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Shaping a New Way: White Women and the Movement to Promote Pueblo Indian Arts and Crafts, 1900-1935

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In the first decades of the twentieth century, many white Americans became involved in an effort to promote Indian arts and crafts, particularly in the Southwest and among the Pueblo Indians. Some scholars have placed this effort within the context of the larger arts and crafts movement in Britain and the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. Historians have explained this movement as a reaction against industrial production and as a related search for authenticity. Believing that industrialization had produced a mass culture of imitation, destroyed communal bonds, and divested work of its inherent worth, arts and crafts movement supporters sought “authentic” objects and experience in preindustrial cultures and modes of production. Other scholars have argued that the white elites who patronized Indian arts consciously attempted to redefine the Southwestern identity and economy—to transform it from an area known primarily for ranching, agriculture, and extractive industries to a region known for its picturesque scenery and people. For all their insights, these explanations neglect two significant aspects of the Indian arts and crafts movement among the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico—its gendered nature and its heterogeneity.

Although several men played key roles within it, the Indian arts and crafts movement in New Mexico functioned largely as a women’s phenomenon. Many white women claimed credit for initiating what they believed to be a revival of pottery and painting among the Pueblos. They also constituted a large number of the members of the two main organizations concerned with Pueblo Indian art—the Indian Arts Fund...
(IAF) and the Arts and Crafts Committee of the New Mexico Association on Indian Affairs (NMAIA). Moreover, white women comprised an estimated 75 to 90 percent of the purchasers of Indian art.

However, these women did not all share a consensual view of the nature and purpose of the arts and crafts movement. Their competing perspectives led to a diverse and contentious movement. Scholars have tended to treat the arts and crafts movement as a homogeneous entity, ignoring or conflating differences among its members. Historians have focused largely on one group in the movement—antimodernists who sought to revive "high-quality," "traditional" Indian art as a means of insulating the Pueblos from modern America. However, another group of reformers who had long advocated the assimilation of Native Americans into American society also became involved in the movement, conceiving it as a means to "uplift" the Indians out of their supposedly backward and degraded state. These Indian arts and crafts supporters embraced modernity and progress. White women took part in both wings of the movement.

A focus on white women in the Indian arts and crafts movement and on its diversity leads to new explanations for white interest in Indian arts in the first decades of the twentieth century. This essay focuses on the ways in which changing notions of gender and sexuality within white American society influenced white women to promote Pueblo Indian arts and crafts. Many white women found in the Indian arts and crafts movement an arena in which both to exert a new source of cultural authority and to shape a new vision of womanhood. Because so much of the movement focused on pottery, a Pueblo women's craft, the promotion of Indian arts among the Pueblos also involved more Indian women than men. White women transformed Indian women artists into powerful symbols of their competing notions of women's roles in modern America.

Among the Pueblos, painting and pottery constituted the major interests of white patrons. Pueblo paintings originally functioned as "essential elements of ritual, as a form of prayer." Pueblos destroyed ritual paintings once completed and did not have a tradition of decorating with paintings. The Pueblos had used pottery primarily to carry water and store grain. Occasionally, Pueblo Indians incorporated pottery making into their sacred ceremonies. At the turn of the twentieth century, white patrons "discovered" and began to commercialize Pueblo
Indian painting and pottery production. Some promoters of Indian arts and crafts believed that many Pueblo Indians had lost the artistic skills they had once possessed. In a fundraising letter written in 1940, three women of the NMAIA Arts and Crafts Committee asserted that Indians have an "instinct for fine spacing and composition" and a "natural and intuitive feeling for dignity and grace and rhythm [that] is attained in contradiction to the white man’s method. There is no perspective and some of the figures are out of scale, but the result is beautiful, and good art, and good Indian Art." The NMAIA women objected to teachers of Indian arts and government bureaucrats who had "insufficient appreciation of the subtle difference between true and mongrel Indian art" and who made "no allowance for the differences between Indians and white men in thinking and traditional concepts." The women of the NMAIA hoped to remedy this "tragedy" of "mongrelized" Indian art by educating both the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the public about "true" Indian art, and by promoting those artists who remained true to their "racial talents." These women and others in the Indian arts and crafts movement believed themselves responsible for generating a "revival" of Indian artistry. Many Indians, as will be shown, contested the notion that their artistry had "died out," or that whites were necessary for reviving it.

Standard accounts of the Indian arts and crafts movement have focused primarily on men’s roles within it. In 1895, according to many scholars, anthropologist J. Walter Fewkes, concerned with the supposed decline in the quality of Hopi pottery, initiated the so-called Hopi pottery revival. Conducting an excavation at Sikyatki on First Mesa, Fewkes encouraged the potter Nampeyo, wife of one of his Hopi workmen, to imitate the designs found on old pottery shards. Nampeyo’s pottery became famous and the renaissance of pottery production she began at Hopi came to be known as the Sikyatki Revival. In the early 1900s, Fewkes also promoted the painting of kachina dancers by several Hopi men. Some scholars have given more credit to trader Thomas Keam for initiating the pottery “revival” among the Hopi by suggesting to Indian women potters that they copy “prehistoric” designs to increase the value and marketability of their pottery. In New Mexico, historians have highlighted the role of Edgar Hewett, a self-trained archaeologist and the first director of the School of American Research in Santa Fe. According to many scholars, in 1907 and 1908, while excavating near San Ildefonso Pueblo in New Mexico, Hewett
urged Maria Martinez, the wife of one of his Indian employees, to craft a pot based on an old pottery shard and to use old pottery stones found in the excavation to polish the pottery. Eventually, Martinez's pottery, on which her husband Julian painted designs, became world famous and commanded high prices. Hewett also took credit for initiating “self-taught” painting among the Pueblo Indians in 1917–18 by commissioning a San Ildefonso Indian, Crescencio Martinez, to paint a series of dances. Kenneth Chapman, an anthropologist and the first director of Santa Fe’s Laboratory of Anthropology, and John Collier, a defender of Pueblo lands and religion in the 1920s and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs under Franklin Roosevelt beginning in 1933, have also been accorded much influence in the Indian arts and crafts movement. Together with physician Harry Mera, Chapman founded and headed the Indian Arts Fund (IAF), an organization dedicated primarily to Pueblo pottery preservation. Collier promoted the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, a governmental effort aimed at promoting Indian handicrafts.

