

ON EXHIBIT

# PLACE MAKERS



Fresh takes on classic catalysts

By Christian Waguespack Photographs by Jeff Medinas

## HORIZONS



People and Place in New Mexican Art



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*Pueblo Pottery*, 1917  
Oil on canvas, 26 1/4 x 32 1/2 in.  
Collection of the New Mexico  
Museum of Art. Gift of Herman C. and  
Bina L. Ilfeld, 1977 (2991.23P).



Marsden Hartley  
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Oil on canvas, 36 x 32 in.  
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**H**orizons: *People and Place in New Mexican Art* celebrates the individuals, ideas, and objects that conspired over the past century to make New Mexico a unique center for artistic and creative innovation. Drawn primarily from the New Mexico Museum of Art's extensive collection, with significant loans from collegial institutions in Santa Fe and Albuquerque, *Horizons* shows the wide and dynamic range of styles, personalities, cultures, and forms that visual creative expression took in New Mexico.

*Horizons* is arranged thematically instead of chronologically; its themes reflect the diversity of our state's artistic culture. *Horizons* honors the museum's foundational figures and ideas, Native arts in New Mexico, a spotlight on Gustave Baumann, New Mexican design, artwork about local social gatherings, and a selection of work voted on by the community. Of course, many of the most recognized artists of the twentieth century, like Georgia O'Keeffe, Maria Martinez, Paul Strand, Diego Rivera, Robert Henri, and Marsden Hartley, are represented. But, since the exhibition was not organized around a canonical history of Southwestern art or as a masterworks show, *Horizons* introduces some new figures and some fresh takes on several of our classic characters.

### Founding Figures and Nationwide Connections

As the museum's founding figures did not work in isolation, the exhibition underscores several interesting formative concepts and interpersonal relationships. Edgar L. Hewett guided the institution during the first several decades of the twentieth century, and *Horizons* honors his role with a portrait of him by Louise Crow, whose work otherwise primarily features Native American subjects. Her relationship with Hewett was rooted in a blend of anthropology and art. Around 1919, she painted *Eagle Dance at San Ildefonso*, inspired by a scene she witnessed while doing anthropological fieldwork with Hewett. The painting was

later shown at the 1921 Paris Salon d'Automne, an example of the international interest in Southwestern subject matter.

From the start, the museum was part of a larger national and international artistic discourse. American painter Robert Henri's vision of a radical new art museum that excluded curators and juries helped establish the museum's early programming. This approach privileged the promotion of contemporary artists, and embraced an anti-academic open-door policy through which artists were allowed to sign up to use the museum's alcove galleries as either a venue for exhibiting their work or for studio space—unheard of at the time.

Henri's 1916 painting *Portrait of Dieguito Roybal, San Ildefonso Pueblo*, painted during his first trip to New Mexico, embraces the humanity of his subject by making a portrait of a named individual, instead of an ethnographic type. Roybal was a drummer of the Eagle Dance at San Ildefonso Pueblo, and is shown in Henri's portrait looking with unflinching confidence straight out at the viewer. Roybal worked for over thirty years with Hewett as a guide and companion on numerous archeological expeditions.

Like many American modernist painters of the twentieth century, Marsden Hartley of Maine was looking for a distinctly American subject for his artwork. He first visited New Mexico in 1918, the year after the New Mexico Museum of Art opened, and wrote of the experience, "I am an American discovering America."

During his early visits to New Mexico, his style shifted from abstract to more realistic subject matter. In New Mexico, Hartley found what he believed to be definitively American subject matter in the blending of Native, Hispanic, and Euro-American cultures, and produced a number of still-lives, including his 1919 painting *El Santo*. He incorporated the material culture of Hispanic Catholicism, such as the retablo in this painting, with Native pottery and textiles.

## Native Arts and Curio Collectors

The coupling of art and anthropology, with a particular emphasis in the Native American figure as subject, is a profound and reoccurring visual theme in the art of the early twentieth century, particularly in the American Southwest. This intersection manifested in several ways. In 1899, Taos Society of Artists painter Bert Phillips opened the Taos Indian Curio Shop, one of the first galleries in New Mexico. Phillips sold Native American-made objects to his clientele, including to members of the Taos Society of Artists. Many of the early artists in Taos and Santa Fe were serious collectors of Native objects. A selection of Native textiles and pottery collected by artists Frank Applegate, Kenneth Chapman, and Laura Gilpin, loaned by the School for Advanced Research, illustrates the importance of Native art to New Mexican art history.

