



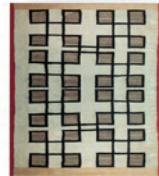
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COVER

Navajo rug, 1920 - featuring Native American geometric decorative elements; Peter Sheridan considers Navajo and Pueblo design and Pueblo Deco architecture in his article on page 5.
Image: Peter Sheridan

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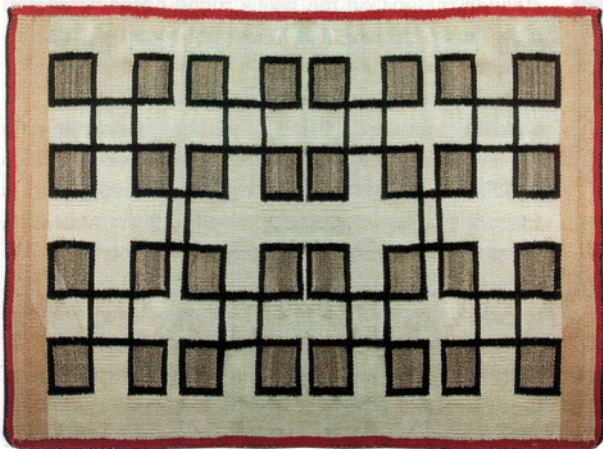
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PUEBLO DECO

Peter Sheridan AM

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO



A few years ago, Jan and I went to see Art Deco architecture in Los Angeles followed up by a visit to Palm Springs during their Modernist Week activities. We were with the ultimate tour guide Dr Mick Beyer who was responsible for the great World Art Deco Congress in Cleveland in 2017. Afterwards we set off by ourselves on a road trip from Santa Fe to Albuquerque in New Mexico. We had heard of Pueblo Deco architecture, so we were on the lookout for examples.

The *Kingdom of New Mexico* was first claimed for the Spanish Crown by the conquistador Don Francisco Vasques de Coronado in 1540. For 100 years the Spanish battled to subjugate and convert to Christianity the 100,000 Pueblo

Indians who lived in the region. A part of 'New Spain', claims for New Mexico passed to an independent Mexico in 1821 following the Mexican War of Independence. In 1848 Mexico then signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, ceding New Mexico and California to the United States, with New Mexico gaining statehood in 1912.

Santa Fe is the capital of New Mexico and although a small city has a legacy of architecture, city planning and preservation of their historic buildings. A 1958 zoning code promotes the distinctive Spanish-Pueblo style of architecture. Albuquerque, founded in 1706 and with a population of 500,000 is about 100km (60 miles) from Santa Fe.

IMAGES:

All images by Peter Sheridan

UPPER:

KiMo Theatre

LEFT:

Navajo rug, 1920

RIGHT:

Blackware



UPPER:
UNM Mitchell Hall,
1950

LOWER:
UNM Bandalier Hall
East, 1930

One of our first steps was to look at Pueblo style pottery, jewellery and handicrafts and we were immediately drawn to the blackware (aka black on black) pottery by Maria and Julian Martinez at the Ildefonso Pueblo. The elegance of the incised and polished native motifs with their stylised form and repetition seemed to mirror Art Deco and raised some interesting chicken and egg questions which still seem unresolved. It has always been accepted that Art Deco utilised non-western stylistic elements, particularly Egyptian or Meso-American (Mayan and Aztec) reflecting discoveries in the 1920s. However, there is almost no Art Deco use internationally of Native American decorative elements as seen in the weaving and pottery of the Navajo and Pueblo peoples, which seem ideal additions to Art Deco architecture in that they are non-figurative, geometric and repeated.

In the case of Maria Martinez's pottery, the first examples of black on black were produced by Maria and her husband Julian in the 1920s, and while the motifs may be ancient, the interpretation may have been impacted by the new Moderne styles spreading around the world. Additionally,

these pieces were more open to creative expression being made for commercial, not symbolic or traditional reasons.

Pueblo Revival style (aka Santa Fe style) is one of the few styles that originated in America. It was basically inspired by a mixture of Spanish Colonial, Mission and Indian Pueblo architectural forms. One of its earliest manifestations was at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque in the early 1900s. It quickly became the regional style of northern New Mexico after 1912. Features include flat roofs with stepped massing on the gently round-edged parapeted walls, stucco cladding, and vigas (thick, round roof beams) extending out of the roofline.

Pueblo Deco is an American regional architectural style which became popular in the early 20th century in the state of New Mexico. Pueblo Deco fused elements of Art Deco and Pueblo Revival design. Using native American motifs the style emphasises applied ornament, often in metalwork, together with extensive tile work and wall murals.