The focus on these men has overshadowed the contributions of white women in the Indian arts and crafts movement. Around 1905, a renegade San Ildefonso Day School teacher first encouraged Crescencio Martinez to paint his dance ceremonials. This was almost a decade before Hewett met Martinez. "Self-taught" painter Tonita Peña told her biographer that she learned to paint when her day-school teacher at San Ildefonso, Esther Hoyt, gave her watercolors and encouraged her to paint. Edgar Hewett “discovered” Peña at the day school, and supplied her with paints and paper thereafter. Peña’s cousin at Cochiti, Romando Vigil, who also became a renowned artist, first learned to paint in day school from his teacher Elizabeth Robbins. Elizabeth DeHuff, writer and wife of a superintendent of the Santa Fe Indian School, insisted that the “real awakening” of Southwest Indian painting occurred in May 1918, in her living room. DeHuff brought seven boys from the Santa Fe Indian School to her house in the afternoons to paint. Among them were Fred Kabotie and Otis Poleonema, both Hopi, and Velino Herrera (or Shije) of Zia Pueblo, all of whom both became well-known and respected painters.

White women seem to have taken an even greater part in promoting Indian pottery. In 1917, Madame Verra von Blumenthal and Rose Dougan from Pasadena arrived at San Ildefonso Pueblo to promote a “better grade of ceramics . . . that could be sold in greater quantity
Tonita Peña, Cochiti Pueblo, ca. 1935. Photo by T. Harmon Parkhurst, courtesy Museum of New Mexico, neg. no. 47480.
throughout the country." The original Board of Trustees of the IAF included many women who had developed an interest in the preservation of Indian culture: writers Mary Austin, Mabel Dodge Luhan, Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, and Alice Corbin Henderson; Margaret McKittrick, chairwoman of the NMAIA and its Arts and Crafts Committee; and Amelia Elizabeth White, head of the Eastern Association on Indian Affairs (EAIA). Except for Austin, who died in 1934, all these women served on the IAF Board for more than twenty years. White served for forty years. White also opened a store in New York City called ISHAUU to market Indian wares and helped to organize the Exposition of Tribal Arts in the early 1930s. White women also figured significantly in the eventual efforts of the BIA to promote Indian arts. In 1932, the BIA hired Dorothy Dunn to teach Indian art and Mabel Morrow to instruct in Indian crafts at the Santa Fe Indian School. Under Dunn's direction from 1932 to 1937, the Studio of the Santa Fe Indian School became the centerpiece of the Collier administration's commitment to Indian arts and a model for other Indian schools across the country.

At least two distinct groups of white women took part in the Indian arts and crafts movement. One group favored the preservation of Pueblo culture and art; the other sought the Pueblo's assimilation into modern life. Artists and writers who lived in the Santa Fe and Taos art colonies, as well as anthropologists, formed the core of the preservationist wing. Influenced by new anthropological theories of cultural relativism and disillusioned by modern American society, these intellectuals extolled the Pueblo Indians who lived in their vicinity as a model society and campaigned to defend Pueblo lands and dances. The Indian arts and crafts movement became a primary means whereby they sought to preserve their image of the ideal Pueblo Indian—a deeply spiritual, traditional artist who subsumed his or her individual interests to the good of the community and who lived in harmony with nature. In order to insulate the Pueblos from modern American culture, preservationists believed that a dual effort was needed to promote "high-quality" Indian art. First the American public must be steered away from buying cheap tourist items, "the endless array of ash trays, candle sticks, . . . pillow tops, and other atrocities . . . which confront the average traveller in Indian country."

Elizabeth Willis De Huff, 1932. Photo by Will Connell, courtesy Museum of New Mexico, neg. no. 59759.
“traditional” ways. In pottery, this meant, according to anthropologist Ruth Bunzel, “no modern white forms, no worthless trifles, only dignified pieces in the best traditional style.” The Indian Arts Fund hoped to accomplish both these objectives. They sought to collect the “best” specimens of ancient pottery from the pueblos, install them in a museum, and bring Indian women potters to view the collection in order that they might learn the ways of their ancestors. White patrons condescendingly assumed that without white intervention, Pueblo women would never learn or continue the artistry of their ancestors. Similarly, many supporters of Pueblo Indian painting sought to promote what they believed to be the traditional Pueblo style. They demanded that Indian artists confine themselves mainly to painting Indian dances and tried to dictate the style that Indians must use. Elizabeth DeHuff, for example, insisted that in “true Indian art, . . . the figures should not be three-dimensional, but should be painted . . . as they were painted on kiva walls.”

