



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on January 8, 2018

The Lib/Con Utah School Porn War Rages On

Recently I reported on the firing of Mateo Rueda, now an ex-art teacher after showing 10- and 11-year-olds nude “artwork” at Lincoln Elementary School in Hyrum, Utah, on December 4. Normally I would have let this story go by now, but Rueda continues playing the victim, aided and abetted by complicit reporters; libertines the world over; and, unfortunately, some good people who don’t realize that the media have mischaracterized his trespass.



Rueda, a native of Colombia, demands an apology, even as he [condemns](#) his fellow Cache Valley residents as “cultural dead-ends” and members of a “narrow-minded community.” He also [said](#), “I was overqualified[;] I took the [teaching] position with an open heart to make a difference in a predominantly[] Mormon community where there isn’t much culture.” My, charitable as well as charming! Yet his defenders — who’ve called people such as me puritans, prudes, and even Nazi-like book burners — should know that Rueda himself confessed that the nudes were out of bounds.

Claiming the images were among a set of art postcards with which Rueda was unacquainted, the *Herald Journal* [reported](#) December 28, “Asked if he thought the nudes were appropriate for the sixth-graders in his class, Rueda said he did not. ‘This is not material at all that I would use. I had no idea,’ he said.” So honest mistake, right?

Well, that was before [I conducted interviews](#) with local parents and reported that after Rueda showed the nudes to the sixth-graders and got complaints, he must have found them appropriate for fifth-graders — because that’s exactly whom he later showed them to. What’s more, the parents told me Rueda belittled the children who objected, said they might find some images inappropriate but he didn’t (which was all that apparently mattered), forced them to continue viewing the images over their protestations, and said he didn’t care if they reported him. He also told them to “grow up.”

Yet after I tipped off the *Herald Journal* that a second class had seen the images and that Rueda was “lying,” as one of the parents put it, it ran a January 2 [piece](#) mentioning the fifth-graders but also printing this: “Rueda said he told the class that they should not feel the images are inappropriate or wrong.”

So do we believe the late December “not material at all that I would use. I had no idea” Rueda or the early January “don’t ‘feel the images are inappropriate or wrong’” Rueda? Hey, it is a different year — I guess his story evolved.

Speaking of which, smut can evolve, too — into art. One of the paintings Late December Rueda said was inappropriate and Early January Rueda fancied culture is the full-frontal nude “Iris Tree,” a portrait of a sexually libertine, drug-using, bohemian woman by that name. It’s a work the media consistently label “classical” (“Ooh, the rubes object to classical art!”), apparently unaware that the term references Greek and Roman antiquity. In contrast, “Iris Tree” is an early 20th-century creation by Italian [Amedeo Modigliani](#), a violent, woman-abusing, philandering, drug-addicted, alcoholic known for dancing naked



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in Paris streets and who could be called a pornographer of his day. (Other than that, he was a peach.)

For those who say I'm confusing art with artist, I [have already examined](#) the difference between legitimate art portraying the naked human form (e.g., Sistine Chapel) and porn masquerading as art. Suffice it to say here, something designed to symbolically relate theological concepts — e.g., the Garden of Eden — “Iris Tree” is not. It's more the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. It's one of those Modigliani paintings that, as the *Daily Mail* [put it](#), exudes “raw sensuality” and is “an homage to the sex he so loved.”

So why are such things deemed fine art and shown to kids? Because sometimes, the older they get, the better they were. People have this curious notion that if smut is put to canvas with paint and some skill and allowed to age a century, the x-rated becomes the extraordinary. It doesn't help that a Chinese collector with more yuan than brains shelled out \$153 million for a Modigliani nude in 2015 or that the painter's works now enjoy art-world approval.

(Think this is meaningful? Read the [story](#) of Estelle Lovatt, who in 2007 fooled the art world into thinking her two-year-old's tomato-ketchup daubs were great works by a renowned, mature artist.)

Speaking of the fooled, and foolish, the mainstream media continue writing inaccurate articles sympathetic toward Rueda. A good example is [this People](#) piece, which portrays the teacher as a martyr, quoting him positively as saying that the “works” were “icons of art history and human patrimony.” Interestingly, however, *People* shows an image of “Iris Tree” with her nipples and nether region curiously obscured. So the painting is appropriate for 10-year-olds but not for an article meant for adults?

Apparently, *People* agrees that its picture refutes its thousand words. You see, shortly before readying this article for publication, I learned that *People* had *removed* the “Iris Tree” image from its piece completely, no doubt as a response to my (and others') having called them out on hypocrisy via Twitter. Ah, but you know the Internet — [archiving](#) and the computer “Print Screen” function saved the day. [Here's how the People article looked](#) before the people at *People* became apprised of their sheer stupidity.

Of course, maybe it's predictable that a media outlet would blur an image when it has already blurred the line between good and bad journalism. But I'd still like to know why *People* is unwilling to show, in its entirety, a painting that it states “millions of people worldwide have marveled at.” What are you afraid of, dear editors? That kids may see it?

Oh, wait...

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