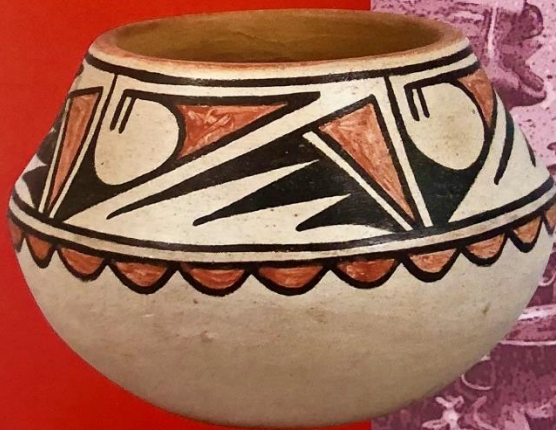
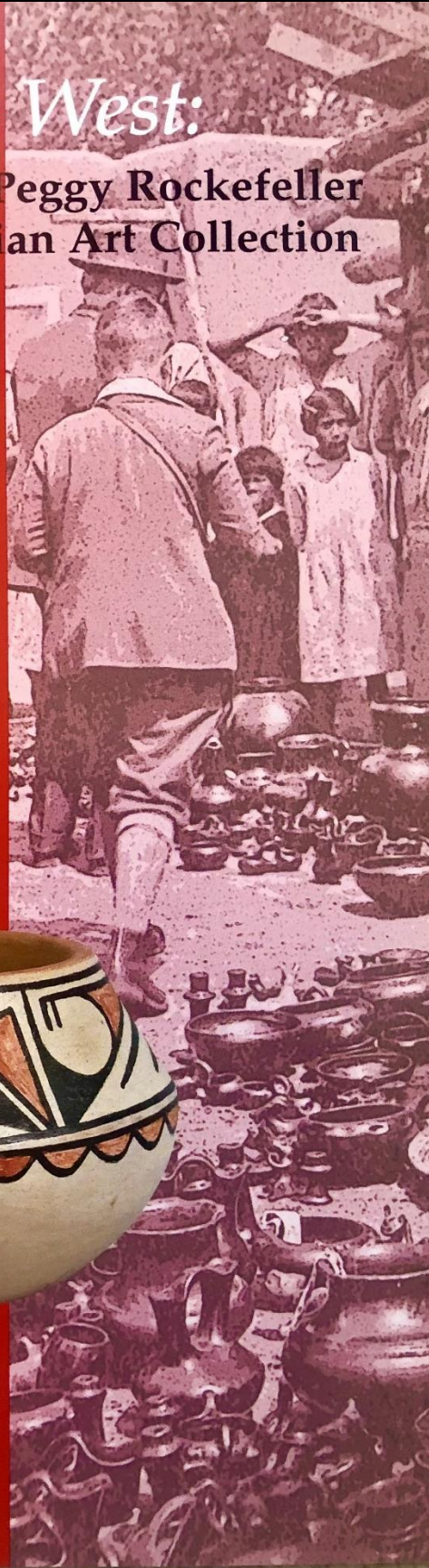


Journeys West:

The David & Peggy Rockefeller
American Indian Art Collection



ABBE MUSEUM
Bar Harbor, Maine
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June 15, 2008



CURATOR'S ESSAY, Bunny McBride

In San Ildefonso we met Maria Martinez, already recognized as the best potter in the region. We watched her form and fire her pots, and my parents purchased a number of them from her. I myself bought a small polychrome pot for which I believe I paid three dollars.

(David Rockefeller)

It is a tiny pot – the smallest item in the collection. Yet, it holds the story of this exhibition. The story is about a pivotal period in American Indian history when artists, anthropologists, art patrons and tourists converged in the Southwest and transformed attitudes toward and possibilities for the creative endeavors of Native peoples.

The pot joined the Rockefeller American Indian art collection on June 11, 1926, the day before

David Rockefeller's eleventh birthday. That day, he visited San Ildefonso Pueblo with his older brothers Winthrop and Laurance and their parents Abby and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. They traveled with anthropologist Kenneth Chapman, an expert on Pueblo pottery. Serving as curator at the Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe, Chapman had recently founded the Indian Arts Fund as a means of purchasing Native art for the museum's collection. Well aware of Abby and J.D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s interest in the arts and philanthropy, and hoping for their patronage, he was eager for them to meet some of the better known Indian artists in the state, especially the potter Maria Martinez.

