



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Tuesday, June 5, 2012**

## **THE HARWOOD MUSEUM OF ART CELEBRATES THE CENTENNIAL OF TAOS MODERNIST BEA MANDELMAN**

*Taos, N.M.*—The Harwood Museum of Art is celebrating the centennial of the birth of artist Bea Mandelman with two exhibitions exploring the Taos Modernist's diverse body of work. "Bea Mandelman: Collage" opens Saturday, July 7 in the Mandelman-Ribak Gallery and remains on view through Sunday, October 14, 2012. Concurrently, the museum presents "Bea Mandelman: The Social Realist Prints" in the George E. Foster Jr. Gallery of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs. In commemoration of Mandelman's important contribution to the art and cultural life of New Mexico, the exhibitions have been designated official events of the New Mexico Centennial. They are also part of "The Remarkable Women of Taos," Taos' year-long celebration honoring outstanding historic and contemporary women of Taos.

Both exhibitions evolved from the fruitful scholarship and collaboration of Harwood Curator of Collections and Exhibitions Jina Brennehan and Alexandra Benjamin, Executive Director, Mandelman-Ribak Foundation.

Over the span of seven decades, Beatrice Mandelman (1912-1998) produced a body of work comprised of hundreds of paintings, prints, collages, and works on paper. The 22 prints in "Bea Mandelman: The Social Realist Prints" exemplify Mandelman's achievements as a printmaker in the Graphics Division of the WPA (Works Progress Administration) in New York City. She was employed by the WPA from 1935 until 1942, when the program was disbanded. In the wake of the Great Depression, WPA artists were grappling with themes of joblessness, homelessness, and devastating poverty. Many of Mandelman's prints depict women as she observed them in their menial labors, these works eloquently convey the hardships women endured during the 1930s and deepen the viewers understanding of a profoundly important period in American history.

"Mandelman's prints from the WPA project represent a wonderful body of work that is far less known here in New Mexico than the abstract work she later would develop as a Taos Modernist," says Alexandra Benjamin. "She created more than 100 lithographs, serigraphs and woodcuts while employed by the WPA."

The nearly 80 colorful collages in "Bea Mandelman: Collage" explore Mandelman's work in that mixed-media genre over five decades.

"Mandelman grew-up during the Great War (1914-1918), then thought to be the war that would end all wars, only to be renamed World War I in 1939," writes art historian and critic MaLin Wilson-Powell in the essay accompanying the exhibition. "She became an artist amidst the violence and squalor of the Great Depression, and permanently left New York City for the remoteness of Taos in 1944, after World War II's atomic annihilations of Japanese civilians and revelations of the full horror of Germany's death camps. Was World War III next? What other dystopian brutalities were yet to come? How to build a life with moments of pleasure, beauty, joy, and love? If art is compensatory – as it so often appears to be - Mandelman's irrepressible, impish nature and her joyous collages are measures of her courage and self-invention."



Beatrice Mandelman, *Pretzel Woman (Vendor)*, ca. 1936, lithograph, 11 1/2" x 8 1/2".

“Bea Mandelman is one of our Remarkable Women of Taos,” says Cathy Connelly, Director, Public Affairs & Tourism, Town of Taos. “Her legacy lives on in the permanent collection at the Harwood Museum of Art, which in 2010 received a significant gift of work from the Mandelman-Ribak Foundation. She came to Taos and was so inspired here. Bea enhanced the community of Taos in many ways.”

### **Bea Mandelman Biography**

From an early age, Mandelman was determined to be an artist. At 12 years old she began taking classes at the Newark School of Fine and Industrial Art and in the 1930s attended Rutgers University, the Newark School of Fine and Industrial Art, and the Art Students League in New York City. In 1935 Mandelman was employed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), first as a muralist and then as a printmaker with the Graphic Division of the New York Project. One of the original members of the Silk Screen Unit, Mandelman worked in the WPA until 1942, when it was disbanded. During this time she was associated with many New York School artists including Louis Lozowick, Willem de Kooning, Arshile Gorky, Jackson Pollock and Stuart Davis. By 1941, Mandelman's works were included in important exhibitions at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of Modern Art and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

In 1942 Mandelman married Louis Ribak and in 1944, they traveled to Santa Fe to visit Ribak's teacher and mentor, artist John Sloan, who'd recommended Santa Fe for the climate and atmosphere. Finding Santa Fe congested, they took the train along the Rio Grande and a stagecoach up to Taos and decided to settle there. An impulsive and inspired move, it was a decision that would effectively remove them from the art world's mainstream. In 1944 Taos was a well-known art community, but there were no galleries exhibiting modern art. A new influx of artists from New York and California during the late 1940s and '50s would change this. A group of these artists, including Mandelman and Ribak, Ed Corbett, Agnes Martin, Oli Sihvonen, and Clay Spohn, would become known as the Taos Moderns. Mandelman was an intensely dedicated painter. In the relative isolation of northern New Mexico she found the freedom to develop a style that was distinctly her own. Inspired by the light, local color, landscape and the confluence of diverse cultures in Taos, Mandelman's work flourished.

*The Bea Mandelman centennial exhibitions are supported by the Beatrice Mandelman and Louis Ribak Legacy Endowment for the Harwood Museum of Art.*

**Lodging Sponsors** The Historic Taos Inn and La Posada de Taos Bed and Breakfast  
Visit [www.harwoodmuseum.org](http://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.

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

**Info:** 575-758-9826, [www.harwoodmuseum.org](http://www.harwoodmuseum.org)

*“Bea Mandelman: Collage” and “Bea Mandelman: The Social Realist Prints” are official projects of the [New Mexico Centennial](http://www.newmexicocentennial.com) and [The Remarkable Women of Taos](http://www.taos.org). Visit [www.taos.org](http://www.taos.org) to explore Taos travel information and learn more about the “Remarkable Women of Taos.”*

*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.*

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