEMENT ABOUT THE ARTIST

Patrick Nasmyth's "minuteness of touch and finish" resembled Jan Wynant. "Nasmyth's pictures show rather much attention to small detail, so much so as to detract from force and breadth of effect."— Robert Chambers and Thomas Thomson

ARTIST'S BIOGRAPHY

According to *A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen* published in 1870, Patrick Nasmyth was born into the family of Scottish painter Alexander Nasmyth on January 7th, 1786. He showed great interest for the arts at an early age, so much so that his schooling would be abandoned on the rare days that the Scottish weather turned favorable for sketching in the fields. Patrick's devotion and skill did not allow an injury that lamed his right hand to restrain him. He quickly mastered the use of his left-hand and, today, these works are sought by collectors. After finishing his schooling under his father, Patrick moved to London where he gained distinction for his landscapes. His skill with detail and light attracted patrons and fame but his dependency on alcohol quickly deteriorated his health and brought an early death. Nasmyth ventured to Norwood, despite a case of influenza from which he had not adequately recovered, to capture a scene which he greatly admired. This trip took a toll on his frail body. The disease returned and ravaged his health. He died at the age of 45 while in the care of his two sisters.

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

This work is Nasmyth's rendition of Jacob van Ruysdael's *Jewish Cemetery* (1655-60). The cemetery is located in Dresden, Germany. The landscape is bare. The stream reminds the viewer of the passage of time and the frailty of life. The dead beech tree in the foreground both frames the space occupied by the three tombs and directs the viewer's eye to the heavens above. As with any good landscape, *Jewish Cemetery* points out the insignificance and minute presence humanity has in this world full of nature and power. The objects, the tombs that contain human remains, seem minor under the looming sky. The ruins in the background seem to be compressed by the strength of the atmosphere.

JACOB VAN RUYSDAEL (c. 1628– c. 1682)

Ruysdael was born in Haarlem, the Netherlands and was taught to paint by his father and uncle. He studied landscape painting in Germany for 10 years before settling in Amsterdam where he established a successful studio and taught many notable Dutch landscape painters like Meindert Hobbema. He also received a medical degree in 1676. He was known for making common objects "such as trees or the flat Dutch countryside into deep sources of contemplation" (Getty Museum).

REFERENCES

- Chambers, Robert, and Thomas Thomson. *A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen*. Vol. 3. Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1971. 210-11.
- Nimmo, William P. "British Landscape Painting Patrick Nasmyth—Turner--John Wilson—Stark." *Lights in Art—A Review of Ancient and Modern Pictures*. Vol. 3. 286-91.
- "Jacob Van Ruisdael" *The Getty Museum*. Web. 06 July 2010. <<http://www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artMakerDetails?maker=517&page=1>>.

MEDIA DESCRIPTION

Oil Paint: oil paint dries slower than tempera (or acrylic paint used today), thus allowing the artist to more deftly revise the work. The drying time and consistency of oil allows for easier blending of pigments. A mastery of mixing was also required; Nasmyth was known for this skill.

RELATED TERMINOLOGY

Landscape: a picture of a natural setting in its own right, supposedly without any narrative content.



Patrick Nasmyth, *Falls of Tummell*, 1816, Oil on Wood

Not Just What You See on a Fieldtrip **ACTIVITY LESSON PLAN: (K-5)**

Session Activity: Landscapes can be very easily overlooked. It is their normality seen at first glance that makes a viewer scan right past them in a gallery. However, landscapes are meant to show the greatness of nature and most importantly, human presence in contrast with it. The lesson plan is meant to help students analyze and appreciate landscape painting.

Materials: Various images of landscape paintings, paper, pencils, paint, paint brushes.

Activity Procedures: Begin your discussion with the students discussing natural places in Florida they like. Ask them why they enjoy these places and the way humans interact with them; enjoyment, preservation, exploitation, harm, etc. You can use images of Florida scenery as well. To introduce landscape painting talk about the way people created images before the invention of the camera. Display and talk about a variety of landscape paintings, including a work by Patrick Nasmyth. A number of these landscapes need to include a human presence. Example questions:

Objectives

1. Students will investigate human/nature interaction.
2. Students will explore the thoughts and feelings experienced prior to, and during, the production of a landscape.

