

April 5 - October 5, 2014

ROSWELL MUSEUM AND ART CENTER



The Wiggins - Howe
Legacy



*Logan Howe, Untitled,
2012, acrylic, latex,
wax, spray paint on
particle board, 26 1/2"
x 11 1/2" x 4 1/4".
Collection of Jeremy
Howe*

For over a century, the Wiggins and Howe families have been leaving their creative mark on the Southwest. Each artist within this family has a unique creative vision, yet a common thread also unites these personal aesthetics, for every generation has been raised in an environment that encourages imaginative self-expression. The result is a family of artistic explorers who use their talents to support culture and education throughout the region.

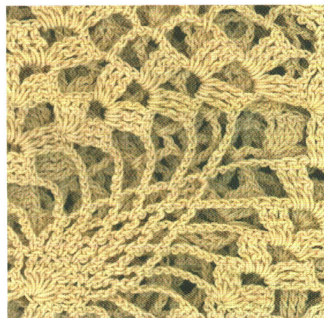
The creative inclinations of the Wiggins and Howes can presently be traced back five generations, with Ida Brown (1873-1937), and her daughter, Mona Brown Wiggins (1897-1983). Originally from Texas, Ida and her family moved to New Mexico in 1908. Mona would marry rancher Miles B. Wiggins, and had two sons, Bill (1917-2012) and Walt (1924-1992). Ida and Mona practiced textile arts such as quilting and crochet, and documented their family lives through photography. Mona also pursued



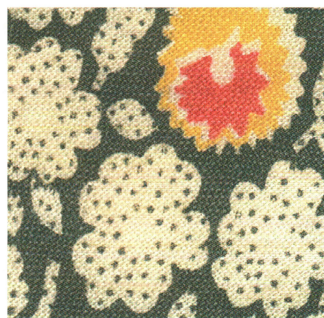
*Elaine Wiggins Howe,
Two Fabrics, 1981,
watercolor on paper,
16" x 22". Collection
of Tom and Elaine
Howe*



Jeremy Howe, Pyrograph: Debris Field, 2002, colored smoke and oxidation trails on paper, 21 1/2" x 21". Collection of Jeremy Howe



Mona Brown Wiggins, Small Crocheted Piece (detail), ca. 1960s, approx. 11" x 19". Estate of Bill and Ruthelle Wiggins



Ida Brown, Dresden Plate Quilt Block (detail), 1932, diameter approx. 16 1/2". Estate of Bill and Ruthelle Wiggins

gardening, painting, and taxidermy, though her greatest interests were music and needlework. Her children were equally creative. Bill would become a prolific and versatile painter who experimented with different styles throughout his seven-decade career, receiving the Governor's

Award for Excellence in the Arts in 2011. Walt would become a writer and seminal photojournalist, writing hundreds of articles for publications such as *Life*, *Argosy*, and *Sports Illustrated*, as well as authoring several books on New Mexico history and art.¹

While the individual accomplishments of Mona, Bill, and Walt are remarkable, what is equally noteworthy is the consistency with which their artistic abilities have manifested in subsequent generations, with some family members becoming professional artists. Walt Wiggins' son, for instance, Kim Wiggins, is a painter and printmaker, while Miranda Howe, the granddaughter of Bill Wiggins, is a ceramist. Other family members have careers outside of the art world but also produce creative work. Bill Wiggins' grandson, Jeremy Howe, is a geologist with a penchant for fireworks and other unconventional materials. His brother Logan also prefers unusual mediums such as spray paint, resin, and latex. Kim's daughter, Rebekah, works in film, acting in and producing her own projects.²

Walt Wiggins, *Rolling Mangana*, ca. 1954, silver gelatin print, 9 5/8" x 12 5/8". Collection of Kim and Maria Wiggins



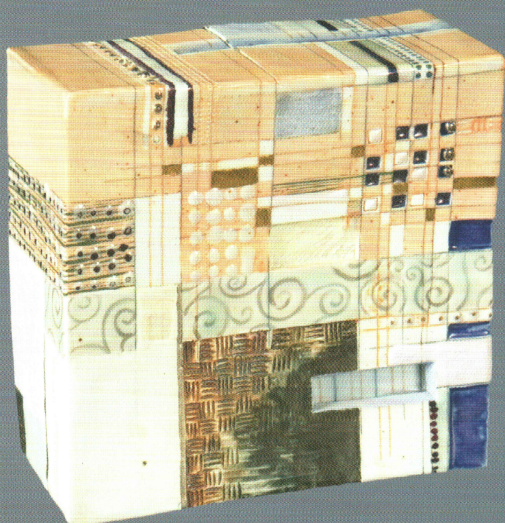
Yet how does this family continue to think imaginatively and produce new work? Genetics may contribute to their creative disposition, but environment is equally important.

When reflecting on his painting career, for instance, Bill Wiggins recalled that "I am sure it was a disappointment to my father that I was not enthusiastic about running the ranch and becoming a 'real cowboy,' but he never expressed that to me. Both he and my mother were always very supportive of my interest in art."³ Subsequent generations confirm that assessment. Family members collaborate on art projects, offer honest critiques, and most importantly, actively encourage one another's artistic explorations.

Rebekah Wiggins, production still from *Those Who Wait*, ca. 2013. Courtesy of the Artist



Miranda Howe,
Patterned Box,
2007, porcelain,
5 1/4" x 5 1/4" x
2 5/8", Collection
of Tom and Elaine
Howe



Bill Wiggins, Kathy
with Blue Face,
1968, oil, 24 1/4"
x 21 1/4", Estate
of Bill and Ruthelle
Wiggins





*Kim Wiggins, Sunrise
- Upper Canyon
Road, 1990, hand-
colored etching, 11"
x 10". Collection
of Kim and Maria
Wiggins*

The creative support that distinguishes the Wiggins and Howes, moreover, is not restricted to the family itself. Bill Wiggins' daughter, Elaine Wiggins Howe, has been especially proactive in arts education, working as a teacher, coordinating public art projects, and establishing the Creative Learning Center in 2003, which provides art instruction for elementary students and assists teachers with integrating the arts into their curricula.⁴ Ultimately, the Wiggins and Howes are not just an exceptionally creative family, but a paradigm for the cultivation of imaginative thinking, a lesson from which we can all benefit.

*Sara Woodbury
Curator of Collections and Exhibitions*

¹Concerning art, Walt was especially interested in New Mexico Modernism; his last three books were monographs on Alfred Morang, Emil Bistram, and William Lumpkins, respectively.

²Examples of her award-winning short films include *Down the Road* (2008), *Click.Flash* (2011), and *Drain* (2011). She is completing production on her first full-length feature film, *Those Who Wait* (2014).

³Bill Wiggins, "Bill Wiggins: An Autobiography," in *Bill Wiggins: A Fifty-Five Year Retrospective* (Roswell: Roswell Museum and Art Center, 1995).

⁴Elaine Wiggins Howe received the Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts in 2009 for her work with the Creative Learning Center.