

Louie Ewing (1908-1983)

Untitled (Navajo Blanket Design #5), 1935-1939

serigraph on paper

Federal Works Agency—WPA

1950.004.0005

Originally from Idaho, Louie Ewing moved to New Mexico in 1935 after studying art in California. Ewing became acquainted with silkscreen, or serigraphy, through the Federal Art Project (FAP). Russell Vernon Hunter, the state director for the FAP in New Mexico, encouraged Ewing to use serigraphy to document historical artifacts.

His best known portfolio focuses on Navajo blankets. Initiated by Hunter and Kenneth Chapman, director of the Laboratory of Anthropology in Santa Fe, this series of prints depicts blanket designs spanning the years 1840-1910. Chapman picked the designs he wanted to have represented, while Ewing created the silkscreens. After the portfolio's completion, copies were distributed to universities, museums, libraries, and other educational institutions.

Olive Rush (1873-1966)

Weird Land, 1937

watercolor on paper

Gift of Mrs. B.C. Mossman

1950.005.0001

Originally from Indiana, painter and muralist Olive Rush first visited New Mexico in 1914, and moved to Santa Fe permanently in 1920. Through the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture, she created murals at the New Mexico Public Library, now part of the New Mexico History Museum, the La Fonda Hotel in Santa Fe, and New Mexico State University, among other places. She also taught at the Santa Fe Indian School, now the Institute of American Indian Arts.

With its spare, elegant brushwork and atmospheric character, *Weird Land* exemplifies Rush's interest in Chinese scroll painting, but it also has the distinction of being the first artwork to enter the Roswell Museum's permanent collection. It was first exhibited in October 1937 as part of a traveling exhibition sponsored by the Federal Art Project (FAP), officially listed in surviving documents as *FAP Exhibition #261*. The show featured a selection of paintings from different artists working for the FAP, and was on view when the Museum first opened to the public. Mrs. Burton C. Mossman, the wife of a prominent rancher, purchased *Weird Land* for the Museum, and it has remained here ever since.

Jozef E. Bakos (1891-1977)

Flowers in a Blue Vase, 1930-1939

oil on canvas panel

Gift of the Federal Arts Project

1950.009.0001

Jozef E. Bakos explored abstraction and other aspects of Modernism through his painting, creating landscapes, still lives, and other works that explore color and shape. During the 1930s, he became involved in the Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP), an art initiative sponsored by the United States Treasury Department. While many artists employed through TRAP painted murals for public buildings, Bakos created easel paintings that were distributed among different institutions. Among these works was *Flowers in Blue Vase*. The painting features an asymmetrical arrangement of zinnias and other blooms, with dark green leaves helping to connect the blue vase with the light pink and yellow flowers. Details such as the newspaper underneath the vase suggest a setting for the work while inviting the viewer to imagine the rest of the scene.

Russell Vernon Hunter (1900-1955)

After the Dust Storm, n.d.

oil on paperboard

Gift of Paul Horgan

1953.015.0005

Russell Vernon Hunter grew up in Texico, a small New Mexico town located near the Texas border. In 1935, he became the state director of the Federal Art Project in New Mexico. As a state administrator, he regularly corresponded with the Roswell Museum's directors, and periodically visited the Museum. He later became Director of the Roswell Museum during the 1950s, and served here until his death in 1955; this gallery is named for him.

In addition to his administrative duties, Hunter maintained an active career as a painter. His stylized works often feature local subject matter, and share visual qualities with Regionalism, an artistic movement that was especially popular during the 1930s. *After the Dust Storm* was included in a solo exhibition at the University of Colorado in 1938. Like many of his paintings, this work takes inspiration from his experiences living in rural New Mexico, with the neutral palette and soft, blurred forms evoking a dust haze.

Harold E. West (1902-1968)

Just in Time, 1938

black and white linocut on paper

Gift of the Federal Art Project

1955.020.0001

Just in Time is one of several linocuts that New Mexico artist Harold W. West exhibited at the Roswell Museum in October 1938. Executed in a clean, legible style, these prints focus on daily life in the American Southwest, from roping cattle to preparing food. They also have a narrative quality that invites viewers to provide the details of the story. West would later work as a guard at Japanese internment camps during World War II, where he spent much of his time sketching the campsites. These drawings are now part of the New Mexico History Museum.

