

The background is an abstract painting in shades of gray. It features a large, dark, circular shape on the right side, and various textured, brush-stroke-like areas in lighter and darker tones. The overall composition is layered and complex.

# Addison Rowe Gallery

Emil Bisttram Day 2015

Exhibition Catalog

# Addison Rowe Gallery

---

229 East Marcy Street, Santa Fe, NM 87501

In 1975 the Governor of  
New Mexico declared April 7th  
*Emil Bisttram Day*,  
a New Mexico state holiday.

Sadly, this holiday has been forgotten  
along with the man for whom it was celebrated.  
This exhibition is an effort to remind New Mexicans  
of his tireless devotion to our artistic community.  
The Addison Rowe Gallery is proud to offer this  
diverse collection of paintings and drawings  
from Emil Bisttram's extraordinary career.

- Enjoy

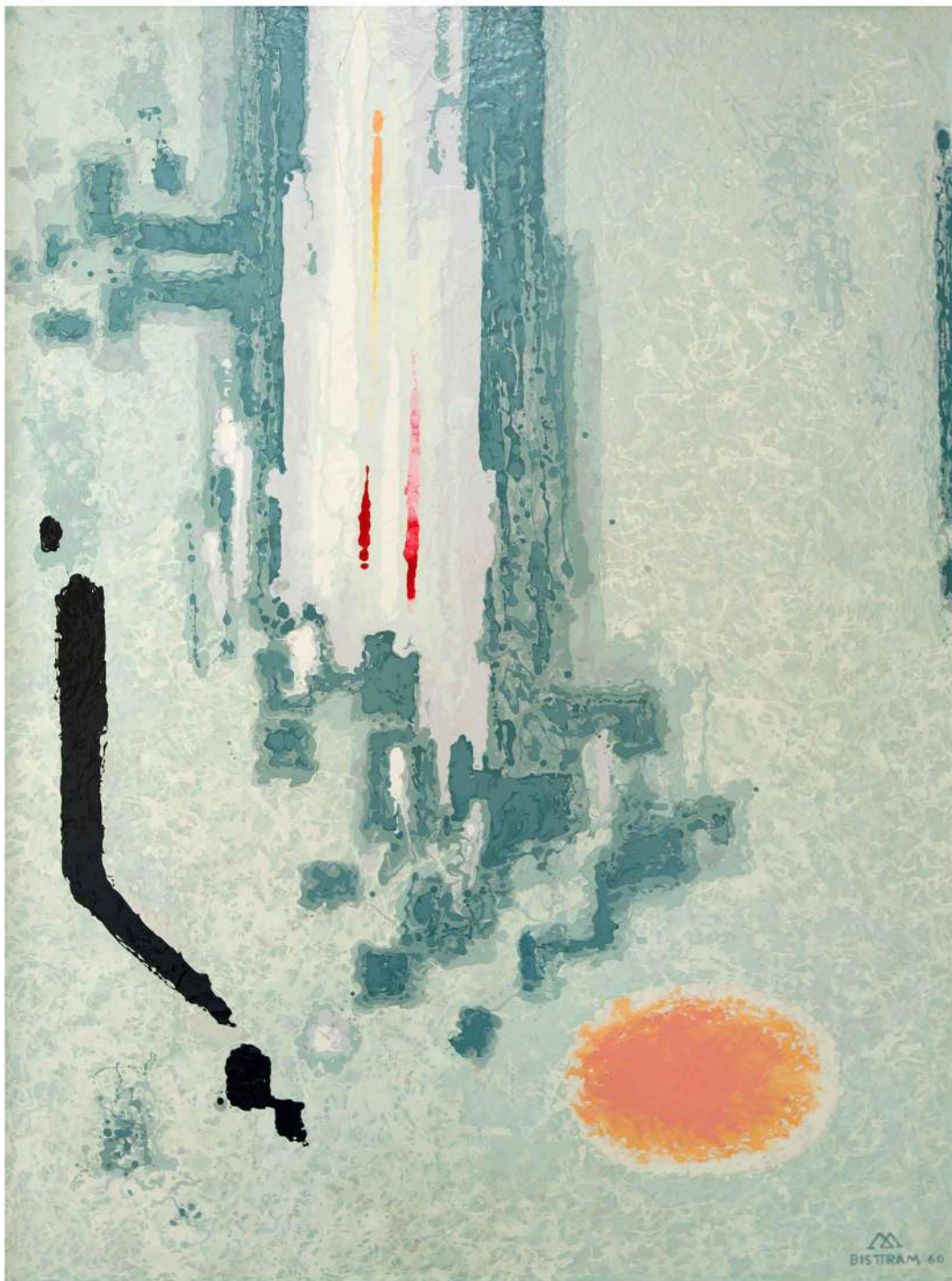


Bucephalus, 1958. Watercolor on paper. 30" x 22". Signed & dated: lower right

Emil Bisttram was born in a small town on the Hungarian-Romanian border on April 7th, 1895. His family immigrated to the United States in 1906. Growing up the tenements of New York City, Emil Bisttram showed a strong desire to paint early in life. He began working as a commercial artist in 1912. By 1915 he founded the first freelance commercial art studio in New York City. In 1918 Bisttram began attending night classes at the National Academy under Ivan Olinski. He also learned from Leon Kroll at the Art Students league, and Jay Hambridge at the Parsons School of Art and Design. In 1921 he was invited to teach at Nicolas Roerich's Master Institute of United Arts in New York City. Although Roerich had little direct influence on Bisttram's artistic style, this was where Bisttram first encountered theosophy, and many other spiritual practices and philosophies. In 1931 Bisttram was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship to study in Mexico with Diego Rivera. In 1932 he moved to Taos, where he founded the Taos School of Art and the Heptagon Gallery (considered the first commercial art gallery in Taos).



*Red Rain*, ca. 1963. Oil on Masonite. 13 ½" x 17 ¾". Signed & dated: lower right



The 1930s are the beginning of Bisttram's story. Everything leading up to this point was formative. He arrived in Taos on a cusp—the more conservative style of the Taos Society of Artists was giving way to the modernist expression of artists such as John Marin, Georgia O'Keefe, Raymond Jonson, and Andrew Dasburg. Bisttram simultaneously irritated the older Taos artists, shared ideas with his contemporaries, and trained the next generation of New Mexican artists. Not that his contributions are unparalleled, rather he was a critical component in the growth of art in New Mexico. A visual exploration of his works from the 1930s to his death on February 26, 1976 shows an artist who was never satisfied—moving fluidly between representational landscapes and pure non-objectivity.







