

Teaching with *Beyond the Centennial* by Carlos Tello



This printer-friendly document is designed to help teachers present, discuss, and teach about Oklahoma history and art literacy through the use of this work of art. The information and exercises here will aid in understanding and learning from this artwork.

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First Analysis and Criticism

The steps below may be used for group discussion or individual written work.

Before beginning the steps, take two minutes to study the artwork. Look at all the details and subject matter. After studying the artwork in silence, follow these steps:

Describe:

Be specific and descriptive. List only the facts about the objects in the painting or sculpture.

- What things are in the artwork?
- What is happening?
- List what you see (people, animals, clothing, environment, objects, etc.).

Analyze:

- How are the elements of art – line, shape, form, texture, space, and value used?
- How are the principles of design – unity, pattern, rhythm, variety, balance, emphasis, and proportion used?

Interpretation:

Make initial, reasonable inferences.

- What do you think is happening in the artwork?
- Who is doing what?
- What do you think the artist is trying to say to the viewer?

Evaluate:

Express your opinion.

- What do you think about the artwork?
- Is it important?
- How does it help you understand the past?
- Do you like it? Why or why not?

Overview of the Artwork

As Oklahomans reflected on our first century of statehood in 2007, members of Friends of the Capitol envisioned Oklahoma's next 100 years. Out of this inspiration they commissioned the mural, *Beyond the Centennial* for the half-circle alcove in the Hall of Governors. Based on the Centennial theme, "A unique history. An extraordinary future," artist Carlos Tello has rendered an insightful, yet dynamic mural that reflects upon our distinct history, contemporary culture, and limitless future.

The left section of the mural is a tribute to Oklahoma's diverse history, wildlife, and natural beauty. Our state's rich and vibrant American Indian heritage is represented by three figures in the upper left who reflect tribal continuance and traditions. The Land Run "Sooner" who bursts across the green pasture with his stake in hand echoes the pioneering spirit of our state's founders. The enduring strength of Oklahomans is illustrated by the family standing on the prairie fields left barren by the Dust Bowl. Familiar flora and fauna, including the state's mammal, the bison, the scissortail flycatcher, and the Redbud tree capture the state's continued ties to the land.

Representing Oklahoma's ongoing advancement and future, the right section symbolizes the cutting-edge industries driving our state into the 21st century such as technology, medicine, research, energy, and space exploration. Oklahomans continue to lead the way in harnessing and mastering the state's abundant resources, including the building of dams to create lakes, an engineering achievement intended to prevent another Dust Bowl, and the extraction of petroleum and natural gas. The industrious figures working on the machines testify to our credence in the state motto, "Labor Conquers All." Oklahomans' goodwill, heroism, and unconquerable spirit, defining qualities that carry us forward, are represented by the fireman in the upper right who breaks through the rubble to help victims of the Oklahoma City bombing.

The mural culminates in the center with the universal "Every Man" who represents every Oklahoman. Carrying the state in his hands, he metaphorically lifts Oklahoma, represented by the state's outline and Osage shield emblem from the state flag, upward into our boundless future.

About the Artist

Carlos Tello A native of Mexico, Carlos Tello received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Graphic Communication from the Metropolitan Autonomous University (UAM) located in Mexico City in the 1980s. He continued his studies at UAM and obtained a Certificate in Airbrush Techniques and took a course on Special Effects in Photomechanics and Lithography. A noted muralist, painter, and potter, Tello relocated to Oklahoma City in 1992 at the invitation of various organizations to paint murals and since then, has made Oklahoma City his home.

Tello has participated in many individual and group exhibitions at the Individual Artists of Oklahoma Gallery, Oklahoma City; City Arts Center, Oklahoma City; Kirkpatrick Center Gallery, Oklahoma City; Firehouse Art Center, Norman; and the Oklahoma City Museum of Art, among others.

In addition, Tello has worked with the Latino Community Development Center and the Oklahoma City Museum of Art to present students with the foundations of studio art throughout the metro area and across the state. One of his most noted murals is located at the Latino Community Development Center in Oklahoma City.

Oklahoma History Details



1. Leroy Gordon Cooper of Shawnee and William R. Pague of Okemah were among the original seven U.S. astronauts. Other U.S. astronauts from Oklahoma include Owen K. Gariott of Enid, Dr. Shannon Lucid of Oklahoma City, Stuart A. Roosa of Claremore, and Thomas P. Stafford of Weatherford.
2. Oklahoma's state motto "Labor Conquers All" is illustrated here by workers. The motto originally appeared on the seal of Oklahoma Territory. In 1907, the motto was incorporated into the state seal.
3. The Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City was bombed by a domestic terrorist, killing 168 people on April 19, 1995. Here, a fireman is seen assisting the victims of the bombing.
4. Oklahoma is the third largest gas-producing state in the nation.
5. Oklahoma has key industries in aerospace, agriculture, bioscience, manufacturing, computer science, energy, nanotechnology, sensors, health, and education. These science and technological advances continue to drive our economic future.
6. Oklahoma has more man-made lakes than any other state with more than one million surface acres of water and 2,000 more miles of shoreline than the Atlantic and Gulf coasts combined.
7. The dust bowl of the 1930s, caused by high winds and severe droughts, forced many Oklahoma families to flee for healthier conditions.
8. The Barite Rose Rock, Oklahoma's state rock, is found only in a streak of rock that runs north and south through the middle of Oklahoma. The rock is a reddish-brown stone that resembles a rose in full bloom.

