Susan Folwell: Taos Light

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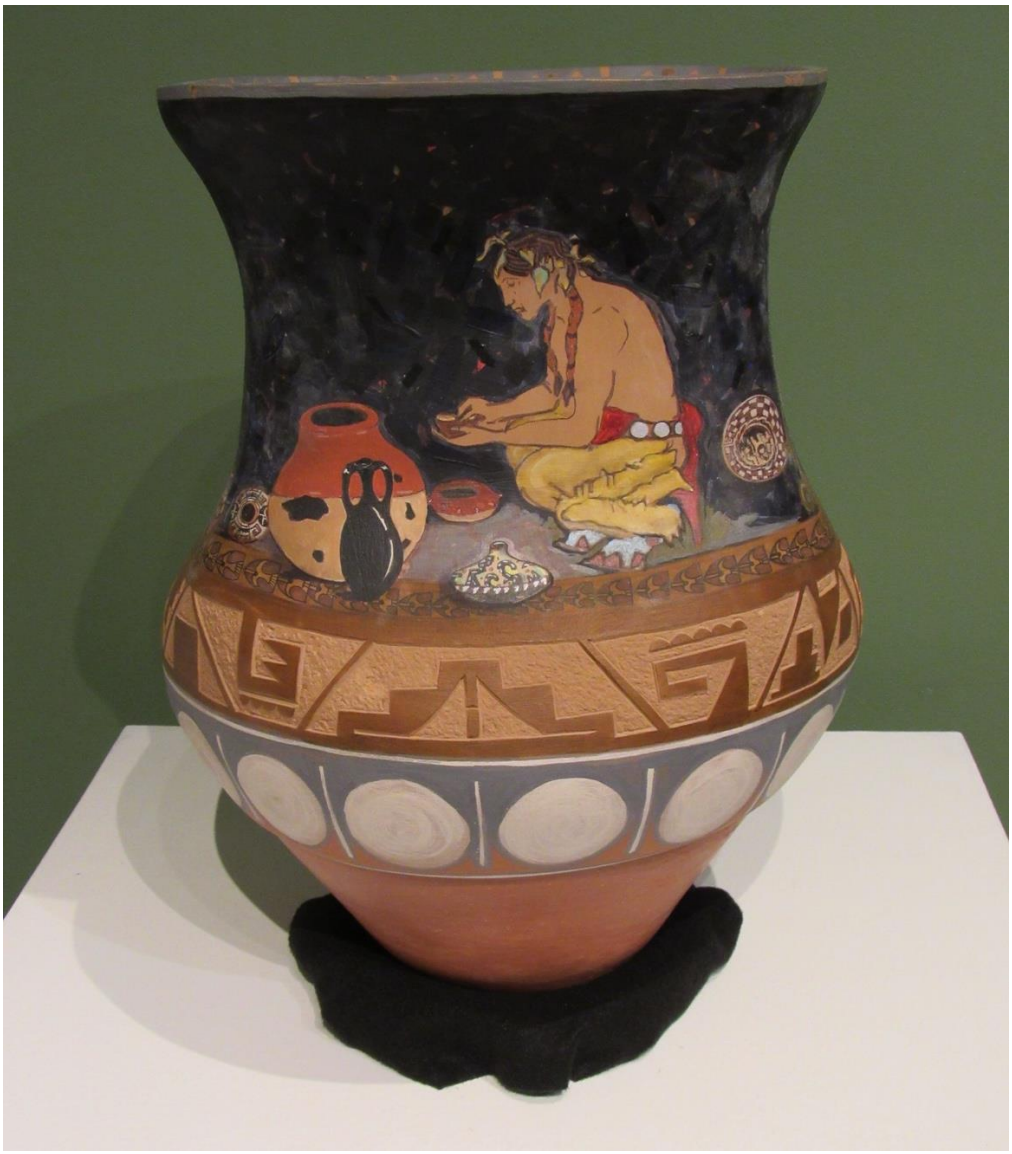

"It's the movement and it's the fluidity. It's the liquidity of how we get through life. It's a simple concept that the only consistency in the world is change."[1]
—Susan Folwell (Santa Clara Tewa, b. 1970), clay artist, northern New Mexico

Clay offers a constant that accompanies ongoing change for the Tewa-speaking village of Santa Clara Pueblo in northern New Mexico adjacent to the Rio Grande. Susan Folwell refers to the clay as Mother Earth—the provider for all beings.[2] The artist participates in the millennia-old practice of transforming Tewa clay into painted pottery, a matrilineal legacy within the tribe. These vessels convey her reflections on places of home and relations between people during particular time periods. Thus, the Pueblo use of clay to respond to social dynamics since time immemorial gives form to an ongoing "pattern of renewal," or constant set of practices, that centers Pueblo people. The concept of a pattern of renewal, based on the teachings of Folwell's cousin Roxanne Swentzell (Santa Clara Pueblo), refers to repeating patterns found in nature—the constant movement of health, vitality, and continuance—that interconnect all aspects of life.[3] As a pattern of renewal, Folwell's clay vessels often portray figurative narratives of cross-cultural dialogue within the Southwest region.

In Folwell's *Taos Light* series of painted pottery vessels (2016–present), she comments on the complexity of intercultural perceptions of the early twentieth century. She visually references the interactions between the Taos Society of Artists (TSA)—a group of Euro-American painters who made portraits of Native Americans between 1915 and 1927—and the Tiwa-speaking Taos Pueblo people who collaborated with them as models. In working with the medium of clay, Folwell grounds Native women's leadership in pottery making as a pattern of renewal—a constant in this series. A painted dialogue on the intertwined relationships of Taos Pueblo community members and the TSA, the *Taos Light* vessels contribute an illustrative social commentary to consider how the past shapes cross-cultural interactions of the present and future for Pueblo people.

Folwell sets up this dynamic by reimagining the TSA's well-known paintings from her Indigenous perspective on the cultures and locales in focus. Her *Taos Light* series honors and enacts patterns of renewal in the continued epistemologies and ontologies of Pueblo communities through the constants of pottery making and cross-cultural dialogue. These artworks contribute to Pueblo peoples' history of exchange, including intertribal exchange, ongoing since time immemorial, and exchange with people from abroad such as the Spanish and Anglo cultures, who began occupying the region in the

late sixteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, respectively.

The ongoing history of these intercultural exchanges as reflected in Folwell's *Taos Light* series expresses a "kin-space-time constellation." An Indigenous lens of understanding coined by scholar Laura Harjo (Mvskoke), a kin-space-time constellation "operationalizes multiple dimensions . . . the spirit world, the practices of ancestors, cosmology, ceremony, and the everyday social reproduction of the community."[4] Kin-space-time constellations manifest in the shared and enduring significance of Indigenous places among Indigenous communities in relation.

Harjo writes, "Indigenous futurity places us in a conversation . . . with the unactivated possibilities of our past, present, and future relatives. . . . Futurity is space, place, and temporality produced socially by people, including relatives located in the past, present, and future. It invokes many . . . yet-to-be imagined possibilities."[5] As such, patterns of "kin-space-time envelopes," as continuances of Indigenous practices, make up kin-space-time constellations. A kin-space-time envelope embodies a concept of futurity where past, present, and future generations of Indigenous community members become tethered through creative expressions that remain extant beyond the time period in which they were produced.[6] As Harjo writes, "Through storytelling, art, and the self-publishing of community knowledge . . . cultural workers are creating futurity in the present moment, dreaming of a (re)imagined future where narratives about Indigenous people are more complex and aligned with lived, felt knowledge."[7]

Tethered to the early tourism era of the 1880s to 1910s, Folwell's *Taos Light* series of social commentary vessels in clay carries on the legacy of Native women artists' leadership in the Southwest region in the arenas of pottery making and exhibitions of the medium. Folwell's vessel forms and imagery create new associations within the kin-space-time constellations and kin-space-time envelopes of today in Taos and northern New Mexico. In the discussion that follows, I analyze the multi-play, or strategically layered, visual devices that Folwell employs in her *Taos Light* series. I consider the ways that these meanings shift in the context of the works' presentation at two institutions in Taos, New Mexico—the Couse-Sharp Historic Site and the Harwood Museum of Art. While Folwell grounds her *Taos Light* series in a local focus, its international implications offer a layer of reciprocity that propels its themes

both outward and inward at once.

In the analysis below, I apply Tuscarora scholar and artist Jolene Rickard's four-part methodology for reading Native art through deep considerations of inspiration, formal analysis, learning through making, and function in Western and Indigenous cultures.[8] To contextualize Folwell's collaborative leadership process, I extend Rickard's method to critically situate the artist's *Taos Light* vessels and their associated exhibitions at the intersection of four foundational lenses. These considerations are mentorship and education, local and international reach, interdisciplinary forms, and place-specific interactions.

Beginnings

Folwell began the first work in the *Taos Light* series in Taos in 2016, after moving there in 2015 following several years of living in Tucson, Arizona. She drew inspiration from her time spent with the art collections at the Couse-Sharp Historic Site in Taos, where her husband, Davison Packard Koenig, was hired as a consultant and now serves as executive director and curator. Drawing upon the site's pottery collection, Koenig, Folwell, and her mother, potter Jody Folwell, curated *Visionaries in Clay: Pueblo Pottery, Past and Present*. In this exhibition, twelve Pueblo ceramicists paired new or existing works with some of the site's vessels—a historic collection of Southwest Native pottery brought together by E. I. Couse, a founding TSA member, for use in his paintings. As one of the featured artists, Susan Folwell created the site-specific vessel *The Artist* (2016; figs. 1–2). This community-driven exhibition was on view June through October 2016 in the site's Luna Chapel—the first studio in Taos of J. H. Sharp, another TSA founding member. This work marked the beginning of Susan Folwell's *Taos Light* series, an ongoing body of work that marks the longest amount of time the artist has pursued both a particular series and subject matter to date.

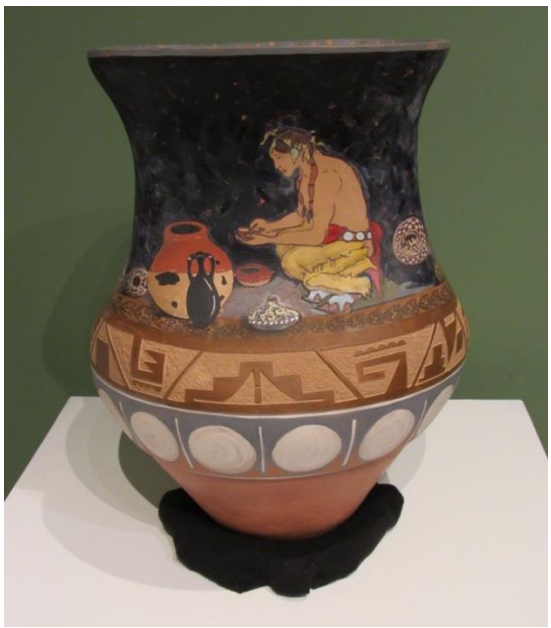

Fig. 1. Susan Folwell (Santa Clara Pueblo, b. 1970). *The Artist*, 2016. Santa Clara Pueblo clay, slips, acrylic paint, wood stain, India ink. Private collection. Photo: Michelle Lanteri.

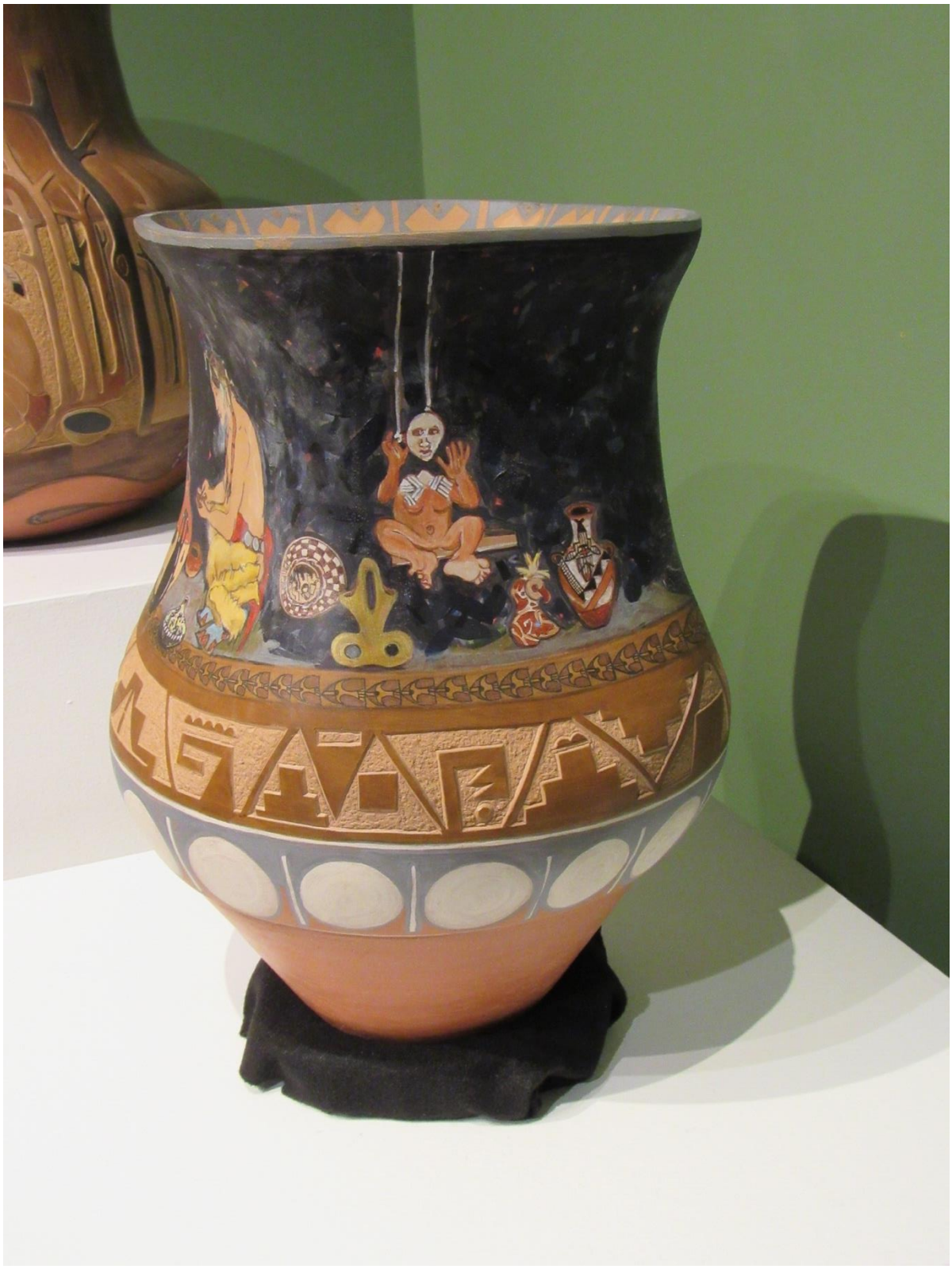

Fig. 2. Susan Folwell. *The Artist* (verso), 2016. Santa Clara Pueblo clay, slips, acrylic paint, wood stain, India ink. Private collection. Photo: Michelle Lanteri.