*Moon Magic*, 1960. Oil on canvas. 31 ½" x 35 ½". Signed: lower right



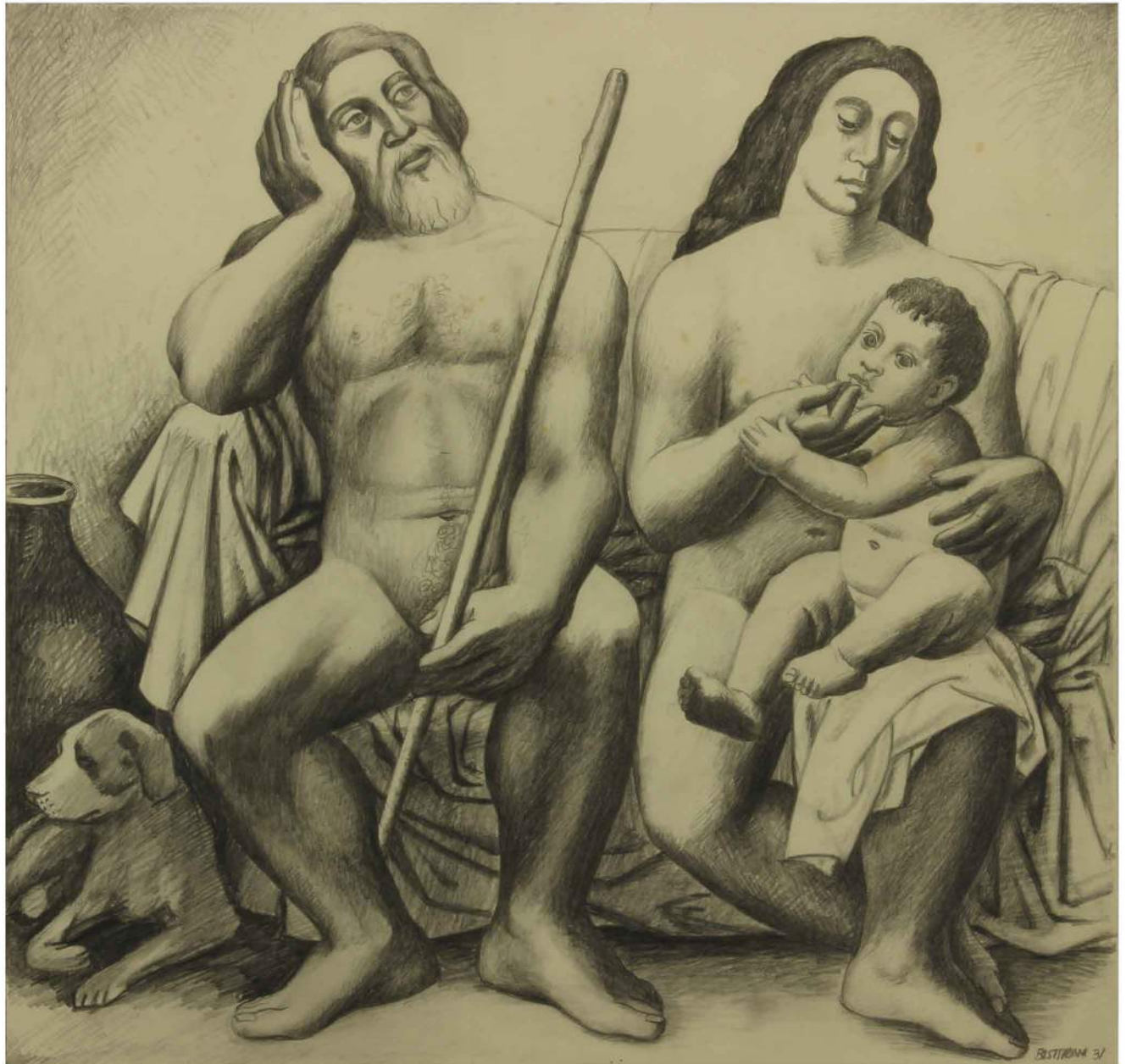


*Mask*, 1959. Oil on board. 36" x 30". Signed and dated: lower right





