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# Independent Spirits: Women Painters of the American West, 1890-1945

By Patricia Trenton



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**Independent Spirits: Women Painters of the American West, 1890-1945** By Patricia Trenton

*Independent Spirits* brings to vivid life the West as seen through the eyes of women painters from 1890 to the end of World War II. Expert scholars and curators identify long-lost talent and reveal how these women were formidable cultural innovators as well as agitators for the rights of artists and women during a period of extraordinary development.

Abundantly illustrated, with over one-hundred color plates, this book is a rich compendium of Western art by women, including those of Native American, African, Mexican, and Asian descent. The essays examine the many economic, social, and political forces that shaped this art over years of pivotal change. The West's dynamic growth altered the role of women, often allowing new avenues of opportunity within the prevailing Anglo culture. At the same time, boundaries of femininity were pushed earlier and further than in other parts of the country.

Women artists in the West painted a wide range of subjects, and their work embraced a variety of styles: Realism, Impressionism, Symbolism, Surrealism. Some women championed modern art as gallery owners, collectors, and critics, while others were educators and curators. All played an important role in gaining the acceptance of women as men's peers in artistic communities, and their independent spirit resonates in studios and galleries throughout the country today.



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### Editorial Review

From Library Journal

This highly readable and engagingly illustrated exhibition catalog fulfills a dual purpose—to retrieve lost talent from among the largely unknown and strikingly diverse group of Western women painters and to probe their emergence as professionals in the previously male-dominated U.S. art world. Ten essays by female curators and academicians examine the social, economic, intellectual, and political forces affecting this period of profound change. One-third of the book focuses on California, with additional individual essays on the Northwest, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, the Rocky Mountains, and the Great Plains. The inclusion of Native, Mexican, African, and Asian American painters adds balance and breadth. As the first comprehensive scholarly survey to single out Western women artists, the work makes an important contribution to studies of the West, U.S. cultural history, and women's history. —Russell T. Clement, Univ. of Tennessee, Knoxville

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From [Booklist](#)

Can you name three women painters of the American West working between 1890 and 1945? We could only come up with one, Georgia O'Keeffe, so we're thrilled with this gorgeous and surprising volume. Editor Trenton and her contributors, a group as meticulous in their research as they are passionate and articulate in their prose, have reclaimed the neglected work of a great number of women artists who lived in and drew inspiration from the spectacular and demanding beauty of California, the Northwest, the Great Plains, the Rockies, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. These women artists were, indeed, "independent spirits," bucking traditional gender roles to devote themselves to their highly original art. Their ranks included the impressionist Donna Schuster as well as more startling talents such as Z. Vanessa Helder, who painted dams and quarries; Louise Crow and Tonita Pena, who interpreted Pueblo life; Mabel Frazer, who captured the drama and hard labor of life in the Rockies; and mystics such as Agnes Pelton, who painted ravishing, spiritually motivated abstractions. An exceptional blend of biography and art history, this fine volume belongs in all American art collections. *Donna Seaman*

From the Inside Flap

"The history of women's participation in the westward expansion has often been subsumed into myths of pioneers and cowgirls. *Independent Spirits* offers convincing evidence of real women's contributions to the cultural life of the American West. Many of the names may be unfamiliar, but the stories can't help but transform our idea of history. An accessible and informative volume."—Whitney Chadwick, Professor of Art History, San Francisco State University

"*Independent Spirits* offers the first step in documenting the achievements and innovations of women in the pictorial arts. The history of Western American painting can never again be examined without the consideration of women in that development."—William Gerds, Professor of Art History, The Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York

"This book makes available the material we need to begin rethinking the West's cultural history. The art history of the region—like the general histories of the West itself—has long concentrated on the work of men. With tightly focused regional essays, fresh photographic illustrations, and reproductions of many little-known works of art, this book establishes women as central figures in the creation of American

art."—Martha Sandweiss, Director of the Mead Art Museum, Amherst College

"At last there is for art of the American West a serious diversion from the enduring continuum of male-oriented surveys. In this handsome volume, for the first time, women's art is copiously revealed and duly celebrated. Their persistent and remarkable creative forces have played a powerful part in interpreting Western life and evolving regional tastes. Here we finally see women's rightful place in the Western creative saga."—Peter Hassrick, Director, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Wyoming

## **Users Review**

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#### **Willie Hodges:**

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#### **Rita Lattimore:**

The book untitled *Independent Spirits: Women Painters of the American West, 1890-1945* contain a lot of information on that. The writer explains your ex idea with easy means. The language is very straightforward all the people, so do definitely not worry, you can easy to read the item. The book was published by famous author. The author will take you in the new age of literary works. You can easily read this book because you can read more your smart phone, or product, so you can read the book inside anywhere and anytime. In a situation you wish to purchase the e-book, you can available their official web-site as well as order it. Have a nice go through.

**Anne Shivers:**

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