Other white women in the movement conceived of its purpose in almost opposite terms. Many of these women had long served in the BIA as schoolteachers and field matrons. They subscribed to the federal government’s policy of assimilation through education, suppression of native religion, and individual allotment of communally held Indian lands. To these women, arts and crafts production could serve to uplift Indian peoples to civilization, rather than to preserve them in their supposedly “backward” state. Female uplifters believed that transforming Indian homes into “Christian” homes constituted the first step on the road to full assimilation. Josephine Richards of the Hampton Normal Institute asserted that encouraging “the beautiful native industries” served as a means, “thru its commercial value, of helping to make the home comfortable and attractive.” The ideal home, modeled on the uplifters’ notion of the “Christian home,” should cultivate “order and purity” and an “atmosphere of uprightness and goodness.” Seeking to effect such a transformation in Pueblo homes, in 1925, Clara True, a former BIA schoolteacher and long-time reformer, attempted to “uplift” Pueblo girls through “reviving” Indian embroidery, a craft Pueblo women had never pursued.

As can be seen by True’s efforts, uplifters in the arts and crafts movement were not so much concerned with reviving a “traditional” and “authentic” craft as they were with supplying Indians with a viable means of “bettering” themselves. In a report for BIA home economics
teachers, the author explained that “for place cards, greeting and announcement cards, lamp shades, bedspreads, pillows, book covers, and in countless other ways the Indian designs may be used to give pleasure to . . . girls and their friends and to . . . make a contribution to the cultural life of the Indian child.”27 Obviously, this vision of Indian arts and crafts differed markedly from that of preservationists, who regarded these items as “atrocities.” This belief in marketing Indian ethnicity as a means to uplift Indians constituted a radical departure from the first decades of government assimilation policy. In the late nineteenth century, the BIA and reformers condemned the participation of Indians in tourist ventures such as Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show, believing that the commercialization of Indian ethnicity reinforced Indian “savagery” and prevented assimilation.28 By the 1920s, however, assimilationists hoped that marketing Indian ethnicity could accomplish their aims.

The issue of tourism particularly divided preservationist women from female uplifters in the Indian arts and crafts movement. Whereas uplifters believed that tourism could work to assimilate Native Americans more fully into American society, preservationists lamented the commercialization of Pueblo culture. Mabel Dodge Luhan bemoaned that “commercial value is the standardized, accepted foundation of acknowledged Art. It is Recognition! I’d hate to have these Indians get recognition! Why, it would be the end of them!”29 Yet, preservationists did countenance and even encourage some commercialization of Indian art. Bunzel maintained that among the Hopi, the old style was “cramped” and “sterile.” She believed that “through some such [commercial] stimulus it may yet be possible to revive ceramic art in those villages where it is nearing extinction through its own barrenness.”30 Bunzel reveals here that she and other preservationists did not so much reject all commercialization as seek to control and direct it away from “cheap souvenirs” toward what they considered to be tasteful art objects.

Given their opposing views on the purpose of promoting arts and crafts, preservationists and uplifters in the Indian arts and crafts movement often clashed with one another. This was apparent in 1933 at the Indian Fair in Shiprock, New Mexico, at which the preservationists’ Southwest Indian Fair Committee appointed one judge and the BIA designated the other. A report on the fair from the Southwest Committee expressed disgust that “the first prize for a native wool pillow top was given to a realistic reproduction of Shiprock with the words
'Shiprock, N.M. 1933.' This division even split the IAF, an organization identified more with preservation than uplift. According to Kenneth Chapman, some “progressive” members, much to the dismay of “conservatives,” desired more art education, field work, and sales rather than the pure collecting and displaying of pottery and other art work. Interestingly, Kenneth Chapman posed the conflict as one between progressives and conservatives, the same terms white patrons used to define divisions within the pueblos.

Some art patrons subscribed solely to either the preservationists’ or uplifters’ views. Others could simultaneously conceive of Indian art as serving both the purposes of cultural insulation and assimilation. Elizabeth DeHuff wavered between both positions. When she brought Pueblo boys from the Indian School to paint in her living room, she insisted that they paint pictures of their dances in “traditional” style. When writing to Dorothy Dunn about her efforts, DeHuff asserted that the paintings of Crescencio Martinez were not real Indian art, because Martinez used backgrounds. Neither did she consider the paintings of another self-taught artist, Alfredo Montoya, to be authentic Indian painting because he supposedly imitated white artists. “The painting I saw showed a deer among trees,” DeHuff wrote disparagingly of Montoya’s realism. Yet, like uplifters, DeHuff also believed that art could transform Indians into productive members of modern American society. In her 1926 portrait of Maria Martinez, DeHuff depicted pottery as the salvation of Martinez: “A few years ago Marie [sic] Martinez and her husband, Julian, were living embodiments of ‘Lo, the poor Injun.’” At that time, the Martinezes lived in a “two-room adobe hut,” but “now they are living in a modern four-room house” with furniture and are driving a Dodge sedan. “Ceramics wrought the fairy tale transformation,” DeHuff believed.

Neither an antipathy toward the modernization of America nor an attempt to assert a new regional identity can adequately explain why so many white women became involved in promoting Indian arts and crafts. For both women uplifters and preservationist women, shifting conceptions of women’s roles in white America also contributed to their participation in the arts and crafts movement. Women in the movement who sought the uplift of Native Americans through arts and crafts largely emerged from a tradition of female moral reform. According to many women’s historians, in the late nineteenth century notions of white middle-class women’s roles in the home paradoxically opened
up opportunities for women to play a public role. Supposedly pious and sexually pure, white women were to guard their homes against the influences of an increasingly corrupt, secularized world outside the home. Yet, as Barbara Epstein has documented, under the slogan of “Home Protection,” white, middle-class women found a means to leave the home. Many middle-class Protestant women became active in crusading for temperance, attacking prostitution, promoting health and hygiene, campaigning for women’s suffrage, and engaging in Indian reform. In each of these reform activities, female moral reformers conceived of women as a class of victims, oppressed by male immoralities. Interestingly, however, as Peggy Pascoe has observed, they more often identified men of other races, religions, and classes as the most immoral degraders of women. Therefore, many female moral reformers turned their attention away from challenging male dominance in the white middle class to rescuing other women who supposedly did not enjoy the status and respect accorded to white middle-class women.