West also belongs to an extensive creative family. His son, Jerry West, is a renowned New Mexico artist, as is his granddaughter, Valli West.

Juan A. Sanchez (active 1930s)

Archangel Gabriel, 1937

wood, polychrome

Gift of the Federal Art Project

1956.147.0001

Juan A. Sanchez (active 1930s)

Saint Gertrude, 1937

wood, polychrome

Gift of the Federal Art Project

1956.149.0001a,b

In addition to displaying contemporary art, the Roswell Museum exhibited traditional crafts, particularly those that reflected New Mexican practices. These figures were likely shown as part of a 1938 exhibit on *santos*, or representations of saints. Carved from wood and traditionally brightly painted, *santos* are a distinctive part of New Mexican Catholicism, and continue to be made today.

James Swann (1905-1985)

Harvest, 1940

etching on paper

Cecil Bonney Memorial

1973.005.0001

Born in Texas, printmaker James Swann spent most of his artistic career in Chicago. He worked in several different printmaking methods, but remains best known for his etchings of landscapes and urban scenes. He also actively supported the work of other printmakers, and participated in such groups as the Prairie Print Makers and the Chicago Society of Etchers.

Swann exhibited his work here in 1941, and a surviving checklist shows that *Harvest* was one of the works on view. Swann featured southwestern work in the Roswell show, with prints bearing titles such as *In Old Albuquerque*, *Texas Coast*, and *Galveston Bay*.

Howard Cook (1901-1980)

Study for San Antonio Mural, 1937

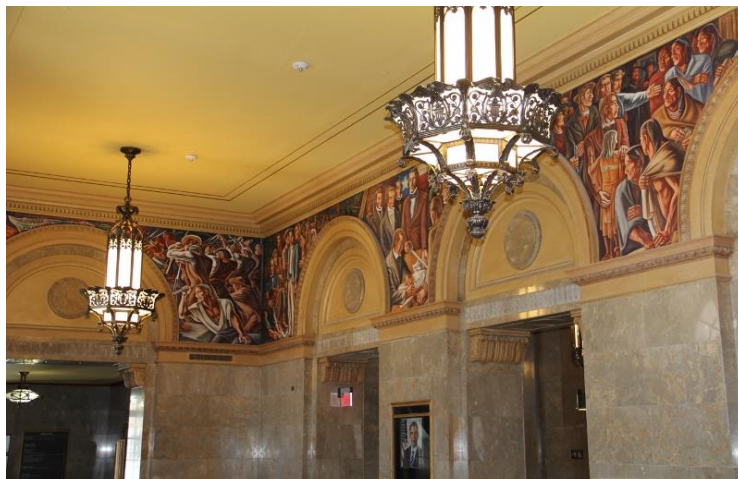
watercolor on paper

Gift of Artist

1974.025.0001a-c

Originally from Massachusetts, Howard Cook studied art in New York and Europe before coming to New Mexico for the first time in 1926. He divided his career between the Northeast and the Southwest, working in New York and a small New Mexican village called Talpa, located near Taos. He initially achieved critical acclaim as a printmaker and illustrator, but expanded into fresco paintings during the 1930s, when he traveled to Mexico to study the work of Diego Rivera and other contemporary muralists. Under the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture, he completed frescoes for several public buildings.

The study on view here is for a mural at the Hipolito F. Garcia Federal Building in San Antonio, Texas. The mural addresses San Antonio's history from the arrival of the Spanish Conquistadors in the sixteenth century, to the rise of the cattle and cotton industries in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



Howard Cook's mural in situ. Image courtesy of Elizabeth Hilburn.