Henry C. Balink's 1917 painting *Pueblo Pottery* is indicative of the era's artistic fascination with Indian subjects. Balink's fascination predates his first encounter with the American West. A native of Amsterdam, Balink moved to the United States during World War I. A poster he saw in a railway station sparked his captivation with the American West and inspired his relocation to New Mexico. *Pueblo Pottery* was first shown in the New Mexico Museum of Art's inaugural exhibition. For this early exhibition, Hewett was interested in images that blended art with anthropology and incorporated the material culture of the Southwest. Balink's portrait of an unidentified Native woman

is as much about the objects she is presenting as it is about the sitter herself. The black-on-cream geometric design exemplifies Santo Domingo pottery, while the all-black vessel is from Santa Clara Pueblo. Arranged in front of the backdrop of a Phase III Navajo Chief Blanket, the composition presents a comparative inventory of regional styles and motifs.

Work by Native artists from the museum's collection is represented in *Horizons* by iconic potter Maria Martinez (San Ildefonso Pueblo) and weaver Ramona Sakiestewa (Hopi), as well as Pueblo paintings, pottery, and textiles borrowed from the School for Advanced Research and the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture.

Situated between a pair of Navajo and Pueblo textiles from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Sakiestewa's work illustrates the continued legacy of masterful textiles made by diverse groups of Native people of the American Southwest, while still bringing her own contemporary vision to the medium. Sakiestewa formally builds upon the traditional weaving methods she has studied, as well as an eye for design and color. She taught herself to weave on the traditional Hopi vertical loom, learned how to dye fibers with Native dyeing techniques, and added her own approaches to cochineal and indigo dyeing processes. She also trained in ancient Ancestral Puebloan weaving techniques with weavers from the Chincero region of Peru. Using these diverse technical methods, she approaches her works as design challenges resulting in abstract compositions.



**Unknown Maker**, *Blanket*, ca. 1865–1875. Cloth and dyes. 45 × 51 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. Collection of the School for Advanced Research (IAF.T62).

**Ramona Sakiestewa**, *Katsina 6*, 1989. Wool. 47 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 74 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. Collection of the New Mexico Museum of Art. Southwest '90 Purchase Prize, 1991 (329.23P).

**Unknown Maker**, *Manta*, ca. 1850–1860. Cloth and dyes. 53 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 48 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. Collection of the School for Advanced Research (IAF.T468).



**Near art** by Gerald Cassidy and John Sloan, hand-carved chairs by Jesse Nusbaum and Sam F. Hudelson represent furniture designed specifically for the museum ca. 1917. They are paired with Will Evans' deco chairs inspired by Navajo designs.

### New Mexican Design

Art and anthropology come together in the furniture that artists originally designed for the museum, which was inspired by the Spanish Colonial antiquities studied by anthropologists of the time. Jesse Nusbaum and Sam Hudelson designed this furniture to complement the Pueblo Revival style of the building. Nusbaum's designs came from mixing Spanish Colonial carving with the aesthetic principles of the new Arts and Crafts movement popular across the United States, resulting in the birth of a distinctly New Mexican style of furniture design still popular today. *Horizons* represents this with a pair of chairs originally designed for the new museum building by Nusbaum; a deco-period table, mirror, and chairs made by William Penhallow Henderson; painted chairs by Will Evans that are decorated with designs inspired by his exposure to Navajo motifs; and an exquisitely carved mahogany chest made by Charles Leroy Delcamp in 1935 that is an elegant reimagining of Spanish Colonial woodwork.

Delcamp's chest, made well over 100 years after early Colonial chests, was likely the result of a program launched in 1933 by the New Mexico State Department of Vocational Education (SDVE) geared at teaching traditional Spanish crafts in small villages across northern New Mexico. The SDVE published a series of trade bulletins in the 1930s that illustrated genuine Spanish Colonial pieces to ensure that craftspeople were keeping to authentic New Mexican designs. The exact decorative composition of Delcamp's pieces is illustrated in one such bulletin.





## Art and Community

The museum is first and foremost a place for art, but its mission doesn't end there. The museum, and particularly the St. Francis auditorium, was designed to serve as New Mexico's first secular community gathering place. In *Horizons*, this commitment is reflected by work that features community activities in New Mexico. Zozobra, or "Old Man Gloom," is the name given to the enormous papier-mâché marionette that was first constructed by Will Shuster and Gustave Baumann in 1924 and has since been burned annually in a cathartic celebration that kicks off Santa Fe's Fiestas. This figure is the subject of a mural-sized painting by Shuster and a wooden sculpture by contemporary *santero* Luis Tapia, both on view in *Horizons*. While Shuster's painting *Zozobra Mural* focuses on the monster being consumed by flames and is more about the action of burning Zozobra, Tapia's *Viva la Fiesta (Zozobra)* is attentive to the community impact of the figure, placing his Zozobra at the center of the Fiestas procession. A 1985 painting by Elias Rivera, *Fiesta at Santa Fe*, offers a more colloquial view of Fiestas, capturing a passing moment shared by three men resting on a bench in the Plaza, each distracted by the festivities around them.