Clara True, one of many uplifters in the arts and crafts movement, had been schooled in this tradition of female moral reform. A member of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, True had first become involved in Indian reform work in the 1890s, when she served for six years as principal of the BIA boarding school at the Lower Brule Agency on the Sioux Reservation. Later, True worked for five years as the day-school teacher at Santa Clara Pueblo and for two years as superintendent at the Morongo Reservation near Banning in southern California. In 1910, she returned to New Mexico to settle in the Espanola Valley, close to Santa Clara Pueblo, where she remained active in Indian reform in an unofficial capacity. In the 1910s, she crusaded against vice and corruption within the BIA. In the 1920s, she turned toward condemning what she believed to be the immoral dances of the Pueblos. True believed Indian women to be victimized by supposedly nefarious Indian men, and she sought to rescue them from their degraded condition. She agreed with her friend, BIA schoolteacher and moral reformer Mary Dissette, who claimed that in Pueblo culture, “the male is supreme and all that contributes to his comfort or pleasure is his by right of his male supremacy.”

In the first decades of the twentieth century, other visions of womanhood emerged to challenge those of women such as True and Dissette. Many women began to invent new public roles for themselves
Margaret McKittrich with group of Navajo Indians, ca. 1935. Photo by T. Harmon Parkhurst, courtesy Museum of New Mexico, neg. no. 3224.
that were not tied to claims of moral authority. Increasing numbers of working-class and middle-class women entered the paid labor force, particularly in new unskilled and service-sector jobs. Several generations of middle-class women obtained a higher education; some of them carved out careers for themselves in the new fields of sociology and anthropology or in the growing public sector. Demographic trends also revealed that many women did not follow the ideals of female moral reformers. A drastic decline in the birth rate, increasing use of birth control, and an astounding rise in divorce, especially among middle- and upper-class white women, undermined nineteenth-century views of women's proper roles. A new orientation toward women's sexuality also arose to challenge female moral reformers' ideals. New Freudian conceptions of sexuality, working-class women's articulation of a competing vision of female sexuality, advertising, and commercialized leisure all contributed to a breakdown of late-Victorian ideals of female sexual purity. Many middle-class white women departed from those women who still held to the view of women as morally superior to, and more sexually pure than, men.41

Indeed, most of the women who participated in the preservationist wing of the arts and crafts movement rejected female moral reformers' vision of womanhood. In the first decades of the twentieth century, preservationist women such as Mary Austin and Mabel Dodge Luhan championed a new vision of womanhood that emphasized women's self-fulfillment, individualism, and sexual expression. Austin described the differences between her and her mother's generations:

In those late nineteenth-century decades all the disabilities of excessive child-bearing were charged up to the horrid appetites of the husband. Not only did the current phrases of birth control and contraceptives not come into use until the women of the pioneer generations [of feminists] were past being interested in them, but nobody . . . had yet suggested that women are passionately endowed even as men are. . . . That sexual desire was something to which God in his inscrutable wisdom had sacrificed all women, was so certainly believed by my mother's generation. . . . But my own generation still lacked even a vocabulary by which measures of escape could be intelligently discussed.42

Luhan also strove to escape the sexual norms of her childhood. She credited birth control pioneer Margaret Sanger with transforming her
views of women and sexuality. Until she discussed sex at length with Sanger, there had usually been a “certain hidden, forbidden something,” in Luhan’s feelings about sex. Sanger helped Luhan “to get rid of some old, old prohibitions” and taught her “the way to a heightening of pleasure and of prolonging it.”

Austin and Luhan disavowed female moral reformers’ views of white middle-class women’s sexual purity. In turn, they undermined the reformers’ quest for moral authority and their self-proclaimed mission to rescue women of other races, religions, and classes from their supposedly degraded condition. In fact, influenced by Sigmund Freud’s theories, Luhan, Austin, and other preservationist women believed that modern Americans and Europeans had repressed their natural sexual instincts while “primitives,” especially the Pueblo Indians, expressed their drives in a healthy manner. Anthropologist Elsie Clews Parsons claimed that the Zunis were “naturalistic,” not reticent, about matters of sexual intercourse. Luhan asserted that Indians lived in their bodies while whites did not. Describing the Taos Indians who came to dance at her house, she wrote, “Their brown bodies are beautiful, for every inch of them has a gleaming awareness as though their flesh is wholly awake . . . our bodies are deserted. We do not live in them and they are like abandoned houses.”

Unlike female moral reformers, preservationists tended to believe that Pueblo women enjoyed high social status. Mary Austin referred to Pueblo women’s power as “Mother-rule.” She believed that this Mother-rule explained the seemingly harmonious communalism of the Pueblos. “Perhaps the most stabilizing fact of Pueblo Constitution is its retention of the matriarchal formula for its social pattern,” contended Austin. “Peace and stability, these are the first fruits of Mother-rule.” In contrast to uplifters, Austin and other preservationists did not deem men to be dominant in Pueblo society, but believed women held the ultimate authority.

