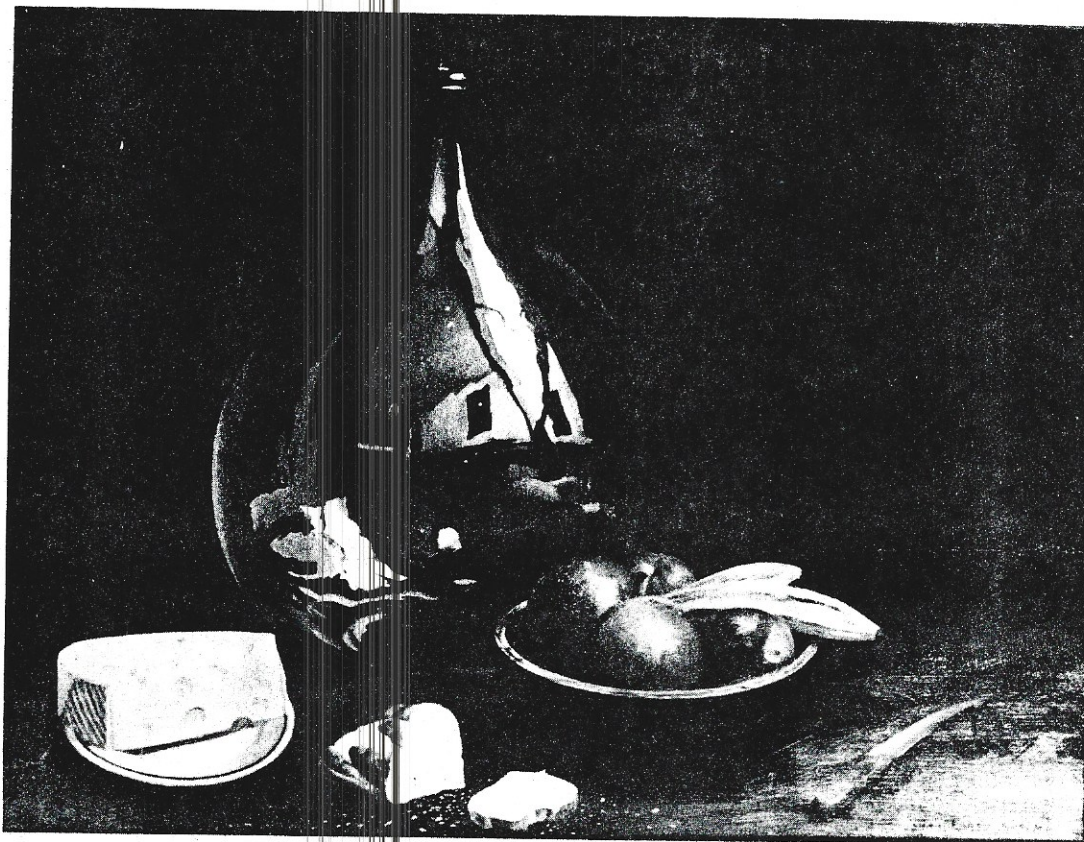




Paul Lantz, THE LAUGHING CLOWN



Paul Lantz, STILL LIFE WITH GLASS BOTTLE

Paul Lantz Returns

by L. Bundesen Waugh

Paul Lantz left Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 1939. Behind him, on the walls of historic buildings and in the homes of well-known art patrons, he left visible symbols of his life and work. Recently he returned to this Southwestern art capital; his vision had broadened; he had a pungent comment or two; and he had dozens of masterfully executed paintings.

"The work I did here before almost doesn't apply to the work I am doing now," he says. "I don't like message paintings and many of my paintings of that time had a message. I think an artist is influenced by the political and social climate of the times. At least I was then."

It has been said of Lantz's paintings — in their extreme and personal realism — that they have conjoined two schools. "School one" is the traditional figurative approach and "school two" is the contemporary realism vogue which is making its mark in the

70's. Actually Lantz doesn't care for any movement in painting. He feels it should all happen with the individual.

And, indeed it has happened to Lantz. When referring to Lantz's individuality, Randall Davy, a noted Southwestern painter, said, "The fact that the human mind can conceive unconsciously of the creation of something definitely new without an attachment to a school is in itself something to consider. But when the results are collectively and individually so intensely personal, honest and original, it is an event that not often occurs."

Since he left the Kansas City Art Institute in 1925, Lantz has been painting. "By painting," he says, "I hope to understand my environment. It's simply part of being alive. I don't paint for others; I've never been tempted to give others pleasure. It's a facile way to get into trouble."

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Even though he does not paint for others, Lantz is acutely aware of others. His subjects glow with the warmth of life and the realism which is inherent in each person and object. "If there is a choice between aesthetic finesse and what I see in life," he explains, "I'll let the 'art' go by and magnify the life part."

His eagerness to return to the West was somewhat dimmed because of the encroachment of civilization. "Upstate New York is a dreary place," Lantz says. "It's the little things that kill you there — like the weather and the grey skies. But on the other hand I have the feeling there is a plastic and chrome and neon culture imposed on the Indian and Spanish culture in New Mexico now. And those cultures seem almost to have quit."

"I guess I'm still living in the 19th century and yet I don't want to paint the Old West. I'm going to feel it out here and understand it. The mesas and mountains are still here but they seem to have changed too."

His verbal displeasure with progress continued. "Highways are a disaster, and the Rio Grande valley is a trashy place. If I were to paint it I'd paint the trash too. But basically I like the landscape here — there is so much intensity and design to its form."

Because his vision is so extremely personal, he finds his best paintings are of the subjects he likes best. "A still life can take me forever if I don't like the arrangement."

"But," he adds, "often there is nothing about a painting to decide. I simply paint it — even if it's not my favorite subject."

"Most of mankind won't accept self-discipline. Yet, it's one of the qualities that makes a good painter."

Traditional values should not be thrown out the window."

His concern with tradition in paintings spills over into his concern with outlets for today's artists. "The cliché thinking of universities has taken over the East," he says. "The liberals who love Dr. Zhivago see to it that no painter who paints in a style unacceptable to them has access to major outlets." Despite these feelings about outlets, Lantz's show at the Schnectedy Museum in New York this past fall was quite successful.

Lantz has painted murals, portraits, landscapes, illustrated children's books and worked in stone, wood and lithography. His works are on the walls of the La Fonda Hotel in Santa Fe and he executed the original Christmas murals for Madrid, New Mexico. Collectors include Mrs. Marshall Field, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., Cyrus McCormick, Mrs. Clyde Porter, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, University of New Mexico, and the Old Stone Fort Museum, New York.

Jamison Galleries in Santa Fe, directly across from the La Fonda hotel where his first murals were painted decades ago, represents Lantz.

His work has lost none of its brilliance but has continued to develop and mature. Lantz probably has more control with the brush than most other contemporary painters. Although his realistic approach appears traditional there is a continuing modernism to his vision. As Randall Davy said of Lantz, "His work has the age of the oldest and the youth of the most recent. In other words, he belongs to that rare group of individuals who have through their individualities dominated through time the less animated members of the art world." □

Paul Lantz, SCHOHARIE COUNTY LANDSCAPE