The *Visionaries in Clay* curatorial statement provides insight on the conditions from which Folwell birthed her *Taos Light* series.

> In the Luna Chapel, the exhibition *Visionaries in Clay: Pueblo Pottery, Past and Present* presents highlights of Native artists, both historic and contemporary, who have helped define our understandings of Native identity and cultural expression through their bold work. The exhibition draws from the strong historic pottery collection of E. I. Couse and from contemporary Native artists in northern New Mexico. The historic potters were visionary for their experimentation in form and designs imbued with symbolic meaning. The contemporary potters are visionary for their continued experimentation that challenges stereotypes of "Indian" and force us to confront our own biases and perceptions.[9]

True to the vision cited here, Folwell created *The Artist*, her first *Taos Light* vessel, as a painted narrative of critical commentary. Her artwork and the exhibition's scope of vision can be understood to have been produced within the northern New Mexico "exhibitionary complex," an industry term that scholar Tony Bennett defines as "a self-monitoring system of looks in which the subject and object positions can be exchanged."[10]

Folwell grew up with artists all around her at Santa Clara Pueblo, and she came from a family of ceramicists. As pottery making was a family affair, she regularly sifted clay—or removed the clay's impurities—and gathered manure for the pottery's outdoor firing in her younger years. The practice of making pottery is a maternal legacy in the family, which Susan's mother, Jody Folwell, learned from her own mother Rose Naranjo. Naranjo had learned pottery from her grandmother, who had become her primary caregiver when she was only three years old upon her mother's passing.[11] Reflecting on the countless memories of gathering with her family to make pottery, Susan Folwell states,

> I was so lucky to be immersed in so much mentorship. It was such a daily part of life with memories of—it's late night, it's summer, it's right before Indian Market, and your grandmother's there, your aunts are there, cousins are all gathered around a table. Some may be polishing pottery, some may still be sanding their pottery. Some may still be trying to get air bubbles out. But you're having a community conversation, and when one person's done with the project they were doing, it's like, okay, now all my five pots are sanded, give me yours. . . . Or if they're done polishing, they're like, here, give me your sanded pots . . . just this really beautiful, interwoven community that can happen. And that still happens quite a bit around clay.[12]

Pottery is a kin-space-time envelope, or continued legacy, in the family: Susan's sister, Polly Rose Folwell; her aunts Tessie Naranjo, Rina Swentzell, Dolly Naranjo-Neikrug, and Nora Naranjo Morse; her cousins Roxanne Swentzell and Jody Naranjo; and her nieces Rose Simpson and Kaa Folwell, all from Santa Clara Pueblo, have worked in clay styles that reflect their own perspectives and connections to the medium and its time-immemorial history.

For more than forty years, Susan Folwell has observed her mother, Jody, making clay vessels in a range of styles. In these experiences, Folwell witnessed, and continues to witness, her mother exploring an interdisciplinary blending of art forms within pottery. These variations extend from sgraffito, or scratched, bird designs on a sienna ground to social commentary narratives in polychrome reflecting her perspectives on national politics and being a Native artist in the Southwest art world. Folwell has witnessed her mother exploring new aesthetics for her vessels over the course of several decades. These explorations include combining an asymmetrical neck and an unpolished lip with a brown-toned surface, or adding a new layer to the familial practices of gathering, processing, and aging clay to build pottery vessels coil by coil.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Jody was one of the first Pueblo ceramicists of her generation to show experimental work in fine art venues, particularly at Gallery 10, a commercial space owned by Lee Cohen in Scottsdale, Arizona.[13] This was a time when most galleries did not take chances on unfamiliar styles of Pueblo pottery, although ironically, San Ildefonso Pueblo artists Maria and Julian Martinez's internationally renowned black-on-black vessels were in demand, despite being an unfamiliar Pueblo pottery style when they emerged during the early tourism period. The matte and burnished black surfaces, a new technique featuring adaptations of Mimbres designs, introduced a different approach to Pueblo pottery in the late 1910s and the early 1920s and has since become a customary style of the family's descendants who make pottery.

In another innovative turn in the late twentieth century, Jody Folwell painted social commentary narratives from her lived experiences on her pottery vessels. While her works were technologically savvy and aesthetically appealing, her social commentary potentially turned some buyers off from collecting her vessels because they confronted the everyday and

sometimes harsh or humorous realities of life from her perspective as a Native female artist. Because of this tension between Jody's style and the Native art market's expected conventions, Cohen's gallery representation allowed Jody to break into the art world, leading to the Heard Museum's purchase of her work in 1979 and a 1985 Best of Show award at the Santa Fe Indian Market.[14] This partnership opened an important avenue for Pueblo potters who want to explore clay vessels' potential for narrative political themes and vivid color palettes of figurative imagery. Jody's trailblazing work in this Pueblo pottery style opened up a broader world of imagery for fellow Pueblo artists to explore, for which numerous Pueblo artists, including Susan, have achieved renown over the years.

Jody's legacy lives on in Susan's vessels, which both convey compelling stories and take chances in their reflections on current epochs. Thus, both women carry forward legacies of leadership in Pueblo arts and exhibition practices. They continue to contribute to the ongoing history of Native women creating new art forms for audiences in both the Southwest region and the northern New Mexico exhibitionary complex.

Fittingly, Susan's first connections to Taos came from her mother. Jody had relocated to Taos Pueblo from Santa Clara Pueblo with her family during middle and high school due to her father's work as a Baptist minister.[15] Jody met Susan's father, Henry Folwell, at the Taos Plaza, when she and her sister, Tessie, were eating ice cream.[16] Henry, an artist from Denver, Colorado, made paintings of the Taos Pueblo community.[17] After earning a degree from the College of Santa Fe in history and political science, Jody returned to Santa Clara Pueblo to raise her children with Henry, who encouraged her to be a full-time artist.[18] Of her father's influence, Susan recalls, "I've always been much more two-dimensional. With my father being a painter, I just felt I had inherited that. . . . I've found a way to actually be a two-dimensional person on a three-dimensional object, which is always a challenge. In many ways, I've come to realize the plain fact that clay's a canvas for me."[19] Her father's history as a painter and mother's work as a clay artist offer a familial backdrop to Susan's retellings of the TSA paintings in her *Taos Light* series.

Folwell studied photography and design at the College for Creative Studies in Detroit, blending aspects of these disciplines with Native clay to arrive at her ceramic vessels painted with poignant narratives. Within this style, she has

produced work shaped by comic books, tattoo imagery, political controversy, and the pottery history of Tewa-speaking Pueblos. Such work includes her *Cry Baby* series, inspired by an encounter with Roy Lichtenstein's painting *Drowning Girl* (1963).[20] In *Love Gun* (2013), Folwell reframed the painting as a tearful self-portrait reflecting the pressures of both working tirelessly to meet exhibition deadlines and reconciling the demands of Native art market expectations for Pueblo pottery with her identity as a female pottery artist from Santa Clara Pueblo.[21] The vessel, a large seed jar, features a square neck and a large painted image of a woman crying while a handgun adorned with roses points at her head—symbols that evoke both a hold-up as well as beauty. Folwell painted the face in comic book colors, while the pottery vessel features Pueblo designs in a palette of earth tones. This pairing speaks to Folwell's struggle to establish her social commentary within the arena of Pueblo pottery—a legacy she carries on from her mother's work in the field.

Other works by Folwell take on the politics of the Southwest art market and tourism through humor. With a canteen body in red, *There Goes the Neighborhood* (2011) ironically bears the imagery from the Fred Harvey Company's advertisements for their "Indian Detours." The composition features a Native woman seated next to a painted pottery vessel and a ladder, looking down at a Harveycar outside of the Pueblo's dwellings. Folwell revised the headline as "Take the Indian-detour Santa Fe in a genuine Harveycar!" Below, the words "There goes the neighborhood" emerge from the woman's unseen mouth as she sits with her back facing the viewer. Complete with the Santa Fe Railway logo and the Harvey thunderbird logo, the vessel demonstrates Folwell's attunement to what she refers to as "a play on play on play."[22] It satirically criticizes the tidal wave of tourism that developed at the turn of the twentieth century, an international marketing vehicle that still supports Native artists, including Folwell herself, today.

Offering more jests as commentary on this phenomenon, Folwell added streaks of white slip to the front and back of the vessel, suggesting vandalization. She replicated a tin Calumet Baking Powder seal on the verso, alluding to the dietary changes that resulted from the influx of industrially made goods from the railroad to the Pueblos. This symbol of the commercialization of Native American

identity also references fry bread, which requires baking powder to make. A staple food in many Native communities in North America, fry bread emerged from forced living on reservations with government annuities. Following in her mother's footsteps, Folwell won a first-place award at the Santa Fe Indian Market for *There Goes the Neighborhood*.[23]

Visionaries in Clay: Pueblo Pottery, Past and Present

From this prismatic world of inspiration, layered approach, and sharp wit, Folwell's *Taos Light* series emerged in 2016, featuring both experimental form and bright hues. *The Artist* (figs. 1–2 above) depicted artworks from the *Visionaries in Clay* exhibition, including those by her Pueblo contemporaries and from the historic pottery collection, as a kind of mirroring reflection. This water jar with a black square neck reinterprets *An Indian Artist* (ca. 1920), E. I. Couse's sketch of a seated Taos Pueblo man painting a pastoral mural on an adobe wall near pottery vessels that are now part of the Couse-Sharp Historic Site's collection.[24] Reproduced posthumously in the 1938 American Lithographic Company's calendar, Couse's composition offered Folwell both a complicated history and a wealth of content for a "play on play on play."

As identified by Couse's granddaughter Virginia Couse Leavitt, this sketch was adapted into the chromolithograph featured in the calendar by E. Martin Hennings, Couse's fellow TSA member.[25] Because Couse had passed away two years prior, his son, Kibbey, insisted that Hennings create the painting in order to maintain the high level of quality that Couse had become renowned for in his work.[26] In this process, the American Lithographic Company sent a series of revisions to Hennings that included widening the color palette and using a "more rugged-feature type" akin to Couse's figurative style.[27] The final version of the painting used for the chromolithograph plate resulted from the artistry of two sets of hands and several compositional edits from the calendar's committee members. Couse had been involved in this kind of process for some of his paintings-turned-chromolithographs commissioned by the American Lithographic Company and the Santa Fe Railway, both of which featured his works between the mid-1910s and the 1930s.[28]

In addition to becoming a household name through the calendar prints, Couse garnered national and international recognition in exhibitions both at home and abroad. His promotion to a full

academician in the National Academy of Design and training at the Académie Julian in Paris further solidified this status. However, Couse made his paintings from his own gridded photographs, a preparatory practice he hid from the public to uphold an air of the artist's mystique.

Couse was not painting ethnographic imagery, contrary to the interpretation of art critics of his day.[29] Although rendered in a naturalistic style, his paintings reflected his work with models in an ethos of pictorialism.[30] He reimagined the academic genre of history paintings within the context of the Taos Pueblo community and invented mythic and aesthetically pleasing scenes designed to invoke empathy for Native American people. Another irony emerges here when considering Folwell's recontextualization of many of Couse's paintings, which promoted the sale of Pueblo pottery through train travel—the mass transit that drastically changed tribal communities and imposed a cash economy for Native arts onto Pueblo communities.

Folwell's *The Artist* embeds several cross-cultural narratives into a visual storyline. First, her practice of using Native clay as a canvas imbues Santa Clara Pueblo history into the vessel, through its coils and circular base, and establishes the artist as a narrator from a particular place. Second, drawing inspiration from historic ceramics in the site's collection—a San Ildefonso polychrome water jar and one of Hopi-Tewa artist Nampeyo's seed bowls with Sikyatki designs—contributes to a legacy of Native women's leadership in arts and exhibition practices in northern New Mexico. Third, Folwell intersects the past, present, and future by reinterpreting Couse's *An Indian Artist* to feature her contemporaries and their selections from the site's pottery collection. This approach creates layers of new relations between extant artworks, participating artists, and audiences bearing witness to this vessel both in person and virtually. Folwell's process for *The Artist* gives way to a kin-space-time envelope by showing the pattern of renewal in the artworks and people emerging from the same particular place. Folwell's artwork honors the circular patterns of subjects and cross-cultural representation in northern New Mexico: a kin-space-time constellation that has been in existence and evolving for more than a century.

A central tenet of the TSA's painting and exhibition practices was to serve an educational function, specifically "to preserve and promote the native [*sic*] art."[31] In *The Artist*, Folwell's site-specific

tactic twists this principle to emerge from a Santa Clara Pueblo artist's hand as both painting and etching on pottery. Her selections of historic pottery from the Couse-Sharp Historic Site's collection create connections with two leading families in the history of the Tewa-speaking villages' pottery production. The references made are to Nampeyo at the Hopi-Tewa village of Hano, a friend of Couse and his family, and to generations of pottery makers at San Ildefonso Pueblo, the home village of Maria and Julian Martinez. Through his cross-cultural relationships in the region, Couse collected Pueblo pottery for use in his paintings—a concept Folwell reflects back to audiences within her imagery in *The Artist* in the context of the *Visionaries in Clay* exhibition.

A case in point, Folwell features Nampeyo's jar in two places in *The Artist*, in the narrative band next to the Taos Pueblo model and as a band of sgraffito patterns in a lower register. The up-close and distant views of this vessel by Nampeyo represent a multiplicity of perspectives and bridge several related contexts. First, Couse included Nampeyo's vessel in his painting *The Flute Player* (ca. 1903), which depicted a Native man seated and playing the flute while a Native boy, presumably his son, sits listening nearby, adjacent to the disc-shaped jar. Couse had exhibited this painting at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904, and it was reproduced in the 1933 Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe (ATSF) Railway calendar promoting "Indian detours."[32] These contexts bear significance in terms of multiple representations of Southwest Native cultures through figurative and artistic representations. Adding another layer, the Martinezes had exhibited their art to international audiences at the 1904 exposition, positioning Native pottery as both an accurate representation and an attraction, the latter being a desirable point of interest in the Southwest region.[33]

On the theme of cross-cultural exchange in the *Taos Light* series, Folwell commented, "You are literally interpreting someone else's work that has come before you. . . . It's an interesting circle because, of course, them [the TSA] studying Native people themselves . . . you can kind of feel the circle of them looking at you looking at your people, you're looking at them, you're all just interpreting. Even though it's a hundred years later. It's all still kind of relevant."[34] In the case of *The Artist*, Folwell steps into the position of a cross-temporal interpreter in her visual play of role-swapping in the vessel's painted

narratives and varied design bands.