Howard Cook (1901-1980)

Study for San Antonio Mural, 1937

conte crayon on paper

Gift of Artist

1973.031.0108

Howard Cook (1901-1980)

Study for San Antonio Mural, 1937

pastel on paper

Gift of Artist

1973.031.0103

Helmuth Naumer (1907-1990)

Viveash Ranch, 1930-1939

pastel on black paper-covered illustration board

Gift of the City of Roswell, Federal Art Project

1976.032.0002

Helmuth Naumer was from Reutlingen, Germany. He immigrated to the United States in the 1920s, and served in the Merchant Marines before settling in Santa Fe. As an artist, Naumer focused on New Mexico's landscapes and historical architecture, and is best known for his pastels, which he often used on black paper to enhance their luminous quality. During the 1930s, Naumer became involved with the Federal Art Project. He completed a series of pastels for display at the Visitor Center for Bandelier National Monument, located outside of Albuquerque.

Regina Tatum Cooke (1902-1988)

Willow Tree in the Taos Valley, 1939

oil on canvas board

Gift of the Federal Art Project

1976.032.0004

In addition to its own activities, the Roswell Museum supervised other WPA-related projects in town. One of these initiatives including assisting in the decoration of City Hall, a WPA building that opened in 1940. The Museum helped City Hall obtain artwork from the Federal Art Project (FAP), with one of the paintings being *Willow Tree in the Taos Valley* by Regina Cooke.

Painted in 1939, the work is typical of the representational art that the FAP tended to support. Featuring a palette of blues and greens, the painting highlights the mountainous landscape of the Taos region, with a single, lush willow occupying the foreground. Haystacks behind the willow suggest that the season is late summer or early fall, while small clusters of blue flowers in front of the willow link the foreground to the sky, enhancing the unity of the overall composition.



City Hall, Roswell, NM. Image courtesy of David Johnsen.

Peter Hurd (1904-1984)

Ranch on the Plains, 1933-1937

oil on panel

Gift of Edward Horgan

1987.010.0001

The Roswell Museum and Art Center has always been closely associated with the work of artist-couple Peter Hurd and Henriette Wyeth. A joint show of their paintings was on view during the Museum's official inauguration in December 1937, and Hurd in particular participated in Museum-related activities such as playing *ranchera* songs for dances, fundraisers and related events. During the late 1940s, the Museum's permanent collection began to develop in earnest when petroleum businessman and art collector Donald Winston offered to donate a set of Hurd's lithographs.

Peter Hurd is best known for his luminous egg tempera landscapes and portraits of the Southwest, but he initially began his career working in oil paint. After discovering egg tempera, he continued working occasionally with oils until the mid-1930s, eventually abandoning them altogether.

LaVerne Nelson Black (1887-1938)

Moonlight on the Rio Grande, 1934

oil on canvas

June Middleton Estate Fund Purchase

1986.002.0001

LaVerne Nelson Black was originally from Wisconsin, and developed an interest in art at a child, drawing with soil, vegetable juice, and other local organic materials. After studying at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts, he worked as a newspaper illustrator while also producing bronze sculptures. During the 1920s, Black moved with his family to the Southwest for health reasons, settling first in Taos and then in Phoenix.

Like many artists during the 1930s, Black worked on post office murals, specifically a series focusing on the history of the Phoenix region. He also created easel paintings for the Public Works of Art Project, with *Moonlight on the Rio Grande* being one such example.

Emil James Bisttram (1895-1976)

Untitled (Study for Justice Tempered with Mercy), 1935

oil on paperboard panel

Gift of the Federal Art Project

1988.012.0001

Originally from Hungary, Emil Bisttram immigrated to New York as a child, and settled in Taos in 1932. As an artist, he experimented with nonobjective modes of representation, expressing thoughts and emotions through color, line, and shape. In 1936, he painted a mural for the Chaves County Courthouse in Roswell through the Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP). The work on view here is a study for the mural's central scene, *Justice Tempered with Mercy*. The right side represents the suffering that arises from injustice, conveyed through toppled buildings and rioting figures. The left side represents a just society, and presents citizens engaging in constructive activities such as teaching and building. Different symbols associated with justice occupy the center of the composition: the Ten Commandments, underscoring the predominantly Judeo-Christian background of American society during this time period; the sword of justice; a flexed bicep denoting strength, and the hand of God in a gesture of blessing. An inscription along the bottom of the study further underscores the theme: "Uphold the Right, Prevent the Wrong."