A selection of work looks at the personal and professional connections among several of the modernists working in the state and abroad. *Grey Hill Forms* by Georgia O'Keeffe, an icon of New Mexican modernism, is paired with the work of Paul Strand, who showed his avant-garde photography at the gallery owned by O'Keeffe's husband Alfred Stieglitz. Strand's photographs are in turn paired with the work of his ex-wife Rebecca Salsbury (Strand) James, whose delicate and graphic reverse glass painting, *Divine Lamb and Taos Blue Sky*, and *colcha* embroidery, *Agnus Dei*, were inspired by Spanish Colonial artistic traditions.

These pieces are situated next to a painting by E. Boyd, *Church at Laguna, New Mexico*, which depicts the altarpiece at the Church at Laguna Pueblo. Boyd dedicated her career to capturing the artistic legacy of the Spanish communities of New Mexico, and in her day was one of the leading scholars of Spanish Colonial art. Boyd is in turn the subject of a portrait painted by Cady Wells, *Portrait of E #2*. Wells first came to stay in New Mexico on Boyd's invitation, and the two remained close friends.

Wells became one of the first serious collectors of Spanish Colonial art, with Boyd advising him on his purchases. He made a name for himself as a member of the thriving community of

modernist painters in New Mexico, and was a student of Andrew Dasburg. Wells was best known for his energetic abstractions of the landscape. The positioning of one of his watercolors, *Abiquiu—Ghost Ranch Country*, hangs above a loose ink abstraction by Dasburg, demonstrating the formal connection between the two. A strikingly different composition by Dasburg, the cubist-inspired still life *Poppies*, shares a wall with a portrait of Dasburg's wife, *Marina Wister*, painted by Mexican Modernist extraordinaire Diego Rivera. Bringing the alcove full-circle, Rivera met O'Keeffe during her travels in Mexico.

Along with various significant kinds of artistic relationships, New Mexico has also supported artist families with national reputations. Peter Hurd, who is best known for his tempera landscapes of Southern New Mexico and his portraiture, and painter Henriette Wyeth made their home in San Patricio, New Mexico, not far from Peter's hometown of Roswell. Wyeth's painting *Portrait of My Grandmother*, from the 1920s, shares an alcove with Hurd's 1955 painting *Highway at Dusk*, which shows a lonely stretch of road in southern New Mexico. Hurd first met Henriette in the 1920s when he was working as a student and assistant to her father, illustrator N.C. Wyeth. Henriette was an accomplished painter building a distinguished career for herself back East when the two married in 1929 and moved to southern New Mexico.

## Gustave Baumann

Gustave Baumann was another artist whose career took off in Santa Fe during the first half of the twentieth century. Baumann first encountered New Mexico in 1918 just after the Museum of Art opened its doors. He first visited Taos and, after running low on money, stopped in Santa Fe on his way home. He never made it back to Chicago. Upon meeting Baumann, Paul Walter, the curator of the art museum, convinced Baumann to settle permanently in Santa Fe by helping him secure a loan of \$500 and offering him studio space at the museum, where he promptly set up shop and made a living for himself by building furniture in the museum's basement. A pair of those chairs is on view in *Horizons*.

Though perhaps best known for his picturesque woodblock prints, Baumann made work in almost every medium available during the early twentieth century, including oil painting, furniture design, and marionette making. Examples of each of these media are represented in the exhibition. The



New Mexico Museum of Art's collection of over 1,700 works by Baumann illustrates this breadth of artistic interest. Several suites of woodblock prints will be rotated over the course of the exhibition with themes of Baumann in New Mexico, floral still-lives, Baumann's travels in the West, and a set of prints depicting forest scenes. The fantastical marionettes are also featured, posed on a recreated stage and arranged in tableaux that will change three times over the course of the exhibition.

These instances of artistic crossroads only scratch the surface of New Mexico's deep and distinctive artistic heritage. The legacy left by these twentieth-century artists has paved the way for the rich and fertile environment that continues to support contemporary artists across the state, and makes New Mexico a locus of artistic innovation. ■

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**Works by** Luis Tapia and Will Shuster honor Santa Fe's beloved Zozobra tradition. **Luis Tapia**, *Viva La Fiesta (Zozobra)*, 1996. Carved and painted wood. 36 × 39 × 39 in. Collection of the New Mexico Museum of Art. Museum purchase with funds from the Boeckman Acquisition Fund, 1997 (1997.8.1). ©Luis Tapia. **Will Shuster**, *Zozobra Mural*, 1964. Oil on board. 74 × 94 ¼ in. Collection of the New Mexico Museum of Art. Gift of Irene Arias Walker and museum purchase with major funds donated by Margot & Robert Linton and the Los Trigos Fund, with additional support provided by Phyllis & Ed Gladden, Jay McDonald Williams, the Santa Fe Kiwanis Club, Charles & Valerie Diker, Frank & Dolores Ortiz, Helen Shuster, James S. Ipiotis, and Ray Sandoval, 1992 (1992.66.1).