Changes in notions of white women’s roles and sexual natures deeply affected white women who participated in the arts and crafts movement. In fact, they seem to have used the movement as a forum for articulating and debating their competing visions of gender and sexuality in modern America. Throughout white women’s private correspondence and promotional material regarding Indian arts and crafts, Indian women became potent symbols of white women’s differing ideals. Women in both wings of the movement endowed Indian women artists with their rival visions. Uplifters characterized the Pueblo artist as a
morally upright pioneer among her people who, through her industry, would “uplift” herself and eventually the rest of her people. Elizabeth DeHuff remarked that Maria Martinez, “by her skill, has raised herself above the level of her Pueblo sisters.” Clara True encouraged Pueblo Superintendent Crandall to send several potters “of good character and with skill in clay working” from Santa Clara Pueblo to the World’s Fair in St. Louis in 1904. True equated “skill in clay working” with “good character.” Conversely, in True’s view, Pueblo women who did not live up to her moral standards also failed to make good pottery. She told Crandall that “there are plenty of women who would go [to St. Louis] but they are not needed here nor elsewhere, as they are idle, dirty loafers who wouldn’t make pottery worth the name.”

Uplifters’ image of the Pueblo artist mirrored their own ideal of womanhood and their own desires for inclusion in American society. Uplifters saw Indian women (and men) as unfairly segregated from modern America. Arts and crafts could help Indian women, indeed all Indians, to become full members of American society. Morally upstanding, the gifted Indian woman artist could, according to female uplifters, overcome her supposed “backwardness” to uplift herself into modern American society. Not coincidentally, female moral reformers also saw themselves as segregated from the mainstream of modern American life. Mary Dissette sarcastically remarked to the president of the Indian Rights Association, “I have read your powerful plea against the union of Oklahoma . . . and most heartily agree with you. I wish I could help the cause but as a woman has no political status, and is classed with the Indians she is helping to raise to the dignity of citizens, I am helpless. In fact I have not been able to protect myself in the work I have given my life to from the influence of coarse politicians, how then can I help the Indians?” Tellingly, Dissette revealed that she saw the status of women and that of Indians in the same terms. Clara True shared Dissette’s views. She desired to rise through the ranks in the Indian Service and to attain leadership positions that only men had held. When she was thwarted by high officials in the BIA, who appointed men instead of her, she became bitter. It was small wonder that women such as True and Dissette identified assimilation into modern American life as their goal for Native Americans; it was also their own ambition for white women.

Even as they promoted Indian arts and crafts as a means to integrate Indian women into American life, female uplifters also used the move-
ment as a vehicle for obtaining further public recognition for themselves. Through their own quest for moral authority, female reformers hoped they could participate more readily in the public life of the nation. Yet, in the first decades of the twentieth century, moral reformers found themselves and their quest for female moral authority increasingly under attack from people such as Mary Austin and Mabel Dodge Luhan. The promotion of Indian arts and crafts constituted a new way for female moral reformers to gain some public authority in modern America.

In contrast to uplifters, white women in the preservationist wing represented Indian women artists not as morally upstanding pioneers who sought to assimilate into modern America, but as the most traditional members of their villages. Preservationists believed that Indians who remained true to their traditions were “natural” artists. According to the IAF, “Craft instinct and artistic sense are inherent and permanent,” among Pueblo women. “With the Indian woman, we find a true art situation,” Mabel Morrow wrote, “where art is interwoven with her life and every activity of her life, and not something superficial.” Preservationist women lamented that in many pueblos, Indian women seemed to be abandoning their traditional ways, and thus losing their artistic sense. Ruth Bunzel asserted that in the 1920s, few Indian women “will now take the trouble to make what [pottery] is required for their household needs.” Instead, most Pueblo women either bought manufactured tins or purchased pottery from “one of the few [Pueblo] women who engages in this occupation on a semi-professional basis.” Preservationist women believed that boarding school’s Americanization programs had stifled young Indian women’s interest in producing pottery. They also concluded that pottery production in many pueblos had “degenerated [due] to the production of cheap souvenirs for tourists.” In the preservationists’ eyes, Indian women artists could defend Pueblo culture from the onslaught of modernization.

Preservationist women portrayed the outstanding Indian woman artist as a woman who found satisfaction in the home and in the daily round of domestic duties. Indeed, Pueblo women supposedly gracefully combined their domestic responsibilities with their art work. An early 1930s article featured painter Tonita Peña working at home: “She is surrounded by children. The youngest one was strapped to Tonita’s back most of last summer while she was painting. . . . She works at a tiny table by a window. Her paints and paper are there, and she goes to
it when she is not busy with other things, just as our mothers pick up the socks that have to be darned.”53 This idealized image of Pueblo women might be surprising given that many preservationist women championed careers and more public roles for white women. At least in white society, Austin, for instance, protested the notion that women were suited only for the domestic sphere. Austin rebelled against the notion “that the work a human being may do in the world is determined by sex.”54 Preservationists’ veneration of Pueblo women’s domesticity reveals the tension that developed for these women between their antimodernism and their vision of womanhood. Although they invented public roles for themselves in modern America, they condemned the very society from which they sought recognition.

In their portrayals of Pueblo culture, preservationists sought to reconcile their competing values. While they envisioned powerful roles for women, they also looked back to a time when the center of power and influence supposedly rested with women in the home and not with men in the office or the assembly hall. In their idealizations of what they believed to be Pueblo women’s traditional roles, Austin, Luhan, and other preservationist women seemed to want to recover a period in which women supposedly gained power through their roles in the home. According to preservationist women, Pueblo women’s work in the home endowed them with a power unbeknownst to white women. To the Pueblo wife, Austin asserted, “belongs the house, the furniture, the garnered grain, the marriage rights of her children.”55 Austin and other preservationists believed that ownership constituted absolute dominion. “The house . . . was the house-mother’s,” Austin wrote. “Seldom her daughters left her, but brought husbands home, and built on another room and another, until the clustered house heap took on that pyramidal form you may observe at Zuni or Taos.”56 Although they embraced a vision in which white women could achieve individual self-fulfillment, preservationist women also were attracted to antimodernism’s celebration of subsuming one’s individual interests to the good of the community. Anthropologist Ruth Bunzel’s portrait of the Pueblo potter captures the sense among preservationist white women that women’s artistic production in the home brought them a satisfaction in community that modern white women no longer enjoyed. “‘Pottery bees’ are a common feature of Hopi life,” wrote Bunzel. “If a woman sits down in her front room to decorate pottery it generally follows that a relative or neighbor who also has pottery to decorate will bring over
her work and join her. Three or four women will frequently gather in this way and gossip merrily over their work." Bunzel’s choice of the phrase “pottery bee” suggests that she associated Pueblo women’s work with a time in white American culture when women also engaged in shared home production through participation in quilting bees.

