

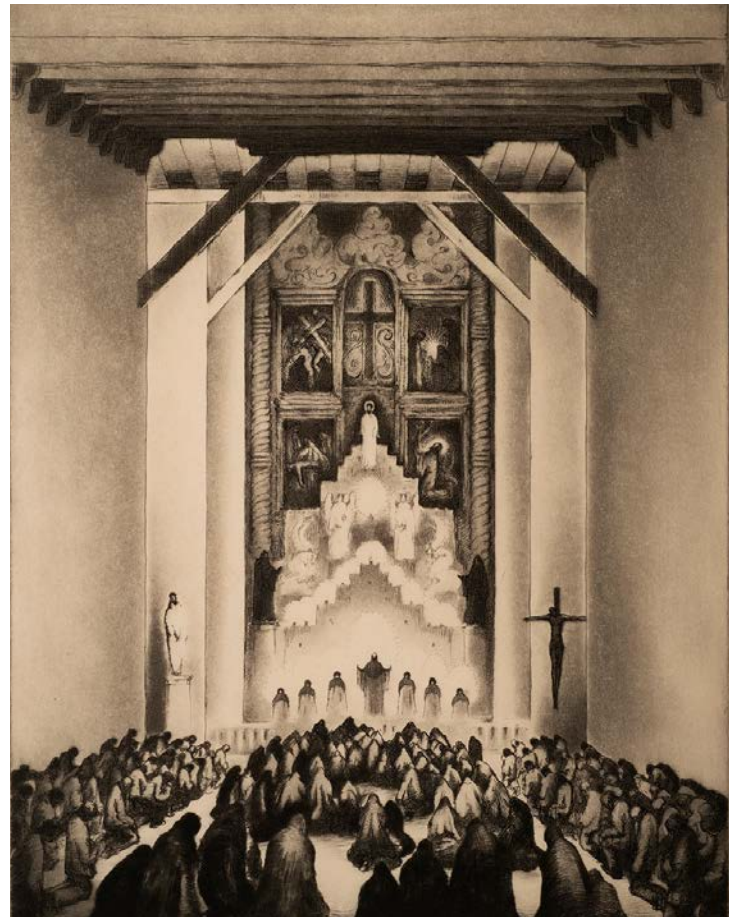
## More than iconic prints

### Taos Gene Kloss exhibition includes paintings, archival materials

TAOS, NM—Couse-Sharp Historic Site’s 2023 spring seasonal show is *Etched in Memory: Gene Kloss’ Taos*. Boasting more than 60 works of art, including watercolors, oils, drawings, and copper plates as well her iconic etchings, the exhibition also features more than 20 letters handwritten by the artist. It will be on view through May 13 in The Lunder Research Center.

“Kloss possessed a unique artistic sensibility and technical virtuosity that combined to create a singular vision of the ‘other’ in New Mexico,” said Davison Packard Koenig, CSHS executive director and curator. During her long sojourns in northern New Mexico, Kloss spent time with Native friends attending Pueblo ceremonials. She was a faithful observer of the Catholic traditions of the Hispano people whose homes are nestled in the valleys of the Sangre de Cristo mountains. “In her prolific career, Gene created an iconic body of work that is synonymous with the people, landscape, and culture of New Mexico.”

Alice Geneva “Gene” Kloss first arrived in Taos in 1925 while on her honeymoon, traveling the Southwest with her new husband, Phillips Kloss, and her 60-pound etching press. This trip would mark a decisive point of Kloss’ life and artistic career. The beauty and power of New Mexico captured her heart and eye. Looking back on this time, Gene later wrote: “I was a New Mexican from then on.” Born in Oakland, California, in 1903, Kloss attended the University of California, Berkeley, where she studied with Perham Nahl.



