



Donald W. Reynolds Center for the Visual Arts | E. L. Wiegand Gallery
160 West Liberty Street in downtown Reno | 775.329.3333 | nevadaart.org

MEDIA CONTACT:

Rebecca Eckland, Director of Communications and Marketing, 775.398.7263, rebecca.eckland@nevadaart.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

MODERNISM MEETS THE WEST IN *SAGEBRUSH AND SOLITUDE*: MAYNARD DIXON IN NEVADA

Reno, NV (March 2, 2024) - *Sagebrush and Solitude: Maynard Dixon in Nevada*, which will be on display at the Nevada Museum of Art March 2 – July 28, 2024, is the first comprehensive exhibition to document Dixon’s early wanderings and extended visits to Nevada and the Eastern Sierra. From 1901 to 1939, Dixon made several trips from his California home to paint and sketch the striking landscapes of the Great Basin and Sierra Nevada region. Among his favorite subjects to paint were old homesteads, wild horses and stands of cottonwood trees—images that conjure memories of a romanticized bygone era before modernization brought change to many of Nevada’s open and pristine landscapes. The exhibition features nearly 150 of Dixon’s paintings of Nevada and the Eastern Sierra, many of them rarely or ever seen before.

From his first Nevada sketching trip with fellow artist Edward Borein in 1901, to his month-long commission documenting the construction of the Boulder Dam in Las Vegas in 1934, Dixon captured the beauty of Nevada’s open spaces as well as its developing landscape in the face of a changing economy and world. The extent to which Dixon engaged with the people and places of Nevada has not been fully examined until now.

Sagebrush and Solitude follows Dixon as he crisscrossed the state over the course of nearly forty years, making trips from his home in San Francisco to paint and sketch in search of what he called his “sagebrush inspiration.” Historian Kevin Starr (1940-2017) once noted that a driving impulse for Dixon was “a sense of imminent loss” of the geography, history, folklore and culture of the American Frontier on the Old West, and that he desired to record it through his art—and words—before it vanished.

Among Dixon’s favorite places to paint were the northernmost regions of Nevada, not far from the Oregon border where he depicted multiple views of Thousand Creek Gorge, Virgin Valley, and Alder Creek Ranch. Dixon also frequented Carson City, where he often painted the changing colors of poplar and cottonwood trees throughout the year, as well as venturing further afield to Lake Lahontan, Pyramid Lake, and the Eastern Sierra community of Lone Pine, California, where he made some of his most remarkable landscape paintings of the Inyo Mountains.

In 1934, Dixon was commissioned by the federal Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) to document the construction of the Boulder Dam (now known as the Hoover Dam) not far from Las Vegas. According to Art Historian John Ott, Ph.D., Dixon’s Boulder Dam paintings “...depart dramatically from the nostalgic frontier scenes with which he established his reputation. These two dozen artworks are a critical watershed of his oeuvre...mark[ing] a stylistic departure that would continue to evolve through his next series of paintings.” This

exhibition and book will feature numerous rarely seen paintings and drawings from Dixon's suite of Boulder Dam works.

Wearing a wide-brimmed Stetson hat and cowboy boots, Dixon fashioned a persona that lent an air of authenticity to his search for the "Old West" as he imagined it. At the same time, Dixon pushed stylistic boundaries and helped to usher in a new style of Modernism to the state of Nevada in the 1920s. Given his immersion in the San Francisco art world of the early twentieth century, Dixon was exposed to national and international trends and artistic styles, such as Cubism, that emphasized the underlying geometric shapes and forms of the landscape and other subjects. Unlike earlier landscape painters in Nevada, Dixon began to emphasize the shapes and forms he saw in the state's landscapes. In doing so, he forged a new artistic vocabulary that was uniquely his own.

This exhibition is curated by Ann M. Wolfe, Andrea and John C. Deane Family Chief Curator and Associate Director, with scholarly contributions from Donald J. Hagerty, and independent scholar and author/contributor to six books on Dixon, including *Desert Dreams: The Art and Life of Maynard Dixon*.

The Book

The exhibition is accompanied by the publication of a major 250+ page book co-published by Rizzoli and Electra in New York and the Nevada Museum of Art. *Sagebrush and Solitude: Maynard Dixon in Nevada* is edited by Ann M Wolfe, the Museum's Chief Curator and Associate Director. Longtime Maynard Dixon biographer, Donald Hagerty, who has authored six books on Dixon, has contributed a key essay on Dixon in Nevada. Other major contributors to the book include Dr. John Ott, art historian at James Madison University, who has written extensively on Dixon and the Boulder Dam, as well as Dr. Ann Keniston, Professor of English with a specialty in American poetry at the University of Nevada, Reno, who has written on Dixon's poetry. The book has been designed by award-winning designer Brad Bartlett, the Museum's longtime Creative Director based in Los Angeles.

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The Nevada Museum of Art is the only art museum in Nevada accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). A private, nonprofit organization founded in 1931, the statewide institution is supported by its membership as well as sponsorships, gifts and grants. Through its permanent collections, original exhibitions and programming, and E.L. Cord Museum School, the Nevada Museum of Art provides meaningful opportunities for people to engage with a range of art and education experiences. The Museum's **Center for Art + Environment** is an internationally-recognized research center dedicated to supporting the practice, study, and awareness of creative interactions between people and their environments. The Center houses unique archive materials from more than 1,000 artists working on all seven continents, including Cape Farewell, Michael Heizer, Walter de Maria, Lita Albuquerque, Burning Man, the Center for Land Use Interpretation, Great Basin Native Artists Archive, Ugo Rondinone's *Seven Magic Mountains*, and Trevor Paglen's *Orbital Reflector*. Learn more at nevadaart.org.

Land Acknowledgement

The Nevada Museum of Art acknowledges the traditional homelands of the *Wa She Shu* (Washoe), *Numu* (Northern Paiute), *Newe* (Western Shoshone), and *Nuwu* (Southern Paiute) people of the Great Basin. This includes the 28 tribal nations that exist as sovereign nations and continue as stewards of this land. We appreciate the opportunity to live and learn on these Indigenous homelands.