



A More Abundant Life: New Deal Artists and Public Art in New Mexico

Jacqueline Hoefler

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Artists began coming to New Mexico in the late nineteenth century. They came from everywhere, from Maine to California and a few from Europe. They were attracted by the dazzling New Mexican landscape, the hospitality of town and village life, and very important, the Indian and Hispanic cultures that had shaped the artistic imagination of New Mexico for centuries. From an artist's point of view it was a rich mix, and between art and odd jobs, they managed to make a living. Until the Great Depression of the 1930s. Then, as the artist Louie Ewing said, 'the jobs ran out.' No matter what you were willing to do, there was no work, and nobody was buying pictures and pots. Help came from Washington. New Deal planners offered artists jobs to 'beautify' the community. Almost immediately, artists in New Mexico picked up their brushes and chisels, and for almost ten years, between 1933 and 1943, signed onto Federal programs. How did artists, traditionally loners, like working for the government? When the Santa Fe artist William Lumpkins was asked, he said: 'We thought it was heaven on earth to be paid to paint.' Fortunately, many New Deal artists had the opportunity to speak for themselves. In state-sponsored interviews they tell us in their own words what the New Deal art programs meant to them. Their rich interpretations of that experience and a selection of the work they produced is what this book is about. Artists whose work is beautifully reproduced in this informative book include Josef Bakos, Patrocinio Barela, Oscar and Charles Berninghaus, Emil Bisttram, E. Boyd, Manville Chapman, Ruth Connely, Regina Tatum Cooke, Fremont Ellis, Louie Ewing, Joseph Fleck, William Penhallow Henderson, Victor Higgins, Nils Hogner, Allan Houser, Odon Hullenkremer, Peter Hurd, Raymond Jonson, Gene Kloss, William Lumpkins, Maria and Julian Martinez, Ila McAfee, Helmuth Naumer, B.J.O Nordfeldt, Sheldon Parsons, Eliseo Rodriguez, Olive Rush, Juan Sanchez, Howard Schleeter, Eugenie Shonnard, Will Shuster, Walter Ufer, Theodore van Soelen, Pablita Velarde, Harold West, Brooks Willis and others. The book shows paintings, pottery, rugs, woodcarvings, sculptures and more.

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