Several years earlier, commissioned by the museum, Maria and her husband Julian had successfully replicated the lost art of black-on-black pottery, modeled after pieces unearthed by archaeologists in the vicinity. At first, Maria was not fond of these recreations and did not openly display them among the polychrome pieces for which San Ildefonso was known. But when Chapman introduced her to Mr. Rockefeller, he told her, "Maria, go ahead and bring those nice pieces you have. This man has lots of money." Abby and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., bought several blackware pieces that day. But young David chose something more colorful – a boy-sized pot with red and black designs painted on a cream background.



Maria Martinez, San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico, 1926. (Photo Laurance S. Rockefeller, courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)

San Ildefonso was one of many stopovers in a two-month 1926 summer sojourn. And that sojourn was one of four extended train trips to the American West that John D. Rockefeller, Jr., took with his family from 1920 through 1930.

We traveled in a private Pullman railway car... We left the car on sidings at various points along the way and visited national parks and other sites of interest by automobile. We completed a ten-thousand-mile circuit of the country in a period of two months.

(David Rockefeller)

Beyond stopovers at Indian reservations, these Western trips included visits to archaeological sites and national parks. For the children, they provided hands-on history lessons about their country, its natural environment and its original inhabitants. For their father, the journeys inspired major contributions to extend parklands and to support research and education efforts concerning American Indians historically rooted in those lands. En route, he and his wife Abby, as well as the children, discovered the distinct beauty of American Indian art. Purchasing pieces directly from Native artists, as well as from the famous Fred Harvey Indian stores and through anthropologists associated with the artists, they built a sizable collection of pottery, weavings, baskets, sculptures, paintings and jewelry.



1926 journey West. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., (2nd from right), and his sons Winthrop (3rd from right) and David (4th from right) with other members of the trip in Montana. (Photo Laurance S. Rockefeller, courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)

The Rockefellers were among an ever growing number of people touring the West, drawn by the region's natural and archaeological wonders and by a fascination with the artistry and lifeways of American Indians who seemed less acculturated than those in the East. Tourism had become a national pastime, thanks to the comfort and expansive reach of the railway system. Train travel owed much of its popularity to English-born immigrant Fred Harvey who, in partnership with the Santa Fe Railway, had built Harvey House hotels, restaurants and retail shops alongside railway stations west of the Missouri River. Described as "trackside palaces in the wilderness," his establishments were famous for first-class lodging, tables set with Irish linen and fine food served by well-groomed "Harvey Girl" waitresses.



Fred Harvey's Alvarado Hotel Indian Building main salesroom, Albuquerque, New Mexico. (Special Collection / University of Arizona Library/Fred Harvey Collection)

The most renowned Harvey Houses were in the Southwest, where fine American Indian art became the hallmark of Harvey stores. The company's Indian Department sent anthropologists and traders all across the region to find museum-quality Indian artworks for display and sale in the retail galleries of its flagship hotels – the Alvarado “Indian Building” in Albuquerque and the El Tovar “Hopi House” in the Grand Canyon. To pique buyer interest, Harvey hired Native potters and weavers to demonstrate their skills and offered bus and private automobile tours to Indian villages.

While Harvey stores thrived on the popular myth of the “Vanishing Indian,” which urged clients to buy before it was too late, the School of American Research and the Museum of New Mexico promoted Native arts as the key to cultural survival. Housed in Santa Fe's historic Palace of the Governors, these sister institutions were committed to the preservation and endurance of Southwest Indian material culture through archaeological research and the careful collection of past and present works of Indian art. Both fell under the directorship of Edgar Lee Hewett, a robust and controversial archaeologist known as “El Toro.” Hewett and the museum's curator, Kenneth Chapman, worked closely with Native artists, such as Fred Kabotie, Awa Tsireh, Ma-pe-wi and Tonita Peña – collecting and exhibiting their work and providing them with studio space in the Palace. In 1922, aiming to educate the public and build fair market possibilities for Indian artists, the school and the museum sponsored the first Southwest Indian Fair, forerunner of today's famous annual Santa Fe Indian Market.

The efforts of Hewett, Chapman and other anthropologists in the region helped inspire the founding of the Eastern Association on Indian Affairs (EAIA), comprised primarily of East Coast anthropologists, artists and wealthy socialites who shared an interest in the art and cultural survival of Indians in New Mexico. They were social activists and taste-makers intent on educating the public about American Indian culture and art and simultaneously improving the social and economic conditions in Native communities by preserving and promoting their artistic traditions. Many EAIA members visited New Mexico frequently and some lived there part of the year.

