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Bringing the legacy to life

The Couse Foundation aims to open research center in 2021
focusing on Taos Society of Artists



TAOS, NM—The Couse Foundation is moving forward with an ambitious plan to open a research center and museum facility in mid-2021 dedicated to the early Taos art colony and the Taos Society of Artists (TSA).

The center, now under construction at the Couse-Sharp Historic Site, will be in a 5,000-square-foot building that was formerly the Mission Gallery. After it is repurposed it will be known as The Lunder Research Center and become the repository for documents and art created, and artifacts collected, by the 12 members of the TSA. Materials will include original documents and correspondence, photographic prints and negatives, sketchbooks, original works of art, an extensive library, scholarly papers relating to the group and Native American art and ethnographic items.

The Couse-Sharp Historic Site (CSHS), owned and managed by The Couse Foundation and located in the historic center of Taos, is a 2-plus acre campus that includes the homes, studios and gardens of E. I. Couse and J. H. Sharp, two of the TSA's founders. The future research center building incorporates the last remnants of the home of Sharp. The Couse home and studio remain largely as they were during Couse's lifetime, with his original artwork, Native American art collection and Spanish Colonial art and furniture.

"The site's nearly unique authenticity of place affords the visitor a powerful experience of this remarkable part of the world, which continues to influence American art," said **Davison Koenig, CSHS executive director and curator**.

"The completion of The Lunder Research Center will create a living campus and fulfill our vision," he explained. "We are launching an \$8 million capital campaign in February 2020 to complete funding for its purchase and renovation. A successful campaign will also allow us to move forward with multiple exciting initiatives."

Through this campaign, The Foundation intends to:

- Outfit the state-of-the-art research center, which will include an exhibition gallery, research library, archival and collections storage, and curatorial space
- Create artist-in-residence and scholar-in-residence programs and additional student internships
- Add key personnel, including archival, curatorial, educational and administrative staff
- Expand programming, including exhibitions, tours, lectures, publications and community events
- Through an endowment, ensure the long-term operation and preservation of CSHS
- Bring the best art created in Taos back to Taos

“We will build on the solid foundation that has been laid and fulfill the vision of an entire campus dedicated to the early Taos artists,” Koenig said. “We anticipate that the center will attract new generations of art enthusiasts, collectors, scholars, artists, students and community members engaged in understanding the continuing influence of these artists.”

Thomas Brent Smith, director of the Petrie Institute of Western American Art at the Denver Art Museum, said the center “will be the first institution solely dedicated to the work of the Taos Society of Artists. It is sure to play a critical role by creating an epicenter for the preservation, study, and promotion of work created in one of the most important art colonies of the American West. Situated within blocks of where associated artists lived and worked, the Center will encourage and assist scholars in bringing new aspects of their lives and art to the greater public attention.

“Collectively and individually, the Taos Society of Artists are critical to understanding American art in the first half of the twentieth century, and the Lunder Research Center will play an essential role in this endeavor,” Smith added.

The campaign’s initial focus is to raise \$3 million to acquire and renovate the facility, including furnishings, equipment and landscaping, and some of the initial operating costs for the center. It has received initial momentum from a \$600,000 grant fully awarded this fall from The Lunder Foundation—Peter and Paula Lunder Family.

“Our faithful donors, board of directors, and friends have generously given more than a million dollars to the campaign already, in amounts ranging from \$1,000 to \$100,000,” said **Rich Rinehart, president of The Couse Foundation**. “As we work to fulfill our expanded vision and secure a sustainable future, we now reach out to our local community and the larger national community of people and organizations that recognize the importance of the early Taos art colony to the development of American art and culture.”

In addition to the short-term campaign, The Couse Foundation aims to build a \$5 million endowment through pledges over the next 10 years, which when fully funded will provide approximately \$250,000 annually for program expenses, including preservation of the site’s historic buildings and grounds.

