

# Converting Maynard Dixon Paintings into Poetry

By Lance Larsen



Maynard Dixon (1875-1946), *Sketch for Campo Santo*, 1934, oil on canvas board, 9 7/8 x 13 7/8 inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of Dickman Investment, 1974.

# “Campo Santo Visitation”

By Lance Larsen

If I were a ghost, I'd swim desert air whispering blue mountain, hills like houses,  
bushes the color of Christmas.

If I were a ghost, I'd play hide and seek with jack rabbits.

If I were a ghost, I'd cozy up to the darkest clouds and fall like rain.

If I were a ghost, I'd circle the white cross three times and count that as prayer.

If I were a ghost, I'd slither red sand like a snake, ride thermals with the vultures.

If I were a ghost, I'd nap inside the ear of a lost horse the color of caramel.

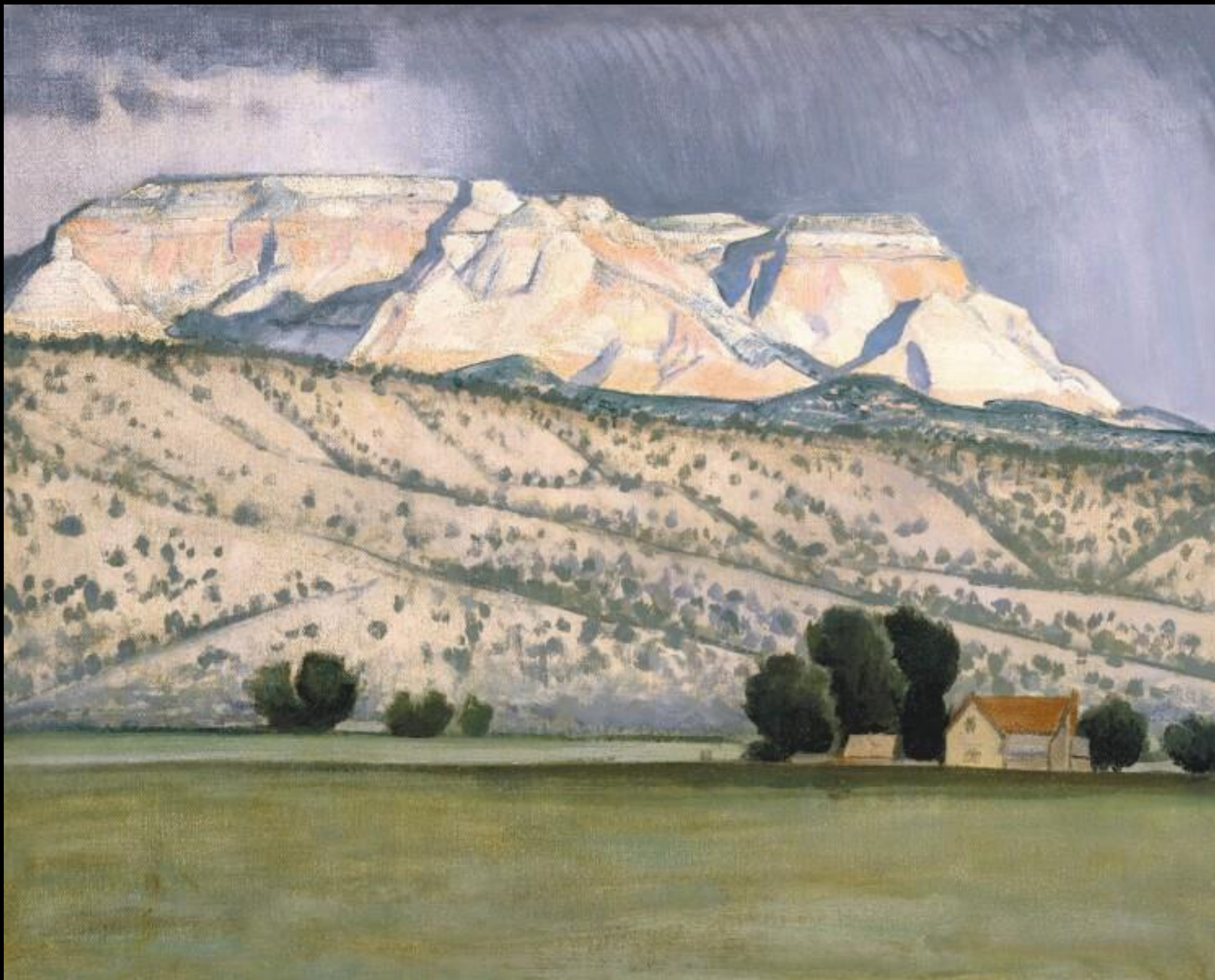
If I were a ghost, I'd sing sad songs with the voice of a mermaid.

If I were a ghost, I'd scare cowboys out of their boots and kiss scared children on  
their necks.





Maynard Dixon (1875-1946), *Mesas in Shadow*, 1926, oil on canvas, 30 1/4 x 40 inches. BYU Museum of Art, 1937.



Maynard Dixon (1875-1946), *Diana's Throne*, 1934, oil on canvas board, 16 x 19 3/4 inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, 1937.

# “Nine Questions while Looking at a Desert Landscape”

By Lance Larsen

How can the horses be happy eating this scrubby grass?

Are the skies always this red?

How can I possibly start a fire without matches?

How to describe these greens? Like spinach, like curtains in a ratty room, like sadness?

If I fall asleep, what will curl up beside me---a gila monster, faraway stars?

Dear Maynard Dixon, did you paint this after a fight with your wife?

How many million ants live underground?

Why do those boulders look like a birthday party of broken bikes?

What does that cloud look like---a weasel, a dirty shoe, maybe a mother crying for her  
lost baby?





Maynard Dixon (1875-1946), *Lazy Autumn*, 1943, oil on canvas, 25 3/8 x 30 inches.  
Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of Gene L. Jones & Anna Smith, 1981.



Maynard Dixon (1875-1946), *Old Homesite*, 1937, oil on canvas, 36 1/4 x 40 1/8 inches.  
Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of B. Darrel and R. Reed Call, 1977.





Maynard Dixon (1875-1946), *Mormon Home*, 1940, oil on canvas, 25 1/4 x 30 1/4 inches. Brigham Young University Museum of Art, 1971.