Bisttram's completed mural was relocated to Albuquerque during the 1980s.

Image courtesy of John Tibbetts.

Patrocino Barela (1902-1964)

Untitled (Three Faces with Heart), n.d.

cedar wood

Gift of Elizabeth and Jim McGorty

1988.025.0001

Patrocino Barela spent his life in Taos. A self-taught artist who worked a variety of jobs throughout his career, he began carving in his thirties after being asked to repair a broken *santo* of St. Antonio. After observing that *santos* assembled in multiple parts were prone to breaking, he started carving his own versions from single blocks of wood. Compared to traditional *santos*, Barela's works appeared highly stylized and fluid, emphasizing the spiritual essence rather than the physical representation of a saint or holy figure. He also left his works unpainted, making the wood itself the focal point.

Barela received national attention when Russell Vernon Hunter, the state director for the Federal Art Project in New Mexico, began to promote his work. With their lyrical character and simplified forms, Barela's sculptures conveyed an abstract quality that appealed to modernist sensibilities, while his self-taught background resonated with audiences interested in folk art and other vernacular traditions. His work was exhibited at such institutions as the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Despite his critical success, Barela never saw these exhibitions first-hand, and continued living in relative poverty.

E. Boyd (1903-1974)

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, 1938

hand-colored woodcut on paper

Gift of Mrs. E.C. Courtney

1990.006.0007

This print belongs to a larger group of works known as the *Portfolio of Spanish Colonial Design*, a set of fifty hand-colored woodblock and linocut prints illustrating different examples of Spanish Colonial decorative art in New Mexico. The portfolio developed out of a Federal Art Project (FAP) initiative known as *The Index of American Design*, which employed artists to document folk art and other artifacts through meticulous illustrations. The FAP invited each state to submit its own portfolio for inclusion within this national compendium, with New Mexico being one of the only states to respond to this request.

The Portfolio of Spanish Colonial Design concentrates on religious art, and includes renderings of *bultos* (sculptures), altars, furniture, architectural details, and other objects. The prints are based on watercolor studies made by Elizabeth (E.) Boyd, an artist and scholar who later served as curator of Spanish Colonial art at the Museum of New Mexico. Six different artists took Boyd's watercolors and created fifty different woodcuts and linocuts. These prints were then distributed among different artists around New Mexico, who hand-painted them with watercolor. 200 copies of the Portfolio were completed in 1938, with the intention of having it distributed among educational institutions, as well as included in *The Index of National Design*. The FAP rejected the *Portfolio*, however, arguing that the quality was inconsistent due to the fact that artists of varying skill had painted the plates. The FAP requested that New Mexico reprint the works using silkscreen instead of block prints, but this was never completed due to a lack of funds. The FAP recalled the *Portfolio* to Washington DC, but a few copies remained in circulation. The Roswell Museum has a complete copy, and exhibition records indicate that plates from the *Portfolio* were shown here during the 1930s.

Chester Faris (active 1930s-1940s)

Firescreen, 1940-1941

iron

Gift of the Federal Art Project

1994.018.0001

The original Museum building included a working adobe fireplace in the office area. It was later removed as a safety precaution, but a nonfunctioning replica can be seen outside of Founders Gallery. This firescreen was made for the Museum between 1940 and 1941 after Lucy Bond, one of the Museum's directors, became concerned about having embers and soot land on the floor. In a letter to her supervisor, State FAP Director Russell Vernon Hunter, she writes that "the winter winds are beginning which blows the coals out on the floor, making it very unsafe."

Frank Standhardt (1913-1978)

Architectural Rendering of Roswell Museum, 1936

graphite, conte crayon on paper

C.R. Carre Co. Architects

2004.005.0001

Frank Standhardt (1913-1978)

Study for Roswell Museum Stage, ca. 1936

graphite, conte crayon on paper

C.R. Carre Co. Architects

2004.005.0002

The Museum's main gallery included a small performance stage, presented here in this architectural rendering. Located on the west side of the gallery and embellished with a handmade *colcha* curtain, the stage accommodated a variety of events, from musical performances to plays. The stage was later converted into a storage area and is no longer visible to the public, but it remains extant behind a gallery wall. We hope to reopen as a performance area in the future.

