



DEAN MITCHELL

GADSDEN ARTS ALLIANCE

EDUCATOR PACKET



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Dear Gadsden County Educators,

The Gadsden Arts Center invites you and your students to participate in the Gadsden Art Alliance through our traveling print series, which will be at your school's media center at some point this academic year. The contents of this packet are all in accordance with Florida Sunshine State Standards, and we hope it will be helpful to you in your classroom. The works chosen in this series are all high-quality prints of nationally known watercolorist and Quincy native, Dean Mitchell. Throughout the year, the Gadsden Arts Center will deliver a presentation to groups of students within your school. This print series will accompany the presentation to engage and educate students.

This packet is designed to assist you in engaging students in art and other content areas using interactive lesson plans with the print exhibition.

This packet includes informational articles, lesson plans, a glossary, and a list of images. The Arts Center will be offering guided lessons with the activities in the media center as well.

Thank you
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DEAN MITCHELL

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Dean Mitchell was born to a single mother, Hazel, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1957. However, it was his grandmother Marie who raised him in Quincy, Florida while his mother pursued a college education. Marie struggled to get by, working while she could in tobacco fields and for a wealthy family. While Dean did not know his mother Hazel well because she only visited on holidays and breaks from college, but Dean learned to appreciate the loving care of his grandmother, Marie.



Dean Mitchell's grandmother, Marie.

From an early age, Dean Mitchell knew he wanted to be an artist. At the age of 7, he completed his first painting. During one of their weekly trips to the store, Dean used the money he had saved up to purchase a paint-by-number set. When he completed the painting he proudly showed it to Marie, and then continued saving up so he could continue painting. Even though Mitchell's mother and aunt discouraged him from a career in art, he began saving lunch money to buy paint brushes and oil paints. His teachers and devoted grandmother also encouraged him to pursue his dream of being an artist. Around the age of 8, Mitchell started working on tobacco farms near his home. Many families in Quincy worked on tobacco farms and by working, he helped to support his family. Throughout his career, Dean Mitchell painted many images of Quincy and Gadsden County: tobacco barns, homes, and many people he knew and loved growing up there.

While in high school, Mitchell began selling his artwork. His high teacher, Tom Harris was an early champion for Dean Mitchell as an artist; he took Mitchell to art fairs and competitions, in addition to helping him develop his skills in school. As an eighteen year old high school junior, he entered his first art competition and won. By the time he graduated, he has already established himself as a painter. With a grant, several scholarships, and money from the sale of his art, Mitchell was able to attend the Columbus College of Art and Design in Ohio. During his junior year of college, he entered his first art competition and won a savings bond.



After graduating from college and working for Hallmark Cards as an illustrator for a short period, Mitchell decided to focus on his career as a fine artist. Growing recognition, competitive success, and the ability to live on a budget made it possible for Mitchell to support himself entirely from his art sales. At the age of 27, he became one of the youngest signature members of the American Watercolor Society. From 1988 to 1999, Dean Mitchell won 74 awards, but was still determined to find further success.

Today, Dean Mitchell is one of the most highly acclaimed painters in the United States. Michael Kimmelman, *New York Times* art critic wrote, "Mr. Mitchell is a virtual modern-day Vermeer of ordinary black people given dignity through the eloquence of his concentration and touch."

Mitchell has won over 450 awards for his paintings. His works of art are found in the permanent collections of the Arkansas Art Center, Canton Museum of Contemporary Art, Gadsden Arts Center, Hubbard Museum of the American West, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Mississippi Museum of Art, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, and the St. Louis Museum.

DEAN MITCHELL

Of his 2011 exhibition at the Gadsden Arts Center titled “Rich in Spirit,” Dean Mitchell says:

This is one of my most important shows at the Gadsden Arts Center. In it is a belief system; it is all we have as human beings in dealing with complex emotions of how we treat one another. Rich in Spirit expresses a belief in doing what is right with a moral compass with or without material possessions. The material is important now as we wrestle with fairness in our societies throughout the world. In my opinion, a person can have both. Material, sometimes in the hands of a wise person, lifts us all, but in the hands of a fool can lead to hurting huge numbers of us in the physical world as we know it. For me, trying to express these feelings requires thought with words and symbols. Feelings are very abstract and can change as we experience life with a balance.