Some preservationist women also celebrated the Pueblo home because they believed it to be a place of natural sexuality. “Out in the Pueblo the Indian women sit together cozily,” Luhan wrote, “in great heaps of corn, shucking the ears. They strip off the harsh husks and their sensitive fingers enjoy the pleasant contact with the ivory-hard polished ears.” In Luhan’s portrait, Pueblo women found community with one another as they pursued their domestic duties. As Luhan’s not-so-subtle imagery also suggests, they also seemed to find sensual (and even sexual) fulfillment in the task of shucking corn. The preservationists’ ideal home, which they imagined among the Pueblos, embodied their many ideals—women’s shared community, productive work, aestheticism, and a “natural” sexual expressiveness. Many white women who sojourned or settled in New Mexico after World War I promoted Indian arts and crafts, in part, because they saw artistic production as a means to preserve what they believed to be women’s ideal role in Pueblo society.

As with uplifters, preservationist women’s images of Indian women artists reflected their own visions of white womanhood. They complicated their ideals of womanhood, however, with a nearly equal devotion to antimodernism. Paradoxically, although they seemed to embrace a modern vision of women’s roles, preservationist women promoted a utopian vision in which women largely remained in the home. On some occasions, preservationist women attempted to live out this ideal. Through canning fruits and vegetables, Mabel Dodge Luhan attempted to take on a productive role in her own home. “Something left over in me from my grandmother has made me turn back to these earlier ways of living,” Luhan wrote. At the urging of her guest D. H. Lawrence, the British writer, who told her she should not have servants, Mabel tried to scrub her own living-room floor and bake bread. “My Indian girls stood round looking half-distressed and half amused,” Luhan remembered. “I frowned and paid no attention to them, because I wanted this to be real. I didn’t want to experiment, I wanted to be really washing the floor.” Yet try as she might, Luhan did not always find her own home to be the productive and sensually satisfying par-
adise she envisioned. Her floor-scrubbing experiment did not meet with success, and Luhan reverted to her non-productive role in the household. In Winter in Taos, she alternately portrayed her home as “the essence of homeliness and comfort” and then as lonely and unfulfilling. More frequently, preservationist women continued to operate in the modern world while they extolled a domestic role for Pueblo women. Like it or not, modernization had created the conditions under which they could enjoy public roles, roles that allowed them to come into contact with the Pueblos, to study them, and to write about them. Perhaps preservationist women imagined they could live out their ideals voyeuristically through Pueblo women. Equally paradoxically, female moral reformers had based their claims to public roles on their desires to strengthen women’s efforts to promote morality in the home. Yet, their vision actually strove for an opportunity for women to leave the home and become more integrated into public positions of power.

The arts and crafts movement provided white women with a venue for exploring and articulating their competing visions of modern white womanhood. Indian women became powerful symbols of white women’s competing visions of women’s place in modern America. Only rarely, however, did Indian women’s views of their own participation in the movement surface in the historical record. Even when they did, their actions are still often filtered through white women’s words. It is nevertheless possible from these sparse and fragmented instances to piece together how Indian women may have interpreted white women’s efforts to promote Indian arts and crafts. Indian women artists often seem to have catered to their white patrons on the surface, but resented and sometimes ridiculed white women’s assumptions behind their backs.

Maria Martinez found a way to both accommodate and mock the value preservationists placed on authenticity and tradition. The black-on-black pottery that came to be identified as the authentic, traditional style of Maria Martinez and the San Ildefonso Indians originated in a disaster for Maria and her husband Julian. Maria told interviewer Alice Marriott that one day Julian put too much manure on the open fire where they fired their pottery. All the pots turned black. Disappointed that they had expended all this effort and ruined every pot, Julian and Maria stored the pots away. Soon, a trader came by desiring more pots. Maria and Julian had not produced any new ones. When the trader per-
sisted, Julian told him they did have some stored in the back, but they were very special. Maria added that they cost more. The trader liked the pottery, sold it immediately, and asked for more. Thereafter, Maria and Julian produced almost exclusively their black-on-black ware.\textsuperscript{62} Soon, the Martinezes taught other San Ildefonso potters their secret. As revealed in the following conversation between Julian, Maria, and Maria's father, the Martinezes manipulated preservationists' desires for authenticity. Maria told Julian she wanted to make some "new kind of bowls." He replied, "You mean the old kind." Maria's father quipped, "The new old kind." Maria concluded, "The kind the white people want."\textsuperscript{63}

Elizabeth DeHuff recounted an incident that illustrates Indian women's overt conformity but covert defiance of white women's promotion of arts and crafts. One summer, a young white woman who had studied ceramics in the East came to live in a Pueblo village. She intended to teach Pueblo women how to make pots that would hold water without seepage. All summer long, she gathered together the potters of the pueblo and taught them how to glaze their pots. According to DeHuff, "the Indian women watched, followed instructions and made the glazed pottery." When the young ceramic artist left at the end of the summer, she congratulated herself on her "successful philanthropy." But "the Indian women—one and all—walked to the edge of the mesa and, with a cluck of disgust, hurled all of the glazed pots they had made over the precipice, breaking them into bits."\textsuperscript{64} While outwardly seeming to accommodate the white woman, Indian women actually deeply resented the white woman's assumptions that she knew better than they how to make pots.