*Spring Thaw*. Oil on board. 39" x 32". Signed and dated: lower right



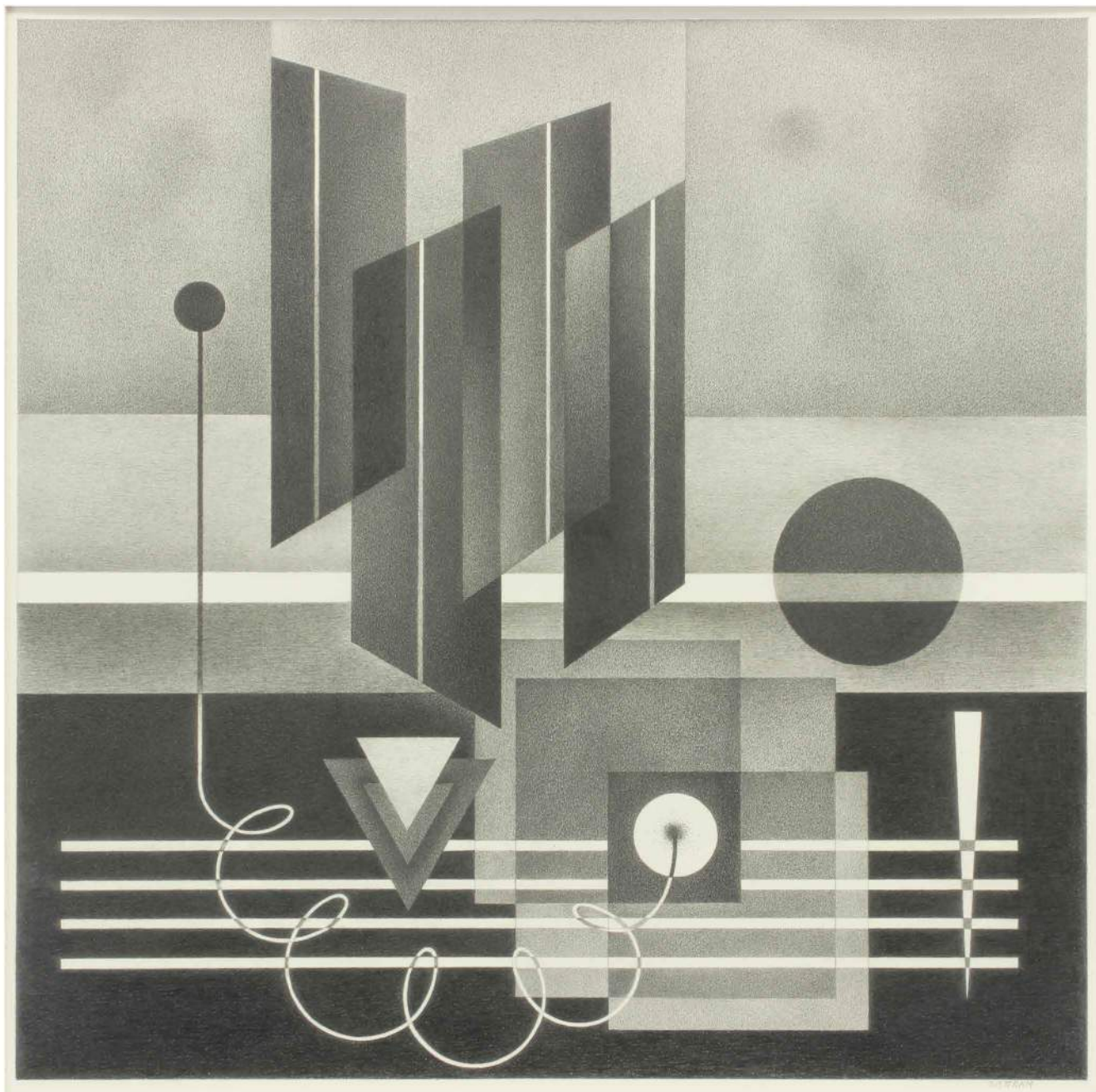


*The Family*, 1932. Pencil on paper. 16" x 17". Signed & dated: lower left



