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in a touching appreciation of the simple beauty and truth of Indian life that the English Slade School certainly did not arouse! . . . "and knowing this is truth and truth is beauty . . . what further shall be sought for or declared?" Browning said.

What I have set down here are but a few hints about the exchange of influence between Taos and those who passed through, and but a few names of the great number of those, for a list without the stories attached is only sterile and tiresome, and I have not the space for more. But as I tell even this little, I discover for myself that the balance between these two, the environment and the people, is not even.

Environment is the stronger for as long as it does something more for the people than the people do for it, and that is still true today. *Taos continues to do something to people.* But we do not know how long this will last, for there are new and powerful elements at work all over the world and not only in this little Valley.

Some call it Progress and some call it Commerce and some call it merely Change.

" 'Tis a heartbreak to the wise that things are in the same place for a short time only!"

The irrational and irresponsible universe, we think sometimes, we all unknowing . . . and without faith.

## LOS OCHO PINTORES

*Kenneth M. Adams*

**T**HE HISTORIC significance of the Taos Society of Artists in the development of the Southwest stems primarily from its activities when the membership comprised eight painters: Bert G. Phillips, E. L. Blumenschein, Joseph H. Sharp, O. E. Berninghaus, E. Irving Couse, W. Herbert Dunton, Walter Ufer, and Victor Higgins. Although the Society was created by

the first six of these painters and was to attain a membership of eleven with the election of E. Martin Hennings, Catherine C. Critcher, and Kenneth M. Adams before it was dissolved, its great years as an exhibiting organization were those of this eight-man membership.

The purpose of the Society is stated in Article III of its constitution:

This Society is formed for educational purposes, to develop a high standard of art among its members, and to aid in the diffusion of taste for art in general. To promote and stimulate the practical expressions of art—to preserve and promote the native art.

To facilitate bringing before the public through exhibitions and other means, tangible results of the work of its members—to promote, maintain and preserve high standards of excellence in painting, and to encourage sculpture, architecture, applied arts, music, literature, ethnology and archaeology, solely as it pertains to New Mexico and the States adjoining.

The Society was organized in 1914 and hung its first exhibition that same year at the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe. Thus began the annual traveling exhibitions of paintings throughout the United States, which continued until 1927 when the members voted to dissolve the Society.

At the time of this first show, there were few if any art dealers between the Mississippi and the West Coast, and no museums with exhibitions of contemporary art as part of their programs. Consequently, within this wide area an expanding population hungered for the cultural nourishment of the visual arts. When it was learned that exhibitions of paintings could be had by simply defraying cost of transportation and insurance to and from the respective communities, exhibitions of the Taos Society of Artists were soon sponsored by schools, women's clubs, and other civic organizations. In lieu of museums, anything that had a roof and walls was used to house the exhibits. Occasionally purchase of paintings resulted from these exhibitions, but more important to the purpose of the Society was its stimulation of the de-

velopment of a "taste for art in general." It is not too much to say that contemporary interest in painting and the allied arts, manifest throughout the West today in its art associations, regional exhibitions, and civic and state museums, received its initial impetus from the traveling exhibitions of paintings of the Taos Society of Artists.

The fame of the Society was not a slow and painful growth. Recognition and favorable publicity came to the Taos group immediately after its organization. I remember the late Walter Ufer telling me that during his term as secretary he had booked the Society's exhibition for such distant points as Honolulu and Shanghai, China. Unfortunately this was the year of our entrance into the First World War, and the project had to be abandoned.

Art at this time had not crossed the Mississippi westward. Men creating it lived in eastern states because they felt the need of close association with both dealers and museums; the large national exhibitions were shown in New York, Philadelphia, Washington, and Pittsburgh. Consequently, a group of painters living in a little New Mexico village isolated from the main current of art activity, working with material until then little exploited, and setting themselves up as an exhibiting society stirred the imagination of critical reviewers and writers on art. The newspapers and the art magazines of the period devoted much space to the work of the several members, collectively and individually. The Society's group show was desired by a constantly increasing number of communities. The work of the members individually was exciting comment and winning important awards in the large national exhibitions, and feature writers for the numerous metropolitan papers and periodicals came out to write glowing accounts of the artists and the beauty of the country. The Santa Fe and the Denver and Rio Grande railroads, quick to sense the importance of the men as publicists for the area served by their lines, extended every courtesy. The painters were often facilitated in their travel with free transportation until the issuance of

passes was restricted by law to the railroad employees only. Walter Ufer was a guest at El Tovar for two weeks because he wished to paint the Grand Canyon.

The painters and the Santa Fe Railroad were mutually fortunate in that William Haskell Simpson was at this time assistant to the president of the company, in charge of public relations. A poet as well as an astute public relations executive, Simpson was sympathetic with the cultural aims of the group and at the same time realized that their paintings could be used to advantage in publicizing the Santa Fe Railroad. Paintings were purchased and displayed in ticket offices and Fred Harvey hotels. I remember having seen a collection in the Railway Exchange Building in Chicago. Also photographic reproductions ornamented the company's advertising literature, and for many years until his death E. Irving Couse produced the work for the company's calendars.