In the upper and largest band of the work, Folwell depicts a scene of Native community through the group of clay artworks contributed and selected by the Pueblo artists featured in *Visionaries in Clay*. The Taos Pueblo male model holds the most prominent position at the center of this narrative; he is in the process of coiling a round clay vessel. Folwell's reinterpretation of this figure as a pottery artist—a departure from Couse's portrayal of him as a mural painter—emphasizes the central position of clay to Pueblo people, the impetus of the exhibition. Her acknowledgment that the role of Pueblo pottery makers extends across gender throws into question the binary expectations held by many tourists because of a century's worth of marketing Pueblo women as the ceramicists of their villages.

Folwell positioned Diego Romero's *No Pictures Please* (ca. 2015), a bowl made in a brown-and-cream Mimbres-style palette with a checkerboard rim, behind the Taos Pueblo potter, accentuating the role of male potters by example. In his signature style, Romero (Cochiti Pueblo) etched a graphic in the bowl's center. A group of Pueblo women and men dressed in their feast-day regalia poses for a selfie taken by one of the women on a cellular phone camera. An irony arises between Couse's use of photographs for his paintings and the Pueblos' enforcement of a "no photography" rule for tourists visiting on feast days open to the public. The composition reflects multiple layers of staging, both in the Taos Pueblo model's mix-and-match Native apparel from Couse's studio collection and the selfie image taken by Pueblo people on their own terms.

Folwell and Romero's figurative portrayal of Native artists dispels another stereotype—that Pueblo potters of the past and present shy away from naturalistic forms. This point is reinforced both through Folwell's role as a narrative storyteller and Romero's feast-day selfie scene. It also is emphasized by Folwell's representation of a figurative clay sculpture in *Visionaries in Clay* by her niece, Rose Simpson. Simpson's work is a seated figure holding its hands and arms upwards to frame its face that is painted in white (see fig. 2). This sculpture reflects Simpson's interpretations of the constant presence and influence of her Santa Clara Pueblo ancestors, conveying a pattern of renewal inherent to pottery making. This meaning is emphasized by Folwell's curatorial positioning of Simpson's artwork in the *Visionaries in Clay* gallery

with two more figurative sculptures: a self-portrait in a standing pose also created by Simpson and a seated self-portrait made by Simpson's mother, Roxanne Swentzell. The themes of legacy and self-reflection form the central thread of this exhibition through the pairings and the strategic installation.

Building upon matriarchal legacy, Folwell includes two bands of abstract motifs in *The Artist* borrowed from both Nampeyo and the San Ildefonso potters, each occupying its own register and making connections between the past, present, and future of the Tewa-speaking villages and their pottery. In the middle band, Folwell reinterprets Nampeyo's Sikyatki designs from their original red and black palette over a white ground as an etched area of cream and sienna. The brown tone of this band links the piece to her mother Jody's work and their family's renowned sgraffito designs. This matrilineal connection becomes pronounced in the vessel's interior rim. There, Folwell painted a series of orange X forms—a family symbol that Jody has also turned sideways in her work, using it as an oblique reference to the mission church at Santa Clara Pueblo. Just above the vessel's red base, Folwell painted a band of alternating white circles and vertical lines—a visual reference to a pattern borrowed from the San Ildefonso Pueblo water jar.

The Artist evokes intersecting patterns of renewal within a site-specific context. The narrative portrayed on the vessel references several facets of cross-cultural relationships, reflected in the borrowed imagery throughout. These include the supportive community upheld by contemporary Pueblo potters as well as the influence and growth of Pueblo pottery through the TSA painters' promotion of Native arts. The continuation of the Tewa-speaking villages' pottery making, upheld by matriarchs like those at Santa Clara and San Ildefonso Pueblos, carries these legacies of cross-cultural exchange into ever-expanding contexts, as exemplified by this first vessel in Folwell's *Taos Light* series. This process embodies generations of Pueblo pottery artists creating kin-space-time envelopes through their work, which make up a kin-space-time constellation, forming a continuum between time immemorial, the recent past, the present moment, and the future ahead for Pueblo communities.

Through the Looking Glass **at the Harwood Museum of Art**

From a single vessel made in 2016, Folwell's *Taos Light* series grew into a body of work that fueled her

exhibition *Susan Folwell: Through the Looking Glass*, on view from July 2019 to January 2020 at the Harwood Museum of Art in Taos, New Mexico (see figs. 3–4). As the exhibition's curator, Folwell juxtaposed her vessels with paintings by the TSA in order to call attention to the shared history of Taos as depicted through an exchange of cross-cultural perspectives between the early twentieth century and the early twenty-first century—a kin-space-time envelope

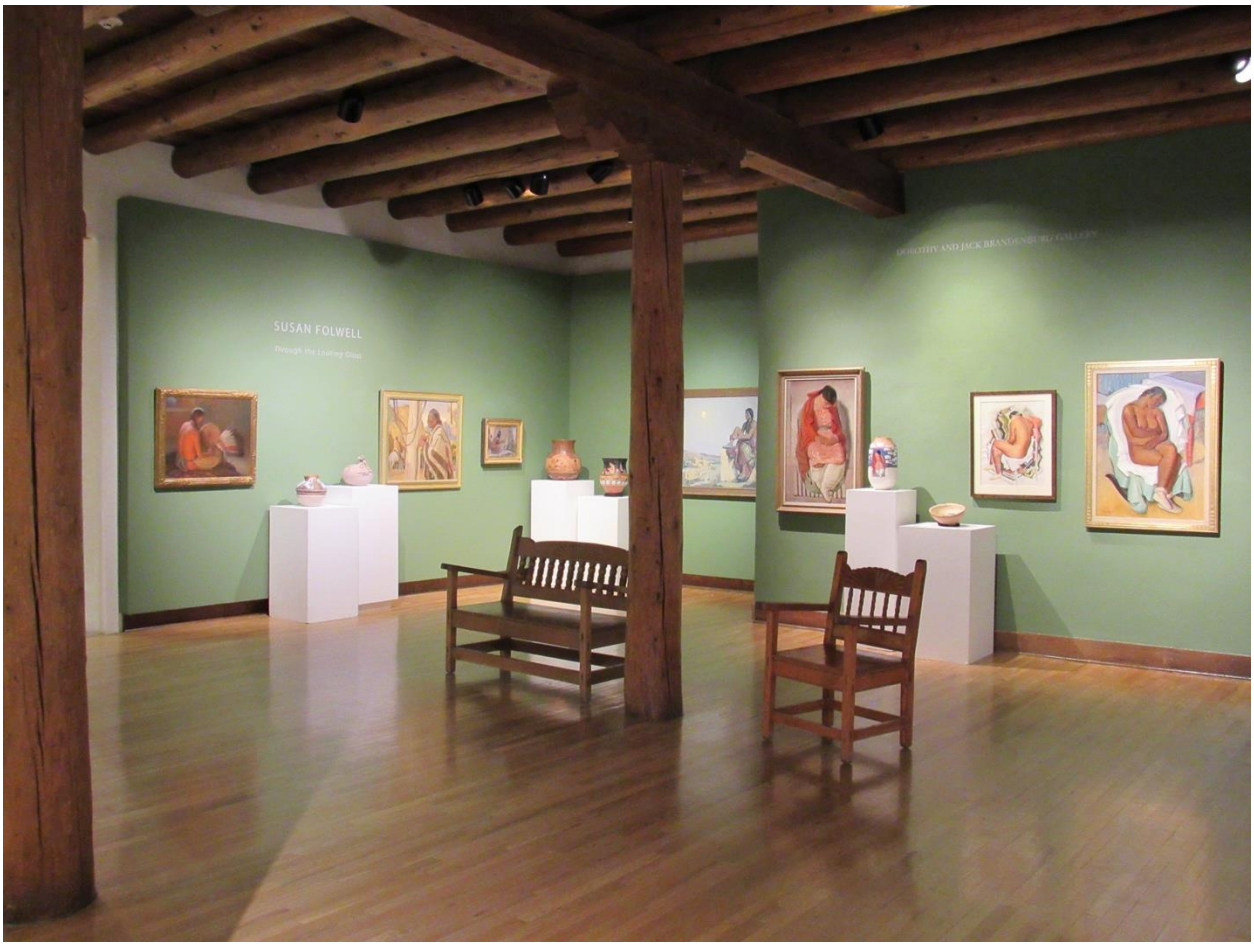

Fig. 3. Installation view of *Susan Folwell: Through the Looking Glass* at the Harwood Museum of Art, Taos, New Mexico. Photo: Michelle Lanteri.

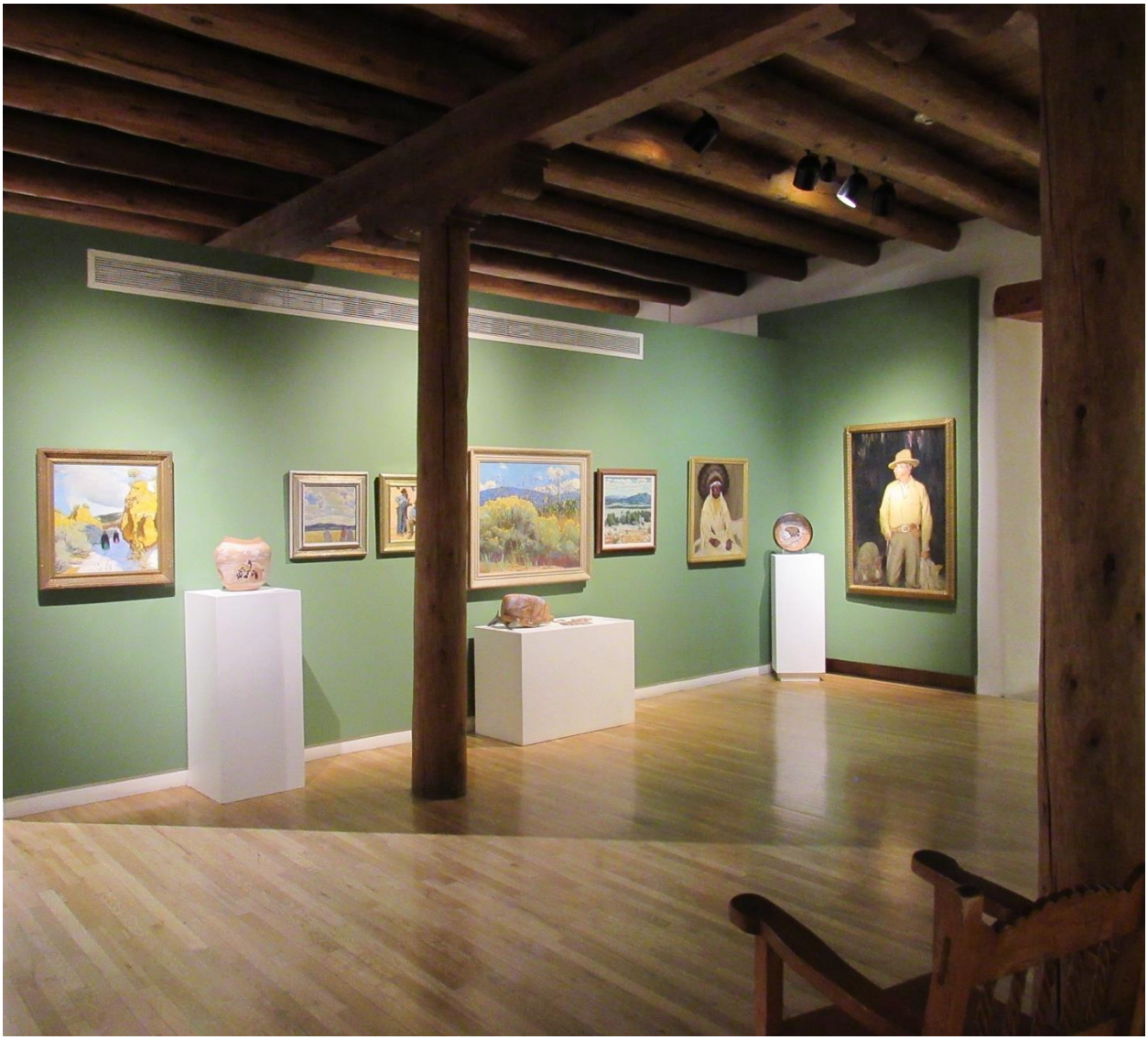

Fig. 4. Installation view of *Susan Folwell: Through the Looking Glass* at the Harwood Museum of Art, Taos, New Mexico. Photo: Michelle Lanteri.

taking the form of an active visual conversation.[35]

This combination of pottery and paintings reveals the ways in which Southwest Native pottery and the TSA paintings created a dialogue during the early tourism period. These art forms worked, and continue to work, in collaboration to promote Native life and arts of the Southwest. As such, this dynamic established a strong platform for Native art sales and representation in northern New Mexico during the early twentieth century that persists today. Reflecting these internal and external stances, the exhibition title refers to Lewis Carroll's 1871 novel *Through the Looking-Glass* (the

sequel to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*), providing a cross-cultural context from that era that is still familiar to today's audiences. Thus, in a "play on play on play," Folwell steps into two roles simultaneously—those of the author, like Carroll, and the protagonist, like Alice. A quotation from the book offers insights into the orientation of Folwell's exhibition: "Why, it's a Looking-glass book, of course! And if I hold it up to a glass, the words will all go the right way again."[36] Folwell applies this methodology in many aspects in her curation of this exhibition.