Below are excerpts from the Southwest Art article featuring Dean Mitchell¹:

Dean Mitchell has been compared to Vermeer, Wyeth, Homer, and Hopper, but it's the Andrew Wyeth comparison that always takes him aback, and perhaps with good reason. Their backgrounds couldn't have been more different, Mitchell says. Andrew Wyeth grew up on the East Coast in a prominent, artistic family, the son of well-known illustrator N.C. Wyeth. Mitchell grew up in the South—poor, black, and not even knowing his father. His mother discouraged him from a career in art because it was too hard to make a living. And his aunt told him, “Black people will never buy pictures.”

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He finds beauty in everything, from historic whiteboard-paneled Southern churches to the faces of hard-working street musicians in New Orleans. Since his art school days at Columbus College of Art & Design in Ohio, he has been concerned with his immediate surroundings as subject matter—and he is not afraid to tackle personal and hard-to-sell images, such as a portrait of his uncle when he was dying of cancer. Mitchell describes himself as an American painter interested in contemporary subjects. “I think a lot of what I like to paint has to do with growing up poor and without a father in my life. I am always searching for a sense of place—a sense of intimacy in my work,” he says. “Sometimes that doesn't have mass appeal.”

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Whether it's old buildings about to be torn down or ordinary people who go unnoticed, Mitchell says in some ways he identifies with it all, because he too knows what it's like to feel “discarded” and experience “a sense of hidden hurt.” None of that sense of hurt is visible in his outward demeanor, though: The first thing you notice about him is that he is animated, exuberant, and positive. In fact, he often gives motivational talks to high school and university students about working hard and setting goals to achieve their dreams.

¹ Gangelhoff, Bonnie. **Dean Mitchell: Rich in Spirit**. Southwest Art Magazine. April, 2011. <http://www.southwestart.com/featured/dean-mitchell-rich-in-spirit>

LIST OF FRAMED PRINTS

Carolyn, 1995
print of watercolor original

Dean Mitchell was raised by his grandmother, and his experience in the community of Quincy had a significant impact on his artwork. Dean Mitchell's work is "Rich in Spirit" because each subject of his work has been an inspiration to him in some ways. For example in the print entitled "Carolyn," he was inspired by Carolyn's personality. Dean and Carolyn are cousins that grew up as close as brother and sister. Of her he says, "Her soul was filled with fun and laughter, and I was a little in awe of her complex majestic beauty. I was quieter and more withdrawn and she teased me about being a homebody. She shared my uncle's love of dancing and they would often dance together in the living room of our house."²



Carriage Ride, 2003
print of watercolor original

Dean Mitchell painted every day life. Walking around New Orleans, Louisiana, carriage rides were very popular. While Mitchell particularly loves painting the people and places from his early years in Quincy, he has also found new places that inspire him, such as New Orleans. Mitchell frequently visits there, painting the architecture and people in a way that captures their history and peace; his canvas always tells a story.³

Let Us Pray
print of watercolor original

This painting is powerful because of the position of preacher and the expression on the preacher's face. Dean Mitchell's use of color also highlights the most important parts of the piece. The light shining down on the preacher and the yellow lines running up towards his face are used to point out his powerful expression during a moment of Sunday service--a vital part of Dean Mitchell's life.



² Ake, Anne. **The Art of Dean Mitchell: The Early Years**. Mitchell Studios. 1996 (p. 6).

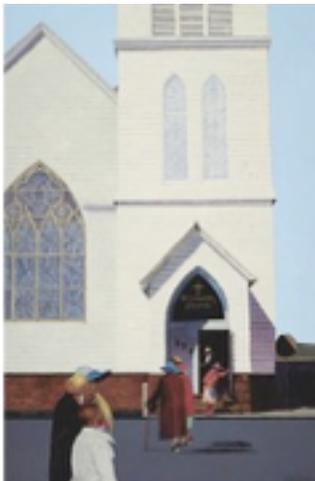
³ **The Watercolors of Dean Mitchell**. Mitchell Studios. 2004 (p. 6).

LIST OF FRAMED PRINTS

Return for Honor, 1990

print of egg yolk and watercolor original

Dean Mitchell painted this and many others following visits to Fort Scott. Of his visits he says, “[they] stirred my soul, and I find myself being drawn back again and again. This was one of the first places where African Americans were allowed to fight in the service of their country. Perhaps their ghosts still walk the grounds, certainly their pride and dignity linger in the atmosphere.”⁴ While living in Kansas City and participating in “Arts in the Parks,” Mitchell learned of the Buffalo Soldiers who though treated badly, fought proudly for their country. Painting individual reenactors was Mitchell’s attempt to honor the original Buffalo Soldiers.⁵



Sunday Morning, 1994

print of watercolor original

Waking up and going to church on Sunday morning was important to his family, community, and culture. He has done many paintings of part of his Sunday rituals. He depicted this tradition in the work entitled *Sunday Morning*, with the women in their colorful hats walking into the church shortly before a service.

