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Icons of American Modernism

Santa Fe museums collaborate to celebrate the city's role in a pivotal art movement

by John O'Hern

Downtown Santa Fe, New Mexico, museums are celebrating the region's rich history as a center for the development of American modernism. Building on the successful collaboration *Summer of Color* coordinated by the institutions on Museum Hill, including the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum and the New Mexico Museum of Art, just off the historic Santa Fe Plaza, are collaborating to present *The Fall of Modernism: A Season of American Art*. The New Mexico Museum of Art

Sept. 11-Jan. 17, 2016

Georgia O'Keeffe in Process

New Mexico Museum of Art
107 W. Palace Avenue
Santa Fe, NM 87501
t: (877) 567-7380
www.nmartmuseum.org

Sept. 25-Jan. 10, 2016

**From New York to New Mexico:
Masterworks of American
Modernism from The Vilcek
Foundation Collection**

Georgia O'Keeffe Museum
217 Johnson Street
Santa Fe, NM 87501
t: (505) 946-1000
www.okeeffemuseum.org

Oct. 2-Feb. 21, 2016

An American Modernism

New Mexico Museum of Art
107 W. Palace Avenue
Santa Fe, NM 87501
t: (877) 567-7380
www.nmartmuseum.org



Andrew Dasburg (1887-1979), *Sangre de Cristo*, ca. 1933. Watercolor, 15⁷/₈ x 21⁵/₈ in. Collection of the New Mexico Museum of Art. Gift of Mr. Edwin F. Gamble, 1968. Photograph by Blair Clark. Part of *An American Modernism: Painting and Photography* at the New Mexico Museum of Art.

will present two exhibitions: *Georgia O'Keeffe in Process* and *An American Modernism: Painting and Photography*. The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum will present *From New York to New Mexico: Masterworks of American Modernism from the Vilcek Foundation Collection*. Galleries across the city will highlight modernist art with exhibitions, programming and events.

The extraordinary collection of American modernist paintings and sculpture assembled by Marica and Jan T. Vilcek was profiled in this magazine in the September/October issue of 2013. *Masterworks of American Modernism from The Vilcek Foundation Collection* opens September 25 and continues through January 10, 2016.

The exhibition was organized by Catherine Whitney, chief curator

and curator of American art at the Philbrook Museum of Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Whitney describes the modernists as "America's first avant-garde." They were the "first generation of American artists who challenged traditional standards of naturalistic representation during the early decades of the 20th century."

Among the more than 60 works in the exhibition is *Berlin Series No. 1* (1913) by Marsden Hartley (1877-1943). Hartley wrote, "The idea of modernity is but a new attachment of things universal—a fresh relationship to the courses of the sun and to the living swing of the earth—a new fire of affection for the living essence present everywhere."

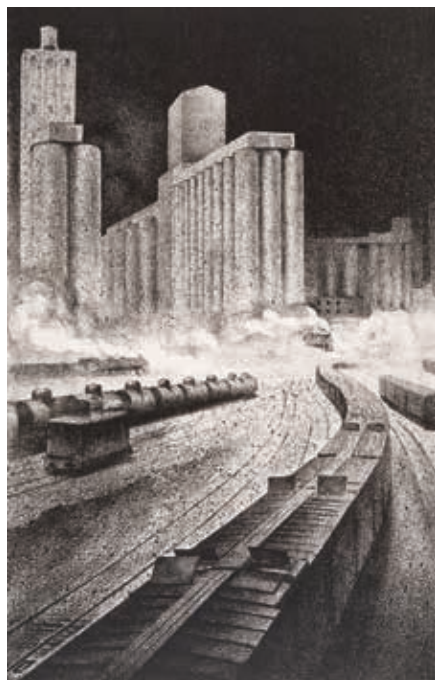
Hartley's description of modernism as a "new relationship" to nature was



