

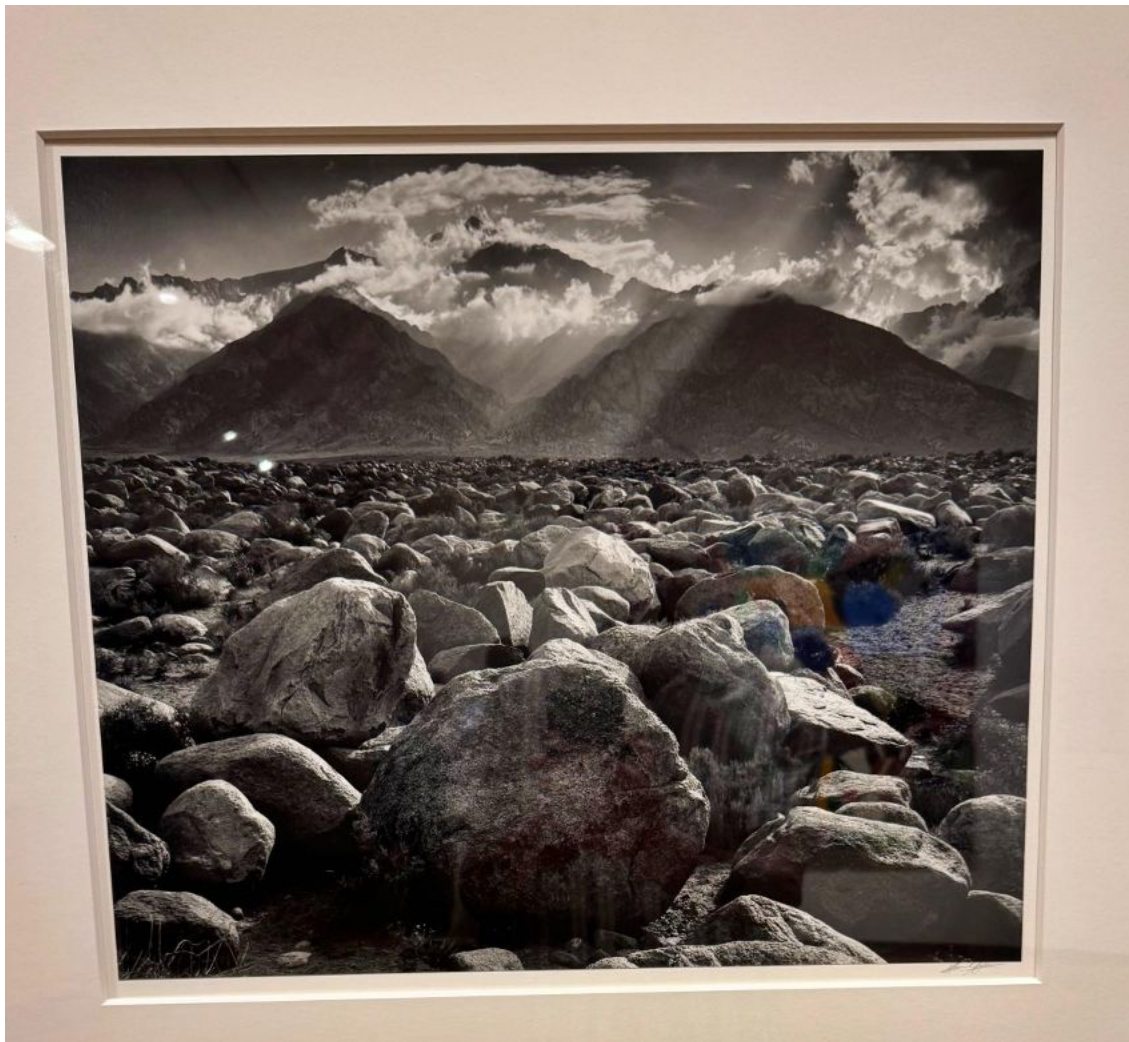
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A glance at UNM Art Museum's Permanent Collection

Plus two other floors







High Five Hall of Fame Exhibit

Did you know that the University of New Mexico has the largest permanent collection of artwork in the state? The collection is larger than the ABQ Museum, which has 10,000 works of art; & larger than the New Mexico Museum of Art in Santa Fe, with more than 20,000 pieces in their collection. The University of NM Art Museum houses 30,000 artworks--paintings, works on paper, photographs & sculpture--that it has been collecting since 1962.