Window to the Past

print of watercolor original

Dean Mitchell worked in tobacco barns when he was a boy for little money. The impact of seeing the system of poverty for all the adults that worked with him never left him, and so Mitchell has painted many tobacco barns during his career. Also, the title of this painting is important. The barn is likely a symbol for not only Mitchell’s past but also the history of those he worked with and African Americans who worked in tobacco at the poverty level while barn owners and tobacco companies made fortunes.⁶



⁴ Ake, Anne. *The Art of Dean Mitchell: The Early Years*. Mitchell Studios. 1996 (p. 74).

⁵ Mitchell, Dean & Dennis M. Smith, Jr., M.D. *Of Southern Passions, Paintings, and Poems... a synthesis of the art of Dean Mitchell and poetry inspired by his images*. Local Legends Press. 2012, (p. 226)

⁶ *Ibid*, (p. 18).

LESSON PLANS

GRADE	LESSON THEMES	PAGE
1-3	Symmetry	12
3	Texture	13
3-4	Perspective	14
5	Art Analysis	15

Symmetry in Stained Glass

Level: 1st-3rd Grade

Subject: Symmetry

Focal Print: *Sunday Morning*

Time: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Materials: drawing paper folded in half, crayons, markers, craft sticks, print or reproduction of *Sunday Morning* (available online on the Gadsden Arts Alliance Resource Page)

FL Standards: VA.1.C.3.1, VA.2.C.3.1, VA.3.C.3.1

Objective: Students will discuss Dean Mitchell's *Sunday Morning* and its use of symmetry and asymmetry. Student will then create symmetrical drawings of stained glass windows, similar to the one in *Sunday Morning* and explore ways of using asymmetry in their art.

Discussion Questions:

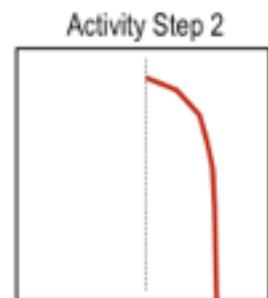
1. Review Dean Mitchell's background (PowerPoint available and we encourage reading *Against All Odds* with the class)
2. Take two minutes to look at *Sunday Morning* and tell us what you see.
3. What is symmetry? (Allow multiple students to answer)
4. Given the definition of symmetry, what do you think is asymmetry?
5. Where do you see symmetry and asymmetry in this painting?
6. As a class, discuss the ways artists use symmetry and asymmetry and places you'll find them in nature.

Activity:

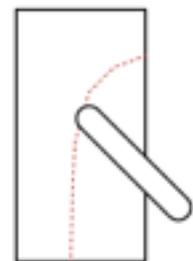
1. Pass out materials (listed above).
2. Draw half of the outline of a window on the inside right side using a crayon.
3. Fold the paper so the outline is on the inside and use a craft stick to press along the line. This will transfer the crayon onto the opposite side.
4. Open the paper to see the window shape. Repeat steps 2 & 3 with designs on the inside of the window. Students should also experiment with asymmetry by only transferring certain parts to the other side.

Critique:

1. Group students into groups of 2-3.
2. Tell students to share their artwork with their group and to explain where they used symmetry and asymmetry, rotating so each group member gets to talk (approx. 2 minutes per rotation).
3. Bring the class together again and discuss 2-3 examples as a class.



Activity Step 3



Creating Texture

Level: 3rd Grade

Subject: Texture

Focal Print: *Return for Honor, Window to the Past, Carolyn*

Time: 1 hour

Materials: drawing paper, pencils, crayons, markers, paint, brushes, prints or reproductions of Dean Mitchell's paintings (available online on the Gadsden Arts Alliance Resource Page)

FL Standards: VA.3.C.2.2, VA.3.C.2.3, VA.3.C.3.1, VA.3.S.2.1, LACC.3.SL.1.3

Objective: Students will discuss Dean Mitchell's paintings and the use of texture. Student will then create texture drawings/paintings and discuss/critique them as a class. Students will use careful observation, questioning strategies, comparisons, and art production.