The main gallery will be named in honor of **Dean A. Porter, former director of the Snite Museum of Art at the University of Notre Dame**, a nationally known scholar and author who has devoted much of his career to scholarship relating to the TSA.

“For many years, scholars searching for information on the Taos Society of Artists have been required to travel extensively to access original sources,” Porter said. “Research has been continually hampered by the time and expense required to retrieve valuable research material. With the opening of The Lunder Research Center for the Taos Society of Artists, scholars will

finally have access to documents and papers on all 12 artists. The Couse Foundation is consolidating original source material in Taos, the town where the art was created.”

Peter and Paula Lunder, principals of The Lunder Foundation of Portland, Maine, have stated, “We are very pleased to be able to support this project, which we feel is an important addition to the resources available for the study and appreciation of American art.”

Gifts of any amount are sought as part of the capital campaign, and a few naming opportunities of rooms and other facilities remain for donations of \$50,000 and up.

The Lunder Research Center and future initiatives will enhance the campus at the Couse-Sharp Historic Site and will further elevate the reputation of Taos as an artistic community of international importance. “Join us to fulfill our vision and make the Couse-Sharp Historic Site the center for scholarship of E. I. Couse, J. H. Sharp and the Taos Society of Artists,” Koenig said.

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Additional quotations about The Lunder Research Center

Museum Professionals & Scholars

Sarah E. Boehme, curator, Stark Museum of Art, Orange, Texas

“The Couse Foundation’s plans to establish a research center with exhibition space will bring about a great resource for the local community and the broader cultural community. Preserving documents, artifacts, and art of the Taos Society of Artists will give opportunities for study and education, on many levels. I feel that Joseph Henry Sharp would be thrilled to see his former space transformed into a vibrant center.”

Michael R. Grauer, McCasland Chair of Cowboy Culture/Curator of Cowboy Collections and Western Art, National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, Oklahoma City

“I believe the genesis and creation of the Lunder Research Center at the Couse-Sharp Historic Site in Taos is providential. There are no coincidences; everything happens for a reason. Therefore, there is no more appropriate place for this library and archives—the spiritual home of the Taos Society of Artists—than at this site, in this town.”

Karen B. McWhorter, curator, Whitney Western Art Museum at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Cody, Wyoming

“The Lunder Research Center will significantly benefit the field of western American art by centralizing resources around the Taos Society of Artists and creating new opportunities for those interested in engaging one of the most unique facets of our country’s artistic heritage. Those of us inspired by the TSA and their legacy can’t wait to be involved with this incomparable scholarly project.”

Marie Watkins, Associate Professor of Art History, Furman University

“In 1899 Bert Phillips and Ernest Blumenschein discussed how to encourage people to come to Taos ‘like the group of Barbizon painters & writers’ they had come to know during their Parisian studies. Eight years later, J. H. Sharp excitedly wrote, ‘Bert Phillips is here the year around. Couse has just bought a little place fitted up with a studio & is at work, & likely for many summers. Young Berninghaus of St. Louis just left, and Curtis, Sauerwein, & others are coming, so there may be a Taos colony a la Barbizon yet!’ These artists would prove prescient. The Lunder Research Center with its richness of archival materials and opportunities fulfills these Taos artists’ Barbizon vision, as scholars, writers, and artists will come together to explore, research, and promulgate the Taos art colony. Like the artists who came to Taos in search of inspiration for a pure American art form, participants at The Lunder Research Center will engage in the excitement of intellectual creation and the birth of new ideas.”

Artists

Glenn Dean, California

“I believe the collective vision of work produced by the Taos Society of Artists visually defines what is the very spirit of Taos itself, and in doing so, has also defined the spirit of the American West. As an artist who is inspired by Taos and the work produced by the TSA, I am excited about the new Lunder Research Center at the Couse-Sharp Historic Site, as I believe it will provide a treasure trove of intellectual information and inspirational material for so many artists and academicians alike, and give various opportunities to gain new insights about the TSA. This expansion project combined with the original preserved homes and studios of Couse and Sharp will undoubtedly become a beacon in the education of this seminal group of artists. I’m looking forward to furthering my own personal study of TSA at this unique and keenly focused research center.”

