

HISTORIC SANTA FE





Inside Historic Santa Fe

Our mission is to preserve, protect, and promote the historic properties and diverse cultural heritage of the Santa Fe area, and to educate the public about Santa Fe's history and the importance of preservation.

HSFF publishes one eZine per month during the year with content that provides our audience with a look at what is happening at the Foundation, and beyond in the world of New Mexico and Santa Fe history, archaeology, and the arts, among other topics relevant to our readers. In the upcoming year, HSFF is working with a broad range of high-level volunteers to make El Zaguán: the building, the archives, and the institutional knowledge of staff, Board and volunteers accessible to the community. We are looking at a bright and exciting 2019. We will share updates with you in our eZines, emails and [printed newsletters](#) so please make sure to sign up for our newsletter and join HSFF as a member. We hope you enjoy this issue and we look forward to the future of HSFF and the interactions with our members and our community.

In this issue, we offer two book reviews of recent Museum of New Mexico Press books: Pete Warzel reviews *Painted Reflections: Isomeric Design in Pueblo Pottery* and Melanie McWhorter looks at *Albuquerque Museum Photo Archives Collection: Images in Silver*. Please enjoy.

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Cover image from *Albuquerque Museum Photo Archives Collection: Images in Silver*; Image above from *Painted Reflections: Isomeric Design in Pueblo Pottery*, courtesy Museum of New Mexico Press.

BOOK REVIEW

Painted Reflections: Isomeric Designs in Pueblo Pottery

By Scott G. Ortman and Joseph Traugott

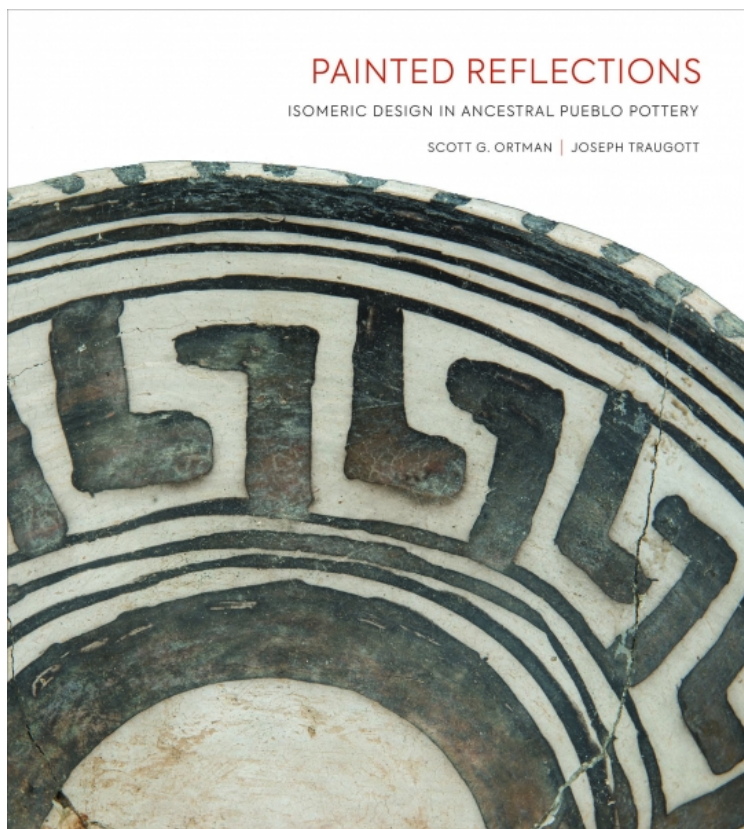
Reviewed by Pete Warzel

Our authors are familiar names and faces in the Santa Fe area. Doctor Ortman has been conducting field work with his students from the University of Colorado at the unexcavated Pojoaque Pueblo ruins for several years, mapping and collecting data. Doctor Traugott was the curator of twentieth-century art at the New Mexico Museum of Art until his retirement in 2013. The combination of their two disciplines in this book, anthropology and art history, makes for a fresh approach to the complex pottery designs on many of the primarily black and white pieces of the Great Pueblo Period, 4th through 10th century CE.