One instance of this approach allows Folwell's pottery to bridge the time period of the TSA paintings with the current moment of the exhibition. To this end, the majority of the TSA paintings displayed include portraits, landscapes, and still lifes that do not feature pottery, despite its strong presence in many of Couse and the group's works. Furthermore, Folwell's vessels assume the role held by Native women potters during the early tourism era, thereby building upon their legacy of leadership in artistic and display practices. Folwell's exhibition contributes to the ongoing kin-space-time constellation within both the specific locale and cross-cultural relationality of Taos. Her foregrounding of her vessels places a Native interpretation of Taos's history at the center of a conversation with the TSA paintings to connect the early tourism era with present-day history in the making. As a clay artist from Santa Clara Pueblo, Folwell holds multigenerational connections to Taos, her current home, through her grandmother and parents. Her *Taos Light* series offers a foundation for and homage to her very existence, as well as to the family legacy of her father painting imagery of Taos Pueblo and her mother making pottery with social commentary narratives. These familial traditions merge the legacies of Pueblo clay artists with those of the TSA painters—with Folwell's *Taos Light* series and *Through the Looking Glass* exhibition embodying the next generation.

With this in mind, Folwell's curation also offers viewers an opportunity to consider women's and men's roles as complementary in Pueblo communities. She does this by bringing together representations of women's work and accomplishments, like baking bread and producing pottery, and men's responsibilities and achievements, like serving as religious leaders and engaging in a successful hunt. Both Pueblo women and men worked as models for the TSA to support their families in the new cash economy.

Both women's and men's activities contributed to the continuance of Pueblo communities of the period. Both Folwell's and the TSA's artworks underscore the Pueblo belief that Mother Earth supports all life. In a Pueblo worldview, Mother Earth does this through the movement of the wind and water, the gift of clay that fuels the life cycle of adobe homes, animals and plants of the land and streams, and the energy of the people that becomes clouds upon their passing.[37]

The Harwood Museum of Art, the site of the exhibition, is an adobe building complex in the Pueblo Revival style. It holds significance as the first space in Taos where local artists displayed their work for both local and international audiences, beginning around 1924.[38] These have included emerging and established artists. The Harwood has showcased paintings by members of the TSA, figurative wood carvings by Patrociño Barela, and collections of Hispanic textiles and retablos (devotional paintings on wood panels), as well as Native-made artworks such as pottery.[39] At the time of this writing, the museum's mission reads as follows: "The Harwood Museum of Art celebrates Taos' artistic legacy, cultivates current connections through art, and inspires a creative future."[40] The museum features permanent galleries devoted to the TSA, Taos modernist artists of the mid-twentieth century, Hispanic artists of the region, and contemporary artists from a variety of cultures. It is worth noting that Folwell's exhibition was presented in the TSA area that is named the Dorothy and Jack Brandenburg Gallery after the daughter and son-in-law of TSA member Oscar Berninghaus and his wife, Emelia.[41]

The museum began as the Harwood Foundation in 1923, established by Elizabeth "Lucy" Harwood, whose late husband, Burt Harwood, was a painter of Southwest portraits and scenes but was not granted membership into the TSA. The Pueblo-style complex was formerly the Harwoods' home, which they had renovated to run on its own electrical generator—the first residence in Taos to do so.[42] The foundation served as the town's only library, with Lucy as community librarian, and the educational exchange in this space grounds its history as a place of international dialogue and learning.[43] This coincided with the international reach of the TSA's exhibition circuit, which brought artists and visitors to the area.[44] In 1935 the Harwood Foundation became part of the University of New Mexico, a status it continues to hold today, and it ceased operating

as a library in the early 1980s.[45] The museum, which has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1976, underwent significant renovations and expansions in 1937 and again in 1997.[46]

Shown in local and international exhibitionary complexes from approximately 1915 to 1927, the TSA's paintings presented imagery of Taos Pueblo—the area's original inhabitants—that portrayed them as an artistic people in order to invoke empathy from viewers. Depictions of the people of Taos Pueblo and their dances, arts, music, and adobe dwellings in the TSA paintings and ATSF calendars, which reached both elite and mass audiences, transformed these audiences into visitors who sought out this locale across long distances. The timing of these works holds significance, as 1915 marked nine years since President Theodore Roosevelt seized the Taos Pueblo people's sacred site, Blue Lake, and placed it under the jurisdiction of the United States Forest Service, specifically the Taos Forest Reserve and the Carson National Forest.[47] The area comprised thirty thousand acres, and under federal regulations, the Taos Pueblo community could not freely engage in their religious practices at Blue Lake, with the exception of three days each August with advance notice.[48] In the early twentieth century, the federal government opened the land to ranchers for cattle and sheep grazing by permit as well as for recreational purposes, including fishing and camping.[49] After sixty-four years of federal litigation, President Richard Nixon signed the Harris-Griffin Bill, which returned the stewardship of Blue Lake and the surrounding lands to Taos Pueblo.[50] The Harwood Museum of Art holds the Taos Pueblo community's historical documents of this struggle in an archive that can be accessed only by the Pueblo's permission.

This site-specific history adds a subtext to *Through the Looking Glass*. Folwell draws upon the complexity of the interdependence of the ongoing cross-cultural relations of Taos in her *Taos Light* series. Building upon a pattern of renewal, she prompts viewers in a twenty-first century context to consider the long-term effects of the early tourism era and its contemporary relevance particular to Taos. To do this, she paired more than nine of her *Taos Light* vessels, many on loan from private collectors, with nineteen paintings by the TSA, several of which were on loan from northern New Mexico institutions.[51] These included the Couse-Sharp Historic Site, the Taos Art Museum at Fechin House, and the New Mexico Museum of Art.

The exhibition also included a bronze sculpture by Ed Smida titled *The Goose Hunter* (2016). Smida, an Anglo artist based in northern New Mexico, portrayed in this work a Native man using a walking stick and carrying a bird on his back. The man is in the process of journeying home. Smida's sculpture is based on Couse's painting *The White Goose* (1911). Through a variety of loans and associations, the exhibition emerged from many layers of collaboration and cross-cultural dialogue.

On a backdrop of walls painted green, with pine vigas above and wooden floors below, *Through the Looking Glass* conveyed a more mature moment in Folwell's "play on play on play" strategy in her *Taos Light* body of work, building on its beginnings in *The Artist*. The exhibition hinged on stories of place retold through Folwell's painted narratives on clay vessels. Folwell achieved this retelling through reinterpretation by appropriating and subsequently reworking a group of TSA compositions. She recontextualized these paintings as a visual device through a changed perspective from her position as a Santa Clara Pueblo pottery artist. In this process, she created reflections on a specific moment in time brought together in the Brandenburg Gallery at the Harwood Museum of Art to intermesh a mirror of the past with a mirror from the present.

In *Through the Looking Glass*, Folwell situated the gallery as a stage of mirrors, in which the TSA's Anglo paintings of Pueblo life and her portrayals of Pueblo life on painted clay vessels anchored multiple perspectives. As a female Pueblo artist and the exhibition's curator, Folwell conjoined these cross-cultural narratives to shape the gallery as a space of many mirrors that invited viewers to participate in a carousel of visual negotiation. She also strategically included an artwork that references her Native name and functions as an origin story and self-portrait at once.

This vessel is named *Blue Mountain* (2019; fig. 5). It is a shallow bowl with a dark rim surrounding an adobe-colored interior scene of a bear in a desert landscape. It conveys a culture hero story of a bear leading the Santa Clara Pueblo people to water, offering a continued source of nourishment. Sikyatki-style designs, reminiscent of Nampeyo's work, surround the vignette of the bear. Placed between two of W. Herbert "Buck" Dunton's paintings, *Portrait of John Reyna* (n.d.) at left and *Ginger* (ca. 1932) at right (see fig. 6), *Blue Mountain* situates Folwell as the narrator of the exhibition's series

Fig. 5. Susan Folwell. *Blue Mountain*, 2019. Santa Clara Pueblo clay, slips, acrylic paint, wood stain, India ink. The Harwood Museum of Art, Taos, New Mexico. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Michelle Lanteri.

of visual exchanges. Reyna, representing a man from Taos Pueblo, and Ginger, portrayed by an Anglo model, suggest the interwoven dialogues between cultures in Taos. This juxtaposition even alludes to Folwell's bicultural heritage and her intercultural marriage. The depth of her "play on play on play" comes through at both personal and community levels while speaking to parallel dynamics taking place on a global stage.

This strategy enacts a gesture of reciprocity, or process of giving and receiving in equal value. As a "play on play on play," Folwell's curation allows her to marry the TSA imagery of Pueblo people and their arts with her retelling of this imagery as a Pueblo female artist and curator. In doing so, she carries on Native women artists' leadership in northern New Mexico. As I discuss below, several pairings reveal the centrality of mentorship and education, local and international reach, interdisciplinary forms, and place-specific interactions as the ongoing manifestations of this

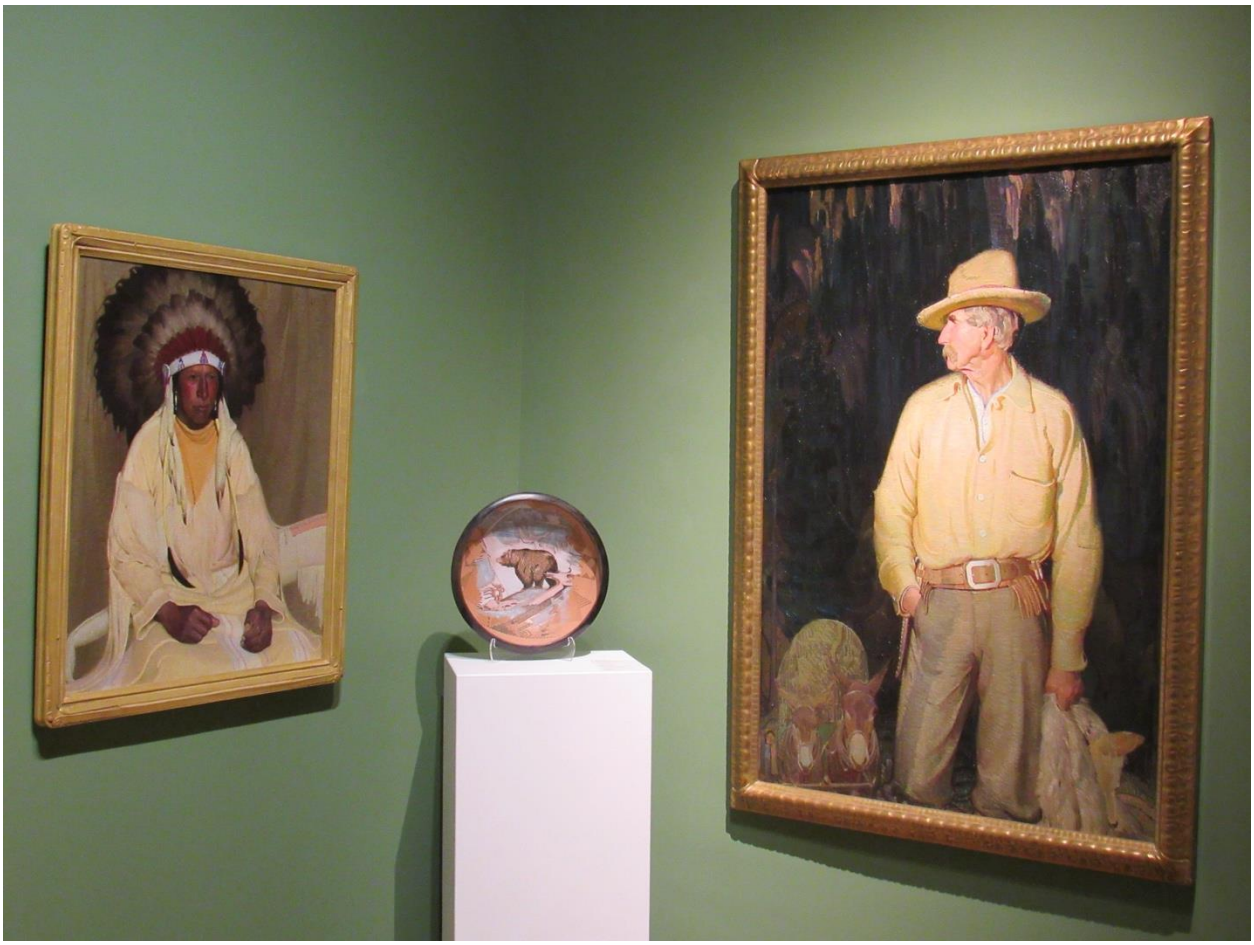

Fig. 6. Installation view of *Susan Folwell: Through the Looking Glass*, showing Susan Folwell's *Blue Mountain* (2019) at center; W. Herbert "Buck" Dunton's *Portrait of John Reyna* (n.d., oil on canvas, collection of the Taos Art Museum at Fechin House) at left; and W. Herbert "Buck" Dunton's *Ginger* (ca. 1932, oil on canvas, collection of the Harwood Museum of Art) at right. Photo: Michelle Lanteri.

feminine legacy rooted in collaboration.

