

4 March 2022

Dear Selection Committee for the College of Creative Arts Faculty/Student Mentored Research Award:

Madelyn Brodie is an art historian, painter, and avid environmentalist. She brings these facets of her life together in her research and has produced a significant MA thesis that fills a major gap in the scholarship and contributes to the body of knowledge in art history.

Her work demonstrates that artwork cataloguing and depicting flora, fauna, and landscapes produced by three early twentieth-century artists had a direct impact on conservation efforts and United States' legislation that preserved millions of acres of land in the Pacific Northwest as National Parks and protected lands. Although there is a substantial volume of literature in the field dedicated to environmental contributions of late nineteenth-century artists who accompanied the major surveys, there is little on artists working in this later period. Madelyn situates her work within this tradition and discussions of Manifest Destiny, but importantly, brings attention to three lesser-known artists, Sydney Laurence, Belmore Browne, and Olaus Murray—adding to our understanding of the importance of their art on their successful conservation advocacy—and she highlights a region of the United States little referenced in art historical literature.

Even with the restrictions imposed by COVID and the difficulties of gaining access to primary sources, Madelyn persevered. She not only conducted in-person research the Murie Ranch Historical Center and Archives, Grand Teton National Park, The National Museum of Wildlife Art, and The National Elk Refuge securing rich documentation from letters, sketchbooks, and artwork, but also performed interviews with scholars and one of the few living artists with first-hand knowledge one of her subjects, and procured materials scanned for her from the Anchorage Museum in Alaska. Additionally, she consulted collections in the Library of Congress Digital Archive; the Dartmouth Library Archives, the U.S. Wildlife and Fisheries Archives; the National Museum of Wildlife Art Archives; the Murie Family Papers at the American Heritage Center Archive; and the Denver Public Library Archives. Madelyn used other primary source materials including published first-hand accounts by some of her artists and those of their spouses.

Madelyn and I have worked together since she proposed her MA thesis topic in the fall of 2020. In the spring she began her project in earnest and we made sure she was able to do in-person research in the summer. Although we met biweekly during the 2021-2022 academic year, she is incredibly self-directed, motivated, enterprising, and responsible for her work. My role has been to ask questions, direct her towards contextualizing her topic, read through drafts and advise on edits, and generally guide her—the drive to obtain the materials she needed, and the intellectual content is all hers.

Madelyn and I have talked about the next phase of her project, and I have encouraged her to present her work at a national conference and rework her eighty-page thesis, plus images and bibliography, into an article for publication as it will bring this new information into the scholarly literature. She will also be sharing it with the public entities she has worked with to add to their collections as it brings each individual artist she discusses into a meaningful conversation showing a wider impetus to use art for public good in the conservation of land in the Pacific Northwest.

I happily and strongly support Madelyn Brodie's application for this award and thank you for the opportunity to recommend her research to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rhonda L. Reymond".

**/ Rhonda L. Reymond, Ph.D.** (she/her/hers)  
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