

Impact Statement

Sydney Laster, Grade 8.

More Than Just a Picture, 2020.

Acrylic on canvas, 12 x 9 Inches.

Washburn Rural Middle School, Topeka, KS

Unsung Hero: Lewis Hine

In class we were told we were going to be doing a project about an unsung hero. We were given a website with a list of people to choose from. A lot of people in my class chose the same person and I wanted to do someone different. I found Lewis Hine on the list and thought he was so cool. He was an artist like me. His art was photography used to bring about social change. I loved how he was committed to his cause. At times he even risked his life to get his message out.

Next, I had to learn more about him. So, I went back to the Lowell Milken Center website to begin my research. From there I expanded by going to other sources on the internet which proved very helpful. When he was 18 Hine's father died, so he had to help support his family. He worked for four dollars a day to go to college and support his family. He became a teacher in New York and became interested in photography. He would later take a full-time job as a photographer with the National Child Labor Committee. In the 1900's there were very few labor regulations, making for horrible working conditions and it was even worse for child laborers. Hine decided to photograph these conditions. Because going into factories was very dangerous and exposing these problems was sometimes life risking, he would often wear a disguise so he wouldn't be recognized. Later, Lewis Hine would make it his goal to publicize this problem. He created a photo series of the harsh working environments and the people he witnessed working in them. Photographs from this series were picked up by newspapers and magazines nationwide bringing attention to this problem. For my painting to represent his work I wanted to include a camera that he would've used in that time, so I researched what a camera looked like during that time period. I also wanted to include his picture of newsboys smoking. I was drawn to that picture for some reason. I wanted both of those things in my painting, so I put the picture in the camera lens's reflection.

When this project began, I knew I wanted to include Hine in my painting, but I also knew that I don't feel confident in painting realistic humans. After several days of worrying, I decided just to jump right in. I learned to not think too much about how I'm going to finish the project, just jump in, start working towards a goal, and then add on till I finish. I have also learned from this project that I should stand up for what I believe in. When something happening in the world is wrong, I want to be a part of making a change.

Even though Lewis Hine is more well known now, he is a huge inspiration and did amazing and important work. He played a role in a big part of history. If it wasn't for his help, we might not have passed the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938. Pictures can make such a huge impact. Capturing a moment perfectly tells a story that could change your perspective or bring awareness to things that need more attention.