Early Pueblo Deco design was influenced by architect and designer Mary Colter's work. Beginning in 1910 her work had enormous influence, becoming popular in the Southwest as she helped to create a style blending Spanish Colonial Revival and Mission Revival architecture with Native American motifs and Rustic elements. She was one of the very few female American architects in her day and designed many landmark buildings and spaces for the Fred Harvey Company and the Santa Fe Railroad.

The term *Pueblo Deco* was popularised by author Carla Breeze. Her 1984 book *Pueblo Deco: The Art Deco Architecture of the Southwest* described the fusion of southwestern motifs with the popular Art Deco style. One notable example is the KiMo Theater in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Most of the buildings in the book are fundamentally Art Deco in external appearance (rather than Pueblo Revival) with flamboyant accretions of native artwork, both externally and internally.

We visited the University of New Mexico and immediately were taken by the subtlety of the architecture



which displayed a different interpretation of Pueblo Deco. All the buildings on the main campus are in the Pueblo Revival style but infused with the clean lines of functionalist Art Deco. The traditional Pueblo undulating roof line was transformed in the 1930s into a strong horizontal feature (often between vertical massings). All the exterior surfaces are earth coloured stucco, and the decorative elements consist of simple geometric forms between or above the windows, adding both colour and contrast (e.g. Zimmerman Library).

The Pueblo Revival style of architecture on campus was introduced by William G. Tight, the president of UNM, who built the Estufa for the Tri-Alpha Fraternity in 1908. Since 1915, it has been the official meeting place of the Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity. The building's history is steeped in fraternity lore and supposedly no woman has ever seen its interior.

Interestingly, Australia has a place in the story of the architecture of UNM. In 1912, David Ross Boyd, the university's fifth president met with Walter Burley Griffin in Chicago to discuss the development of a more systematic master plan for the campus. In 1915 Griffin submitted what he called a nucleus plan and described as a compact, continuous pueblo. Laid out with symmetrical cross-axes, Griffin's pueblo was organised around quadrangles framed by linked building blocks and connecting porticoes. The horizontally stacked forms of those buildings translate the Pueblo Revival into Griffin's variant of the Prairie Style, combined with Mayan references. Griffin sent this plan from

Canberra, Australia, where he moved in 1913 to oversee the implementation of his plan for the Australian capital. Griffin's plans were never fully realised but the fundamental use of Pueblo style was reinforced by Santa Fe architect John Gaw Meem. He became the UNM campus architect in 1933 and designed thirty-six structures on the main campus all maintaining the Pueblo style until the mid century when other building styles were accepted.

We identified some twelve buildings of which ten were by Meem dating from 1936 to 1962. The Estufa of 1908 and the 1930 Presidents House by Miles Brittelle are clearly Pueblo Revival. However, Brittelle's next effort, Bandalier Hall East in the same year, clearly shows the Art Deco influence. The theme is then taken over by Meem in 1936 with Scholes Hall. The seamless blending of Pueblo and Deco styles works beautifully for buildings such as the Zimmerman Library 1937, Mitchell Hall 1950, Mesa Vista Hall 1950 and the Student Union 1950, some of which needed to incorporate large numbers of students. The 1937 Zimmerman Library has a sense of majestic importance whereas the Student Union of 1959 has an understated feel with its elongated low horizontal facade.

In the late 1950s a new master plan utilised and confirmed ideas going back to those espoused by Burley Griffin. The buildings were clustered around courtyards and patios and grouped into loose quadrangles of related disciplines; accepting the legacy of Meem, new buildings would continue using Spanish-Pueblo forms while staying under the height of Zimmerman Library built in 1937. Meem's

TOP LEFT:
UNM Scholes Hall,
1936

TOP RIGHT:
UNM Scholes Hall
detail, 1936

LOWER LEFT:
UNM Presidents
house, 1930

LOWER RIGHT:
UNM Memorial
Chapel, 1960



UPPER:
UNM Student
Union, 1959

LOWER:
UNM Zimmerman
Library detail, 1937

1960 Alumni Memorial Chapel is a fitting end to his career at UNM showing a very confident and resolved place of worship, elegant in its Southwestern simplicity.

We felt privileged to see the works of the San Ildefonso potter Maria Martinez, who was responsible for the renaissance of Pueblo pottery, and John Gaw Meem, the UNM's campus architect for nearly 30 years. In both cases there is a sophistication and skill which makes their vision and outcomes feel timeless. This unique regional combination of local Pueblo style and Art Deco reinforces the global nature of Art Deco and its permeation right throughout the world and into all aspects of style and design.

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