



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, June 8, 2012

LAST WEEK: AGNES MARTIN CENTENNIAL EXHIBITIONS AT THE HARWOOD IN TAOS

Taos, N.M.—“Agnes Martin: Before the Grid” and “Agnes Martin: Works on Paper” at the Harwood Museum of Art close Sunday, June 17. This will be the last opportunity for the public to see the centennial tribute to this remarkable artist. The 30 paintings and drawings in the exhibition, many of which have never been exhibited before, were culled by curators Tiffany Bell and Jina Brenneman from private and public collections. These pieces, dating from the early 1940s through the 1950s, comprise a little-known body of work demonstrating Martin’s evolution from portraits, still-lives and landscapes to the biomorphic and geometric abstractions preceding the grid paintings for which she is internationally recognized.

Agnes Martin is among the most admired and influential American painters of the last half century. With her spare but emotionally rich paintings, based on grid compositions and a severely muted palette, she created a singular genre, a combination of Minimalism and Abstract Expressionism that has inspired two generations of collectors, curators and fellow artists. Her work is included in virtually every major museum of contemporary art. In 1998 she received the National Medal of Arts awarded by the U.S. government and presented by the President of the US.



Collection The Harwood Museum of Art,
Courtesy Mildred Tolbert Archives.

At the behest of art dealer Betty Parsons, Martin moved to New York City in 1957 and took up residence at Coenties Slip. Many in the art world assume that Martin emerged fully developed in her 1958 solo show at the Betty Parsons Gallery in New York. By then, Martin had been working for nearly 20 years, much of that time in the fabled but isolated art community of Taos, New Mexico, moving step by seemingly inevitable step from landscapes and portraits to biomorphic and geometric abstraction, resulting in the mature work that is perhaps the purest abstract art ever made.

“This exhibition shows that before Martin arrived at the simplicity and directness of her mature non-objective work, she painted for many years in a range of styles and techniques, addressing content – the vast New Mexican landscape, primordial, biomorphic forms, and hovering, atmospheric geometric shapes – that suggest a search for a way to convey an essential or universal truth,” says curator Bell.

Martin quickly came to prominence with Parsons’ financial backing and full support beginning in 1958. However, in 1967 she dropped out of the New York art world, bought a pickup truck and headed back west. She landed first in Cuba, NM, where she built an adobe home. Later she moved to Galisteo, outside of Santa Fe, where, after seven years of not painting, she went back to work and quickly regained her fame. In 1993 she returned to Taos. She lived and worked in Taos until her death in 2004 at the age of 92.

“Throughout the 1950s, throughout her artistic career, Agnes Martin was on a continual quest to express the language of the inner mind,” adds Harwood curator Jina Brenneman, “a place where perfection and beauty existed as spiritual absolutes.” As Martin herself once said, “When I think of art, I think of beauty. Beauty is the mystery of life. It is not in the eye, it is in the mind. In our minds there is an awareness of perfection.”

Agnes Martin: Before the Grid Catalogue

A 70-page color catalogue accompanies the exhibition with an art historical essay by Dr. Richard Tobin. The catalogue includes introductory text by Arne Glimcher of The Pace Gallery and artist and friend of Martin, Richard Tuttle. Info: 575-758-9826 (x102) or send an e-mail to shop@harwoodmuseum.org. Cost: \$40. Alliance members get a 10% discount.

These exhibitions were made possible by the generous support of The Pace Gallery, The Brown Foundation, Inc. of Houston, The Robert Lehman Foundation, the Fisher Family, The Harwood Museum Alliance, John E. and Jeanne T. Hughes Charitable Foundation, Anne and Burt Kaplan in memory of Burt Kaplan, Hannelore B. Schulhof Collection & Friend of Agnes Martin. "Agnes Martin Centennial: Before the Grid" is an Official Project of the [New Mexico Centennial](#).

Lodging Sponsors The Historic Taos Inn and La Posada de Taos Bed and Breakfast
Visit www.harwoodmuseum.org for special rates.

Hours

Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m.- 5 p.m; Sunday, 12 – 5 p.m.

General Admission

\$10 adults, \$8 seniors (65+) and students; Free to children age 12 and under, members of the Harwood Museum of Art Alliance and University of New Mexico students and staff and Taos County residents on Sundays. \$25 Museum Association of Taos Ticket is available for admission to the Harwood Museum of Art, the Taos Art Museum, the Millicent Rogers Museum, the Blumenschein Home and Museum, and La Hacienda de los Martinez.

Ski and the Harwood Museum of Art Special

Bring your lift ticket or season pass from any New Mexico Ski Resort and receive either 20% off museum admission (one discount per lift ticket) or 10% off any item in the Harwood Museum of Art Museum Store. (Films and special performances are not included).

Where: The Harwood Museum of Art of UNM, 238 Ledoux Street, Taos, NM

Directions: The Harwood Museum of Art is located on historic Ledoux Street, just south of, and within walking distance of the Taos Plaza. If driving, turn west onto Camino de la Placita and west onto Ledoux Street.

Info: 575-758-9826, www.harwoodmuseum.org

The Harwood Museum of Art, located in Taos, New Mexico, founded in 1923, is the second oldest art museum in New Mexico. In 2010, the Harwood Museum inaugurated its expansion which includes an auditorium, library, additional exhibition space, and a state-of-the-art collection storage facility.

<http://www.harwoodmuseum.org/agnesmartin>

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