



COURTESY OF ADDISON ROWE GALLERY

"Still Life" is an oil on canvas board by Jozef Bakos (1891-1977).

BY KATE MCGRAW
For the Journal

A nice slice of Santa Fe's art history goes on display today when Addison Rowe Fine Art opens a show of paintings and watercolors by Jozef Bakos (1891-1977), a founder of the historic art group "Los Cinco Pintores."

The Marcy Street gallery is also exhibiting work by some of Bakos' early-20th-century friends in the Santa Fe art colony. Bakos, Willard Nash, Fremont Ellis, Walter Mruk and Will Shuster were the official members of "Los Cinco Pintores," who painted in Santa Fe in the 1920s, '30s and '40s.

"This band of artists is recognized as the first modernist art group in New Mexico," gallery owner Victoria Addison said. "The young artist members were all under the age of 30 (when they began the group). They had rebelled against the academic traditions in art and were looking at new avenues of artistic expression. The local Southwest landscape and people filled their paintings.

"Their work represents the traditional subject matter in stylized and abstracted forms. Their canvases used a very deep, colorful palette with uncomplicated composition," she said.

Son of immigrants

Study in Paris was the sine qua non of art students in the early 20th century, but Bakos did not have the money to follow his contemporaries there. He was a working man who came from Polish immigrants who had migrated to Buffalo, New York, in the late 19th century. His father passed down the ability to work as a woodcarver and general contractor.

Bakos' early mentor was his art teacher, John E. Thompson. Thompson brought to Buffalo the results of studying at the Academie Julian and living in Europe for a decade right before World War I. He provided Bakos with an entrée to European art. Paul Cezanne's work was a big influence.

Childhood friends and fellow students Walter Mruk and Augustine Korda accompanied Bakos to a traveling show of Western art by "The Society of Men Who Paint the Far West."

There for the first time he saw the works of Taos artists E. Irving Couse and Ernest Blumenschein. Bakos started painting impressions from this show.

Mruk and Bakos followed Thompson to Denver. A year later, all three of them entered the 25th Annual Exhibition of the Denver Art Association. Their paintings created a public outrage. The western viewers did not like their first exposure to modernism and wrote scathing letters to the press claiming this art reeked of "Bolshevism."

In spite of this controversy, Bakos taught briefly at the University of Colorado until the school shut down during an influenza epidemic. He then visited Mruk in Santa Fe. He fell in love with the landscape and never left. The two of them worked for the U.S. Forest Service. This experience opened up visuals that are reflected in his oils. To make ends meet, he used his carpentry and wood-carving skills to make handmade furniture. His large commissions, such as one for La Fonda, helped sustain him.

In 1919, with Mruk, Nash, Shuster and Ellis, Bakos started a modernist art group called Los Cinco Pintores (The Five Painters). Determinedly avant-garde, the group rebelled against academic traditions in art. The Pintores wanted to have traveling art shows for the common man. Their show went on the road in the Midwest. Although these shows — and the group — lasted only until the mid-1920s, Bakos sold several works and was offered a teaching job at one of the leading universities. He declined.

A congenial man, Bakos next co-founded "The New Mexico Painters," a result of his and William Penhallow Henderson's rejection by the Taos Society of Artists. The Taos Society had reportedly considered their work "too modern." One of the major purposes of The New Mexico Painters was to transcend the rivalry between the two art colonies.

In 1929, Bakos married Italian countess and concert pianist Teresa Di Locci Di Lanti. They became part of the fabric of Santa Fe. Bakos was a great promoter of the arts in Santa Fe. He and his wife opened their home on

LANDSCAPE LOVE AFFAIR

Southwestern Modernists Jozef Bakos, friends on display at Addison Rowe



See BAKOS on PAGE S4 This untitled pastel on paper is by Helmuth Naumer (1907-1989).

Bakos, Friends On Display

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Camino Del Monte Sol to a wide array of artists for parties and late-night discussion sessions. Bakos seemed to be in the middle of everything. He taught art at Santa Fe High School for 30 years and is well-remembered for devotion to his students. He was also a committee member of the annual Fiesta shows at the Museum of Fine Arts in Santa Fe and was known for several eccentric hobbies, including home-brewing.

Meanwhile, his artistic output received national recognition. Bakos used the palette of Gauguin and the shapes and forms of Cezanne to create his own unique style. He received national recognition when he was invited to exhibit at the Art Institute of Chicago in its show "Half a Century of American Painting" as the only New Mexican artist included.

His works were shown in The Whitney Museum of American Art, the Pan American Exhibition (Los Angeles, 1926), and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Corcoran Museum and the Carnegie Institute. Bakos' paintings are in collections of major museums such as the Whitney, The Brooklyn Museum and Denver Art Museum. He died in Santa Fe in 1977.

Addison Rowe Gallery specializes in paintings, watercolors and sculptures by early 20th century American artists with an emphasis on Southwest Modernism. This collection of artists includes members of the Stieglitz Circle, the Taos Society of Artists, Los Cinco Pintores and Academie Julian.