Discussion Questions:

4. Review Dean Mitchell's background (PowerPoint available or read *Against All Odds*)
5. Take two minutes to look at the paintings and tell us what you see.
6. Do these look realistic? Why/How?
7. What is texture? (Allow multiple students to answer)
8. What kinds of textures do you see in these paintings? (Objects such as skin, fabric, trees, wood barn and what they feel like such as soft, rough, hard, smooth, bumpy)
9. As a class, discuss how you can make something look rough, hard, bumpy, etc. and how Dean Mitchell made his textures look real. Use white board, or large piece of paper to demonstrate examples.

Activity:

1. Pass out supplies.
2. Have students either draw/paint something from the classroom or something imagined, but up fairly close, so the object isn't obvious. For example, a sleeve and part of a hand or a corner of a table and the floor (see samples). Students should focus on the textures of these objects. Students should also try to fill the whole paper.
3. Offer suggestions to individual students for how to create the illusion of texture. For example, cross-hatching and shading.

Critique:

1. Arrange students into groups of 2-3.
2. Tell students to share their artwork with their group, but to not tell what object/texture they are trying to depict. Their partner should try to guess the object & texture. Rotate so each group member's work is discussed (approx. 2 minutes per rotation).
3. Bring the class together again and ask students to share examples of how they could easily see certain textures, or if they thought someone in their group did a good job. Discuss 2-3 examples as a class. Offer suggestions to students who struggled with the assignment on how to improve and encourage students to use texture in their art to improve its quality.

Drawing Perspective

Level: 3rd-4th Grade

Subject: Perspective

Focal Print: *Carriage Ride*

Time: 1 hour

Materials: paper (drawing and lined), pencils, crayons or markers, projector for PowerPoint, print or reproduction of *Carriage Ride* (available online on the Gadsden Arts Alliance Resource Page)

FL Standards: VA.3.C.1.2, VA.3.C.3.1, VA.3.C.3.2, LACC.3.SL.1.3, LACC.3.L.3.4

Objective: Students will discuss Dean Mitchell's painting entitled *Carriage Ride* and create perspective drawings. Students will be able to discuss the way contrast and proportions create depth in atmospheric perspective through the creation of artworks. Students will use careful observation, questioning strategies, comparisons, and art production.

Discussion Questions:

1. Review Dean Mitchell's background (PowerPoint available and we encourage reading *Against All Odds* with the class)
2. Take one minute to look at the painting and tell us what you see.
3. Where might this be?
4. Have any of you been to New Orleans? That is the place painted here.
5. Does anyone know what the difference between a background and foreground is? If students are unfamiliar with the words, give them clues from root words as well as context clues.
6. What is in the background?
7. What is in the foreground?
8. Why does the background look farther away?
9. Why do you think Dean Mitchell painted this scene?

Additional Demonstration:

Use the accompanying PowerPoint to discuss foreground, background, vanishing point, horizon, proportions, contrast and other appropriate terms.

Activity:

1. Pass out supplies (1 drawing paper and 1 lined paper per student)
2. Have students lightly draw a horizon line in pencil.
3. Tell students to draw a place they have visited and liked. For buildings that are far away, make them smaller in the background. For buildings closer, make them bigger, in the foreground.
4. Offer suggestions to students for contrast and proportions.
5. Ask students to describe their drawing on a separate sheet of paper, providing details about when they visited there, and why they like it.

Analyzing Dean Mitchell's Art

Level: 5th Grade

Subject: Analyzing a Painting

Focal Image: *Rowena*

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: Copies of focal image or projector (images available online on the Gadsden Arts Alliance Resource Page), paper, pencils or pens

FL Standards: VA.5.C.1.2, VA.5.C.3.2, VA.5.O.1.3

Objective: *Students will look at Rowena to determine the emotion of the piece. Students will use appropriate art vocabulary to analyze the painting, the artist technique, and form a hypothesis about the artist's intent.*

Discussion Questions:

1. Take a couple minutes for students to look at the painting and write down at least 5 adjectives as their initial reaction.
2. As a class, call on students to describe the painting, identifying what they see.
3. Read the following excerpt from Dean Mitchell about this piece and discuss how it impacts the students' opinions of the piece.

She was already very old when I met her, but she was full of life and energy. I remember watching the tiny steps she took when she walked, but I've never seen a little old lady move as fast! I knew that I had to paint her. She was one of those rare people that you just want to share with the world. Something told me that the time was not right, so I waited.

When I was invited to enter the Hubbard Exhibit, I knew this was what I had been waiting for. Rowena capture the hearts of the viewers and judges, as she had captured mine. She was a very gentle person and spoke often of children. She never had a child of her own, but she loved children and much of her life was devoted to caring for the children of others. Her philosophy of what ails the world could be neatly summed up in one phrase, "Children just need love." She honored me by calling me one of her honorary, God-given children.