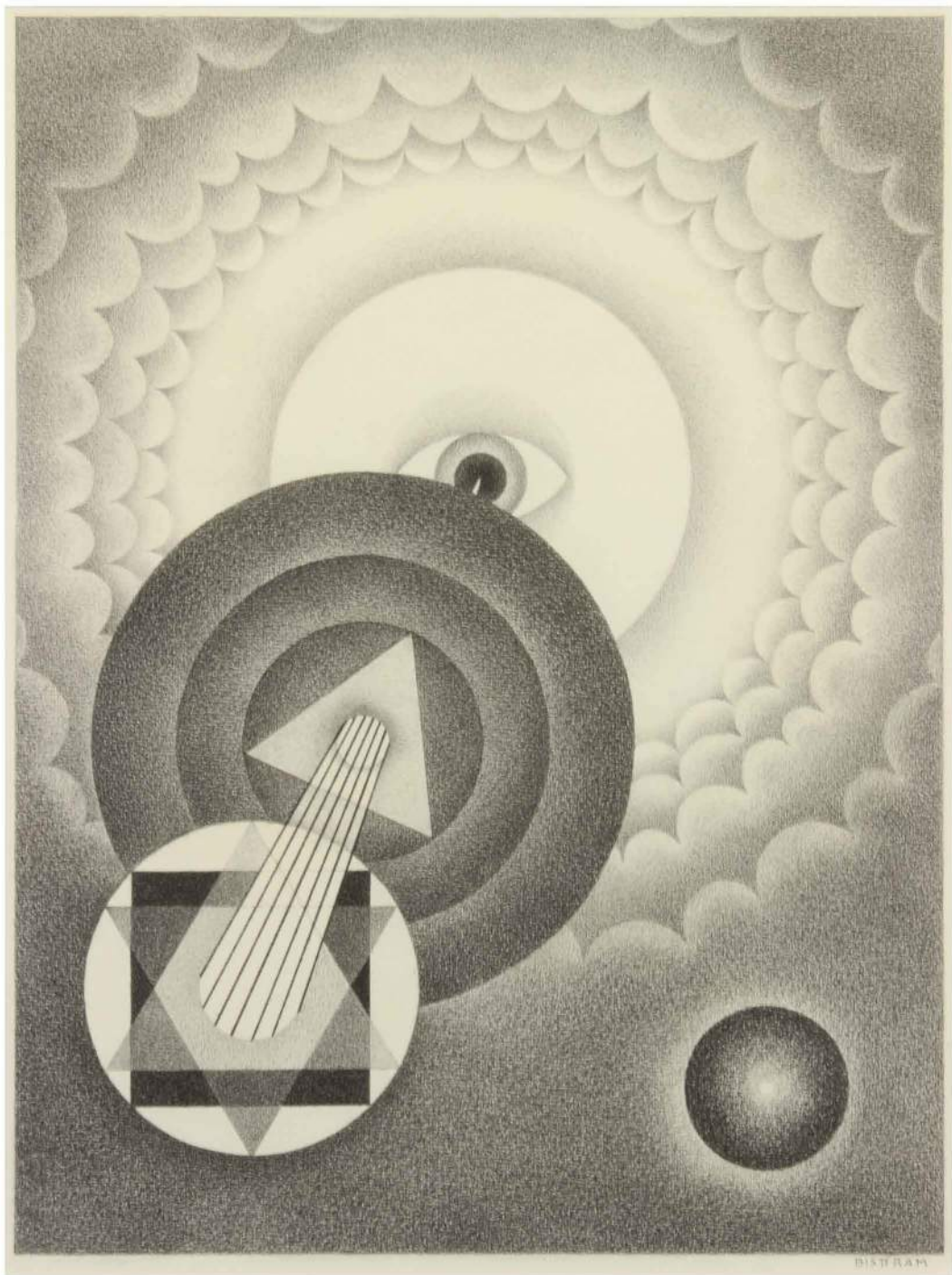
15 *Stream Into Eternity*, 1952. Litho-crayon on paper, 21  $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 16  $\frac{3}{8}$ ". Signed and dated: lower right