The Santa Fe Railroad began carrying more and more people into the Southwest on vacation trips. Many, financially independent, returned and established homes; still others, seeing possibilities for profitable living in agriculture, stock raising, mining, lumber, commerce—yes, and in catering to the needs of future generations of tourists—returned to enter or establish enterprises in these various fields. Why did they come? What focused their attention upon the Southwest and particularly upon New Mexico? The lion's share of the credit must go to the early publicity created by the traveling exhibitions of the Taos Society of Artists.

Thus in its life span of thirteen years, 1914 to 1927, the Taos Society of Artists achieved far more than the ambitious purpose of Article III of its Constitution. Directly or indirectly, its influence is present in so many divergent fields of New Mexico life as we know it today—both cultural and economic—that no present or future historian can very well ignore it. It stimulated the art of painting so effectively that today New Mexico has more resident artists per capita than any state in the union. Its several members in the course of their lives have found themselves allied

with the anthropologists, archaeologists and ethnologists in many a battle for the preservation of the native arts, national monuments, historic architecture, and the independence of the Indian. Many workers in the fields of the applied arts, architecture, sculpture, music and literature are grateful for the encouragement they have received from these men. Their contribution as unwitting publicists, perhaps, has been worth millions of dollars to the state and the surrounding area. Certainly no other professional group has contributed so much to the Southwest.



In the late years of the Society's existence it became increasingly difficult to assemble traveling exhibitions of painting of a quality comparable with that of the early years. The quality of the painters' production had not deteriorated. They were painting better than ever, but they had succeeded so well in their purpose as a group in developing an art interest that the work of the members could not keep up with the demand coming in the form of requests for "one man shows" and invitations to exhibit in a growing number of national exhibitions and with increased sales. The Society had accomplished its purpose. Regretfully, a quorum of its members met at the home of Bert G. Phillips one night in March, 1927, and by a unanimous vote ended the existence of the Taos Society of Artists.

Of the eight painters who constituted its membership during

the years of its greatest activity, four are dead: Couse, Dunton, Ufer, and Higgins. Living and working with undiminished ardour and enthusiasm are Sharp, Phillips, Blumenschein, and Berninghaus.

In seeking some quality common to all of these eight individuals who reacted differently to the stimulus of the physical environment and the human life it embraced, I think I might say it was love: love that had in it elements of reverence for the awe-inspiring grandeur of the mountains, expanse of cultivated fields and desert, and the simple "rightness" of "belonging" that characterizes the Indians and the Spanish-American inhabitants of the Valley. It was this quality that won for the alien artists a place in its life. Whatever there may have been at first of doubt, mistrust or suspicion was quickly dispelled by the friendliness of Sharp, Blumenschein, Phillips and Berninghaus, the earliest resident artists.

It was Sharp who "discovered" Taos sometime in the nineties, and his vivid description of its beauty to Phillips and Blumenschein in Paris sent them to Taos in 1898. Phillips remained and established the first home and studio. Blumenschein returned to New York but came back the following summer, a pattern he was to follow for several years before making Taos his permanent home. Berninghaus came to Taos in 1899 and shortly thereafter established residence. These four men created the pattern of conduct and communication that served as a guide to artists following them to Taos. The later ones, like myself, sought their counsel and advice, always freely and graciously given. Men of good humor—patient, kind, and tolerant—they worked over the rough corners of our "greenness" until we were acceptable "Taosenos." They introduced us to their Indian friends who worked with them as models and these friends in turn found models for us.

Out of this working relationship of artist and model evolved many loyal and devoted friendships. Founded upon a conscious-

ness of their common humanity, mutual respect and esteem—if not of understanding—many of these friendships have lasted a lifetime. I think of Jim Mirabal and Walter Ufer, of Albert Martinez (Looking Elk) who worked with Berninghaus for so many years that even his fellow Indians often called him Albert “Bernie,” and of Ben Luhan who posed for so many of Couse’s paintings. So closely was he identified with Couse that more people in Taos today know him by the name “Ben Couse” than they do by his own name.

The Indian was the predominant theme for the paintings of the group in the early years. Later, as the artists became adjusted and felt themselves a part of the life of the valley, their interest broadened and embraced a wide variety of motifs. Skilled in the craft of painting, they attempted anything and everything, from a spray of wild plum blossom to the dramatic sweep of storm clouds over Taos mountain.

It is still too early to evaluate properly the aesthetic significance of the paintings of the group, but recognition of their contribution to the cultural and economic development of the Southwest is long overdue.

## NOTES FOR AN ART CRITICISM

*Andrew Dasburg*

“The artist’s work is part  
and parcel of the man.”

**T**HERE WAS a time in my student days when I thought that an infallible order of composition underlay the works of the masters. A kind of mathematical crutch on which they equilibrated their subject matter. I had still to learn that the source of all design lies in the intuitive mind of the artist and not in any theory of space division. Every forceful creative idea,