Adding another layer of meaning to its form, Folwell paired *The Artist* (figs. 1–2) with *The Cacique* (1932; fig. 7). At the time of the exhibition, this was the only painting by E. I. Couse in the Harwood Museum of Art's collection. It filled an important role institutionally as a tether between the museum and an artist who was instrumental in promoting Taos to national and international audiences.[52] Folwell's pairing of *The Artist* and *The Cacique* also carries another significance. This is the only TSA painting included in the exhibition that features pottery in its composition, serving as a testament to Native women and their leadership in arts practices in northern New Mexico. By placing vessels adjacent to the cacique who overlooks Taos Pueblo, this painting blends both

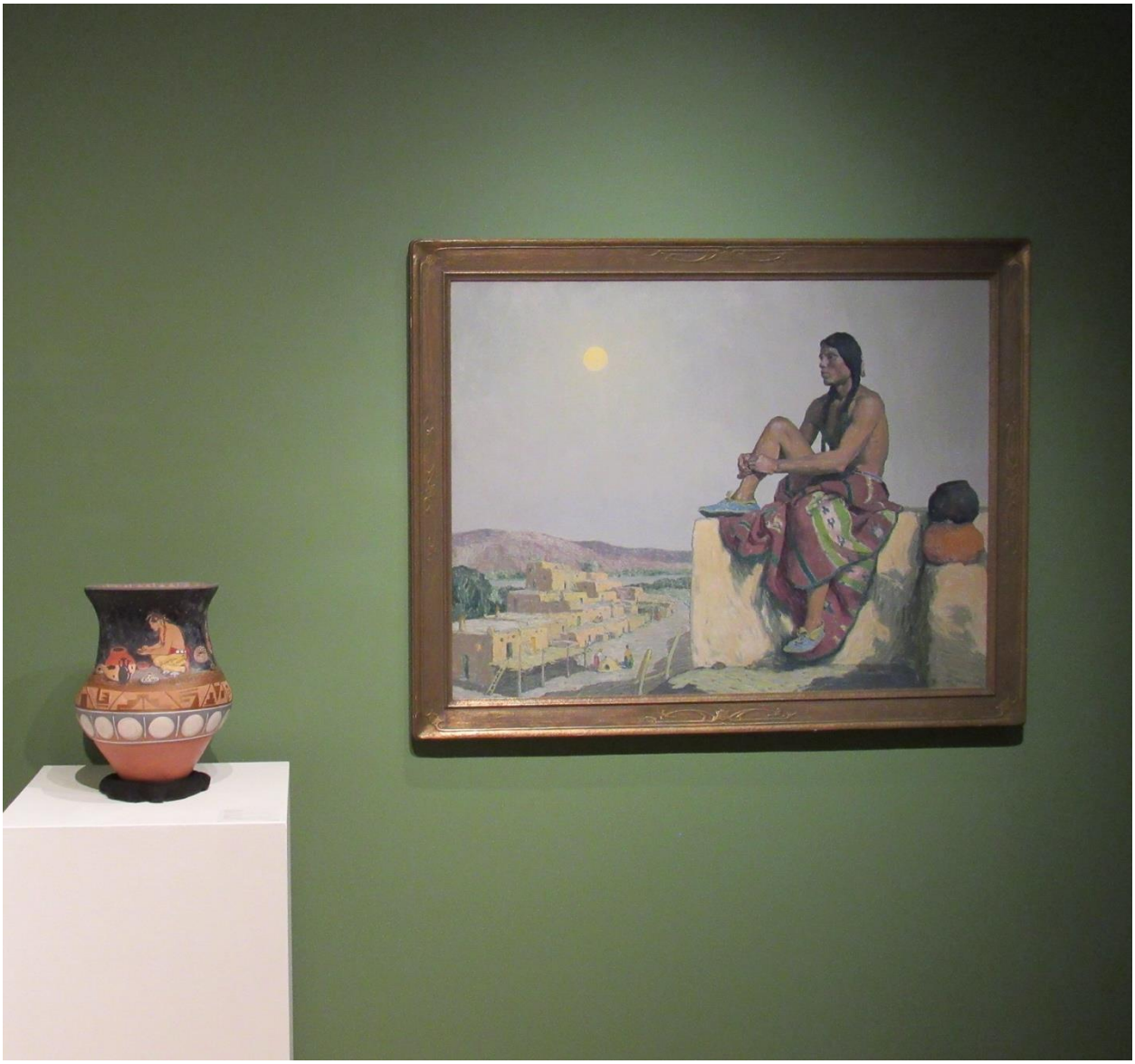

Fig. 7. Installation view of *Susan Folwell: Through the Looking Glass*, showing Susan Folwell's *The Artist* (2016) at left and E. I. Couse's *The Cacique* (1932, oil on canvas, collection of the Harwood Museum of Art) at right. Photo: Michelle Lanteri.

female and male presence to create balance in terms of leadership, gender, and responsibilities within the community. Seated on a Pueblo house rooftop, the cacique is the largest and uppermost figure in the painting. His position suggests a connection to his Pueblo ancestors, whose energy embodies the clouds overhead. The work also incorporates another layer of meaning with the return of Blue Lake and its surrounding lands to Taos Pueblo.

As a material provided by Mother Earth, the clay of the vessels shown creates feminine associations between the Pueblo architecture and the adjacent horno, or outdoor clay oven, depicted at left in *The Cacique*. At this hearth, a woman is shown baking bread while another figure and two children stand nearby. Depictions of community sustenance like this provide visual examples of the collaboration that serves as a supportive foundation for the cacique to act as one of Taos Pueblo's primary leaders. Folwell's narrative in *The Artist* carries forward this idea of a foundation as well, with the narrative band showing the clay artworks of her Pueblo contemporaries supported by the pottery vessels of Native female ceramicists of earlier generations, referencing familial and maternal contexts. The large pictorial band of *The Artist* functions similarly to the compositional space of the painting as a window into a constructed world that evokes intergenerational relationships grounding the continuance of the Pueblos. As her own contribution to these relations, Folwell's interdisciplinary practice of using clay as a canvas emerges as a portal between time periods in the northern New Mexico area.

The elements of this painting all allude to themes of local and international reach. The clay vessels suggest the ancestral practice of pottery making at the Pueblos, which began in domestic and trade contexts and then expanded to an art and commerce function during the early tourism period. The Pueblo architecture, providing dwellings and protection for the people, symbolizes the combined support of Mother Earth and the community's women in nurturing these structures. Historically, women plastered the adobe walls, a practice that continues today but now includes men, similar to the way pottery making spans gender while also signifying Native women's legacies and leadership.[53]

The horno builds on this context while illustrating the Pueblo peoples' integration of this Spanish technology of bricks and mortar covered with adobe. Women continue to use this beehive-shaped oven to bake bread for the community, particularly during annual feast days, when the Pueblos open their villages to the public to partake in a meal that usually includes oven bread. Taken together, the pottery, architecture, and horno in *The Cacique* all visually reference Native women's leadership in arts and community building in northern New Mexico. This imagery traveled internationally through photography and paintings that promoted Southwest

tourism in exhibitions, calendars, and publications. The pairing of *The Artist* and *The Cacique* underscores the interdependence of the creative production of pottery making and community leadership, both directly linked to the lands of northern New Mexico.

Another pairing further explores the connections between Native women's mentorship and education, local and international reach, interdisciplinary forms, and place-specific interactions within the northern New Mexico area. Folwell's *Baking Bread* (2018; figs. 8–9) depicts four vignettes of Pueblo women baking bread in hornos. Adjacent to this artwork

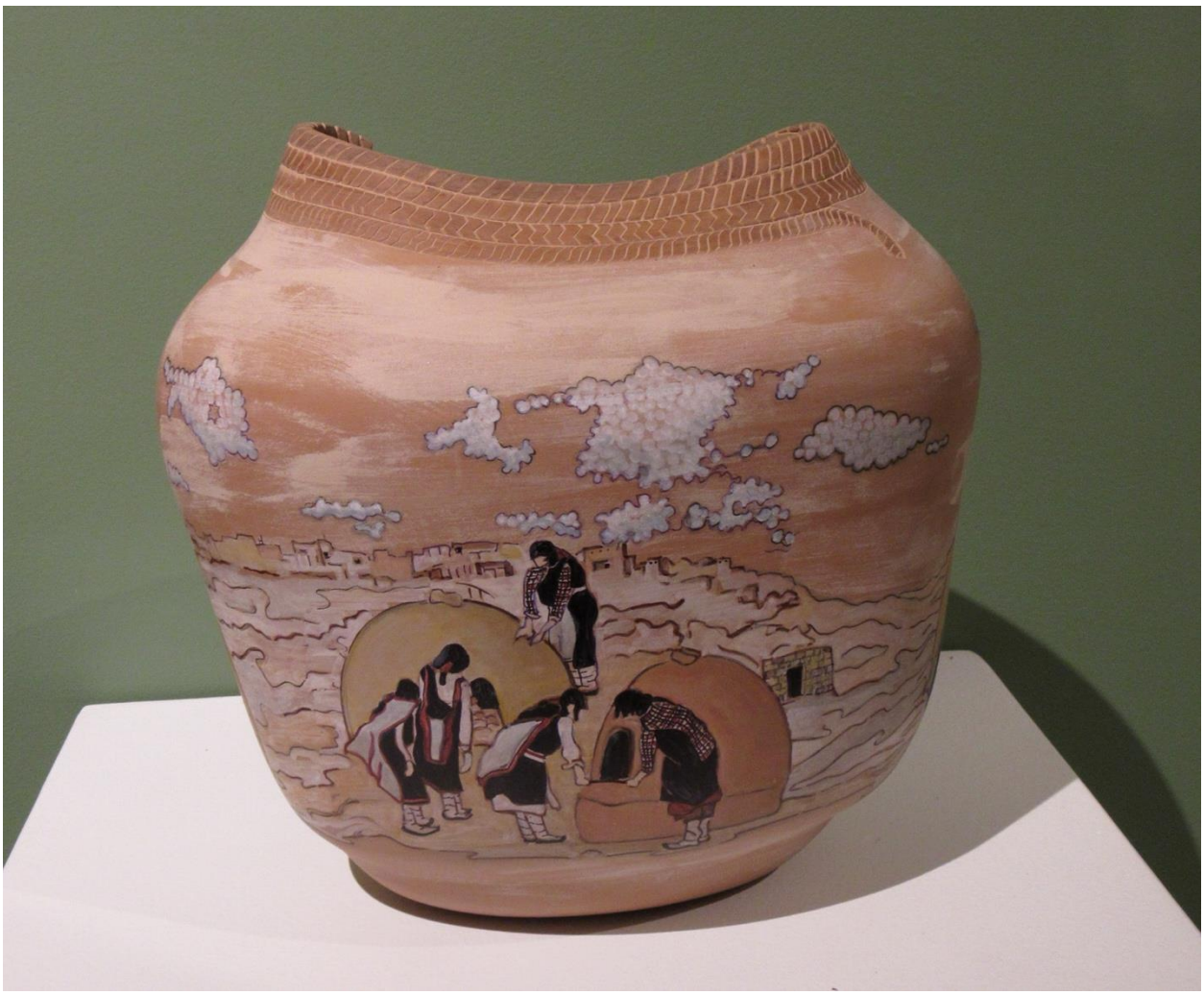

Fig. 8. Susan Folwell. *Baking Bread*, 2018. Santa Clara Pueblo clay, acrylic paint, wood stain, India ink. Private collection. Photo: Michelle Lanteri.

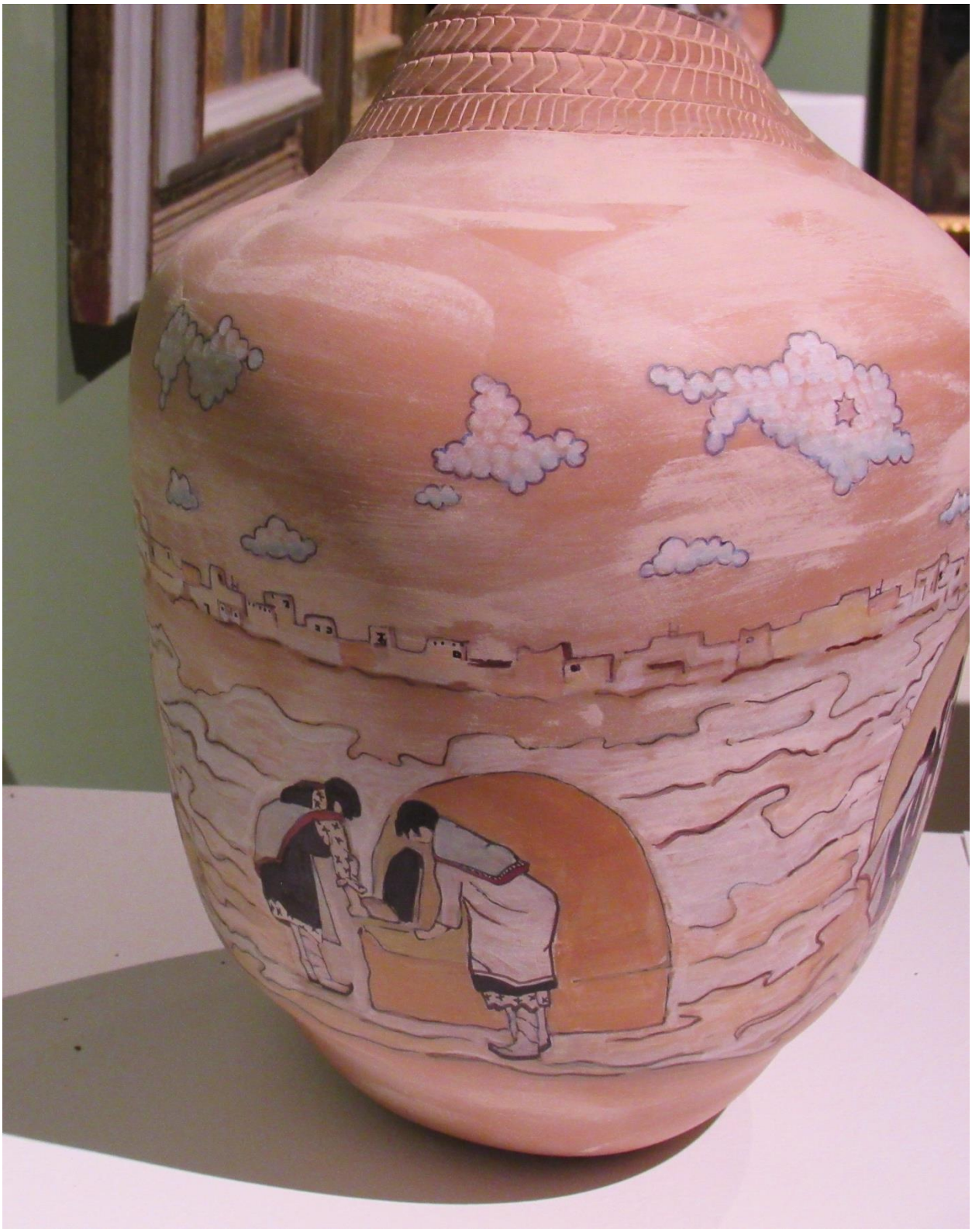

Fig. 9. Susan Folwell. *Baking Bread* (detail), 2018. Santa Clara Pueblo clay, acrylic paint, wood stain, India ink. Private collection. Photo: Michelle Lanteri.

