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## Organization Spotlight: Provo A Future for the Provo Gallery Stroll?

An interview with Ryan Reely  
by Ehren Clark

If the past two months is any indication, it may be safe to say that Provo is undergoing an artistic renaissance. Like Salt Lake City and major communities across the country, Provo holds a monthly Gallery Gtroll, an event that helps galvanize participation in the arts from that community and gauges its interest in the arts. For much of 2007, despite major initiatives by the Downtown Business Alliance which sponsors it, [Downtown Provo Gallery Stroll](#) has seemed to be on a decline, with lackluster attendance and empty gallery spaces.

Since the appointments of Ryan Rebecca Reely as the new directors of the Stroll at the end of 2007, things seem to be changing. The couple owns Mode Boutique, located on University Avenue, just around the corner from Center Street. Part of their vision of reinvigorating the Stroll is bridging the gap between high end galleries and businesses, such as Mode Boutique, that display contemporary art on a monthly revolving basis. Based on the success of the past two Strolls, the Reelys' energy and vision may be fueling an optimistic turn in the direction of the Stroll. Is Provo experiencing a state of flux that might result in a renaissance for the arts in central Provo? While including established traditional art venues with an invigorating new art atmosphere, is there a community and business base able to maintain this momentum? Ryan Neely says an emphatic yes!

Ehren Clark: Why have you been appointed as the new Director of the Provo Gallery Stroll and why do we need a new Director?

Ryan Neely: There have been internal struggles within the city and trying to find a new identity and they realized the importance of a historic Downtown and artistic culture and did not know how to go about promoting it.

EC: It seems in the past the visitors in the Gallery Stroll were marginalized between upscale clientele for galleries such as the [Coleman Studios](#) or young enthusiasts centered around [Gallery OneTen](#), the only gallery to offer a revolving exhibit each month. How do you plan on bridging the gap?

RN: As the Gallery Stroll director I want to include everybody. New venues, new businesses contributing every month with fresh exciting artists, venues actually open every day with new shows

## Recently Read

### Minerva Teichert: Pageants in Paint

by Tom Alder

One of the most remarkable monographs to have been written in recent years is Marian Wardle's *Minerva Teichert: Pageants in Paint*. That Wardle is the granddaughter of the venerable western and Mormon muralist is inconspicuous, and with exacting detail, Wardle has created the most important work to date about Minerva Teichert. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name at [Brigham Young University's Museum of Art](#), Wardle's masterful work is a precisioned arrangement of not only a credible biography and evocative coffee table book of 47 color plates, but also a comprehensive chronology (including an extensive catalogue raisonne), and Teichert's never-before published autobiography.

It might be expected that a monumental treatment of Teichert's story by a family member, and published by Brigham Young University, would be a pallid re-telling of the spiritual side of Teichert, akin to a 1940s Relief Society manual; but Wardle freely narrates the salty side of Teichert as well as detailing some noteworthy disappointments in her life. However, Wardle resists writing an extensive account of many of the stories that have been re-told for decades. Yes, in her youth, Teichert slept with a gun under her pillow. Yes, she worked as a trick roper while studying in New York. Yes, she often used her children's dates and any others who happened by the modest Cokeville, Wyoming home as models for some of her massive and forceful murals. No, she did not create a mural for the Ellis Island receiving station.

Teichert's disappointments chronicled in the book included being disqualified from painting murals in the Idaho Falls Temple because she was not a male priesthood holder. However, she felt fully restored when asked some years later to paint murals in the Manti Temple, the first female invited to do so. Of particular interest is Wardle's detailed handling of two significant dreams. The first concerns her marriage to Herman, a non-Mormon, wherein she describes in great detail the tweed in his suit, the opera, Lucia di Lammermoor playing in the background, and the white hair of the man performing the ceremony, all being signs that it was alright to marry outside the faith (later, Herman joined the Mormon Church and served in the local bishopric for many years). The second dream, much more personal, surrounded the occasion of being invited by her mentor, Robert Henri, famed Ashcan School ringleader, and Mrs. Henri to travel with them to Europe. Teichert's dream, some days before their scheduled departure, vividly illustrated her walking down a long gallery where there were "grand things" on the walls, but as she approached them, the beautiful "things turned brown and curled up." She continued with the same event occurring with each new hall explored, until she spotted a portrait of a teenage girl in a pink dress. She commented to her companion about how she wished she "could paint like that." The reply came back that she could and that the girl was her daughter. Teichert awoke with great excitement, wrote the Henris and told them that she could not travel with them as she had seen her daughter in a dream. A year and a half later and some years after having three dark boys, Teichert gave birth to a beautiful, blue-eyed daughter.

Like a Teichert mural, Wardle marches forward with pageantry bringing all elements of her book together in a contextual celebration. She details the influences

opening, that's what it takes to have people come out. People might not be exposed to art and this is a chance to see fresh new art.

EC: How viable is this?