Frank Standhardt (1913-1978)

Architectural Rendering of Roswell Museum, 1936

graphite, conte crayon on paper

Found in Collection

2009.007.0001

This rendering from 1936 highlights specific architectural features of the Museum's proposed exterior. Compared to the earlier elevation from 1935, this version of the Museum has a more overtly historicized appearance, with the corbels in particular referencing Spanish Colonial styles.

Frank Standhardt (1913-1978)

Early Proposed Roswell Museum Building, ca. 1935

pen and ink wash on paper

Gift of Harry and Kim Curtis in Memory of Courtney P.
and Lillie Mae Holstun, Sr.

2009.020.0001

Early Proposal for Museum Building is currently dated to late 1935 or early 1936, when the Historical Society first suggested its plans for a museum building to City and WPA administrators. Frank Standhardt, who later served at the Museum's architect, created this early rendering. Drawn in pen and ink, the Museum has a naturalistic yet stylized appearance, with extensive, decorative linework delineating the forms of clouds and trees.

While the final Museum building would have an overtly Spanish Colonial appearance, this early rendering offers a more streamlined, modernized interpretation of historical styles. The corbels supporting the portal, for instance, have been distilled into simple, cylindrical columns, while the overall building has a clean, rectilinear profile. The final building would have a more historicized appearance that recalls the Pueblo Revival aesthetic of Santa Fe.

Louis Siegriest (1899-1989)

From an Indian Painting on Elkskin—Great Plains, 1939

serigraph on paper

Found in Collection

2009.008.0005

Louis Siegriest studied art at the California School of Fine Art in San Francisco and the California College of Arts and Crafts. In the 1930s, he designed silkscreen posters for the Federal Art Project (FAP). Promoting everything from classes and special programs to health policies, the bold, legible designs in posters such as Siegriest's remain one of the most striking legacies from the FAP.

From an Indian Painting on Elkskin—Great Plains advertises the Indian Court at the Golden Gate International Exposition, held in San Francisco in 1939 and a second time in 1940. The Exposition was a World's Fair, an international emporium celebrating technical and cultural innovations of the time. It also commemorated the recent completion of two new bridges: the Oakland Bay Bridge in 1936, and the Golden Gate Bridge in 1937. The Indian Court, one of several displays at the Golden Gate Exposition, introduced visitors to America's different indigenous cultures. Siegriest designed eight posters advertising the pavilion, with each poster taking its imagery from a different tribe.

Top:

Manville Chapman (1903-1978)

Roswell Museum Federal Art Center Foyer, restrike print
1987

woodcut on paper

Gift of the Federal Art Project

2008.002.0002b

Bottom:

Manville Chapman (1903-1978)

Exterior View of Main Gallery, restrike print 1987

woodcut on paper

Gift of the Federal Art Project

2008.002.0003b

Raised in Raton, New Mexico, Manville Chapman participated in a variety of FAP-related projects. He helped produce the prints featured in *The Portfolio of Spanish Colonial Design in New Mexico*, for instance, and had an exhibition of batik prints circulated through the Community Art Center Project, which was shown here in 1938. He also created a set of woodblock prints showing the Roswell Museum, which were used to illustrate an early booklet about the art center. The impressions on view here are restrikes made from the original blocks, displayed in the case below.