Winter in New Mexico (ca. 1930; see fig. 10) by Walter Ufer depicts two Pueblo women walking through a mountain pass. Both artworks show women supporting women within Pueblo communities while offering a social commentary on popular imagery marketed as a kind of Southwest mythology to tourists during the early twentieth century. Matthew J. Martinez (Ohkay Owingeh) and Patricia C. Albers have contributed an insightful analysis of these categories of images within the scope of twentieth-century photography. They write:

> The mythical "look" of the Pueblo Southwest was sustained by a narrow range of pictorial subjects and styles, endlessly replicated in the work of different photographers. One apt example is the image of women baking bread in the beehive-shaped ovens the northern Pueblos call a *horno* [Spanish] or *panteh* [Tewa]. Whether pictures of this activity come from Isleta and Cochiti in 1910 or Taos and Tesuque in 1940, they follow nearly identical stylistic conventions. All of them depict their subjects wearing a traditional *manta* [dress] and shawl. Staged or taken from "real life," this sort of stock image represents a classical embodiment of the prelapsarian [a kind of Eden-like] imagining of the Southwest.[54]

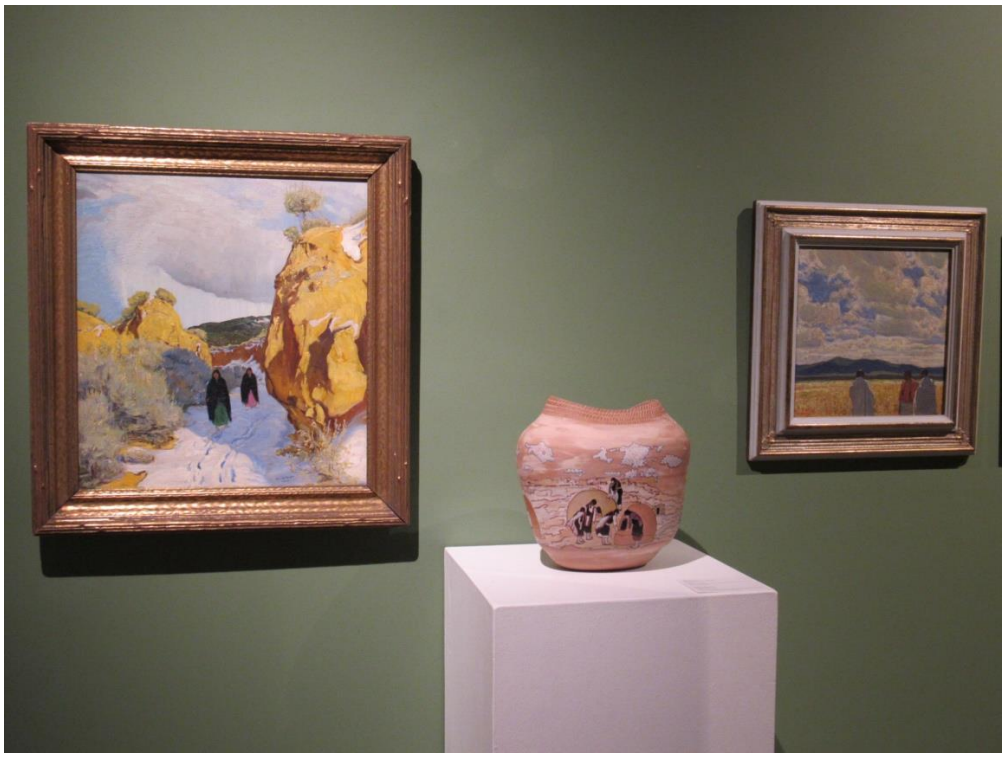

Fig. 10. Installation view of *Susan Folwell: Through the Looking Glass*, showing Walter Ufer's *Winter in New Mexico* (ca. 1930, oil on canvas, collection of the Harwood Museum of Art) at left; Susan Folwell's *Baking Bread* (2018) at center, and E. Martin Hennings's *Discussing the Crops* (ca. 1930, oil on board, collection of the Harwood Museum of Art) at right. Photo: Michelle Lanteri.

In her reproduction of an iconic image of Pueblo women baking bread, Folwell shifts the perspective from that of an outsider looking in to one that looks both outward and inward. Through this multiplicity of stances, Folwell's vessel offers a reinterpretation of Ufer's painting, *The Bakers* (1917), a work not on view. This strategy reflects her lived experience and that of her ancestors, emphasizing their collaborative participation in baking bread and making both pottery and staged imagery.

A connection to complementary gender roles is also revealed in a painting by E. Martin Hennings that bookended *Baking Bread* in the exhibition. At the vessel's right, Hennings's *Discussing the Crops* (ca. 1930; see fig. 10) depicts three Pueblo men standing together in a field with clouds overhead and mountains in the background. The painting symbolizes the men's responsibility for a healthy growing season, the prayers they put forth to appeal for this sustenance, and the wheat that the women winnow to make bread.

In reflecting on her *Baking Bread* vessel, Folwell discussed Ufer's painting style as an impetus for this piece portraying Pueblo community life. She stated:

> What I love about the *Baking Bread* piece is I've always thought of Walter Ufer as . . . no matter what his subject is, there always just seems to be this momentum. You can almost feel the wind. His clouds are very specific to his sky, very specific, even though he might be doing a portrait of farmhands. You're still feeling the atmosphere that they're in. I'm really proud of the *Baking Bread* piece because I feel like there's movement . . . you can just kind of feel the momentum. Not only just the women working, but it's just kind of in everything else. I think there's an atmosphere that's around it.[55]

Folwell's pairing of *Baking Bread* with *Winter in New Mexico* creates a relationship of absence, presence, reproduction, and allusion.

Baking Bread is a terracotta-color vessel with an oval base depicting five Pueblo women in the process of baking bread at two hornos, with the same scene shown in mirror image on the two wider sides of the vessel (see fig. 8). In the background, Pueblo architecture holds the waistline of the vessel while white clouds mark the shoulder area. The narrower sides each show a pair of women removing baked bread from the horno (see fig. 9). The overall shape of the vessel reads similarly to the beehive form of the oven, save for the four bands of rope-like texture Folwell placed at the vessel's neck. Lighter washes of terracotta brushed in wide strokes in the sky portion of the landscape

give an atmospheric effect. Like all of Folwell's *Taos Light* vessels, *Baking Bread* bears a matte finish.

Folwell reflected on the form of the vessel:

> I also feel like the rope, the shape, the body of the piece is good and solid, but the rope kind of lends to visually understanding that the rope is just spinning around the pot. I think that helps with the movement of it. That [the rope] was not my choice. You know the shape of the piece started to make itself. It was another one of those . . . *What is this? How do I finish it? It's getting interesting.* It's very oval. It's got these shoulders but it doesn't. When you look at the top of the piece, it's very oval. It's almost vaginal in a way . . . *How do I finish that? What is that looking like?* So, I think that's why I ended up just making a long coil . . . my very last coil . . . then just accenting the idea of it still just being a coil and breaking it off into a rope, or a texture like rope.[56]

Folwell's sentiments echo those of her grandmother, Rose Naranjo, who described the importance of being "one with the clay," since "the clay says, 'I want to be this, not what you want me to be.'"[57] Folwell's vessel form evokes associations with an earlier generation of Pueblo women potters. The rope alludes to the way that Native women strung this material through the lugs of large pottery canteens that they made to carry water to their homes at the Pueblos and at the Hopi-Tewa village of Hano. The rope texture, together with the narrative scene of baking bread, attests to Native women's leadership in acts of community care through the use of clay in both hornos and pottery making, as well as in art for sale to foreign visitors since the early tourism era.

In Ufer's *The Bakers*, the composition similarly centers on the women and their work of baking bread, though it focuses more tightly on this scene with a framing that ends on either side of the pair of hornos. In contrast, Folwell's reinterpretation opens the scene to a much larger landscape and roots it locally. Folwell portrays four groups of women baking bread to suggest the passing on of intergenerational knowledge. However, as Ufer's painting was not on view in the exhibition, these associations could only be made from knowledge and research beyond the display. Instead, audiences of *Through the Looking Glass* created new associations between Folwell's version of *Baking Bread* and Ufer's *Winter in New Mexico*. This offered a broader perspective for those familiar with Ufer's oeuvre, as one can draw relationships between his different compositions. In *Winter in New Mexico*, two Pueblo women wearing dresses

and long shawls over their heads walk through a mountain pass, one in front of the other. Here, Ufer offers viewers a large sky that is filled with white folding clouds, providing an upper frame to the rock buttes on the other side of the women. Ufer also placed tracks in the snow ahead of the women, communicating a sense of legacy that these women follow, as their forebears have done and descendants will do.

Across from these artworks, Folwell devoted an entire wall to full-length portraits of Native women of the Southwest region (see fig. 11). This curatorial strategy calls attention to the fact that the TSA also collaborated with female models, although the group's portraits and narrative scenes of Native men are more widely circulated. Here, a group of five artworks visualized the multiple roles of Pueblo women. Two portraits by Folwell and three by Victor Higgins offered audiences an opportunity to consider Pueblo women as both pottery makers and portrait sitters at once. These portraits of Native women, blending representation with abstraction, evoke complex narratives in the collective grouping of Anglo and Pueblo perspectives on their subjects. Two pairings within this display emphasize the centrality of feminine leadership in Southwest Native communities, and the multiple forms it can take.

Higgins's *Sleeping Model* (n.d.) (see fig. 12) portrays a Native woman seated in a chair, wearing a floral-patterned dress in orange and white, a red cape, and white moccasins with matching leggings wrapped around her calves. Her hair is pulled back and gathered at the base of her neck, and her head tilts downward, while her hands rest in her lap. She is surrounded by an adobe-colored wall and ground. Her legs are crossed, and her feet rest on a striped rectangular rug. Near the right edge of the composition, a dark shadow surrounds the red cape, suggesting a light source shining diagonally from the opposite side. Another quotation from Carroll's novel offers insights into both Higgins's depiction of the model and Folwell's retelling of this portrait: "'So I wasn't dreaming, after all,' [Alice] said to herself, 'unless—unless we're all part of the same dream.'"[58]

Higgins's painting focuses its attention on the adobe-colored wall and ground that supports the woman. This allusion to adobe architecture, coupled with her moccasins, floral dress, and hairstyle, identifies her as Pueblo. The painting, like the works of both Folwell and the TSA, conveys the strength

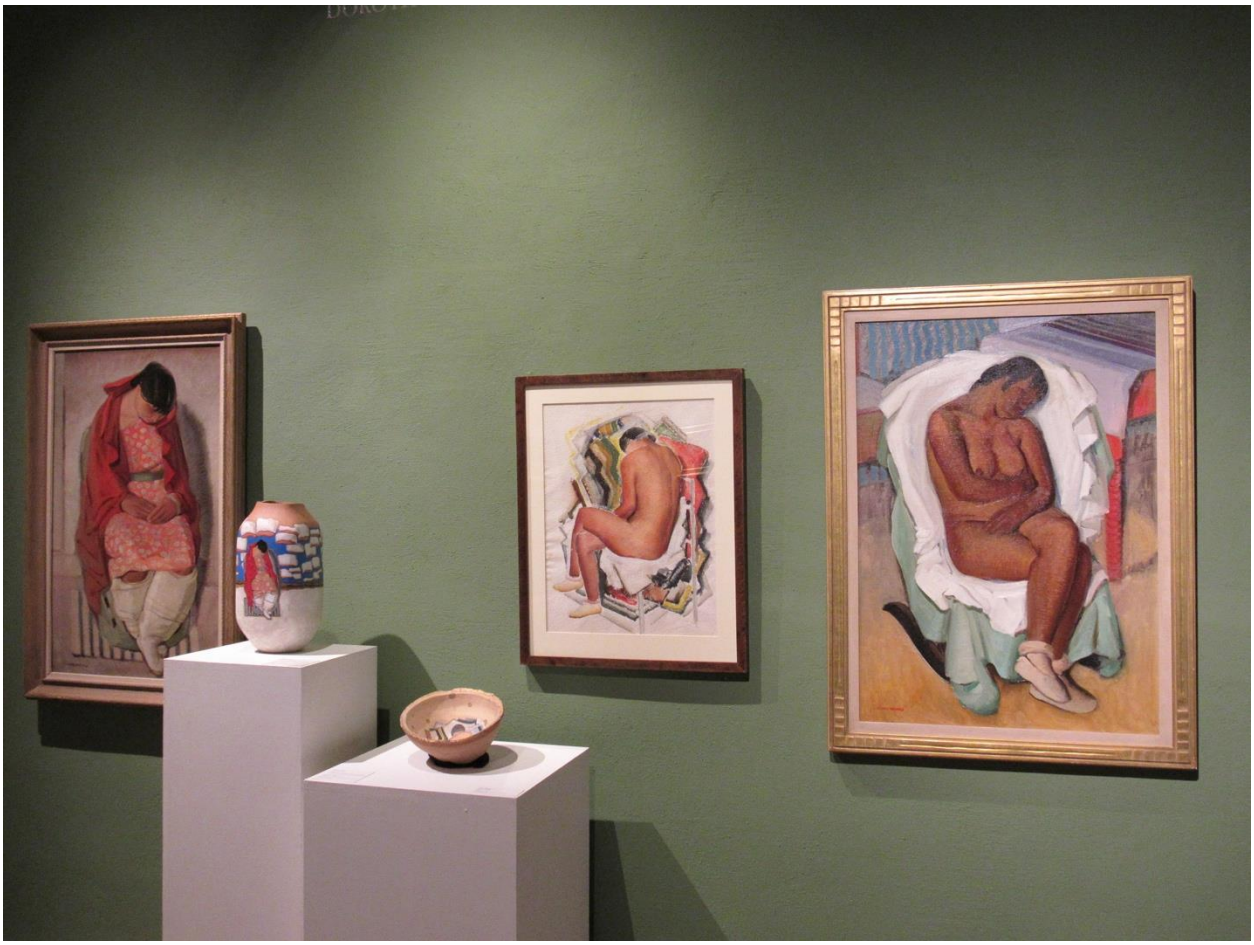

Fig. 11. Installation view of *Susan Folwell: Through the Looking Glass*. Works, from left to right: Victor Higgins, *Sleeping Model* (n.d., oil on canvas, collection of the New Mexico Museum of Art); Susan Folwell, *Sleeping Model* (2018; Santa Clara Pueblo clay, acrylic paint, wood stain, India ink; private collection); Susan Folwell, *Higgins "Open Bowl"* (2017; Santa Clara Pueblo clay, slips, acrylic paint, wood stain, India ink; private collection); Victor Higgins, *Nude Study* (n.d., watercolor on paper, collection of the New Mexico Museum of Art); Victor Higgins, *Indian Nude* (n.d., oil on canvas, collection of the Taos Art Museum at Fechin House). Photo: Michelle Lanteri.

of Native women through the combination of adobe—an embodiment of Mother Earth—and the female model shown at work, even while she is asleep. Folwell's reinterpretation of this narrative portrait transposes the figure from Higgins's ground plane to an abstract skyscape (see figs. 12–13). On this clay vessel, Folwell illustrates Pueblo worldviews of cyclical life through the filter of Higgins's composition. She replaces the striped rug with a sewer grate, reflecting the changes in technology at the Pueblos. Depicted in the same pose as in the Higgins painting, the female figure suggests a woman of a later time than in the