Josh Elliott, Helena, Montana

“The Taos Society of Artists has inspired several generations of artists with their approach of a more modern style in the Western genre, their respectful depiction of Native Americans and their iconic interpretation of Taos and surrounding areas. It is a pilgrimage of sorts for living artists to visit Taos, like going to Paris to see what the Impressionists saw. I can only imagine the impact that the research center will have on countless generations of artists to come. Access to their paintings, sketchbooks, reference material, correspondence and studios will give artists today the closest thing to studying with these influential master artists. The opportunity to participate in an artist-in-residence program will allow us to immerse ourselves in their world and, hopefully, lead us to make our own contribution to the Western art world and further the legacy of this historic location for American art.”

Chloe Marie Gaillard, Taos

“The Lunder Research Center is a wonderful project that is necessary in a strong art community like Taos, where knowledge will be available in order to keep the Taos legacy alive. The arts, and especially the old masters of the TSA, is what built the reputation of Taos over the centuries and what keeps it going. We need to provide resources, information and pieces from the past to create the present and future, to keep the generations ahead interested and motivated. A research center will be an amazing platform where people of all ages could meet, share and exchange about culture and the future of the arts. I believe this is a fundamental project that we need to install to be able to offer the TSA legacy to people and make it accessible to locals, visitors, collectors, researchers, artists in the making and leading artists. As an emerging artist, this project and The Couse Foundation have my full support. I am grateful to be part of Taos, its art scene and its community!”

Logan Maxwell Hagege, Los Angeles

“Taos has an intense magnetic draw to artists and people who are in tune to its special beauty and character. I am so grateful that this Foundation exists to help preserve the legacy of the Taos Society of Artists as well as educate the public on this fascinating time in Western American art history. On a very personal level I can’t wait to dig into the archives and get to know these artists more intimately.”

Jivan Lee, Taos

“The Lunder Research Center is the type of facility that propels artists forward in their pursuits while also serving the broader community. As an artist I can say that the Center will support the area’s evolving artistic legacy by enabling The Couse Foundation to present a broader and more nuanced window into the creative processes and lives of Taos Society artists. It’s the type of place that inspires contemporary artists by contextualizing their practices amidst those that have come before, providing an essential education that instigates deeper and more insightful work. I applaud the Couse Foundation’s new center and capital campaign—it elevates the entire community and fills an important gap in the area’s arts institutions and programmatic offerings.”

Mark Maggiori, Taos

“I think this project is very important for the future of Taos. Having a place to remember how major these artists were and to actually encourage the new generations is a key element for any town that has such glorious past. I am thrilled to move to Taos and be part of this revival. My wife, Petecia Lefawnhawk, and I will do our best to help the community become sensitive to the Taos Society of Artists and understand how beautiful this heritage is for the people of Taos and everyone else.”

Gallery and Auction Professionals

Michael Frost and Jim Balestrieri, J. N. Bartfield Galleries, New York

“A new museum, archive and research center at the Couse-Sharp Historic Site is central to the mission of introducing the magnificent art of the Taos Society to the next generation, and beyond. The artists of Taos have had a hold on the American imagination for a century. The Lunder Research Center’s sponsored scholarship will see to it that the magnetism of their works draws new eyes and inspires new and exciting interpretations.”

Kate Hlavin, Director of Business Development, Hindman Auctions, Denver

“The Couse Foundation’s future advancements will be an incredible asset to professionals in a variety of disciplines, including those in the auction and appraisal communities. Their dedication to documenting the Taos Society of Artists through this rare comprehensive archive and their willingness to share resources and data with the individuals in these fields will be essential in garnering the market attention this influential group of American artists deserves.”