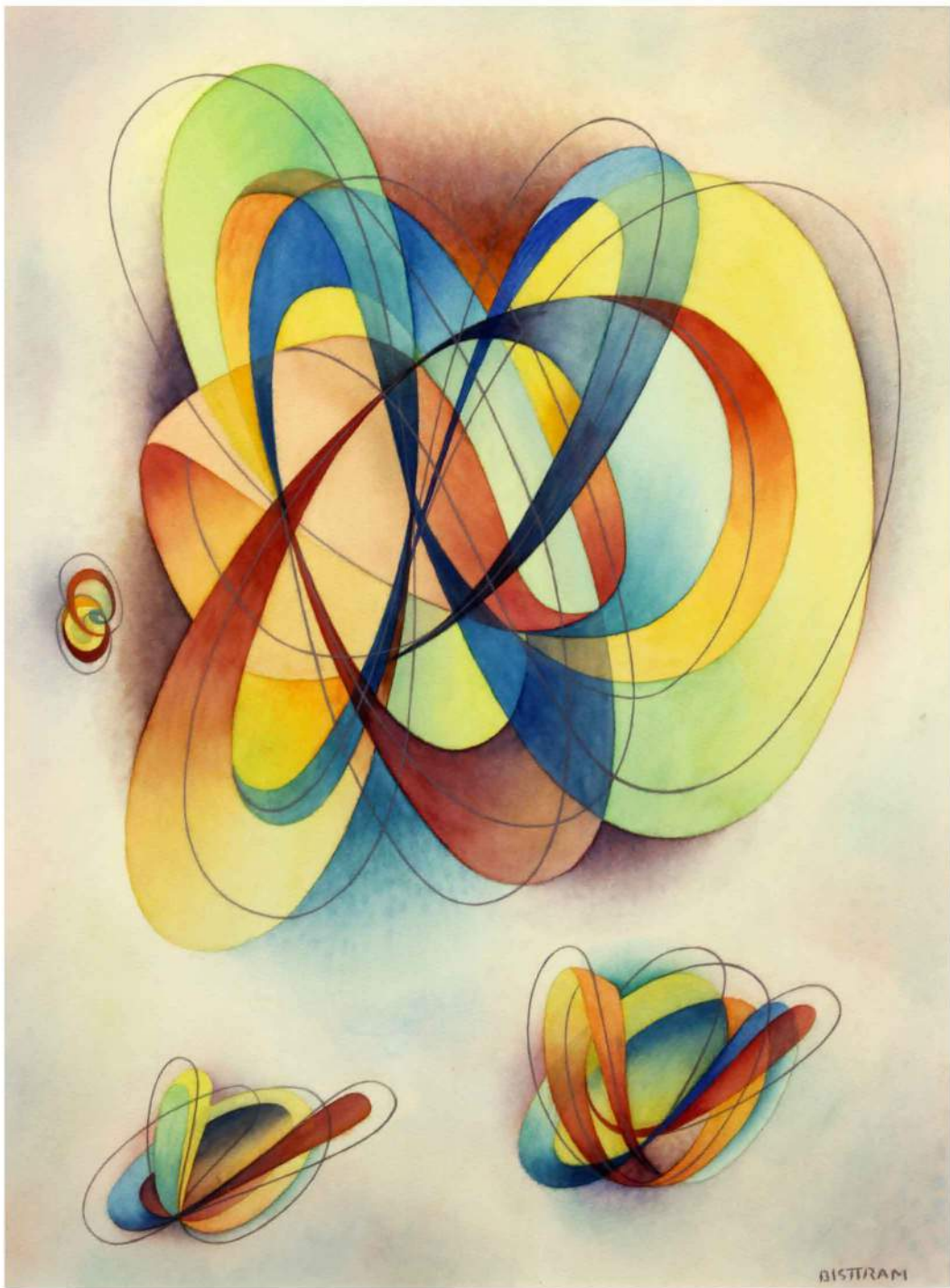


*Descending.* Pencil on paper. 16" x 16". Signed: lower right





*Untitled Abstraction*, ca. 1940. Graphite on paper. 18" x 13 ½". Signed: lower right