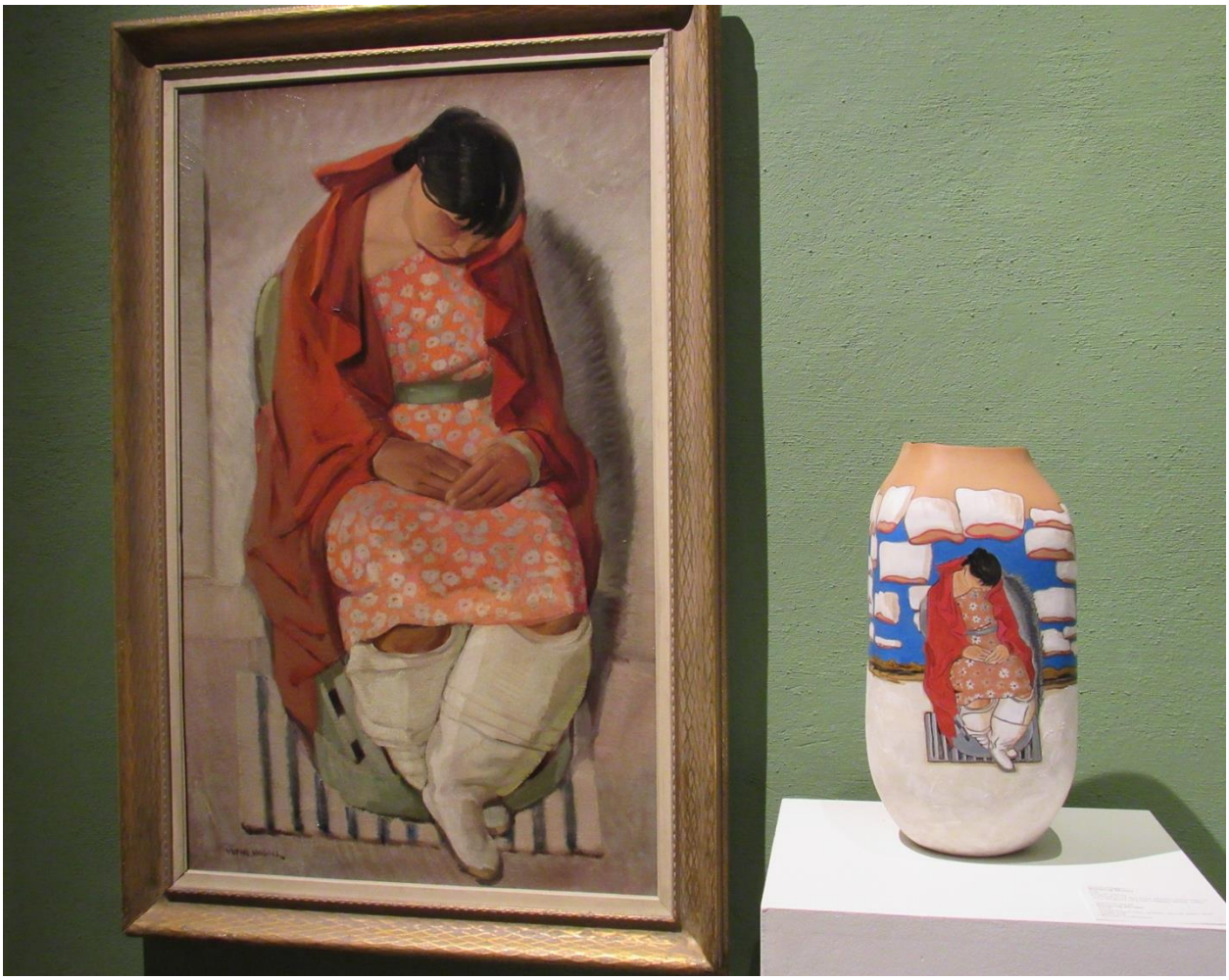

Fig. 12. Installation view of *Susan Folwell: Through the Looking Glass*, showing Victor Higgins's *Sleeping Model* (n.d.) at left and Susan Folwell's *Sleeping Model* (2018) at right. Photo: Michelle Lanteri.

earlier portrayal, creating an illustrated kin-space-time envelope between the two time periods.

Yet the two figures remain connected through the legacy of Pueblo values, and this connection holds visual form in the billowing clouds. These clouds suggest the presence of Pueblo ancestors and the life cycle of Po-wa-ha, the breath that gives life's expressions.[59] This spiraling movement, as a pattern of renewal, echoes through the coils of Folwell's vessel. In this creative expression, Folwell demonstrates Native women's leadership—a legacy intertwined with Mother Earth, whose clay body offers Pueblo people spaces of dwelling and pottery vessels that support life. At the top of Folwell's vessel, an adobe-colored rim visualizes the foundation that Mother Earth provides to Pueblo people. When considered in tandem, Higgins's painting and

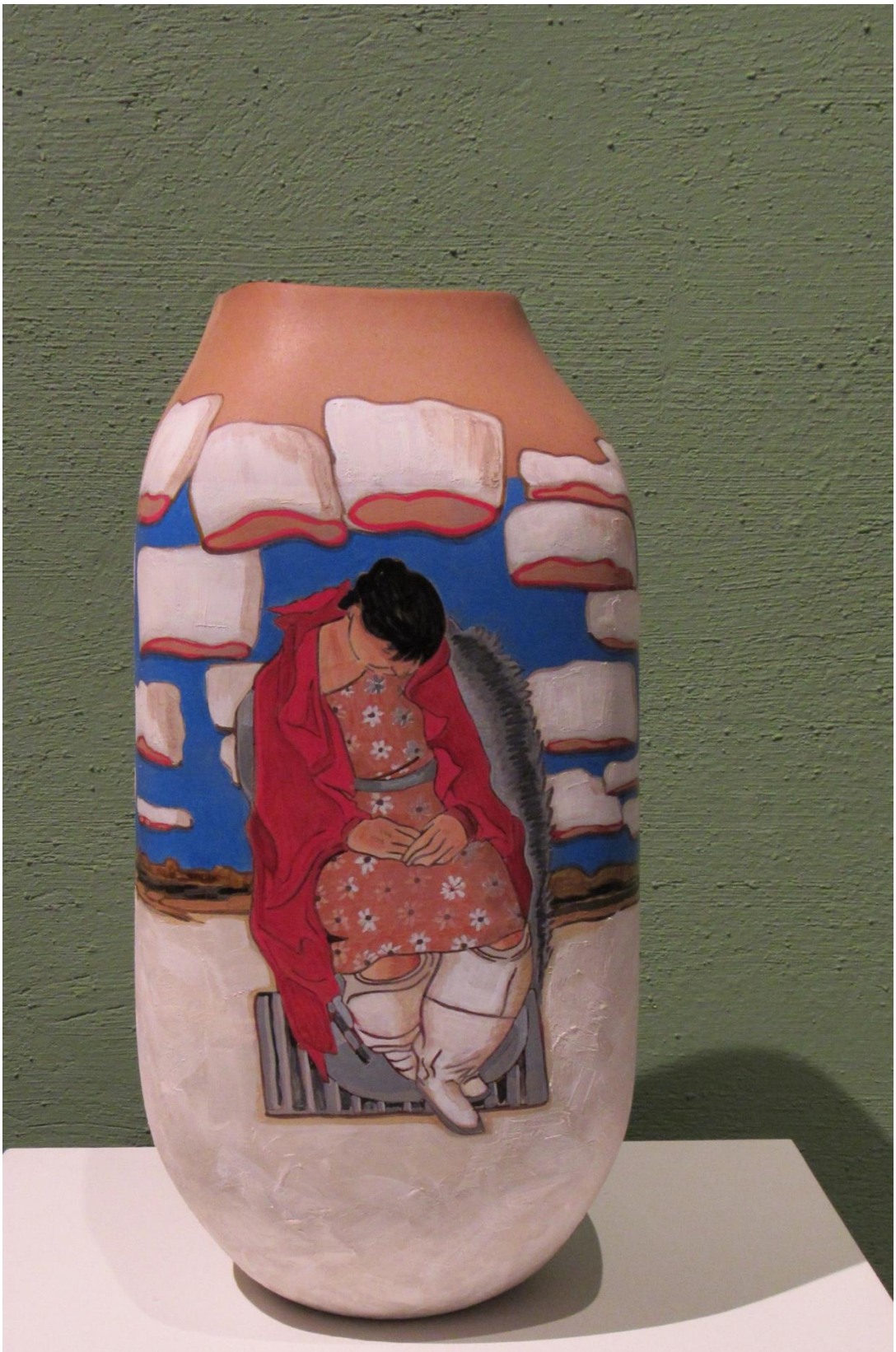

Fig. 13. Susan Folwell. *Sleeping Model*, 2018. Santa Clara Pueblo clay, acrylic paint, wood stain, India ink. Private collection. Photo: Michelle Lanteri.

Folwell's vessel convey the Pueblo worldview that all beings connect without separation and that the sacred locates itself in the everyday.[60]

These themes continue in the section of the wall to the right of this pairing. Here, Victor Higgins's *Nude Study* (n.d.) and his *Indian Nude* (n.d.) create a backdrop for Folwell's *Higgins "Open Bowl"* (2017) (see figs. 11, 14–15). When looking at these three works together, the concept of the sketch

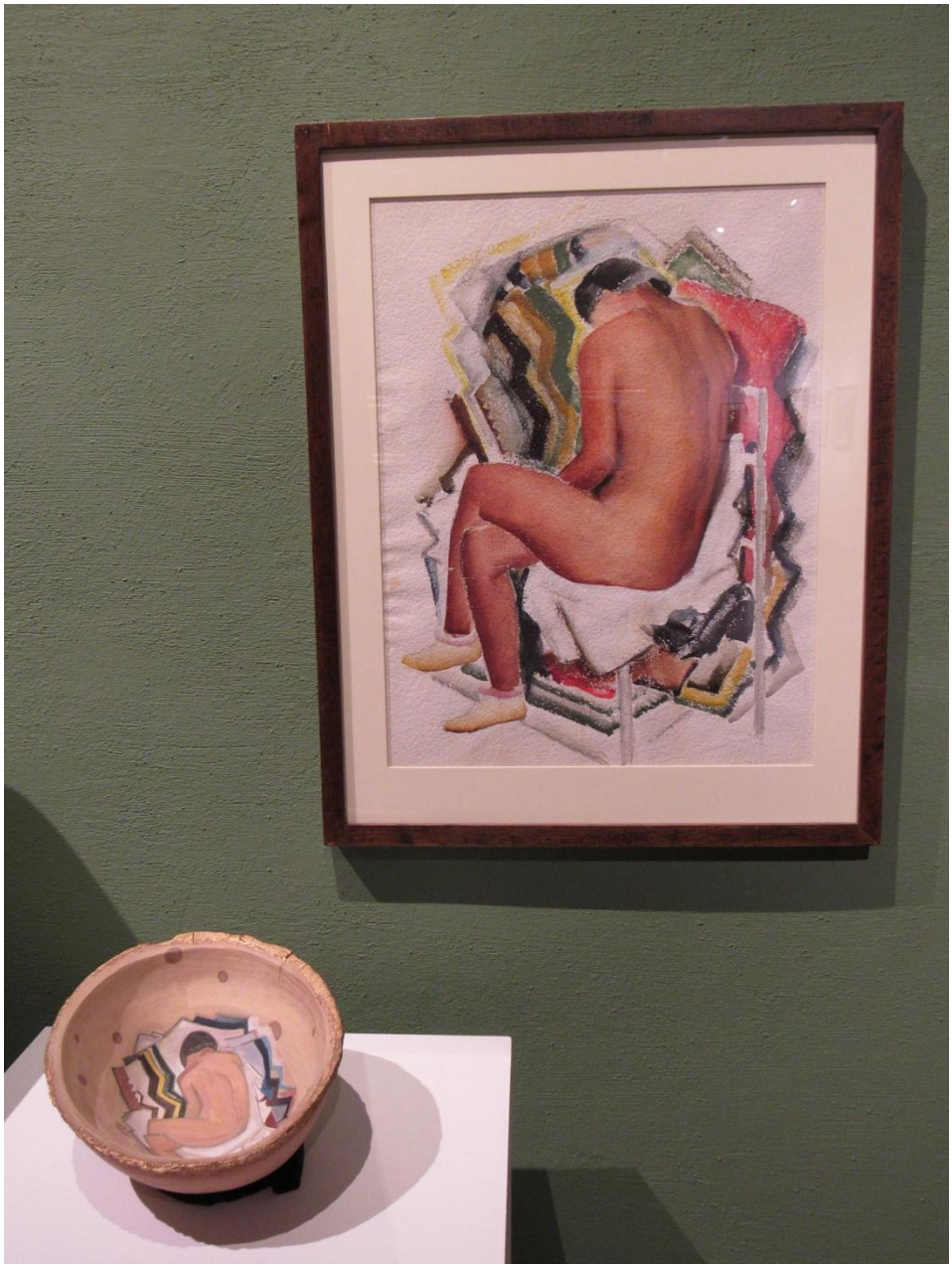

Fig. 14. Installation view of *Susan Folwell: Through the Looking Glass*, showing Susan Folwell's *Higgins "Open Bowl"* (2017) at left and Victor Higgins's *Nude Study* (n.d.) at right. Photo: Michelle Lanteri.

