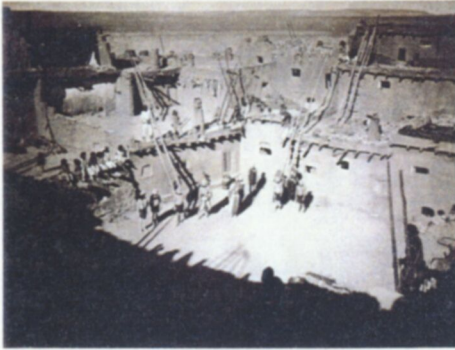


# Passages

## Touring New Mexico Art with a Detour Along Route 66



John K. Hillers, "Mudheads," Zuni Pueblo, New Mexico, 1879-80, albumen photograph, 1879-80, Palace of the Governors Photo Archives #37941



Marsden Hartley  
*El Santo*, 1919, oil on canvas,  
anonymous gift of a friend of  
Southwest art



Kenneth M. Chapman, *New Art Museum, South Front*, 1916, watercolor, museum acquisition



William Lumpkins, *This Was a Breakthru*, 1935, watercolor, gift of the William and Norma L. Lumpkins Trust

*Passages* presents a brief history of New Mexico art from the arrival of railroad tourism in the 1880s to the conceptual art of the present. The tour begins with the arrival of ethnological expeditions to document the Native cultures of the Southwest. Reports of these scientific expeditions published in literary magazines and government reports initiated the development of New Mexico as an "artist's paradise"—and a tourist's destination.

Academically trained painters including Henry Balink, Irving Couse, and Joseph Sharp responded to the physical and cultural landscapes as they explored the region. During World War I, artists Marsden Hartley, Andrew Dasburg, and Robert Henri came to the Southwest and interpreted New Mexico from a Modernist perspective.

The Museum of Fine Arts opened in the fall of 1917 and served the growing colonies of artists in Taos and Santa Fe. The museum's building was based on the architectural style of the region's mission churches, and the successful New Mexico pavilion at the 1915 California-Pacific Exposition in San Diego. The museum offered studio space in the basement, as well as a non-exclusionary exhibition policy.

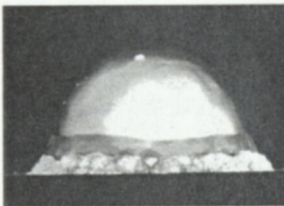
During the 1920s, automobile travel brought more visitors and artists to the region. Emil Bisttram and Raymond Jonson founded the Transcendental Painting Group to emphasize spiritualist goals and non-objective form. The group attracted a small cadre of younger artists, including Florence Miller Pierce and William Lumpkins.



John Sloan, *Knees and Aborigines*, 1927, etching, gift of Ann L. Maytag

The detour along Route 66 shows the impact of automobile tourism on New Mexico art and culture, as the fabled highway crossed New Mexico connecting Chicago with Santa Monica. The detour begins with John Sloan's sarcastic comment on the relationship between tourists and Natives in his 1927 etching *Knees and Aborigines*. Other important artists who interpreted New Mexico from "The Road" included Ansel Adams, Van Deren Coke, Edward Weston, and Adja Yunkers. The view from "The Road" propelled ethnic New Mexico into mainstream American popular culture.

Official Photograph, Los Alamos Project, Optics Group (G-11), First Atomic Explosion . . . July 16, 1945, gelatin-silver photograph, Palace of the Governors Photo Archives #29314



The detonation of the first atomic bomb on July 16, 1945, near Alamogordo, New Mexico, signaled the end of New Mexico as an isolated region. Experiences during World War II would forever change the outlook of New Mexico artists.

Richard Diebenkorn *Berkeley #15*, 1954, oil on canvas, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Gifford Phillips



During the postwar period, artists abstracted the region. Artists such as T.C. Cannon continued to investigate the meaning of Native lifeways; Richard Diebenkorn expressed his emotional response to the region through abstract paintings; Agnes Martin found the spiritual in her gridded structures; and Joel-Peter Witkin alluded to art history in his photographic nightmares.



Agnes Martin, *untitled*, 1989, ink on paper, gift of American Art Foundation

Themes permeating this exhibition include the depiction of Native lifeways and religions, the marketing of New Mexico through tourism, the exchange of ideas between cultures, the translation of ethnic New Mexico into mainstream popular culture, and the search for spiritual values. In short, these works document changing versions of Modernity in New Mexico during a time of rapid cultural and artistic change.

This survey underscores the complexity of New Mexico art. Perhaps the only permanent aspects of New Mexico art have been artistic change, the search for the spiritual, and the ability of artistic traditions to influence one another.

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