*Embracing Couple*. Encaustic on paper. 22" x 22". Signed and dated: lower right





*Transcendental Abstraction*, 1937. 28" x 22". Encaustic on paper. Signed: lower right

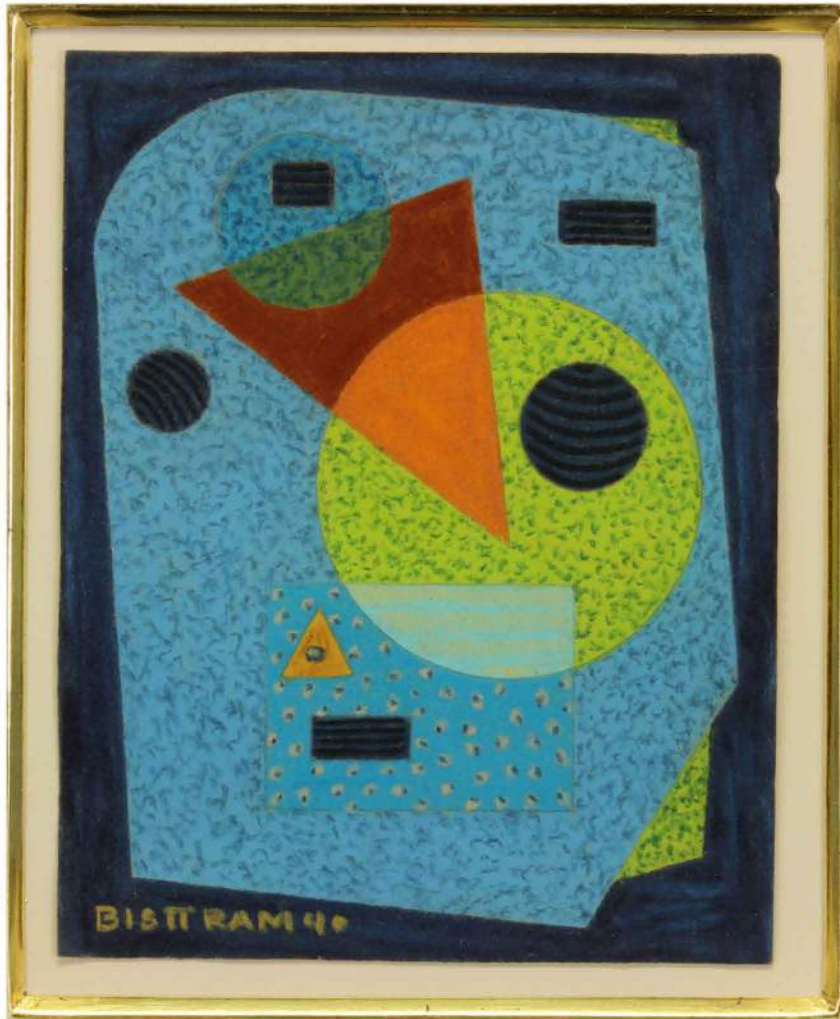






*Untitled*, 1940. Encaustic on paper. 11 ¼" x 8". Signed & dated: lower right





*Untitled*, 1940. Encaustic on paper. 6 7/8" x 5 1/2". Signed & dated: lower left

Art concepts and all tangents therefrom are a matter of relative comprehension. It is my conviction that Art, for the artist and the layman, is a means to unfold the consciousness and thereby bring it to envision and experience wider horizons. Art, therefore, should concern itself not with imitation but with creation, otherwise it fails in its prime purpose: that of inspiring and stimulating thought. It brings to the life of the artist and to the layman an experience on a higher plane of emotion and intellectual perception without which there can be no real progress in man's development.

