



A Contested Art: Modernism and Mestizaje in New Mexico

Stephanie Lewthwaite

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When New Mexico became an alternative cultural frontier for avant-garde Anglo-American writers and artists in the early twentieth century, the region was still largely populated by Spanish-speaking Hispanos. Anglos who came in search of new personal and aesthetic freedoms found inspiration for their modernist ventures in Hispano art forms. Yet, when these arrivistes elevated a particular model of Spanish colonial art through their preservationist endeavors and the marketplace, practicing Hispano artists found themselves working under a new set of patronage relationships and under new aesthetic expectations that tied their art to a static vision of the Spanish colonial past.

In *A Contested Art*, historian Stephanie Lewthwaite examines the complex Hispano response to these aesthetic dictates and suggests that cultural encounters and appropriation produced not only conflict and loss but also new transformations in Hispano art as the artists experimented with colonial art forms and modernist trends in painting, photography, and sculpture. Drawing on native and non-native sources of inspiration, they generated alternative lines of modernist innovation and mestizo creativity. These lines expressed Hispanos' cultural and ethnic affiliations with local Native peoples and with Mexico, and presented a vision of New Mexico as a place shaped by the fissures of modernity and the dynamics of cultural conflict and exchange.

A richly illustrated work of cultural history, this first book-length treatment explores the important yet neglected role Hispano artists played in shaping the world of modernism in twentieth-century New Mexico. *A Contested Art* places Hispano artists at the center of narratives about modernism while bringing Hispano art into dialogue with the cultural experiences of Mexicans, Chicanas/os, and Native Americans. In doing so, it rewrites a chapter in the history of both modernism and Hispano art.

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