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Howard Cook

(American Painter and Print-Maker, 1901-1980)

Howard Cook, one of America's best-known print-makers, began his career with a scholarship that sent him from his home in Springfield, Massachusetts to the Art Students League in New York City, where he studied under Joseph Pennell and George Bridgman, and made connections with fellow students, such as Max Weber and Andrew Dasburg. In the 1920s, Cook worked as an illustrator for several well-known magazines, including *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, *Survey*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Forum*, and *Century*, work that allowed him to travel all over the world. In 1926, he was commissioned to illustrate the serialization of Willa Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop* for *Forum* Magazine with woodcuts. He traveled to New Mexico to research the work, where he executed a number of works with New Mexican subject matter, especially Indian dances, Southwestern landscapes, and pueblo architecture. He later returned to New Mexico to settle with his wife, the artist Barbara Latham. Over the next several years, Cook experimented with many different media, including etching, aquatint, woodcut, wood engraving, and lithography. He eventually turned to painting, focusing first on mural-painting, then on pastels and watercolors, and finally on oil and collage. In 1932, he was awarded a Guggenheim fellowship, which allowed him to travel around Mexico, the Mid-West, and Texas to study fresco painting. During World War II, Cook served as an artist war correspondent in the South Pacific, creating works which were later exhibited at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., as well as in a traveling exhibition funded by the War Department. A traveling exhibiting of Cook's pastels was mounted by the Santa Barbara Museum of Art in 1952. In 1984, a major exhibition of Cook's work was held at the National Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C.

After the war, Cook's work became increasingly abstract, focusing on simplified mountainous shapes and earthy colors. His later work is particularly notable for its use of texture and color to achieve feelings of energy, movement, and rhythm.