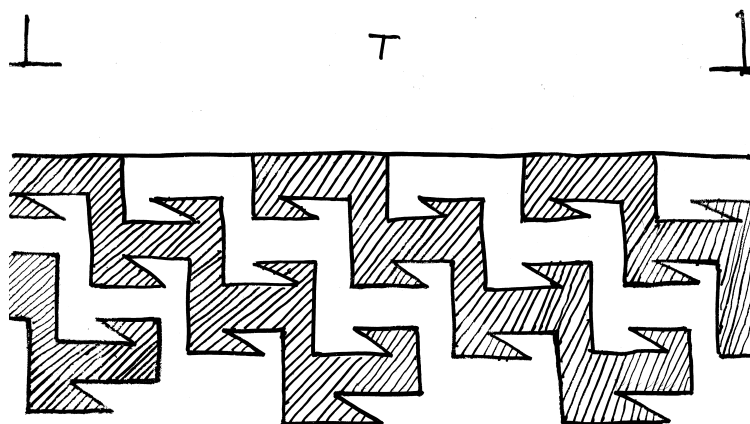
They begin with a lesson on the physics of seeing. There are simple illustrations of spatial illusions and optical reversals, what we are all likely to be familiar with – the black and white Rubin diagram that is either a goblet or two symmetrical faces staring at each other, depending on your focus on the dark primary image or the negative space of the white background. The point is to define “isomeric design” in the pottery.

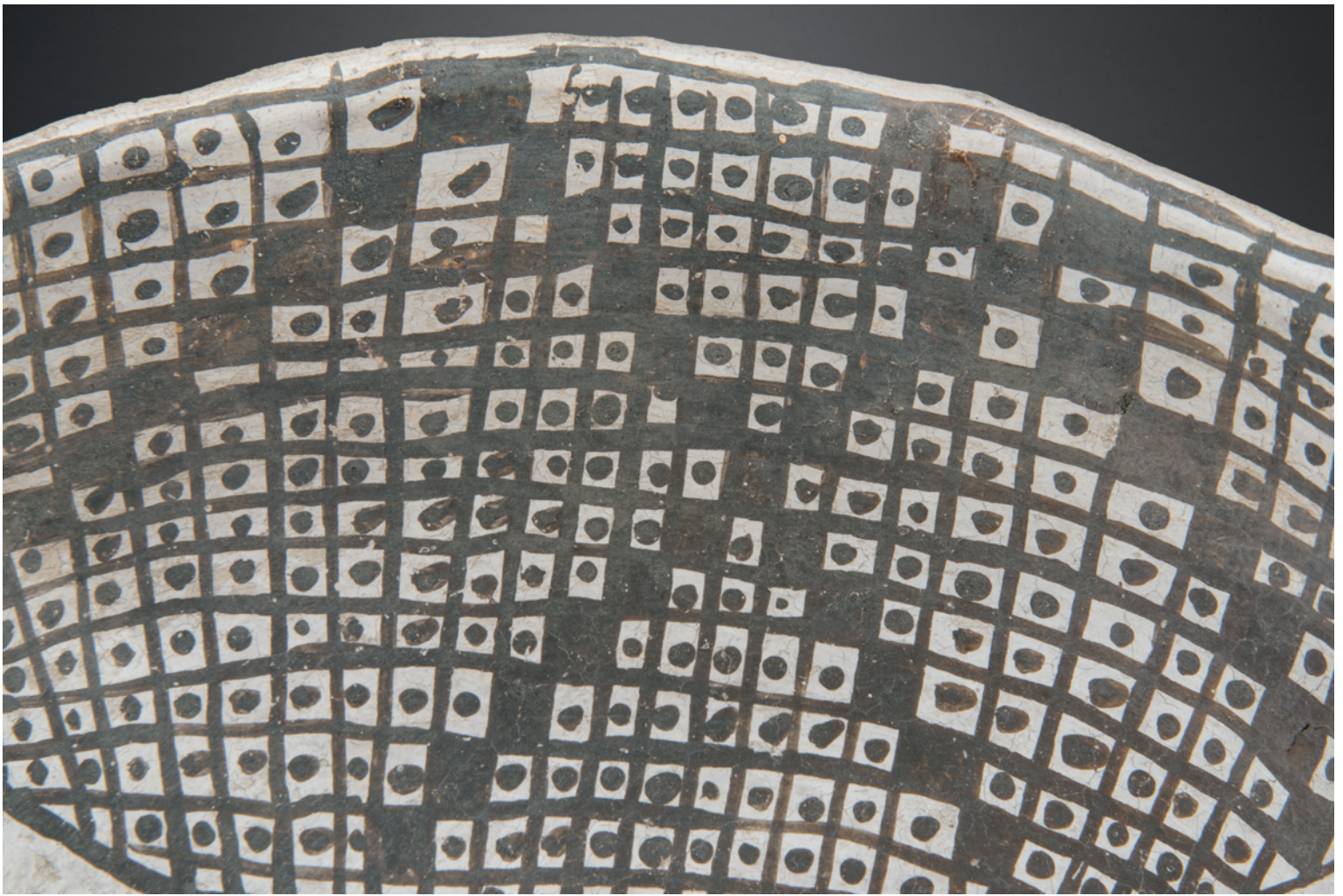
The authors have borrowed the concept of isomerics from chemistry where compounds have mirror image structures. They define the use of this optical application of “isomers” in four general groups of painted ceramic tradition: **painted and un-painted isomers** (optical reversals of shapes by painting on the white ground of the pot), **tessellated isomers** (added and subtracted forms that act like jigsaw pieces that interlock), **liminal-space isomeric designs** (pairs of elements separated by unpainted space that is a mirror image of the painted), and **incomplete –elements isomers** (partial images that interlock to create an abstraction of a perceived form). All forms are complex, detailed, wonderfully painted in a balance of space on what are curved forms as ground (pot, bowl, etc). How this complex work is accomplished is fascinating.

