



For: Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services
City of Inglewood
One Manchester Blvd.
Inglewood, CA. 90301

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\Helen Lundeberg (1908-1999), “Pioneer of Modernism” Brief Biography

An important pioneer of modernism, abstract impressionism and abstract classicism in Southern California, Helen Lundeberg has been called one of the daring pioneers and explorers of 20th Century American art. She was born in Chicago on June 24, 1908. Her family moved to Pasadena in 1912 and she attended Pasadena Junior College with the intention of becoming an English teacher, although she enjoyed art. After her graduation in 1930, a family friend offered Lundeberg a three-month scholarship to Stickney Memorial Art School in Pasadena. Her instructor there, Lorser Feitelson, later became her husband.

Lundeberg exhibited her first painting in San Diego in 1931 and held her first one-person show in 1933 as the country remained in an economic downturn. During this Great Depression, the government offered aid to artists, as well as to the hungry jobless through the Work Progress Administration’s (WPA) Federal Art Project.

Although noted for her Post-Surrealist paintings and lithographs, the WPA asked Lundeberg to create murals of a specific subject. “The History of Transportation” starts out with wagon wheels and ends with passenger planes. “I did not try to do anything that could be called Post-Surrealism,” the artist once said. “I simply made a procession . . . which tells a story and is decorative at the same time.”

Working on this and other WPA murals validated Lundeberg as a professional artist early in her career. She was 31 when she designed and supervised the construction of “The History of Transportation.” The completion of the artwork was psychologically liberating for women throughout the country. “Altogether, it was a great thing for most artists,” Lundeberg said. “And for me! My being an artist had been a worrisome thing for my family. But the project saved the day.”

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"History of Transportation" - Mural by Helen Lundeberg

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After the end of the Federal Art Project in 1942, Lundeberg sought a new perspective for her work. She began to paint postcard-size paintings in reaction to the large scale and impersonality of the mural designs. She later returned to easel painting, producing landscapes, interiors and still lifes in the spirit of New Classicism.

By 1962, Lundeberg had achieved wide national recognition, participating in exhibitions on both coasts. Throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, her work was exhibited in retrospectives that contributed to her growing acclaim.

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art exhibited "A Birthday Salute to Helen Lundeberg" in 1988. The show was an appreciation of the extent of her work, the evolution of her aesthetic and a testament to her devotion to her craft. Her body of work spanned decades, as she created art that expressed her depth of vision and imagination.

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