

AGNES PELTON



SMOKE TREES IN A DRAW

SMOKE TREES IN A DRAW, circa 1950

AGNES PELTON 1881-1961
American, born in Germany

Medium: Oil On Canvas

Museum purchased with funds provided by the Western Art Council, Mary James Memorial Fund 2008

Palm Springs Art Museum Permanent Collection: Currently on display: Palm Springs Art Museum Lines in the Sand

Stages of painting: Imaginative, American Southwest, Transcendental Abstraction

SMOKE TREES IN A DRAW is a classic American Southwest painting by Agnes Pelton. The broad spectrum of her artistic talent is evident by her fresh impression of light and dalliance in SMOKETREES painted in 1950.

Initially I was attracted to Agnes Pelton's work through her Visionary oil paintings. They lured me into her worldview and drew me close to her reverence for nature. Love of nature is her signature throughout her career.

Although she was born in German 1881, she was brought to America as young girl and educated at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY. As it turned out this was an auspicious time and location as she studied landscape painting with Arthur Wesley Dow, who later also taught Georgia O'Keeffe. She studied the esoteric and spiritualist writings of Madame Blavatsky on Theosophy and Occultism, as well as Japanese and Chinese art. Being a new star of her times she participated in the first wave of modern art in New York during the 1910s, and two of her symbolist works were exhibited at the 1913 Armory Show.

She was well traveled and, deeply attracted to the Southwest when she settled here. "The vibration of this light, the spaciousness of these skies enthralled me. I knew there was a spirit in nature as in everything else, but here in the desert it was an especially bright spirit." She lived here in Cathedral City until her death in 1961.

Although the major body of her work was of the transcendental nature she revisited her beautiful portfolio of Southwest landscapes in the late 1940's and early 50's. She and other plein air painters such as James Swinnerton were popular landscape artists and had many customers. Agnes could rely on her sincere love of the desert and desert light to provide reliable income for some years.

Even though our paths have never crossed and we are separated by time I have discovered a number of shared interests and commonalities. Interestingly enough we both went to Pratt University in New York, both of us ventured similar travel destinations and followed the same metaphysical teachers as well.

COLLECTIONS

- The Raymond Jonson Collection, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque
 - Oakland Museum of Art, California
 - Honolulu Museum of Art, Honolulu, Hawaii
 - Palm Springs Art Museum, California
 - Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, New York
 - Phoenix Art Museum, Arizona
 - Santa Barbara Museum of Art, California
 - San Diego Museum of Art, California
 - New Mexico Museum of Art
 - Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Agnes Pelton Poet of Nature by Michael Zakian at the Palm Springs Desert Museum 1995

Illumination by Karen Moss, Orange County Museum of Art

Victoria Braverman 2018