

# PEYTON WRIGHT

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## Janet Lippincott

(American, 1918-2007)

In a 1980 article in *Southwest Art*, Janet Lippincott addressed who she was as an artist: "Abstract painting is an intellectual process. To be a modern painter and to make a truthful statement is the sum total of all I am and what I am continually striving to create. I am a painter and my paintings are all I can contribute to this world." Working away from the major art centers, Lippincott had a singular devotion to her art - a quest to find a pure expression based in color and form. New Mexico afforded her a place to work independently without the distractions of the New York art scene.

Born in New York into a privileged family, she went to museums with her Aunt Gertrude, a modern dancer. When she saw her first Picasso, Lippincott was hooked, and residing in Paris for a period as a child brought her in contact with the most contemporary movements. At age fifteen, she took a life-drawing class at the Art Students League, where she would later enroll full time.

During World War II, she enlisted in the Women's Army Corps and was attached to General Eisenhower's staff. Later she liked to tell the story of how Patton stormed in demanding to see Ike and how she told him to take a seat and keep his mouth shut. In 1949, she drove to Taos for instruction in Emil Bisttram's School of Art on the G.I. Bill. In response to the transcendental painter's dismissal of her talent, Lippincott told him that the G.I. Bill was paying him and that she would stay. If anything, his criticism only made her determined to prove him wrong, and she was vindicated when her one-time teacher wrote a glowing review of her exhibition at the Jamison Gallery in 1972.

Lippincott briefly studied at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center and the San Francisco Art Institute on fellowships. In 1957, she moved to Santa Fe, setting up an adobe house/studio that she built on Canyon Road. Many the artists there were working in response to the Southwestern landscape, light, and culture, with no attention paid to Abstract Expressionism. After having started painting landscapes and portraits, Lippincott had experienced her conversion. "After the war, I came out here, and NO ONE was doing any modern painting. Here I came with my screwball ideas and shook everybody up."

Lippincott found a deep well in working in various media. She continued to keep drawing as an underlying discipline, and she was a member of a drawing group in Santa Fe for about 25 years until about 1987. Lippincott was one of the first artists to create lithographs at the Tamarind Institute. In the 1970s, she dove into sculpture, shortly after the Shidoni Foundry opened in Tesuque.

She was very much a loner and was married once for 10 days. "That was 10 days too long," art dealer Karen Ruhlen recalls the artist saying. While she enjoyed the company of a man, she was always self-reliant and "a little on the ornery side," Ruhlen adds. "Janet was an artist to the core. Making art was like breathing - it was her way of talking and expressing emotions."

Selected Awards: 1956 Annual Circle Exhibition, Roswell Museum, Roswell, New Mexico; 1957 Purchase Award, 10th Graphic Exhibition, NM Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe, NM; 1958 12th Graphic Exhibition, New Mexico Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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Selected Exhibitions: 1957 Los Artisanos, Las Vegas, New Mexico; 1957 Mexican-American Cultural Institute, Mexico City; 1958 Abstractions in Colored India Ink, La Galleria Escondida, Taos, NM; 1959 Mid American Exhibition, Nelson Atkins Museum, Kansas City, Missouri.

Selected Collections: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA; Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City, UT; Museum of Fine Art, Santa Fe, New Mexico; State Capital Art Collection, Santa Fe, New Mexico; Harwood Foundation, Taos, New Mexico.