

American Museum of Western Art – The Anschutz Collection

Writing the West: Season 5, February 2024

Setting the Stage

[Story Map](#) pairing: **Process and Voice.**

When working on a painting, different artists use different processes. Some isolate themselves, while others form accountability communities; some do research and conduct interviews, while others embark on expeditions and create in the field. As you write using the prompt guide, reflect on which tactics might be the most beneficial for you as a storyteller and add them to your process.



Bull Dance, Mandan O-kee-pa Ceremony (painted in the field) and Interior of a Mandan Lodge (painted in the studio) – George Catlin (1796-1872):

Artists in the studio versus artists in the field. Catlin believed Native cultures wouldn't survive American expansionism. As a result, one goal of his became to “sell a dying culture.” To do this, he needed to pass through as many Native communities in the West as he could. Sometimes he painted in the field, using a limited palette; sometimes he took sketches back East to his studio where a larger palette and longer amounts of time awaited. Using Catlin's point of view, choose one of his processes and describe it.



Return of the War Party and Indian Weaver – Eanger Irving Couse (1866-1936):

Artists in community. Unlike Catlin, Couse valued community as part of his process. The artist colony, the salon, the ever-widening social circle, Couse embraced them all. Couse also chose to live where he worked. From his community, he could meet potential models for his paintings, hire interpreters when needed, and share his connections with other artists. By living in the same place for decades, one of his goals became to preserve Indigenous culture. Not exploit it. Using Couse's point of view, imagine a moment or a scene in his community and describe it.



The Silenced War Whoop and The Attackers – Charles Schreyvogel (1861-1912):

Artists conducting research and interviews. Unlike Couse and Catlin, Schreyvogel didn't have access to the West before wanting to depict it in his paintings. His goal was to paint the Indian Wars; and as a result, he relied on interviews with Indigenous warriors and U.S. soldiers, as well as secondhand experiences, to provide him with the information needed to add realistic details to his paintings. Using Schreyvogel's point of view, choose one of his processes and describe it.