The authors show several examples of pieces that give away their secrets through a poor firing of the pots. In a space that should have fired pure black but came out slightly gray, a line



can be seen, sectioning the curved interior of the pot into a grid. Outlined drawings of triangles beneath a section of line hatching reveal spaces that were originally planned to remain white, changed intentionally during the execution of the design by the potter. These lines and grids peeking through the final design are very much like the drawings on European canvases that can be seen through the paint of many works left unfinished. They give us a clue to technique in painting intricate





geometric elements on a curved surface, much harder to do than on a flat canvas or board.

In looking at seeing and the mechanics of the layout of design, Ortman and Traugott have not pursued the distinctive local variations of elements between specific pueblos, but focused on the whole, the use of mirror images and negative space as a unified tradition in the ancient Pueblo world, reflecting, they would argue, a philosophy of the entire culture in a pre-contact band of time during the Grand Pueblo Period. In making this leap the authors look at the relationship between pottery design and basketry. "...Early experimentation with pottery was an attempt to improve upon existing containers of the time. Hence it is not surprising that the earliest painted pottery designs mimicked those that had been sewn into coiled basket walls for millennia." The illustrations accompanying this part of the text make the point very clear. They cite the design of "sifter baskets", used to separate corn meal from pieces of the grinding stone. The technique necessary to weave one of these utilitarian baskets readily produced isomeric designs in the weave. Spirals also in pottery design mirror coils in weaving baskets, as well in the coiling of ceramic structure. But the how

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must lead them to the why, and so they look at the mirror images of Pueblo life to explain a worldview captured in the utility of the pots.

The authors tap into contemporary Pueblo views as the key to the nature of this past design. "...Each person's heart and mind must generate respectful and helpful thoughts for one's surroundings and for other people. In this way, the spiritual world of thought, in each person and in larger natural forces, influences the state of the physical world." The isomeric designs then "...emphasize the coexistence of the seen and unseen world, each the complementary mirror image of the other...."