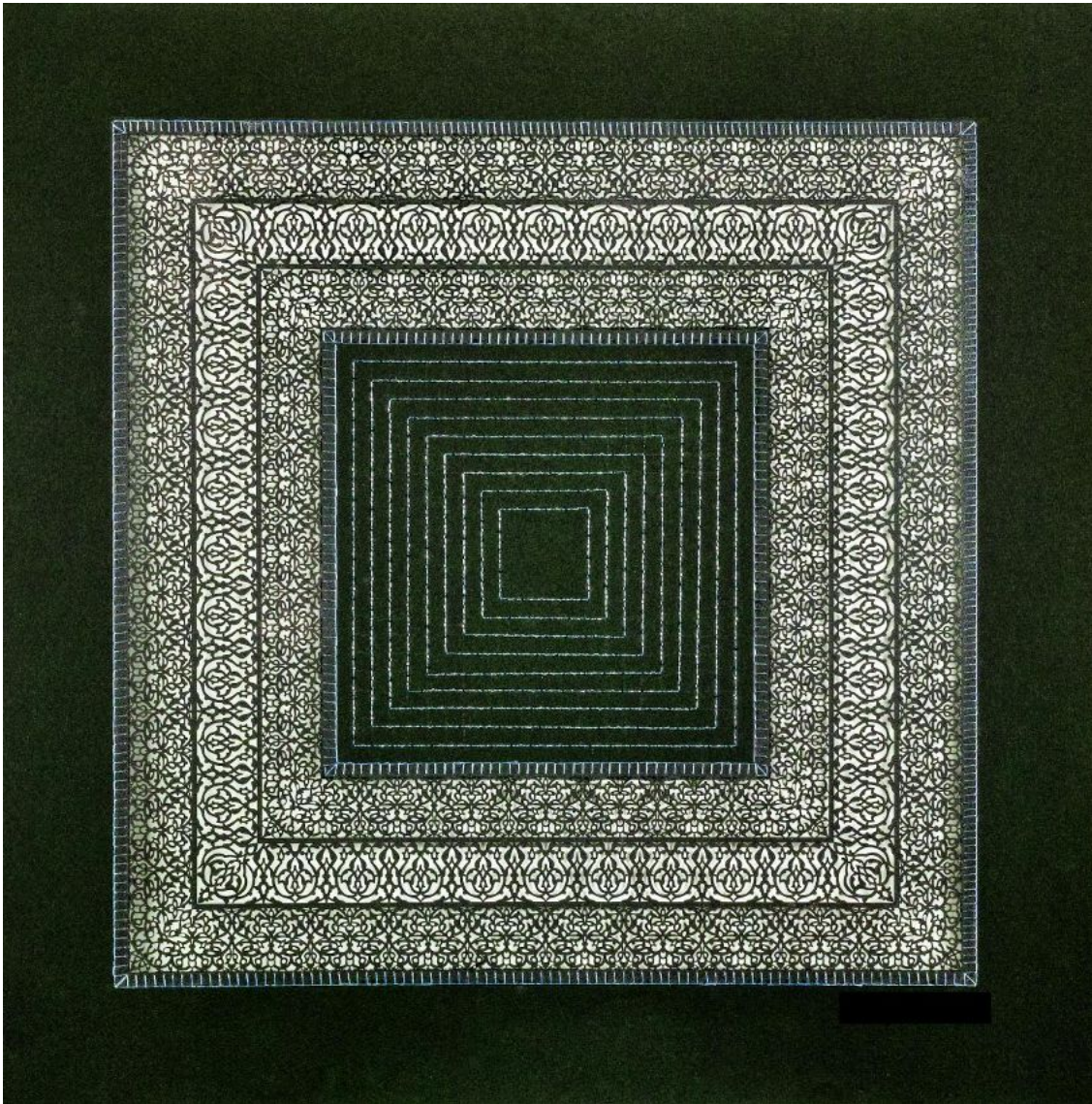
One worthy objective of Museum Director Arif Khan, is to display as much of the permanent collection as possible, instead of leaving the thousands of pieces generally cloistered from public view. The current show, *High Five Hall of Fame: Highlights from the UNM Art Museum Collection*, is a step toward realizing that goal.

The exhibition is in the smallest of the three major galleries in the Center for the Arts building on the UNM campus, but makes up for quantity by featuring a diverse grouping of high-quality images. It features some of the usual New Mexico suspects--including a painting by Georgia O'Keeffe, *Tent Door at Night* (1916); a photo by Ansel Adams, called *Mount Williamson, Sierra Nevada, from Manzanar, California* (1944),

above, & a photo of Ansel Adams, taken by Beaumont Newhall, at [Ranchos de Taos, New Mexico](#).

More heavy hitters include contributions by Frederick Hammersley-- *To.1962* (image at the top of the page), who may be the 1st [computer art artist](#); there's also *White Fire* (1930), by Transcendentalist painter Agnes Pelton, seen just below-- the more I stare at it, the more it moves; & an Agnes Martin abstract ([untitled, c 1955](#)). These are a few of the the New Mexico Masters on display, who all had intimate connections to New Mexico during their lives.