Oklahoma History Details



9. Oklahoma has the largest American Indian population of any state. Many of the 252,420 American Indians living in Oklahoma today are descendants of the original 67 tribes inhabiting Indian Territory. Thirty-nine of the American Indian tribes currently living in Oklahoma are headquartered in the state.
10. The American Buffalo, or Bison, is Oklahoma's state animal. The Bison is a massive animal that weighs from 800 to 2,000 pounds and stands nearly six feet high at the shoulder. A large head, high hump on the shoulders and dark brown shaggy hair characterize the animal.
11. Grasses grow in abundance in Oklahoma. Bluestem, buffalo, sand lovegrass, and grama grasses are native, with the bluestem found mostly in the eastern and central regions, and buffalo grass most common in the western counties, known as the "short grass country."
12. Oklahoma's state bird, the Scissor-Tailed Flycatcher, is a somewhat quiet bird with beautiful plumage and a long sleek tail that is twice as long as its body. The deeply-forked tail resembles a pair of modern scissors.
13. Unassigned lands of Oklahoma were claimed and established by way of land runs, a race to stake a claim on the lands.
14. Oklahoma's state tree, the Redbud, grows in the valleys and ravines of Oklahoma. In early spring, its reddish-pink blossoms brighten the landscape throughout the state.
15. Oklahoma has a rich fossil record which can be found from Cimarron to McCurtain counties. Oklahoma's official state fossil, the Saurophaganax, along with other dinosaurs have been found in Cimarron county near Black Mesa. Dinosaur footprints can even be seen today preserved in sandstone just north of Kenton. Oklahoma's official dinosaur, the Acrocanthosaurus-Atokensis has been found in McCurtain and Atoka counties.

Visual Art Details



1. The central figure of the mural is a symbolic and universal “Every Man” who represents all people of Oklahoma. The figure lacks detail in order to be relatable to everyone.
2. The gestures of the “Every Man” are also symbolic as he is carrying the state in his hands; he metaphorically lifts Oklahoma, represented by the state’s outline and Osage shield emblem from the state flag, upward into our boundless future.
3. The viewer’s eye is drawn to the “Every Man” by using complementary colors. The warm oranges and reds of the skin-tone are outlined with cool blue which creates a striking contrast.
4. The left side of the mural illustrates our state’s past. The colors used on the left side are mostly earth-tones. This color choice recalls the belief that the Earth absorbs our past, and the past is integrated into the properties of the soil.
5. The right side of the mural illustrates our state’s present day and future. The colors used on the right side are cool blues, greens, and violets. Cool colors are symbolic of industry and technology which is associated with modern day.

Suggested Reading

Further reading and research to complement your understanding of the artwork:

Oklahoma Adventure, Centennial Edition 2006 by Oklahoma History Press

Oklahoma Stories: Early Settlers and the Run of 1889, **pages 320-327**

Oklahoma Stories: Oklahoma Astronauts, **pages 348-351**

Oklahoma Stories: Darkness at Noon: The Dust Bowl, **pages 358-364**

Interesting Facts About Oklahoma, **page 418**

State Emblems, **pages 419-420**

Oklahoma: Land of Contrasts by Clairmont Press

Appendix I: Oklahoma's Vital Statistics, **page 502**

Appendix II: Oklahoma's Symbols, **pages 503-504**

The Story of Oklahoma, Second Edition by Baird and Goble

Appendix C: Oklahoma Geography, **page 405**

Appendix H: Oklahoma Symbols, **pages 410-411**

Final Analysis

After completing the readings and activities, go back and look at the artwork again. Now that the students are more familiar with the subject matter, ask them to write a few paragraphs about their interpretation of the artwork. In their own words, the writing should address the following:

- Description of the artwork and who/what is in it
- How the elements of art and principles of design are used within the artwork
- What feelings, emotions, or information the artwork depicts
- Their opinion of the artwork

Pass Objectives

High School- Oklahoma History

Standard 1: The student will demonstrate process skills in social studies.

1-Identify, analyze, and interpret primary and secondary sources (e.g., artifacts, diaries, letters, art, music, literature, photographs, documents, newspapers, and contemporary media).

3-Interpret information from a broad selection of research materials (e.g., encyclopedias, almanacs, dictionaries, atlases, and cartoons).

Standard 6: The student will investigate the geography and economic assets of Oklahoma and trace their effects on the history of the state.

1-Locate the significant physical and human features of the state on a map (e.g., major waterways, cities, natural resources, military installations, major highways, and major landform regions).

2-Examine how economic cycles (e.g., the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl, and oil boom and bust) have affected and continue to affect major sectors of state employment (e.g., fossil fuels, timber, mining, tourism, the military, and agriculture).

Standard 8: The student will examine factors that contributed to the political, economic, and social history of Oklahoma during the twentieth century.

4-Examine and evaluate the causes and effects of terrorism in Oklahoma, including the A. P. Murrah Federal Building bombing in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995, the responses of Oklahomans to the event, and the creation of the Oklahoma City National Memorial.

High School- Visual Art

Standard 1: Language of Visual Art - The student will identify visual art terms (e.g., content, engraving, foreshortening, mosaic, perspective)

1-Identify and apply knowledge of the principles of design: rhythm, balance (symmetrical, asymmetrical, radial) contrast, movement, variety, center of interest (emphasis), and repetition in personal artwork, and the artwork of others.

3-Describe exhibitions of original works of art seen in the school or community.

4-Differentiate between art criticism and art reviews, recognizing that criticism is positive as well as negative in its evaluation of a work of art.

Standard 2: Visual Art History and Culture - The student will recognize the development of visual art from an historical and cultural perspective.

1-PROFICIENT: Analyze a work of art within its cultural and historical context.

5-PROFICIENT: Identify major regional, national, and international collections of art.
ADVANCED: Visit and critique art at local, regional, national, and international museums, and art exhibitions.

6-PROFICIENT: Identify the use of visual art in business and industry, advertising, television and film.

Standard 4: Visual Art Appreciation - The student will appreciate visual art as a vehicle of human expression.