Mother was an enthusiastic supporter of a traveling exhibition of American Indian art in 1931. I believe this was the first time that the creative efforts of Indians were exhibited in this country as works of art rather than as anthropological artifacts.

(David Rockefeller)

For Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and other art patrons involved in the EAIA, collecting American Indian art was part of a movement to advance a uniquely “American” art and to transform mainstream society's concept of art to include creative works by indigenous artisans previously relegated to natural history museums. Toward this end, they helped organize the landmark 1931 Exposition of Indian Tribal Arts, a public call to give Indian artists “the recognition that is their due as creators of beauty.” After opening in New York City, this exhibition of 650 works representing some eighty Eastern and Western tribes, traveled to major cities across the country. The driving force behind the show was newspaper heiress Amelia Elizabeth White, a serious collector of ethnographic literature and Native art, and a powerful advocate of Indian rights. Abby Rockefeller served on the Exposition board, along with other art patrons and well-known artists and anthropologists such as John Sloan, F.W. Hodge, Oliver La Farge and H.J. Spinden. Additionally, she and her husband were the major financial contributors and loaned several artworks for the exhibition, including a painting by Tonita Peña whose work won best of show.

For Native artists, the Exposition was a turning point toward more prestigious and profitable markets for their work. It cost them a measure of autonomy, but in the words of Penobscot performing artist Lucy Nicolour (“Princess Watahwaso”), it answered their own call for “dignified opportunities for artistic expression.”



Fighting Buffaloes by Blackfoot Indian artist John L. Clarke. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., purchased this piece from Clarke at his studio in 1924.

In 1974, David Rockefeller spontaneously gave away the tiny pot he bought from Maria Martinez when he was a boy. He gave it to his friend Robert Binnewies, who had served as Acadia National Park's chief ranger in the late 1960s and worked closely with Peggy Rockefeller in founding the Maine Coast Heritage Trust. That year Robert and his wife Midge traveled to New Mexico with Peggy and David. “We stopped at San Ildefonso,” Robert recalls, “and David reminisced with Maria. He mentioned buying the pot from her and asked if she remembered. She did.”

Artworks in the Exhibition

Unless otherwise indicated, all artworks are from
The David & Peggy Rockefeller Collection of American Indian Art

Late Classic Wearing Blanket Navajo, c1870-75

Mixed commercial and raveled wool yarns, including Saxony and bayeta, indigo, cochineal, and aniline dyes
50 x 29 1/2 in.

Late Classic Wearing Blanket Navajo, c1870-75

Mixed commercial and raveled wool yarns, including Saxony and bayeta, and indigo, cochineal, and aniline dyes
51 x 32 in.

Terraced-style Late Classic Phase III Chief's Blanket (Sarape)

Navajo, c1875-85
Black, white, brown, indigo-blue, and red bayeta yarns
57 x 45 in.

Polacca Polychrome Handled Bowl

Hopi, c1880-1900
7 in. diameter
Gift of Mr. & Mrs. David Rockefeller, on loan from The Museum of Indian Arts & Culture/Laboratory of Anthropology, Museum of New Mexico (46520/12)

Concha belt

Navajo, c1900-1924
Wrought silver on leather
40 1/4 x 3 1/2 in.

Concha belt

Navajo, c1900-1924
Wrought silver on leather
42 x 3 in.

Concha belt

Navajo, c1900-1924
Wrought silver on leather
41 1/2 x 3 1/4 in.

Concha belt

Navajo, c1900-1924
Wrought silver on leather
39 1/4 x 3 1/2 in.

Concha belt

Navajo, c1930-1940
Wrought silver on leather
36 x 3 1/2 in.
Collection of Eileen R. Growald



Fighting Buffaloes

John Louis Clarke (1881-1970)
Blackfeet, c1924
Cottonwood
11 x 19 x 11 in.

Squash Blossom Necklace

Navajo, c1935-1940
Sterling silver and turquoise
32 1/2 in. long
On loan from Abby A. Rockefeller

Feathering Arrows

Joseph H. Sharp (1859-1953)
Oil on canvas, c1926
14 x 17 in.

Flat Woven Wallet

Nez Percé, c1890-1910
Twined corn husk, Indian hemp, dyed bear grass, worsted wool yarn, cotton drawstring
25 x 16 1/2 x 4 1/2 in.