Richard Lampert, Zaplin Lampert Gallery, Santa Fe

“The contribution of the Taos Society of Artists, founded over a century ago, cannot be underestimated when examining New Mexico’s firmly established role as a major destination for collectors and lovers of art. Considered one of the nation’s most influential art colonies, the TSA collective drove Southwestern tourism in the first half of the 20th century, establishing both Taos and Santa Fe as key art centers. For this reason The Lunder Research Center will be an institution of significance and impact for all those who are concerned with preserving and building upon the legacy of these remarkable artists.”

Nedra Matteucci, Nedra Matteucci Galleries, Santa Fe

“The confluence of artists and patrons in northern New Mexico in the early decades of the 20th century changed the course of American art history. As a collector and dealer I’m keenly aware of how scholarship relating to the TSA is critical to maintaining and growing the interest and market for artwork of this era. The Lunder Research Center will boost the opportunities for scholarly work that so many of us in the field depend on and edify the region’s reputation as an art center for generations to come.”

Nathaniel O. Owings, The Owings Gallery, Santa Fe

“I have known the Lunder family for many years and I am delighted that their foundation has awarded this wonderful gift to The Couse Foundation and the Couse Sharp Historic Site in Taos. The Lunder Research Center will be an incredible resource for the preservation and continued scholarship of the artists of Taos and all of New Mexico. I also look forward to The Lunder Center helping to introduce a new generation of student scholars, enthusiasts and art collectors to the important American artists of Taos, Santa Fe and the American West.”

Robert Parsons and Ashley Rolshoven, Robert L. Parsons Fine Art and Parsons Gallery of the West, Taos

“We are grateful that The Couse Foundation is embarking on the monumental launch of The Lunder Research Center. It is imperative to our community and beyond that we preserve the art, artifacts and history of the Taos Society of Artists. The legacy of the TSA and the early Taos Art Colony can thrive through continuing to educate, inspire and engage future generations of scholars, collectors and enthusiasts. The institute will also honor the importance of the contributions from the Taos Pueblo people and other native cultures. There is no better place to house the archival material than here in our beloved Taos.”

Mark Sublette, President, Medicine Man Gallery, Tucson

“A research depository for the Taos Society of Artists will be a monumental leap forward for Western Art of the 20th century and will serve to promote the visions of the founders and artists who followed. What better setting than The Couse Foundation’s Lunder Research Center in idyllic Taos to promote a new understanding of early New Mexico artists. Historians can be immersed not only in a treasure trove of important documents, but also the art and artifacts that help narrate the unique story of the Taos Founders.”

Background

In 1915, six American-born, European-trained artists founded the Taos Society of Artists with the mission to promote the authentically American, Native art and culture of the Southwest. The group grew to include 12 active members and several more associate and honorary members.

The Couse-Sharp Historic Site reflects the original goals of these artists and continues to promote their mission. The Site includes the home and studio of E. I. Couse, the garden designed by his wife, Virginia, the workshops of his son, Kibbey, and the two studios of his neighbor and fellow artist, J. H. Sharp. Couse’s studio and darkroom are maintained in a state very close to how he left them upon his death in 1936.

The Site also brings to light the contributions of the models from Taos Pueblo and other indigenous groups who sat for their paintings, as well as the Native artists whose work was collected and used by both artists.

Sharp’s later studio, built in 1915, was completely restored in early 2017 and now contains a permanent rotating exhibition of his artwork, personal effects, and Native art he collected and used in his paintings. His earlier studio, converted from an 1835 chapel, hosts changing exhibitions of artwork and contextual material related to the TSA.

All public areas of the site can be toured by appointment, which can be made on the couse-sharp.org website or by calling the site office.

The mission of The Couse Foundation is to preserve and interpret the Couse-Sharp Historic Site, its buildings, grounds, collections, and the archives of the Taos Society of Artists, through education, collaboration and scholarly engagement. The organization’s vision is even more expansive: To be the center for scholarship of E. I. Couse, J. H. Sharp, and the Taos Society of Artists.