RN: I think this is already happening. So far December was the kickoff of new venues including Mode Boutique, Cole Umbrella, Maestros as well as Metropolitan Salon. All of these had new shows, great shows with very established artists and we have had a tremendous turn out. One aspect of the [Salt Lake Gallery Stroll](#) is that they have businesses, not just galleries, that show art; everybody is participating, everybody is open. We are getting venues that are very conducive to an artistic atmosphere.

EC: It seems as if community word of mouth and involvement is essential in getting the public motivated. So it becomes more of a network once you establish the interconnection.

RN: December was the real turn out and I can't imagine greater success. There were families, people of all different ages with artists of all different ages. So that had a lot to do with it. People develop alliances.

EC: I appreciate the communal aspect of the Stroll. How do you feel you can motivate and encourage the community as the Director?

RN: The Gallery Stroll is really going to be a showcase for local talent and as such, as with the thriving music scene, which has many venues and people who want to come out and play, if we give more exposure to these artists, more venues to show at, this will create more excitement, make artists more prolific and create more art.

EC: Do you see a real potential for an exciting event, something to compete with Salt Lake, as Provo tends to receive far less esteem. Do we have this here?

RN: Absolutely. We are selling. I think we sold a good amount. We are not galleries but we are selling well which is good for these artists to know their art will sell. Not a bad gig! We are creating interest and we are going to see "real galleries." We are creating a demand. There is an upscale element to Provo now and we have the clientele looking for more original art.

EC: How do you see the Provo Gallery Stroll evolving in the future?

RN: Get other venues involved, recruiting to fill a lot of vacancies downtown. For anyone who wanted to start a business this is the perfect opportunity. Cheap real estate available right here in Downtown. With the demise of Pierpont, Sugarhouse and cultural neighborhoods of Salt Lake we have an opportunity to step in and fill some of that niche. We want to see families, the whole community to come out and be exposed to new art, new kinds of art, break the stigma-stagnant art and be exposed to new cutting edge contemporary art. We want to bring in the best shows and the best art. I want to bring new life into the project, bring a contemporary edge to it, elevate the level of art being shown and bring the people of the community in to create a better understanding of contemporary art.

The reinvigoration of Provo's Gallery Stroll comes from the addition of a number of new businesses who in addition to their regular business display exhibits of art on a rotating basis. These businesses will appear regularly in the page 10 listings of Up and Upcoming exhibitions. They include [Coal Umbrella](#), a new and used clothing and vintage boutique on University Avenue, | **1** | which is exhibiting Fidalis Buehler and Byron Stout for the month of February; [Metropolitan Urban Hair Salon](#) throws an interesting mixture of creativity in both their hair design and art, which this month is the work of Ashley Mae Christiansen. | **2** | Owner Alex Stefanciw is the driving force behind the art shows at Maestro's Café | **3** | and the current offerings of work by Lisa Marie Crosby are as refreshing as the gelato. Mode Boutique is the product of Ryan and Rebecca Neely. | **4** | The cognoscenti from Salt Lake come down to buy their jeans there, now there is a new element in the boutique to attract patrons! Currently showing [Jason Metcalf](#) for February. | **5** |

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on Teichert's life and career. Her murals typically feature women in strong, self-sufficient roles, influenced, as Wardle points out, by her mother who wrote pamphlets for the women's suffrage movement. The portrayal of attractive and appealing human subjects on her canvasses underscored her sensitivity. Male Native Americans are not generally represented as being warlike; rather, they frequently accompany females in dances and other celebrations, and are depicted more like "new age sensitive guys."

Missing is a comparison of Teichert's Book of Mormon characters to those of Arnold Friberg's massively-muscled men that became Church icons. Wardle reports without apology that Teichert was disappointed when, after creating 42 Book of Mormon paintings in 1951 that she assumed would be embraced by her church, those in authority were non-plussed. It would be, as Wardle describes in Teichert's extensive chronology, 1969 before the artist would donate these beautiful creations to welcoming arms at BYU, several of which are reproduced in *Pageants in Paint*. This was a crowning event and occurred just prior to Teichert's breaking her hip from a fall, which ended her career.

Wardle's exuberance about her now-famous grandmother is fully understandable. Her scholarly analysis and balanced writing style about Teichert and her extensive body of work is objective, compelling, and hits the mark. For those bothered by the constant use of "[sic]" when examining primary documents, Wardle chose not to use the repetitive explanation; rather, she kept Teichert's words as written which creates more continuity and connection for the reader. For those with OCD, no misspelled words were detected. This relaxing, but informative and complete biography of Minerva Teichert is a fresh approach and hopefully indicative of future BYU publications. Credit should be given to Scott Anderson and Zions Bank for their vision and financial commitment to this monumental project. Whether you enjoy regional history, are a Mormonophile, or appreciate some of the finest paintings created in the spirit of the west, *Pageants in Paint* will not disappoint.

Minerva Teichert: *Pageants in Paint* by Marian Wardle is available in hardback and paperback. The book is currently available at the Brigham Young University Museum of Art bookstore, or can be ordered by phone at (801) 422-8214.