Top:

Manville Chapman (1903-1978)

Roswell Museum Federal Art Center Office, restrike print
1987

woodcut on paper

Gift of the Federal Art Project

2008.002.0004b

Bottom:

Manville Chapman (1903-1978)

Roswell Museum Federal Art Center Ladies' Lounge,
restrike print 1987

woodcut on paper

Gift of the Federal Art Project

Manville Chapman (1903-1978)

Roswell Museum Federal Art Center Foyer, 1937

carved woodblock

Gift of the Federal Art Project

2008.002.0002a

Manville Chapman (1903-1978)

Exterior View of Main Gallery, 1937

carved woodblock

Gift of the Federal Art Project

2008.002.0003a

Manville Chapman (1903-1978)

Roswell Museum Federal Art Center Office, 1937

carved woodblock

Gift of the Federal Art Project

2008.002.0004a

Manville Chapman (1903-1978)

*Roswell Museum Federal Art Center Ladies' Lounge+,
1937*

carved woodblock

Gift of the Federal Art Project

2008.002.0005a

Ephemera

The Roswell Museum and Art Center archive contains hundreds of documents dating from the WPA era; a selection of facsimiles is included in this case. From receipts for office supplies to employee timesheets, this ephemera tells us a great deal about how the Museum operated in the 1930s.

A substantial part of these documents consists of forms that the federal government supplied to each art center, known collectively as Federal Art Project (FAP) forms. Art center directors completed and submitted these forms to their state supervisors, who would then forward copies to the national headquarters in Washington, DC. Two forms that appear frequently in the Museum's archives include FAP Form 7, the Monthly Director's Progress Report, and FAP Form 5-B, the Individual Activity Report, which each staff member would complete.

The documents in the archive address a variety of subjects. Exhibitions are a major topic, with surviving documentation including exhibition checklists, summaries, and Billing and Lading forms for exhibit transport. Other documents address education, including class descriptions, schedules, and attendance lists. The archive also includes correspondence with other art centers, with surviving letters addressing the timely shipment of exhibits, collaborations on community art projects, and other topics. There are also several drawings, and photographs of exhibitions and special events.

This archive reveals an art center that was actively involved in its community. By providing a regular rotation of exhibits, free education classes, and special programs, the Museum endeavored to connect the Roswell community with both its regional history and the greater art world.

Los Pastores

One of the most remarkable events that occurred at the Roswell Museum during the WPA era was the performance of a mystery play called *Los Pastores*. Dating from the Middle Ages, mystery plays are dramatizations of the Bible, and are an oral, vernacular tradition, with different geographic regions developing their own interpretations. *Los Pastores* is a New Mexican retelling of the Nativity, or the birth of Jesus, from the perspective of the shepherds. The play follows the shepherds through a series of comedic misadventures, as devils and various temptations try unsuccessfully to keep them from reaching the birth site of the Christ child.

Los Pastores was performed at the Roswell Museum when Roland Dickey (1914-2000), one of the Museum's first directors, learned about it during a visit to Chihuahita, Roswell's Hispanic district. Dickey recognized an opportunity to introduce Museum visitors to Roswell's Hispanic culture, and invited the all-male cast to give a special performance. *Los Pastores* was performed at the Museum on December 31, 1938. Records indicate that it was a success, with 100 people attending the Spanish-language performance. The photographs on view here highlight the performance and the actors behind it.

Furniture

Among the highlights of the Roswell Museum collection is its WPA furniture. These pieces were built specifically for the Museum by Domingo Tejada, a wood carver based in Taos, with help from the National Youth Administration, a New Deal agency that focused on providing life skills to young Americans. An NYA camp was located near Roswell in the town of Capitan, and the furniture was built in the Museum's basement, located underneath the performance stage.

The Roswell Museum's furniture is constructed from different hardwoods. Like the original Museum building itself, these pieces incorporate traditional decorative motifs, including carved floral designs, animal heads, and abstract patterns. To bring out these details, the furniture was stained and then coated with calcimine, a whitewash often used for walls and ceilings. The excess calcimine was wiped off, leaving it primarily in the carved recesses. One of the pieces on view, a large storage cabinet known as a *trastero*, also features inlaid straw, another traditional form of decoration that produces a luminous effect.

In addition to furniture, the Museum interior included several pieces of original tinwork, created by tinsmith Eddie Delgado. Like the furniture, the tinwork incorporated traditional punched designs, and enhanced the historicized character of the building. While much of this tinwork has been lost, we still have three original chandeliers. Recently conserved, you can see these pieces in Founders Gallery.