4. Use the following questions to prompt further information from the painting.
 - Why did the artist paint this?
 - What is the painting's purpose?
 - What is the feeling you get when you see it?
 - What do you think the artist meant to say with the artwork?
 - What does the artwork mean to you?
 - What of the artist's environment/background might have influenced the artwork?
5. Finally, ask students to formulate a hypothesis about the artist's intent. Students should also explain how Dean Mitchell's creative and technical ability was used to produce the art.

GLOSSARY

aerial perspective – the appearance of an object viewed through the atmosphere, such as contrast reduction in backgrounds reduced color saturation (for example mountains looking blue in the background)

background – the area that is farthest from the viewer

contrast – the degree of difference between light and dark; high contrast has a greater difference between light and dark (bright whites and dark blacks) while low contrast has a lower difference (grey tones)

expression – the look of feeling on someone's face

figurative – describes artwork representing the form of a human or an animal

foreground – the part of a view that is nearest to the viewer

highlight – the area of most light in a painting

line of symmetry – an axis that divides an image into two mirror images

horizon – the line at which the earth's surface and the sky appear to meet

landscape – an artwork which depicts scenery such as mountains, valleys, trees, rivers, and forests

linear perspective – a type of perspective used by artists in which objects are drawn using a vanishing point and lines which all lead to the point (see visual explanation)

medium – material used by an artist to produce a work of art

mood – the overall feeling that an artwork generates for the viewer

portrait – an artwork of someone

profile – the outline of the human face from the side

proportions – relative size between two objects

spirit – the part of human associated with the mind, will, and feelings

still life – a painting, picture, or photograph of inanimate objects (for example, flowers, vases, a desk, etc.)

subject – the topic or theme; the person or thing that is focused on in an artwork

symbol – something that stands for something else

symmetry – the quality of being the same on both sides of a line of symmetry

texture – the feel or appearance of a surface

theme – a main idea that unifies a group of artworks

tradition – something that is handed down

vanishing point – the point at which parallel lines viewed in linear perspective appear to meet

watercolor – a medium in which the paints are made of color pigments suspended in water

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Publications (by year)

Mitchell, Dean & Dennis M. Smith, Jr., M.D. **Of Southern Passions, Paintings, and Poems... a synthesis of the art of Dean Mitchell and poetry inspired by his images.** Local Legends Press. 2012

Gangelhoff, Bonnie. **Dean Mitchell: Rich in Spirit.** Southwest Art Magazine, April 2011.

Rose, Joshua. **The Space Within: New Dean Mitchell Retrospective at the Canton Museum of Art.** American Art Collector, October 2010.

Collaborations: Two Decades of African American Art: Hearne Fine Art 1988-2008. Pyramid/Hearne Fine Art Galler, Little Rock, Arizona. Exhibition Catalog, 2009.

The Harriet and Harmon Kelley Collection of African American Art: Works on Paper. Historic City Hall, Lake Charles, Louisiana. Exhibition Catalog, 2007.

Dean Mitchell. American Art Collector, Scottsdale, Arizona. February 2006.

The Watercolors of Dean Mitchell: Beauty in the Real. Mitchell Studios, 2004.

Dean Mitchell: Recent Paintings at the Red Piano Art Gallery. Red Piano Gallery, Hilton Head, South Carolina. Exhibition Catalog, 2001.

Ake, Anne. **The Art of Dean Mitchell: The Early Years.** Mitchell Studios. Exhibition Catalog, 2002.

Black Romantic: The Figurative Impulse in Contemporary African American Art. Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, New York. Exhibition Catalog, 2002.

Outward Bound: America Art at the Brink of the Twenty-First Century. Meridian International Center, Washington, D.C. Exhibition Catalog, 1999-2000.

Ake, Anne, ed. **The Art of Dean Mitchell: The Early Years.** Mitchell Studios, Overland Park, Kansas, 1996.

Lehrman, Lewis B. **Being an Artist.** F & W Publications, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1992.

Hubbard Art Award: 1990 Pursuit of Excellence. Hubbard Museum of the American West, Ruidoso Downs, New Mexico. Exhibition Catalog, 1990.

Mitchell, Dean. **Painting Your Heart.** Artists Magazine, 2008.

The Watercolor Page: Dean Mitchell. American Artist, 1989.



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