-Emil Bisttram

Sources:

- Bisttram, Emil, and Walt Wiggins. *The Transcendental Art of Emil Bisttram*. Ruidoso Downs, NM: Pintos, 1988. Print.
- Levin, Gail, and Marianne Lorenz. *Theme & Improvisation: Kandinsky & the American Avant-Garde 1912-1950*. Boston: Little, Brown and Comp., 1992. Print.



Abstract Canyon, 1958. Watercolor on paper. 21" x 28 ¼". Signed & dated: lower left





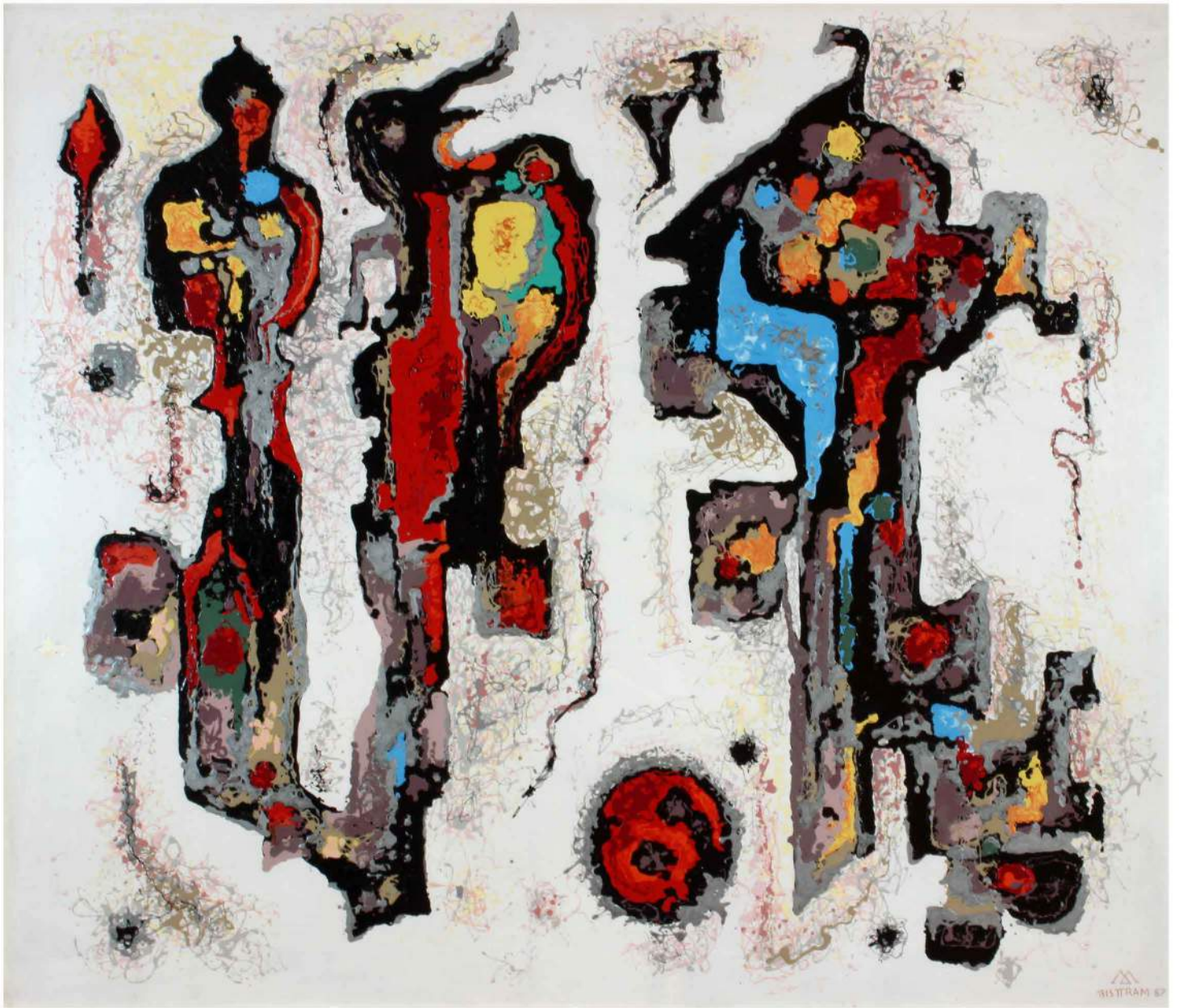
*Hopi Calako Mana*. Watercolor on paper. 22" x 16". Signed and located (Taos): lower right