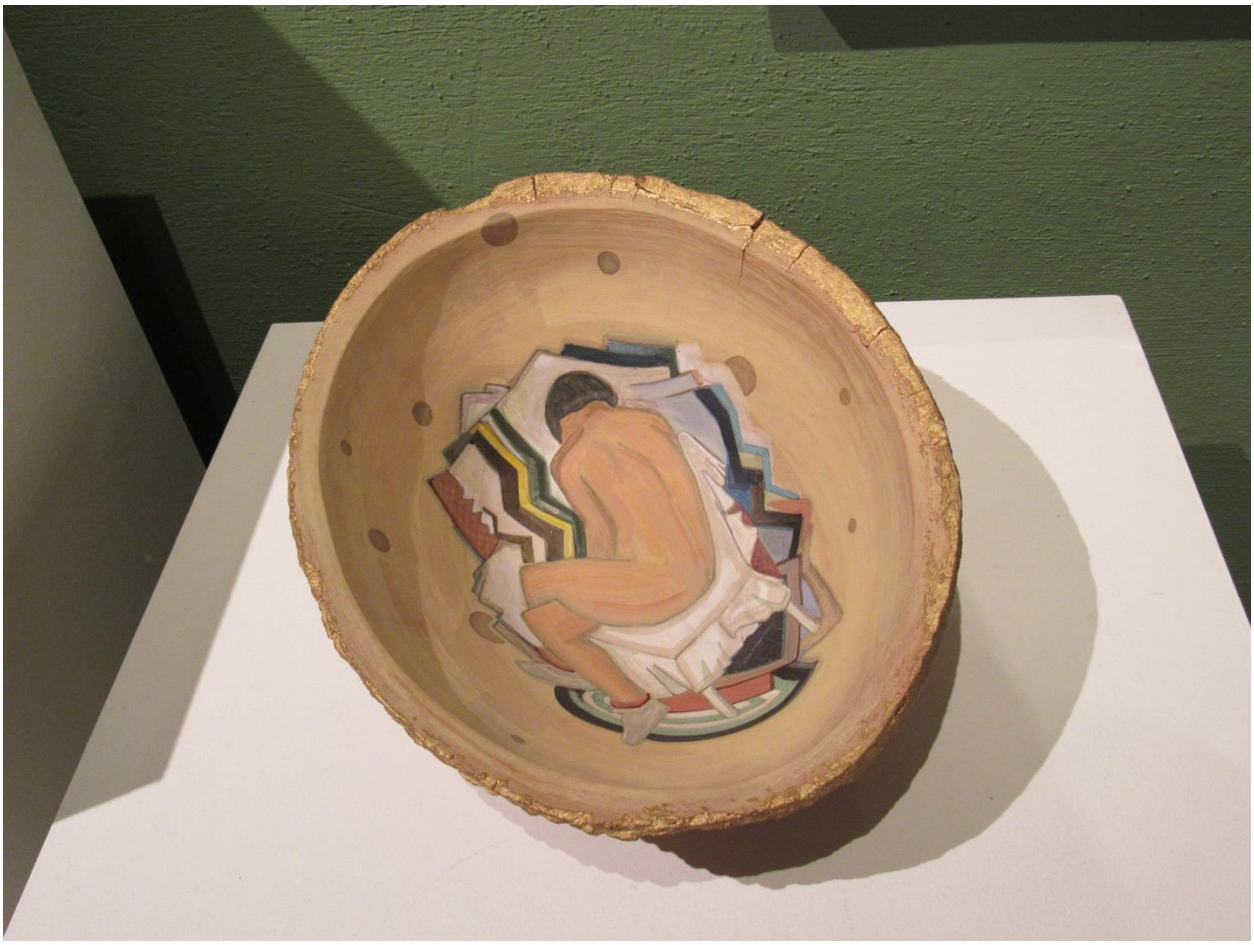

Fig. 15. Susan Folwell. *Higgins "Open Bowl,"* 2017. Santa Clara Pueblo clay, slips, acrylic paint, wood stain, India ink. Private Collection. Photo: Michelle Lanteri.

emerges as a key TSA painting practice, which adhered to European academic standards where preparatory studies served as studio references for final works. Folwell's "play on play on play" resignifies this practice by incorporating Mother Earth, in the form of a clay bowl, who both holds and supports the nude model whose back is to the viewer. Her composition echoes that of Higgins's *Nude Study* in its use of abstracted blankets as a backdrop to the woman while offering new insights into nude portraiture. On this topic, Nancy Marie Mithlo (Chiricahua Apache) writes, "Depictions of nudity in Indigenous creative endeavors do not simply mimic . . . but often work in ways that say something altogether different—sending a message of self-empowerment and resiliency."[61] In a visual demonstration of this concept, Folwell's orientation of her portrait of this Pueblo woman as encompassed by a round clay bowl directly references Tewa

worldviews. Specifically, that beings of the current world live through Po-wa-ha (or breath) in the middle place (or earth), with a clay bowl supporting from below and a wicker basket offering protection from above.[62]

The crackled edge of the cream-colored bowl is one of Folwell's signature stylistic elements, borrowed from her mother, Jody. Adding another layer to her mother's visual legacy, Folwell applied gold acrylic paint along this edge, alluding to various forms of value, including the sun and gold as a precious metal that the settlers of New Spain sought to both find and commodify in New Mexico. Herein lies another moment of Folwell's humor and "play on play on play": as the Spanish did not find gold there, the vessel reveals the greater value of Mother Earth, who offers the Pueblo people the precious value of life itself. The protection suggested by the model's body facing downward into the clay demonstrates the Pueblo understanding that people are both made of Mother Earth and supported by her in the cyclical process of life, taking form through her body and returning to her as clay. This cycle of becoming and returning recalls Pueblo creation stories of their arrival into the current world, or era, by emerging upward through the clay, or Mother Earth's body.[63]

Folwell's curated pairings of her own works with Higgins's reveals that they show many sides of a cross-cultural narrative. As a case in point, Higgins's *Indian Nude* (see fig. 11) offers audiences a frontal view of a female Pueblo model, as a counterpoint to the depiction of a subject from behind in his *Nude Study* and Folwell's *Higgins "Open Bowl."* In *Indian Nude*, the woman appears to be asleep, in a similar seated pose to that of *Sleeping Model*. Folwell's curation of this wall exemplified the exhibition's title, *Through the Looking Glass*, by leading audiences through multiple mirrors and the intersecting perspectives reflected in the works: hers as a Pueblo woman artist and Higgins's as an Anglo man and artist. By presenting viewers with these multiple mirrors, Folwell related the concept of the looking glass to traditions of illusionism in painting. As Yvonne Yiu writes, "The mirror can serve the painter as a tool."[64] In her turning of the mirror, Folwell as curator transforms the looking glass into a prism, refracting light in different directions in order to show both commonalities and cultural intersections at once.

Throughout *Through the Looking Glass*, Mother Earth, as seen in the clay and adobe, supports these acts of looking and cross-cultural

exchange in kin-space-time constellations—or embodiments of cultural continuums—in northern New Mexico. As the provider of clay, she maintains the time-immemorial foundation of the place and the people. In turn, Folwell's cyclical vessels, as kin-space-time envelopes, empower the futurity of Pueblo women through the patterns of renewal of pottery making practices and related exhibitions. Thus, Folwell conveys Native women's leadership in her *Taos Light* series by honoring women's roles in Pueblo communities as creative contributors in balance with the roles of Pueblo men. She bridges her personal history and connections to Taos Pueblo and Santa Clara Pueblo with the experiences of both the TSA and the Pueblo models who collaborated with them. By constructing a direct dialogue between her works and the TSA's, she offered glimpses of relatability to viewers who have become familiar with the TSA paintings over the decades.

In nurturing this tether to Pueblo community members of the early tourism era, Folwell builds upon Native women's leadership in the northern New Mexico exhibitionary complex as a kin-space-time constellation. Her pottery series *Taos Light* and its two related exhibitions, *Visionaries in Clay: Pueblo Pottery, Past and Present* and *Susan Folwell: Through the Looking Glass*, act as kin-space-time envelopes, calling for empathy from audiences. In her roles as an artist, narrator, and curator, Folwell demonstrates the prismatic quality of identity and the open-ended possibilities of holding multiple social positions at once—both of which have long been patterns of renewal among Pueblo women. She does this by strategically layering her "play on play on play" narratives and by anchoring her work in practices of mentorship and education, local and international reach, interdisciplinary forms, and place-specific interactions. To conclude this discussion, I (re)turn to Folwell's reflections upon fluidity in time and place:

> The TSA helped introduce Native culture, Native life. . . . It's a living legacy today . . . all of it has this third eye that kind of swirls around you, and it comes together for a reason that way. . . . Clay is a living thing. . . . It's a platform for what you need to say. It really doesn't have to strictly be beautiful. I think, particularly for Native females, and the world is changing quite a bit. . . . Native people will always be community people, but it's nice that you're seeing a lot more individual voice, and I think that's part of the feminism, part of the power. . . . You're just another fish in that stream, moving forward. . . . The only constant in the

world is change. . . . It's the movement and it's the fluidity. It's the liquidity of how we get through life.[65]

[1] Interview with the author, January 26, 2021.

[2] Ibid. Susan Folwell studied art in a post-graduate course at the Idyllwild Arts Academy in California, and she focused on photography and design at the College for Creative Studies in Detroit. Her work is in many museum collections, including the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art at the University of Oklahoma, the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art in Indianapolis, and the Minneapolis Institute of Art in Minnesota.

[3] See Roxanne Swentzell, "Flowering Tree Permaculture Institute—Patterns," Karl Duncan, uploaded October 19, 2010, YouTube video, 14:59, https://youtu.be/NGKQFbK-zd8.

[4] Laura Harjo, *Spiral to the Stars: Mvskoke Tools of Futurity* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2019), 28.

[5] Ibid., 30.

[6] Ibid., 28.

[7] Ibid., 30.

[8] Jolene Rickard, "Artist Essay: Frozen in the White Light," in *Watchful Eyes: Native American Women Artists*, ed. Anne Gully (Phoenix, AZ: The Heard Museum, 1994), 18.

[9] "Exhibitions: Visionaries in Clay: Pueblo Pottery, Past and Present," Couse-Sharp Historic Site, accessed May 17, 2021, https://couse-sharp.org/exhibitions/detail/100005.

[10] Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," *new formations* 4 (Spring 1988): 82.

[11] Tessie Naranjo, "Those Naranjo Women: Daughters of the Earth," in *Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists*, ed. Jill Ahlberg Yohe and Teri Greeves (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Institute of Art; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019), 76.

[12] Interview with the author, January 26, 2021. "Indian Market" references the annual Santa Fe Indian Market that takes place every August, usually in outdoor booths throughout downtown Santa Fe, New Mexico.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Adele Cohen, "Jody Folwell," in *The Art of Clay: Timeless Pottery of the Southwest,* ed. Lee M. Cohen (Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishers, 1993), 75.

[15] Ibid., 74.

[16] "Susan Folwell: Santa Clara Pueblo Potter," Medicine Man Gallery podcast, episode 117, uploaded September 9, 2020, YouTube video, 1:07:29, https://youtu.be/ga-kukEXqx4.

[17] Cohen, "Jody Folwell," 74.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Interview with the author, January 26, 2021.

[20] Beth Duckett, "Peering Through Taos Light," *Images Arizona*, accessed May 17, 2021, https://imagesarizona.com/peering-through-taos-light/.

[21] Patricia Lenihan, "Regarding Patterns: Susan Folwell," *Santa Fe New Mexican,* August 18, 2017, https://www.santafenewmexican.com/pasatiempo/art/regarding-patterns-susan-folwell/article_3decb32d-59d2-52d6-a434-52e08be0b31b.html.

[22] Interview with the author, January 26, 2021.

[23] "Susan Folwell," Folwell.Koenig, accessed May 17, 2021, http://www.folwellkoenig.com/susan.html.

[24] Virginia Couse Leavitt, *Eanger Irving Couse: The Life and Times of an American Artist*, *1866–1936* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019), 274–275, 277.

[25] Ibid., 277.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., 257, 260.

[29] Ibid., 220.

[30] Ibid. "Pictorialism" refers to staged and edited photography of the late 1800s to the early 1900s that largely focused on themes of myth, archetype, and legend. These images were made using glass plate technologies.

[31] Ibid., 234.

[32] Ibid., 190.

[33] Richard L. Spivey, *The Legacy of Maria Poveka Martinez* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2003), 167.

[34] Interview with the author, January 26, 2021.

[35] Michelle J. Lanteri, "Review: *Susan Folwell: Through the Looking Glass*, The Harwood Museum of Art," *First American Art Magazine* 24 (Fall 2019): 77.

[36] Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass, And What Alice Found There* (London, 1871; Project Gutenberg, 1991), https://www.gutenberg.org/files/12/12-h/12-h.htm.

[37] Rina Swentzell, "Rina Swentzell: An Understated Sacredness," New Mexico PBS KNME-TV, *¡COLORES!* program, uploaded November 30, 2009, YouTube video, 18:21, https://youtu.be/8zHAiOKN6Vo.

[38] Leavitt, *Eanger Irving Couse*, 301; The Harwood Foundation, *Harwood Museum Collection Handbook* (Tucson, AZ: City Press, 1997), 6.

[39] The Harwood Foundation, *Harwood Museum Collection Handbook*, 6.

[40] "About," The Harwood Museum of Art, accessed November 16, 2023, https://harwoodmuseum.org/about.

[41] Carole Gregory, "Dorothy Berninghaus Brandenberg," Remarkable Women of Taos, accessed May 17, 2021, http://womenoftaos.org/women/profiles-legends?/item/130/Dorothy-Berninghaus-Brandenburg.

[42] The Harwood Foundation, *Harwood Museum Collection Handbook*, 5.

[43] Ibid., 6.

[44] Leavitt, *Eanger Irving Couse*, 302.

[45] The Harwood Foundation, *Harwood Museum Collection Handbook*, 6–7.

[46] Ibid., 7.

[47] Joe S. Sando, *Pueblo Nations: Eight Centuries of Pueblo Indian History* (Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers, 1992), 98.

[48] Ibid., 98–100.

[49] Ibid., 98–100.

[50] Ibid., 100–101.

[51] Due to loan constraints, Folwell removed and replaced some of her vessels during the run of the exhibition.

[52] Leavitt, *Eanger Irving Couse*, 334–35.

[53] Orlando Romero and David Larkin, *Adobe: Building and Living with Earth* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), 44; Anita Rodriguez and Katherine Pettus, "The Importance of Vernacular Traditions," *APT Bulletin: The Journal of Preserving Technology* 22, no. 3 (1990): 3.

[54] Matthew J. Martinez and Patricia C. Albers, "Imaging and Imagining Pueblo People in Northern New Mexico Tourism," in *The Framed World: Tourism, Tourists and Photography*, ed. Mike Robinson and David Picard (London: Ashgate, 2009; New York: Routledge, 2016), 45.

[55] Interview with the author, January 26, 2021.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Quoted in Stephen Trimble, *Talking with the Clay: The Art of Pueblo Pottery in the 21st Century*, rev. ed. (Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research, 2007), 15.

[58] Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass.*

[59] Rina Swentzell, "Rina Swentzell: An Understated Sacredness."

[60] Ibid.

[61] Nancy Marie Mithlo, "The Gaze in Indigenous Art: Depictions of The Body and Nudity," in *Making History: IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts*, ed. Nancy Marie Mithlo (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2020), 42.

[62] J. J. Brody and Rina Swentzell, *To Touch the Past: The Painted Pottery of the Mimbres People* (Minneapolis, MN: Weisman Art Museum; New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1996), 20. The clay, as the lower half of the spherical Tewa world where all beings live, embodies Mother Earth and femininity, while the basket signifies the upper half of the Tewa cosmos and is understood as male.

[63] Rina Swentzell, "Rina Swentzell: An Understated Sacredness."

[64] Yvonne Yiu, "The Mirror and the Painting in Early Renaissance Texts," *Early Science and Medicine* 10, no. 2 (2005): 189.

[65] Interview with the author, January 26, 2021.