The book is elegantly illustrated to highlight arguments in the text. Additionally, nearly half of the pages are set aside at the end of the book in a portfolio of images, one to a page; an exquisite collection of work, as a recap of the isomeric tradition. This is a serious analysis of what amounts to a world view by Pueblo culture, one that embraced the mirror balance of life – male/female, earth/sky, life/spirit world – as one, a whole, the elements of each mirror images of the other. It

manages to cover a lot of ground in the fairly slight number of pages for textual discussion. It is an elegant book and the images of exquisite work by these ancient Pueblo makers is a case in itself for the continuity of design elements, perhaps a look at a worldview, but most definitely at the astounding quality and artistry in the products made for use so long ago. The result is a finely thought, written, and illustrated book.

Painted Reflections: Isomeric Design in Ancestral Pueblo Pottery

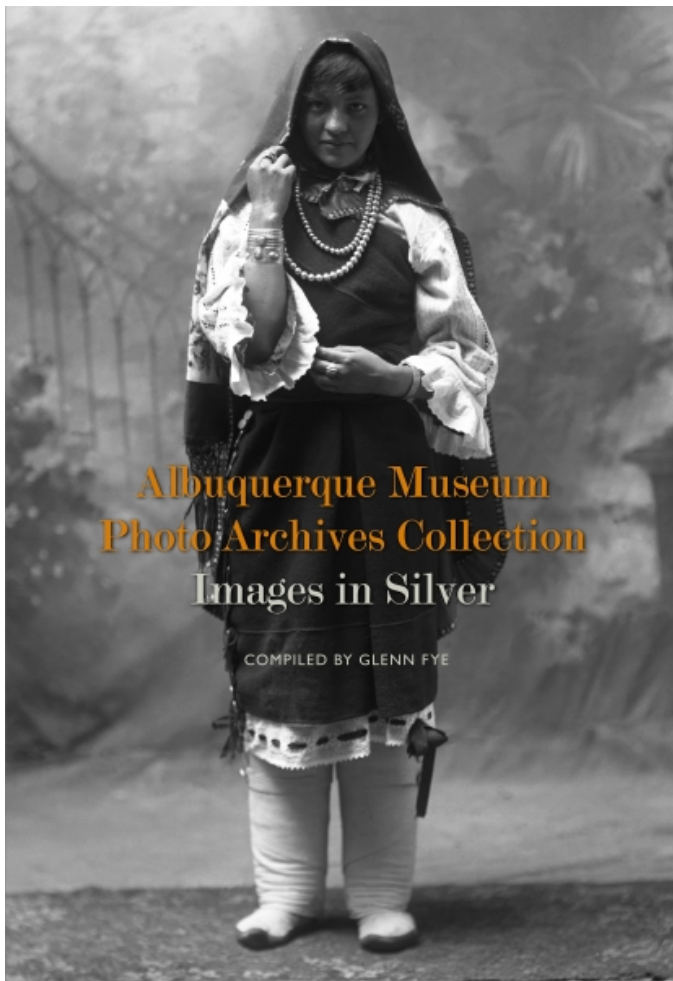
By Scott G. Ortman and Joseph Traugott
Museum of New Mexico Press
Hardcover, 140 pages, \$37.50

BOOK REVIEW

Albuquerque Museum Photo Archives Collection: Images in Silver
compiled by Glenn Fye with essays by Byron A. Johnson and Mo Palmer

Reviewed by Melanie McWhorter





decades ago, the conditions for each acquisition, and a brief biography or narrative of the collection. He argues, as the opening quote states, that photography is one of the most accurate tools for exploring the past. While Johnson does briefly note that photographs can be manipulated with knowledge of science of photography and optics using depth of field, length of exposure, and other techniques including darkroom manipulation, he also notes misrepresentation or un-truths in early images, e.g. Edward Curtis' cross-cultural costuming of Native Americans and Matthew Brady's alteration of the battlefield scenes that often involved moving of the mortally wounded. What can be argued for this archive is that it is representative of Albuquerque, its residents, its industry and its vitality in the late 19th and early 20th century.