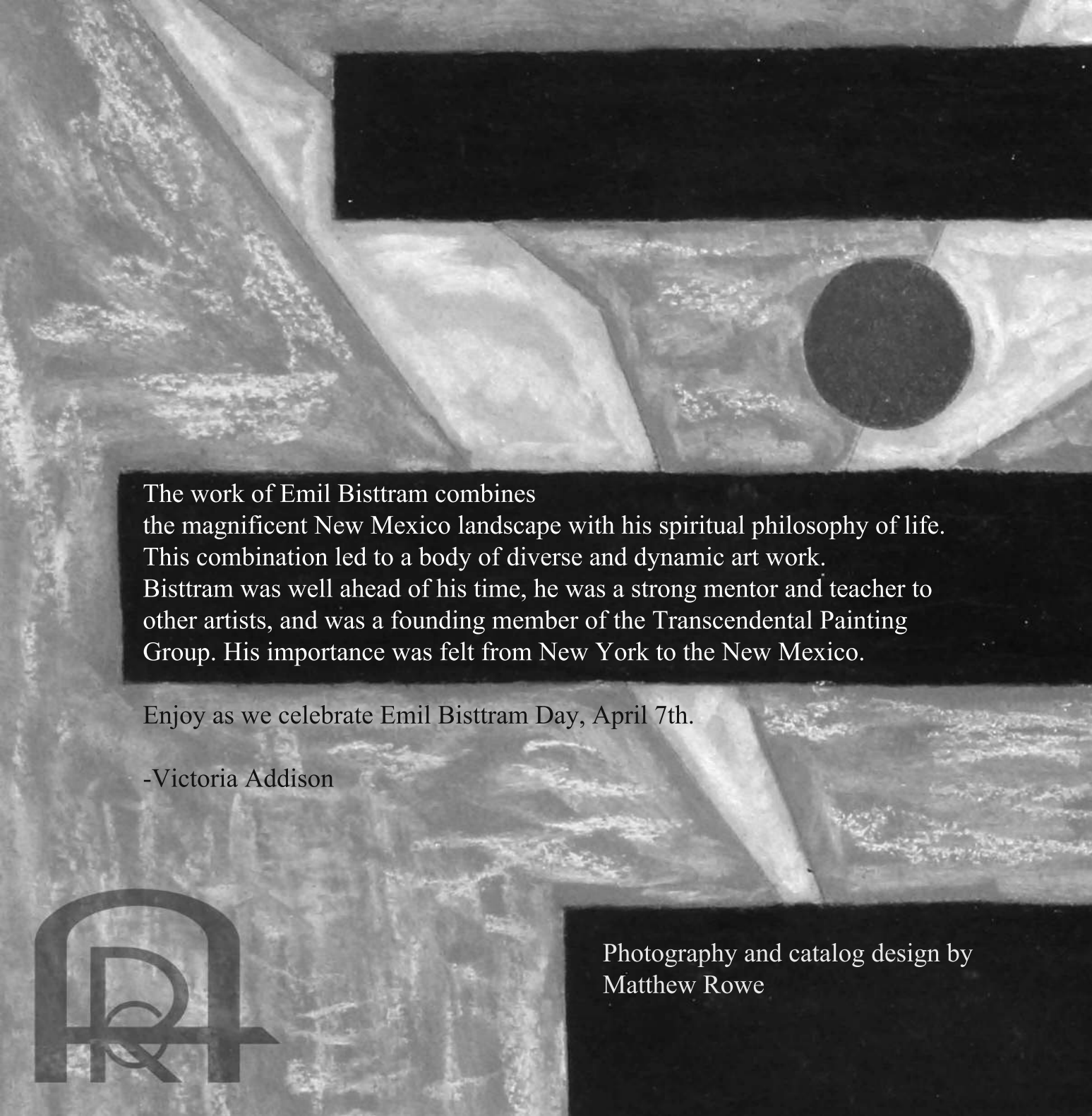


*Ranchos de Taos Church*, 1970. Oil on canvas. 27 x 36 ½ inches. Signed and dated: lower right 32





*Sails in the Night*, 1965. Oil on canvas. 32" x 36". Signed and dated: lower right



The work of Emil Bisttram combines the magnificent New Mexico landscape with his spiritual philosophy of life. This combination led to a body of diverse and dynamic art work. Bisttram was well ahead of his time, he was a strong mentor and teacher to other artists, and was a founding member of the Transcendental Painting Group. His importance was felt from New York to the New Mexico.

Enjoy as we celebrate Emil Bisttram Day, April 7th.

-Victoria Addison



Photography and catalog design by  
Matthew Rowe