

OWINGS-DEWEY FINE ART

A GALLERY FOR 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN ART
CONSULTATION | SALES | APPRAISAL

JOHN WARD LOCKWOOD

(b. 1894 Atchison, Kansas – d. 1963 Taos, New Mexico)

Media: oil; watercolor, etching; pastel; ink; polymers

Education: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia; Academie Ransom, Paris.

Exhibitions: (partial list) Salon d'Automne, Paris, 1921; Venice Biennale, 1937; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 1935, 39; Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, 1946; Whitney Museum of American Art, 1936, 39, 46, 50; Chicago Art Institute, 1935; Brooklyn Museum, 1949; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1950, Denver Art Museum, 1952; Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe, 1956.

Collections: (partial list): Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center; Delaware Art Center, Wilmington; Denver Art Museum; Harwood Foundation, Taos; Marion Koogler McNay Art Institute, San Antonio; Museum of Fine Art, Santa Fe; Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia; Roswell Museum and Art Center, Roswell, New Mexico; Santa Barbara Museum of Art, CA; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City.

Murals: Taos County Court House; Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center; Wichita, Kansas, Post Office; Washington, DC, Post Office Department Building; Lexington, Kentucky, Federal Court House; Edinburg, Texas, Post Office; Hamilton, Texas, Post Office.

Selected Bibliography:

Coke, Van Deren, Taos and Santa Fe, The Artist's Environment, 1882-1942. The University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1963.

Nelson, Mary Carroll, The Legendary Artists of Taos. Watson-Guption Publications, New York, 1980.

John Ward Lockwood was born in Atchison, Kansas in 1894. He received a complete, and well-rounded education at the University of Kansas, the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts, and the Academie Ransom in Paris. He also studied in Andrew Dasburg's classes at Woodstock.

Due largely to the presence of his friend Kenneth Adams, Lockwood came to New Mexico in 1926, not to paint the Indians but to find stimulating associations and inexpensive living conditions. This turning away from the Indian subject which had

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drawn so many of the earlier painters to New Mexico was caused in part by a change in the artistic climate of the United States. While the Armory Show had caused a move towards various forms of abstraction, a considerable number of younger, realistic artists had become concerned with a kind of naturalism that reported the objective world in unvarnished, candid terms, with only an occasional overlay of Cubist devices.

The work from Lockwood's early years in Taos, from 1927 to 1940 is quite realistic – a free and warm handling of the environment which he so enjoyed. The artist's earliest Taos paintings were straight transcriptions of local scenes painted on the spot. There existed a bright pattern of light and shade in these pictures, a consequence of the famous New Mexican sky, but shadows remained transparent, and there were no modernistic effects of distortions. Lockwood painted predominantly landscapes – small and intimate, easily recognized views of the Taos valley in a variety of moods and seasons. He also focused on the streets and daily life of the Taos village – paintings which were both pictorial and also sufficiently descriptive to give the viewer a sense of the lifestyle and area at that time, without sentimentality. In an article published by *The American Magazine of Art* in 1929, a reviewer of the Carnegie International Exhibition of that year noted: "Ward Lockwood takes away from the artistic illusion of Taos, New Mexico, by presenting a horrifying picture of its ugly street scenes." Lockwood depicted a new and emerging Taos reality which consisted of storefronts and electrical power-lines in place of what was once earth and sky – hardly "horrifying" by today's standards.

Lockwood's art was never the expression of a social-protest artist. There was always a primary interest in aesthetic rather than social principles underlying his paintings. This is demonstrated clearly in his landscapes where form rather than storytelling was the major concern. Such landscapes have a raw vigor which is conveyed through a variety of simple shapes and shape contours, with a debt to Dasburg's tamed and modified Cubism. In addition to his contact with Dasburg, Lockwood also spent a good deal of time fishing and sketching with Marin during Marin's two visits to Taos. It was therefore, not surprising to see Lockwood's subsequent development as a shaper of nature into crisp, shifting, compartmented planes. Gradually these tight compositions of the 1940s gave way to a free play of abstract planes, interwoven by the action of color and the broad application of paint with a pigment-laden architectural triangle.

Lockwood's work grew progressively freer of realistic perspective and more involved in designing schematic patterns relating to landscape. The work of the final two decades of the artist's life give clear evidence that Lockwood's development was consistently toward abstraction, culminating in the non-objective paintings done in his final years. In an interview in 1960 he said, "To paint poems, not to tell stories, is my objective."

Loren Mozley, longtime friend of the artist wrote, "Ward Lockwood is generally thought of as a Taos painter, and certainly the picturesque environment and landscape of New

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Mexico were fruitful in his life and in his artistic formation. He made himself a part of the locale, and referred to it invariably when speaking of his work. The Southwest is reflected in whatever he did, in obvious and ineffable ways... He lived intensely in the mountain and desert world until it became part of his vision and memory.