Top: *Morning Worship*, 1939, etching, drypoint, aquatint, artist’s proof (edition of 30), 14 x 10 7/8 in. The Hutson-Wiley & Echevarría Collection. Bottom: *Untitled (New Mexico Landscape)*, c. 1940, watercolor on paper, 18 1/2 x 25 in. Collection of Rob and Rose Chappell.



Amazed by the first print she pulled from the press, Nahl predicted she would be an etcher. Kloss spent two more years of study at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco and the California College of the Arts in Oakland.

Kloss worked predominantly in three media—etching, oil, and watercolor—but is best known for her prints of New Mexico. The body of her works has a consistent harmony in its balanced concern for the subject and for abstract principles of design. “I want the finished print to enable the viewer to see the design, the subject matter, from across the room, at arm’s length or under a magnifying glass—also upside-down for satisfactory abstract design.” Working from memory and quick sketches, Kloss produced remarkable images of life in Taos and the surrounding areas. Her work captures moments of Pueblo ceremonials, secret Penitente pilgrimages, quiet vistas, and daily life, cementing her memories as lasting images.

Kloss wrote of her chiaroscuro process: “My method I came [to] use to enable memory to compose etchings was to note details of costume, focus on two or three notes [*sic*] of the dance that were repeated and directly upon leaving the pueblo to make quick sketches[.] Next day I developed the drawings to completion which it was all fresh. Black and white of etchings is an abstraction of the abstraction of the dances” (1989 letter from Kloss to R. H. Dick).

Producing more than 600 etchings over her lifetime, and an estimated 18,000 editioned prints, Kloss’ prolific oeuvre demonstrates her devotion and care not only for a complex medium, but also for the lives and stories of Northern New Mexico. *Art News* wrote, “Gene Kloss is one of our most sensitive and sympathetic interpreters of the Southwest.” One critic called her a “landscape mythic,” another a “portrait psychologist.”

Koenig said the exhibition came together organically due to a remarkable donation of 12 Kloss prints from the Marilyn and Richard Shoberg Family, intended to be sold at the CSHS biennial national auction



Top: *Buffalo Dancers at Fiesta*, oil on canvas, 30 x 24 in. The Collection of Stephanie Bennett-Smith. Bottom: Excerpt of a personal letter from Kloss to R. H. Dick, Sept. 4, 1989. Dick was an avid collector of Kloss’ work in the late 1980s. Collection of David A. & Sheila J. Young.

My method I came <sup>use</sup> to enable memory to compose etchings was to note details of costume, focus on two or three motifs of the dance that were repeated and directly upon leaving the pueblo to make quick sketches. Next day I developed the drawings to completion while it was all fresh. Black & white of etchings is an abstraction of the abstraction of the dances.  
With very best wishes  
Sincerely, Gene Kloss

in July of this year. “The donation to the Estate Art Program sparked our interest in telling Gene’s story and bringing her work and life back into focus here in Taos,” he explained.

The organization also recently received a collection of original Gene Kloss letters. The staff hopes that exhibiting them will promote awareness of The Lunder Research Center on the CSHS campus. The center, which opened to researchers in October 2022, has a collecting scope that includes archival materials documenting the early art of Taos, with particular focus on female and Indigenous artists. “This show will raise the profile of our need for donations of materials that will help us tell a more nuanced story of Gene Kloss and her dynamic artist community in Taos,” Koenig said.



### **Exhibition details**

*Etched in Memory: Gene Kloss’s Taos*

Dean Porter Gallery, The Lunder Research Center

138 Kit Carson Road, Taos, NM

Couse-Sharp Historic Site

January 27–May 13, 2023

Open Tuesdays through Saturdays 1–5 p.m.

Free admission; donations welcomed

Top: *Untitled*, graphite on paper, 5 1/8 x 5 in. Collection of Greg Nelson.  
Bottom: *Far Across the Rio Grande*, 1939, etching, artist’s proof (edition of 75), 9 7/8 x 13 7/8 in. Gift of Marilyn and Richard Shoberg Family.