Some women artists were more blatant in their objection to white women's assumptions. DeHuff quoted a Pueblo woman exclaiming, "I do not need nobody to teach me about pottery! . . . My grandmother teach me long ago!"\textsuperscript{65} Other women artists contested preservationists' notions that they should avoid the tourist trade and make only the "highest quality" objects for an elite white market. Many white women art enthusiasts also became involved in promoting "high-quality" Navajo rugmaking. After attending a conference on Navajo rugmaking sponsored by the Santa Fe Laboratory of Anthropology, Sarah Smith, a Navajo weaver, objected to the conference's suggestion that only very fine spinning yarn be used for weaving blankets. "It's this way," Smith explained,
the Indians weave blankets only for their eats especially, than for their clothing. It will be very hard on those that live far away from the trading stores, they say it takes a year or two to finish one blanket like that. What if they run out of coffee or sugar and if they get hungry for meat what could they do, get to work and weave a blanket quick so they can sell it and get some coffee and sugar and meat or maybe a sack of flour and something else.66

Indian women seem also to have rejected the view of both uplifers and preservationists that Indian women artists represented either pioneering women who willingly embraced assimilation or the most traditional members of their villages. Maria Martinez shaped a middle way between these two stark visions. When she and her husband Julian bought a Dodge sedan, Julian painted Indian pottery designs on it. Maria told one of her interviewers, “That was the first car in the pueblo! . . . It was a black car, all black. I can see the designs Julian put on that car. He painted it all around just like pots. You be surprised what I do with that car. We take everybody who is sick. And we get food. We help everybody with that car.”67 Martinez acquired the ultimate symbol of modern America, but rather than conveying modernity and individual achievement with their new car, she and her husband instead imbued the vehicle with values more associated with their pueblo.

Despite Indian women’s attempts to subtly and sometimes more overtly challenge white women’s assumptions, white women more often than not clung to their over-simplified visions of Indian women artists. Perhaps white women adhered to these visions so fiercely because they had more to do with their own attempts to articulate competing notions of white womanhood than they did with Indian women themselves. Even as they promoted Indian women artists and sought to mold them to their vision of white womanhood, white women in the Indian arts and crafts movement also shaped new roles for themselves. It was no coincidence that the Indian arts and crafts movement developed not only during a period in which the pace of modernization increased, but also at a time in which a dramatic upheaval in gender roles and notions of sexuality divided the country. Encompassing a wide variety of both female moral reformers and antimodern preservationist women, the movement served white women partly as a venue for defending old conceptions of gender roles or articulating alternative possibilities for women in modern America. 69
NOTES

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2. A notable and important exception to this is the work of Molly Mullin, an anthropologist. Her dissertation, "Consuming the American Southwest: Culture, Art, and Difference" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1993) deals extensively with gender.


4. See Brody, _Indian Painters_ and Molly Mullin, "The Patronage of Difference: Making Indian Art ‘Art, Not Ethnology,’” _Cultural Anthropology_ 7 (1992), 395–424. Modernity, modernism, modernization, and antimodernism are slippery terms. _Modernism_ refers to an intellectual movement that developed in the first decades of the twentieth century. _Modernization_ and _moder-
nity connotes a marked increase beginning in the late nineteenth century in the industrialization, bureaucratization, and rationalization of American society. Antimodernists opposed modernization, not modernism. In fact, many figures, such as Mabel Dodge Luhan, could be characterized as both modernists and antimodernists.

5. For an example of the large numbers of Pueblo women involved, see “Named Artists on Indian Arts Fund Collection Pottery,” Indian Arts Fund Potters folder, Indian Arts Fund (IAF) papers, IARC. The list contains few men. Of those included, most painted designs on their wives’ pottery. Many other southwestern Indian arts and crafts—Apache basketry and Navajo weaving, for example—were also primarily women’s endeavors.


7. Letter to Friends of Indian Art from Dorothy Stewart, Gina Knee, and Margretta S. Dietrich, New Mexico Association on Indian Affairs (NMAIA), 5 July 1940, IAF papers.

8. For example, see Elizabeth DeHuff, “The Procession of the Pots,” New Mexico Morning Examiner, 5 March 1939, clipping in Box 9, DeHuff Family papers, Center for Southwest Research (CSR), General Library, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.


11. Brody, Indian Painters, 67–68, 85; Bunzel, Pueblo Potter, 82–83; Alice Marriott, Maria: The Potter of San Ildefonso (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1948), 152, 155–57. Patrons referred to the first group of Indian painters they encountered as “self-taught” artists, connoting that they had received no formal training.


15. E. DeHuff, “The Renaissance of Southwest Indian Art,” unpublished ms., ca. 1926, Box 6, Folder 50; E. DeHuff, “American Primitives in Art,” unpublished ms., ca. 1924, Box 6, Folder 3; Elizabeth DeHuff to Mrs. [Dorothy Dunn] Kramer, n.d., Box 10, Folder 31; Elizabeth DeHuff to her mother, 11
March 1919, Box 10, Folder 25; Fred Kabotie “to whom it may concern,” May 1940, Box 7, Folder 24, all in DeHuff Family papers. See also Fred Kabotie, with Bill Belknap, Fred Kabotie: Hopi Indian Artist (Flagstaff: Museum of Arizona Press, 1977), 27–29; Mary Roberts Coolidge, The Rain-Makers: Indians of Arizona and New Mexico (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929), 103; Brody, Indian Painters, 101.