The book includes 180 photographs that are on display for the 50th anniversary of the Albuquerque Museum: Milner Studio, Frank Speakman Collection, Harry Brooks Studio, Bandel Collection, William and Eddie Cobb Studio, and William Steele Dean Collection. Johnson's focus when acquiring images was on "people, architecture, public and private institutions, the urban landscape, daily life and important events from 1860s to 1950s". This is broad, yet, features photographs from a period before expansive growth in this community, one that the author notes grew from 40,000 in 1940 to 300,000 in 1970s.

Albuquerque Museum Photo Archives Collection: Images in Silver features six collections of photographic archives that are currently on display through November 2019 at the namesake museum. The exhibition's accompanying book is a catalogue of some photographs from post-American territorial period through mid-century in this important New Mexican city. The realization of the loss of certain structures and other methods of preserving historic records like oral histories led to this institution's increased awareness in the 20th century about the importance of saving what could be saved for the future. Along with the attempts at the physical preservation of the structures, archivists wanted to save the historical photographs, thus forever preserving representations of buildings, homes, and lifestyles of earlier years. This exhibition and book are an example of such preservation efforts and demonstrate the importance of the physical photographic archive. The images show what can be lost in personal and community narratives, and architecture while its mere existence shows the value of preservation.

In the opening essay and introductory texts for each chapter, Johnson discusses the founding of the archives



Johnson speaks about the loss of the oral history record of Hispanic culture and the exodus of many immigrant families who were pivotal in the founding of this city.

There is a desire for a historical, pictorial record for these communities. He laments the loss of Fred Harvey's Alvarado Hotel in 1970, and the Castle Huning shown in the book photographed around 1918. Both are no longer extant, but saved in images. Milner Studio depict San Felipe de Neri (c. 1910), a Catholic church that still graces the plaza, and Brooks Studio, the KiMo Theater in 1931 which is still located on the thriving Central Avenue. Some collections – Milner Studio, Harry Brooks Studio, and William and Eddie Cobb Studio – give an overall view of the people who lived in Albuquerque during these years and their dress, professions, and recreational activities through the photographers' professional and personal images. Other collections are more subject oriented.

The Frank Speakman Collection is an extensive look at the type of aircraft that landed at the city's airport in the

the local businesses and leaving, for the benefit of posterity, the glass plates bearing the likeness of the businesses' interiors and its employees: cafes, shoe repair shops, a used car dealership, a barber shop, a bike repair shop, drug stores, a saddlery. The photographer's perspective includes as much of each location as possible, noting tools, merchandise, price signs, clothing, all illustrated and locked in time.

The final chapter of the book presents the work of William Steele Dean, an organist for the silent films at the KiMo Theater. His fascination with film and film stars drove Dean's desire to record those actors and Hollywood personalities who were travelers on the Santa Fe California Limited. Many of the celebrities disembark for a respite and Dean was often there to capture their fixed image including the likes of Douglas Fairbanks,



1920s and 1930s. The Bandel Collection features the work of an itinerant photographer who pass through the city in the fall of 1930 and trained his camera on many of

Mary Pickford, Rudolph Valentino, Jack Dempsey and his wife, and many other artists, some whose names and

likenesses have now been lost but to the most dedicated silent film cinemaphile.

Johnson's quote about the historical significance of photography for the researcher, archivist and historian is demonstrated in this collection's depth and importance. He briefly tells of the story of George Pearl and how he saved the negatives, literally from the trash bins of the former owners, that contain the only visual record of the

first airplane flight in New Mexico that took place on October 11, 1911. Many other events, locations, and people may not seem as significant to the history of this state or city, yet, this collection is an invaluable addition to the trove of documentary and visual materials. *Albuquerque Museum Photo Archives Collection: Images in Silver* is both a lively, entertaining read that demonstrates an invaluable, preserved cache of images.

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Karen Kuehn from the exhibition *20 New Mexico Photographers* that is currently on display at El Zaguán through November 30, 2010.

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