Above & Below

Pakistani-American artist [Anila Quayyum Agha](#)'s immersive collages are created from many different materials, like wax, charcoal, mylar & cut paper. She had a solo show at the Museum a few years ago ([Mysterious Inner Worlds, Sept. '22](#)), & now has a piece in the museum's permanent collection. Agha "combines forms from Islamic architecture with her own concepts about patterns." Above is the mesmerizing image, *Captive Shadows II (Black and Purple)*; with [intricate layered cut paper](#).

Roy de Forest's [Return to Bovine Park \(1976\)](#), acquired by the Museum almost fifty years ago, below, is rich & vibrant once again, after going through a UNM Art Museum restoration process. The painting feels like a bright collage featuring different fabric swatches.



A thread that seemed to pull together some of the artists in the show is the [Tamarind Institute](#), a "renowned center for fine art lithography." Tamarind opened in 1960 & "houses an extensive archive of historic material & a vast print inventory of more than 8,000 lithographs."

Jaune Quick-to-See-Smith, for example, collaborated with the Tamarind for over 40 years. Frederick Hammersley also taught & produced at Tamarind. His foundation initiated the Frederick Hammersley Artist Residency & the Frederick Hammersley Apprentice Printer programs at Tamarind, in 2016. Another artist, [Anna Hepler](#), whose work is in the show, completed residencies at the Roswell Artist-In-Residence program & also at the Tamarind Institute. [Ed Ruscha](#), another artist featured in [High Five Hall of Fame](#), also spent a lot of time at Tamarind.

And [Nicola López](#), born in Santa Fe, has returned to Tamarind four times to complete an Artist in Residence. Her permanent collection piece in the show is *Infrastructure +2* (2012), below.



* * *

In the Abstract

Wandering through the three other galleries in the Museum turned out to be quite a treat. The main gallery featured a show of Abstract Expressionist printmakers, called *Push & Pull: The Prints of Helen Frankenthaler & Her Contemporaries*, who all hobnobbed generally in New York City in the '50's. Frankenthaler stands equal in stature alongside other Abstract Expressionists like Lee Krasner, Elaine de Kooning ([who also taught & produced work](#) at the Tamarind Institute), Willem de Kooning & Jackson Pollock, all represented in the show.

My favorite of her prints is below, called *Monotype XVI* (1991). It is a ghost image created by printing multiple sheets from the same woodblock without re-inking; each pull comes out lighter, which highlights the wood grain of the block. Then she added green, blue & red into the print, which created amorphous shapes that float on the scene.



Distortion. Notice the image-within-image in Frankenthaler's piece, especially the distortion on the inside left half of the larger green blob. When taking photos, glass glazing that protects artwork can reflect scenes from behind the photographer & become part of the new photo. In the photo image of *Monotype XVI* (1991), other pieces in the show that hung on the gallery wall directly behind the photographer became imprinted on the inside left of the green splash, above. Looking closely, you can see other distortions in the photo, like all the white dots that trace out an arrow shape in the upper right, which was a reflection of the overhead lights in that gallery of the Museum.

Other photos of artwork with protective glazing are similarly distorted, due to the photo-reflection effect. Another example is the orange & blue color interruptions in Ansel Adams' *black & white photograph* of a serene mountain rockscape, [Mount Williamson, Sierra Nevada, from Manzanar, California \(1944\)](#), also the 3rd image from the top.



Above & Below. An interesting & atypical Jackson Pollock print (*untitled, 1938*)--not one of his famous 'drip technique' images--is above & on display in the Frankenthaler exhibit.

Modern Contemporary? 2nd year MFA student Yoma Wilson was one of three UNM students selected from an open call to students, to artistically respond to Frankenthaler's "use of color, philosophy, technique, or materials," by creating their own drawings, prints or photographs. *Concrete & Plywood* (2024), below, was his contribution & one of the images selected for the show.



Graphic Art & Revolution: Latin American Political Posters 1968-2000

The third gallery, on the top floor of the Museum, featured political posters from Latin America, spanning over 30 years. It highlighted "materials produced in response to populist, anti-imperialist & anti-dictatorial movements," & was fascinating to view.

[Click to read more about the unique exhibit.](#)

An example from the show is below: a serigraph print by Jesús Ruiz Durand, called

Made in USA, 1971. "It features an image of a soda can stamped with 'Made in USA' that spews out the American Flag while bearing the label of Puerto Rico."



* * *

Since the inception of both public artspaces more than 60 years ago--the Tamarind Institute, seen below, & the UNM Art Museum--they are still free to visit. They are also conveniently located very close to each other, making excellent same-day

destinations.

Note: Effective May 19th, 2025, the UNM Art Museum will not hold public hours, due to a pause in their exhibitions & programs, for an ongoing 'collections care initiative.'

It's called Collection Year & you can read more about it here:

[Collection Year Announcement](#)

I visited the UNM Art Museum three times recently, to absorb the totality of expression these extensive exhibits provided. It's been an excellent experience, & I'm looking very forward to the Museum opening up again to the public next year.



Thx for reading.

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