Vocabulary

Plein air: French expression which means “in the open air;” to paint outdoors.

- Why do you think the sky is this shade? The trees? The water? How does this affect the mood of the painting? Is the mood different from the others? What sets it apart?
- How do you think the artist felt about this place? What do you suspect the artist was thinking about this place as he/she was painting?
- Is there any single thing to which your eyes are automatically attracted? What? Do you think the painter wanted this? Explain.
- Do you see any people? Do they seem important in the painting? What do you judge the artist thought of humans when he/she was painting this?

If possible, go on a field trip to a natural place. Hold a discussion about the setting and the human interaction with it. Have the students create their own landscape paintings of this place “en plein air.” Have students use what they analyzed and learned about landscape painting to help them convey the wonder of this place. Students can sketch the landscape first since this was part of Nasmyth’s process as well.

SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS: K–5

Strand B: Creation and Communication

Standard 1: The student creates and communicates a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas using knowledge of structures and functions of visual arts.

SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS: 6–12

Strand D: Aesthetic and Critical Analysis

Standard 1: The student assesses, evaluates, and responds to the characteristics of works of art.

Appropriation: Homage or Copyright Infringement? **ART HISTORY LESSON PLAN: (6-12)**

Session Activity & Objectives: Since Patrick Nasmyth’s work is a reproduction of another artist’s piece, an interesting and controversial topic can be explored by the students, “appropriation.” Art practices involve the appropriation of ideas, symbols, images, objects or styles from any aspect of human visual or non-visual culture. (ie. art history, popular culture, foreign culture). An earlier work is re-contextualized to create a new work. The objectives of this lesson plan are:

- The students will discover and discuss the unending chain of influence past and current art exerts on future artists and pieces.
- The students will be acquainted with recent art world appropriation and learn of the objectives and style of the practice.

Discussion: First, the students will be guided through a list of examples of appropriation in art such as simple recurring symbolism in Renaissance paintings, Picasso’s synthetic cubism, and Warhol’s works. Expand this list for your needs in class. The students will then discuss and debate the ethics of appropriation. How far can an artist go? Discuss the works of Sherrie Levine and Larry Rivers who blatantly re-display other artists’ works. Discuss Sherrie Levine’s series *After Walker Evans* (1981) in which she rephotographed Evans’ photographs and displayed them. The main part of the discussion includes the following questions:

- Why did the artist rephotograph actual artworks? Is she trying to push boundaries in the art world? In the society?
- What is Levine’s message? Does she mean to reiterate the original artist’s messages? Or is she adding to the original messages? How does the appropriation itself contribute to the message?
- Is this kind of “copying” acceptable? Why or why not? Does it depend on the impact and significance of each individual piece?

At the end of the discussion the students should have some idea of the way appropriation artists manipulate their subjects and art for the communication of their messages and purposes.

Activity: After the extensive discussion of “appropriation” students will be assigned to create works of art. These works, however, will be complete appropriations of other pieces. The students will think of ideas or messages they would like to convey to others. With a message in mind each student will research artworks from the past and find one that will convey his/her own message with as little addition as possible. Or reverse the process: ask students to look at artwork and then adapt messages to the works. Each student will indicate the message of the original work as well as his/her message through the use of appropriation. Among the class they should discuss whether or not appropriation itself has any effect on message and whether or not each student’s work is homage or copyright infringement.

Resources:

- Music video as introduction to “appropriation:” *70 Million* by Hold Your Horses
- Article with introductory information on “appropriation:” *Pictures of Pictures: Princeton University Art Museum Explores the Ways Artists Nest Images Inside One Another*, by Ilene Dube (centraljersey.com).



Sherrie Levine, *After Walker Evans: 4*, Gellatin Silver Print