

Laura Gilpin,
409 Camino del Monte Sol
Santa Fe, N.M.

PHOTOGRAPHY, 1968
FINE ARTS MUSEUM, SANTA FE, N.M.

The current exhibition of photographs by New Mexico photographers, now showing at the Art Museum is both interesting and provocative; interesting in its seeking for new approaches, provocative in some of the results. After a first quick glance, it is surprising to find so many pictures in a very low key. One wonders what has happened to sunlight, particularly New Mexico sunlight. This somberness could be coincidence, though I rather doubt it. Is this a symbol of the times we live in? Missing also is use of our environment for subject matter. There are almost no traces of New Mexico. Most of the pictures could have been made anywhere in the U.S.A. Not that this matters too greatly, it seems a pity, though, when the essence of the country we live in, the quality of the light at our command, the challenge of superb landscape, are missing from this exhibition. It matters not if a photographer works in abstract design, in documentary photography, or in carefully arranged subject matter, for it is how these subjects are visualized and handled that is important.

This exhibition is dominated by one particular group of people from Albuquerque. There is very fine work here for most of it is well designed, skillfully executed, with prints of fine quality. Where are prints by other photographers whose work I know and who are workers of ability, people also from Albuquerque, Roswell, Santa Fe, Los Alamos, Taos and perhaps other localities? Did they not submit work or were they rejected? The inclusion of work by a number of these photographers would have given this exhibition a far greater scope and interest to the general public as well as to the specific few who follow photography closely. One becomes saturated with mundane subject matter.

There are some interesting experiments in this exhibition, experiments in motion, in double exposures and double printing, experiments with a touch of color added to black and white by hand, experiments in processes, such as photogravure. Some of these, I feel belong to the class room rather than an exhibition gallery. There are almost no portraits as such, one of them brings a breath of air in the somberness of dark values, another is so lacking in all fundamental qualities belonging to portraiture and so out of scale with the rest of the exhibition that it should not have been included.

Yet when one studies carefully the prints in this show, there are many very worthwhile and excellent examples of photographic art. They deserve real praise. One could wish that these could have been interspersed with pictures in a higher key where the contrast would have benefited all.

I for one, am delighted that the Museum of New Mexico has given us this knowledge of work that is being done in our midst. It is a long time since an exhibition of photography has been held here.

The prints are beautifully displayed but I deplore the addition of technical information following the titles. This is irrelevant and focuses attention on tools rather than ideas.

Laura Gilpin.