



SNAPSHOTS

From the PAST

Using the photography of Eanger Irving Couse, Mark Maggiori brings prominent Taos figures to life.

BY MICHAEL CLAWSON

When Mark Maggiori relocated from Los Angeles to Taos, New Mexico, in 2020, he didn't know it yet, but he made the move at a fortuitous time. In Taos, at the Couse-Sharp Historic Site, a team was preparing for the eventual opening of the new Lunder Research Center, which is now home to a treasure trove of materials related to the Taos Society of Artists. Some of the materials were photographs taken by Eanger Irving Couse, one of the key founders of the group.

"At that time they were scanning thousands of pictures, many of them taken in the early 1900s by Couse all around Taos and his studio. It was exciting being there at the time because for many of the images, it was the first time they were being put on a computer. Many of them were just negatives in a folder," says Maggiori, who was waiting for his own studio to be built at the time and was an artist in residence in Joseph Henry Sharp's studio on the Couse-Sharp campus. "I just remember looking at the images and feeling like I was in a

Above, left to right: *On the Old Stone Wall*, oil on linen, 24 x 18". *Ben Lujan*, oil on canvas, 30 x 18". *The Son*, oil on linen, 30 x 24". Opposite page: *Antonio Lujan*, oil on board, 30 x 23"





A Young Couple, oil on linen, 9 x 12"

time machine. Right away I asked if I could do a show on the images, just to really make a showcase of Couse's work to open the Lunder Research Center."

The museum immediately agreed and *Resurgence: Mark Maggiori Portraits from E.I. Couse's Pueblo Photos* was born. The show opens October 2 and will mark the grand opening of the Lunder Research Center, a major repository of information for Taos and its famous artists who flocked to Northern New Mexico in the early 20th century. "It's fitting for us to open the Lunder Research Center with this series by Mark Maggiori, who worked from original photographs taken by Irving Couse as studies for future paintings," say Davison Packard Koenig, executive director and curator at the site. "Mark's artwork is a compelling example of why archives matter. We built an archive and research center for early Taos art so that artists,

scholars and the public can be inspired. The legacy of the Taos Society of Artists, in many ways, rests with this new generation of artists."

Resurgence will present five larger works and an assortment of smaller pieces. All of the paintings will be for sale, with a portion of the proceeds going to the Couse-Sharp Historic Site. After the show was agreed upon, Maggiori was tasked with choosing his images, which was no easy feat considering the quality and depth of the photography collection in the archives. "There were so many good ones. I had the privilege of choosing, but it was a dilemma," he says. "It was even harder to choose because you could tell Couse had an eye—everything was good. I think that was the most exciting part about looking through the material was seeing these great pictures that were turned into great paintings. And the subjects, especially

the Pueblo people, looked stunning."

Since his move to Taos, Maggiori has started carefully exploring the Pueblo people as a subject, so Couse's interest from a century prior was important to his own work. "Anybody that has the opportunity to visit with Native American people here in Taos, especially in the Pueblo, will see they have a philosophy, an approach to life, that is very different. There's no other way than to just fall in love with the people and the culture when you're here," the artist says. "So that's why it's exciting to work with Couse's work, because he was showing the rest of the world this place he loved and respected."

When it came time to actually put paint to canvas, Maggiori was immediately challenged by what direction to go in. He didn't want to recompose the photographs into unique paintings since Couse's images were already masterfully shot and composed,



Buffalo Dancer, oil on linen, 40 x 28"



Mark Maggiori painting in the Joseph Henry Sharp studio at the Couse-Sharp Historic Site. After moving to Taos, New Mexico, Maggiori was an artist in residence at the studio.

so instead he preserved the images Couse had taken but used color that would add a new layer to the existing image. It was a delicate balance that honors Couse, but also allows Maggiori's talent as a painter to shine through.

Works in the show include the magnificent portrait *Antonio Lujan*, showing Mabel Dodge Luhan's fourth husband, Tony Lujan, who was an artist and well known around Taos. Couse shoots him in a moderate close-up, which feels more contemporary than its 1919 date, and Maggiori retains the moodiness of the light and seriousness of his expressions. And by adding color, the painter accentuates the intensity of his stare and the richness of the shadows that make deep lines around his face. He also paints Lujan in *Buffalo Dancer*, a large 40-by-28-inch oil showing the model standing in front of a dark backdrop.

Blankets, weavings, pottery and other objects feature prominently in many of the

images, including *A Young Couple*, with a magnificent pot next to a fireplace, and *The White Cloth*, featuring a figure wrapped in a white sheet or blanket. One of Couse's favorite models, Ben Lujan, is featured in both works, as well as in *The Son*, showing Ben holding his son Eliseo under a striped weaving with a large diamond design element, and in *Ben Lujan*, a remarkable standing profile of the model against a white wall. Ben was well known around Taos and even designed and built the gardens for Couse's wife, Virginia. Ben also developed the irrigation system that drew from a nearby acequia, and he maintained it even after Virginia's death in 1929.

Adding to the excitement of some of the work is the fact that Maggiori started initially painting for the show while he was working in Sharp's studio, where presumably Sharp and Couse would hold court, talk art and

discuss what was on Sharp's easel.

"It's an interesting studio, because it's very old and there is a second floor made of wood. Sometimes the wood cracks and creaks, and it can be very loud," Maggiori says. "When I was painting there, after lunch I would take naps just right on the floor—just these little power naps to push me through the rest of the day. Sometimes that second floor would crack so loud it would wake me up. It was Sharp telling me to get back to painting." 🌿

Resurgence: Mark Maggiori Portraits from E.I. Couse's Pueblo Photos

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