Navajo Late Classic Wearing Blanket, 1870-75. Purchased by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 1926.

Vase

Maria Martinez (1887-1980)
San Ildefonso Pueblo,
New Mexico, c1926
12 1/2 in. tall, 10 in. diameter

Jar

Maria Martinez (1887-1980)
San Ildefonso Pueblo,
New Mexico, c1926
12 1/2 in. tall, 9 in. diameter

Jar

Maria Martinez (1887-1980)
San Ildefonso Pueblo,
New Mexico, c1926
8 1/2 in. tall, 8 in. diameter

Sacred Meal Bowl

Maria Martinez (1887-1980)
San Ildefonso Pueblo,
New Mexico, c1925
5 in. tall, 10 in. diameter

Salt Storage Jar

Papago, c1900
Yucca, bear grass, and ocotillo
17 in. high, 20 in. diameter

Navajo Concha belt, c1900-1924.
Purchased by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., c1924.

Flat Woven Wallet

Nez Percé, c1890-1910
Twined corn husk, Indian hemp, dyed grass, worsted wool yarn, tanned deer-hide drawstring
21 x 14 1/2 x 3 1/2 in.

Flat Woven Wallet

Nez Percé, c1890-1910
Twined corn husk, Indian hemp, dyed grass, worsted wool yarn, tanned deer-hide drawstring
20 x 14 x 3 in.

Flat Woven Wallet

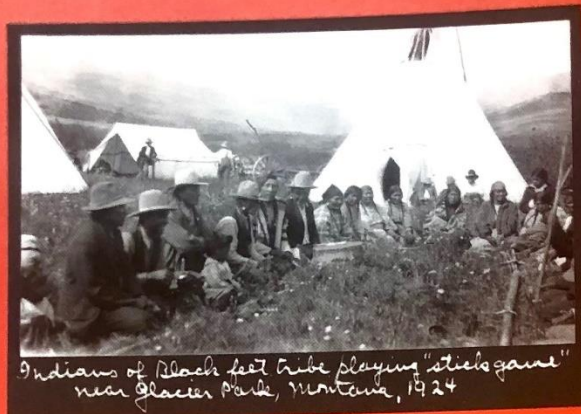
Nez Percé, c1890-1910
Twined corn husk, Indian hemp, dyed grass, worsted wool yarn, deer-hide drawstring
23 x 18 x 4 in.

Coiled Basketry Jar

Lina Manakaja Chikapanega
Iditcava (1893-1968)
Havasupai, 1924
Willow, catclaw, and devil's claw
6 in. high, 8 in. diameter

Kachina Dancer

José Rey Toledo, (1915-1994)
Jemez Pueblo, New Mexico,
c1934
Tempera on paper
18 x 12 in.



Blackfeet Indian encampment near the Rockefeller campsite arranged by ranch owner and outfitter Harry Ralston. (Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This exhibition builds on **Peter Furst's** excellent catalog, "American Indian Art and Paintings by Taos Artists: The David and Peggy Rockefeller Collection" (1988). In addition, curator **Bunny McBride** and exhibition designer **Betts Swanton** received invaluable assistance from the Rockefeller Archive Center's senior archivist **Michele Hiltzik**, especially in locating and reproducing a rich selection of photographs from the Rockefeller family's private albums. Also indispensable in bringing this exhibition to the public are members of David Rockefeller's immediate staff. Based in his New York City office, **Marnie Pillsbury** and **Marianna Brown** took care of an array of details and kept communication channels flowing. Special thanks to Mr. Rockefeller's art curator **Bertha Saunders** for tending to the conservation needs of paintings in this exhibition. **Doug Hopkins** in Seal Harbor helped track and pack objects featured in the exhibition. He worked in coordination with the Abbe Museum's Collection Manager, **Julia Clark**, who shouldered countless tasks, including permissions for all objects and images. Also of note is author-historian **Peter Johnson**, Mr. Rockefeller's long-time associate and friend, whose in-depth knowledge concerning Rockefeller family history greatly enriched the exhibition narrative. Beyond providing historical information and insight, Mr. Johnson oversaw the recording session that made it possible to include Mr. Rockefeller's voice in the exhibition. Our greatest debt of gratitude goes to **David Rockefeller** himself, who, with his late wife Peggy, cared for the collection after the passing of his parents – and has now graciously made it available to the public.



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