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***Quest for the New:* Modernism in the Southwest**

Exhibition Dates: January 26 – March 25, 2018

Opening Reception: Fri, January 26, 5 – 7 pm

Gallery Hours: Mon – Fri, 10-6

Sat, 10-5

1613 Paseo de Peralta

Santa Fe, NM 87501

505.988.3250

www.lewallengalleries.com

Press Contact: Alex Gill

agill@lewallengalleries.com



Howard Schleeter, *Church*, 1942,
watercolor on paper, 18.75 x 13.25 in

Featuring the Following Artists

Józef Bakoš | Emil Bisttram | Howard Cook | Andrew Dasburg | Fremont Ellis | Raymond Jonson
Gene Kloss | Paul Lantz | William Lumpkins | Willard Nash | Sheldon Parsons | Howard Schleeter
John Sloan | Will Shuster | Virginia True | Cady Wells



Emil Bisttram, *Ranchos de Taos Church*, 1970,
oil on canvas, 27 x 36.5 in

Santa Fe, NM – LewAllen Modern is pleased to present a specially curated survey of works created by pioneering voices within the Southwest Modernist movement, with particular focus on those working in New Mexico. *Quest for the New: Modernism in the Southwest* opens on Friday, January 26 and will remain on view through Saturday, March 17.

At the turn of the 20th century, when America and the world convulsed with eager anticipation of cultural revolution, Modernist artists transformed the world of art by seeking a radical break with the conventions of the past and by searching for new forms of artistic expression. As

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the poet Ezra Pound later described it, the goal everywhere was to “make it new.”

During this time, well-known Modernists such as John Sloan, Andrew Dasburg, Raymond Jonson, Fremont Ellis, Józef Bakoš and numerous others were drawn to the Southwest, seeking to create a uniquely American artistic vision not anchored in European traditions or those of the East Coast. For these artists, New Mexico in particular offered a liberating place of the exotic, the majestic, the unexplored and the mystical, all rich as catalysts for original artistic expression and what they hoped would become a new, more powerful American Modernist aesthetic.

In *Quest for the New*, LewAllen Modern surveys this powerful connection between place and spirit as it is manifested in the dynamic work of these notable artistic adventurers of the Southwest.

Rejecting academic traditions and guidelines, Modernist artists vigorously challenged the previous notion that art should only provide literal depictions of the visible world. The Modernists experimented with formal and technical innovations as well as the expressive and emotional use of color, non-traditional materials, and a variety of media. Many imbued their works with a sense of spirituality.

The Southwest Modernists, who predominately originated from East Coast or Midwestern cities, were influenced by the ideas and innovations that were transforming the art world generally at this time. A number of the artists in this exhibition came to the Southwest in response to the exhilaration they felt from the new and revolutionary art exhibited for the first time in America at the 1913 Armory Show. Many were wooed to the region by Mabel Dodge Luhan, a key supporter of the Armory Show, and her staunch advocacy of New Mexico as an ideal place to fulfill their quest for new artistic vision.



Paul Lantz, *Chamita*, c. 1938,
oil on canvas, 18 x 24 in

In the Southwest, these artists largely defined their own traditions, creating groundbreaking works that established their singularity within the

Modernist canon. They incorporated into their new art the awe and spiritual influences of the mystical light, rugged mountains and desert scenery, and unexpected colors of nature, as well as the panoply of people, cultures, rites, mysteries, and traditions inherent in the region. The expansive and breathtaking Southwest landscape symbolically underscored these artists' search for personal and artistic freedom and individual fulfillment. In a region steeped in history, these artists created a new visual language that referenced unique views of the landscape and ancestral cultures of the Southwest while addressing impulses solidly rooted in the transformations of the 20th century.

Many artists drew inspiration from New Mexico's distinctive and majestic color palette, exemplified by works in this exhibition such as John Sloan's *New Mexico*, with its blood red Sangre de Cristo Mountains, and Jonson's *Arroyo No. 4*, with its veins of electric blue and cadmium red earth. Artists also experimented with Cubistic and expressive distortion of landscape: the fine draftsmanship and pastel hues of Andrew Dasburg's Cubist landscapes such as *Village Road*; the fragmented, jewel-like Cubism of Howard Schleeter's *Church*; and the smoothly-gradated subdivisions of Emil Bisttram's *Ranchos de Taos Church*. Other artists in the show brought to their work a deep sense of spirituality and reverence for

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the traditions of indigenous cultures, exemplified by Cady Well's *Penitente Procession*, Gene Kloss's *Return of the Processional*, Emil Bisttram's *The Corn Dancers*, and Howard Cook's *Deer Dancer*.

American Modernism in the Southwest is a different visual experience than that of Modernism elsewhere: whether the new Southwestern artworks were created in a Cubist, Post-Impressionistic, Futuristic, Abstract, or Transcendental manner, the paintings and prints highlighted in this exhibition are consistently infused with the region's fundamental sense of captivating mystery, spiritual inspiration, and aesthetic power.



Raymond Jonson, *Arroyo No. 4*, 1922,
oil on canvas board, 15 x 24.25 in