Marsden Hartley (1877-1943), *Berlin Series No. 1*, 1913. Oil on canvas board, 18 x 15 in. Collection of Jan T. and Marica Vilcek. Promised Gift to The Vilcek Foundation. Part of *From New York to New Mexico: Masterworks of American Modernism from The Vilcek Foundation Collection* at Georgia O'Keeffe Museum.

shared by some in the modernist movement but not by those who celebrated the precision of an industrialized America. Artists of both persuasions were intent upon developing a uniquely American approach to depicting the countryside and the city. The New Mexico Museum of Art notes that its exhibition *An American Modernism: Painting and Photography* will highlight the tensions between both points of view, as well as the artistic vocabulary of modernism. The exhibition opens October 2 and runs through February 21, 2016.

Two works from the exhibition illustrate the different approaches. Andrew Dasburg (1887-1979) recalled that his mother would often take him to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to look at the paintings. “Then one Sunday, there was a very strange painting there which fascinated me, its strangeness. It was the first Monet that was shown at the Metropolitan. I only learned that later, you see. This was one of the bridge across the water-lily



Louis Lozowick (1892-1973), *Untitled*, 1933. Lithograph, 12¾ x 8⅞ in. Collection of the New Mexico Museum of Art. Bequest of Vivian Sloan Fiske, 1978. Photograph by Blair Clark © Louis Lozowick Estate. Part of *An American Modernism: Painting and Photography* at the New Mexico Museum of Art.



Max Weber (1881-1961), *Still Life with Bananas*, 1909. Oil on canvas, 32¼ x 26 in. Collection of Jan T. and Marica Vilcek. Promised Gift to The Vilcek Foundation. Part of *From New York to New Mexico: Masterworks of American Modernism* from The Vilcek Foundation Collection at Georgia O’Keeffe Museum.

pond. That’s the first Monet I ever saw, the first bit of modern painting that I ever saw.” (*Oral history interview with Andrew Dasburg, 1974 Mar. 26, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.*)

Dasburg would go on to become a major influence in the development of modernism in Taos and showed three paintings and one sculpture in the groundbreaking *Armory Show*. His lyrical watercolor *Sangre de Cristo* (circa 1933) is in the exhibition. Louis Lozowick’s lithograph, *Untitled* (1933) is a gritty black and white depiction of grain elevators and trains. Lozowick (1892-1973) was born in



Howard Cook (1901-1980), *Complex City*, ca. 1956. Oil on canvas, 32 x 44 in., Collection of Jan T. and Marica Vilcek. Promised Gift to The Vilcek Foundation. Part of *From New York to New Mexico: Masterworks of American Modernism* from The Vilcek Foundation Collection at Georgia O’Keeffe Museum.



Georgia O’Keeffe (1887-1986), *On the River (From the River Light Blue)*, 1964. Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 in. Collection of the New Mexico Museum of Art. Gift of the Georgia O’Keeffe Estate, 1987. Photograph by Blair Clark © New Mexico Museum of Art. Part of *Georgia O’Keeffe in Process* at the New Mexico Museum of Art.

Ukraine, and in one of his essays, “The Americanization of Art” (1927), he encouraged his fellow artists to depict “the skyscrapers of New York, the grain elevators of Minneapolis, the steel mills of Pittsburgh, the oil wells of Oklahoma...”

Georgia O’Keeffe in Process opens September 11 at the New Mexico Museum of Art and continues through January 17, 2016. According to the museum, “Preliminary sketches and photographs will be shown alongside finished works to demonstrate the steps, the thinking and the technical art-making process of this 20th-century New Mexico master. The exhibition examines what makes an O’Keeffe artwork recognizable as an O’Keeffe and illuminates some of the ways that the artist approached her compositions.”

O’Keeffe (1887-1986) visited northern New Mexico in 1917 and returned to Taos to paint in 1929 at the invitation of Mabel Dodge Luhan (1879-1962). She settled permanently in nearby Abiquiu in 1949. Her oil painting *Chama River, Ghost Ranch, New Mexico (Blue River)* (1937) is in the exhibition. ■