17. “Story of the Indian Arts Fund”; Ann Nolan Clark, “From Basement to Basement, ca. 1965, 1:93, IAF papers. Also see IAF Report, ca. 1963 or 1964, Appendix: Board of Trustees, 1:88, IAF papers and Margaret McKittrick to Kenneth Chapman, 22 November 1927, NMAIA correspondence, Chapman papers, IARC.

18. See Folder: “ISHAUU, Correspondence, 1923–1929, Box 1D; and Folder: Exposition of Indian Tribal Arts, Inc., 1931, Box 3D, Amelia Elizabeth White papers, School of American Research, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

19. See brief biography of Mabel Morrow, Mabel Morrow papers, Archives, Laboratory of Anthropology/Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, Santa Fe, New Mexico; Sally Hyer, One House, One Voice, One Heart: Native American Education at the Santa Fe Indian School (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1990), 31; Margaret Connell Szasz, Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination since 1928, 2d ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977), 48–76; and Brody, Indian Painters, 126–27, 128, 132.


23. Elizabeth DeHuff to Mrs. [Dorothy Dunn] Kramer, n.d., Box 10, Folder 31; E. DeHuff, “The Renaissance of Southwest Indian Art,” ca. 1926, Box 6, Folder 50, both in DeHuff Family papers.

24. For some of the best overviews of federal assimilation policy and its genesis in reform circles, see Frederick Hoxie, A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880–1920 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,


31. Southwest Indian Fair Committee, Report on Shiprock Fair, 1933, Indian Fairs, 1933, Chapman papers, IARC.

32. Kenneth Chapman to F. W. Hodge, 21 June 1933, Chapman papers, IARC.

33. Elizabeth DeHuff to Mrs. [Dorothy Dunn] Kramer, n.d., Box 10, Folder 31; E. DeHuff, “The Renaissance of Southwest Indian Art,” ca. 1926, Box 6, Folder 50, both in DeHuff Family papers.

34. Elizabeth DeHuff, “Marie, the Indian Pottery Maker,” *Everybody’s Magazine* (April 1926), clipping in Women of New Mexico collection, Maria Martinez, Box 2, item 37, CSR.


37. Clara True to Samuel Brosius, 22 March 1913, IRA papers, Reel 27; Clara True to Herbert Welsh, 19 April 1922, IRA papers, Reel 38; Clara True to Matthew Sniffen, 16 June 1919, IRA papers, Reel 34.
38. “History of Schools in Santa Clara,” John Collier papers, microfilm edition (Sanford, N.C.: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1980), Reel 29; and Clara True to Superintendent Crandall, 29 August 1902, Record Group (RG) 75, Pueblo Records, Letters Received from Day School Teacher Clara D. True, 1902-7 (Entry 38), Box 1, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Rocky Mountain Branch, Denver, Colorado. True to Brosius, 22 March 1913, IRA papers, Reel 27; True to Sniffen, 29 January 1912, IRA papers, Reel 25.

39. For cases in which True attempted to defend the virtue of young Indian women from the alleged sexual depravity of Indian men, see Clara True to Samuel Brosius, 30 October 1919 and 1 November 1919, IRA papers, Reel 34; True to Herbert Welsh, 19 April 1922, IRA papers, Reel 38; True to Superintendent Coggeshall, 13 September 1913, RG 75, Pueblo Records, Day School Correspondence (Entry 42), Box 2, Folder “T,” NARA, Denver. Also see chapter 2 in Margaret Jacobs, “Uplifting Cultures.”


42. Mary Austin, “The Forward Turn,” The Nation, 20 July 1927, 57.
45. Mary Austin, Taos Pueblo, photographs by Ansel Easton Adams (San Francisco: Grabhorn Press, 1930), no page numbers.
46. Elizabeth DeHuff, “Marie, the Indian Pottery Maker.”
47. Clara True to Superintendent Crandall, 20 January 1904, 18 February 1904, 31 March 1904, 14 April 1904, 16 April 1904, and 19 April 1904, RG 75, Pueblo Records, Entry 38, Box 1, NARA, Denver.
48. Mary Dissette to Herbert Welsh, 10 February 1906, IRA papers, Reel 18.
49. True to Herbert Welsh, 19 April 1922, IRA papers, Reel 38.
51. Bunzel, Pueblo Potter, 2, 62.
52. Bunzel, Pueblo Potter, 5, 58, 64.
54. Mary Austin, “Sex Emancipation through War,” Forum 49 (May 1918), 611, reprint available in Mary Austin papers, CSR.
55. Austin, Taos Pueblo. See also Parsons, “Waiyautitsa of Zuni, New Mexico,” reprinted in Babcock, Pueblo Mothers and Children, 95; Marriott, Maria, 8.
57. Bunzel, *Pueblo Potter*, 64.
62. Marriott, *Maria*, 173, 201–2. Bunzel also describes the emergence of black-on-black pottery, but seems unaware that for the Martinezes, it was an accident (*Pueblo Potter*, 82–83).
64. Elizabeth DeHuff, “Pueblo Episodes,” unpublished ms., n.d., Box 6, Folder 48, DeHuff Family papers.
65. Elizabeth DeHuff, “The Procession of the Pots,” *New Mexico Morning Examiner*, 5 March 1939, clipping in Box 9, DeHuff Family papers.
66. Letter from Sarah Smith to Henrietta Burton, included in Report on Navajo Women’s Conference on Rugmaking, 1933, Chapman papers, Laboratory of Anthropology.