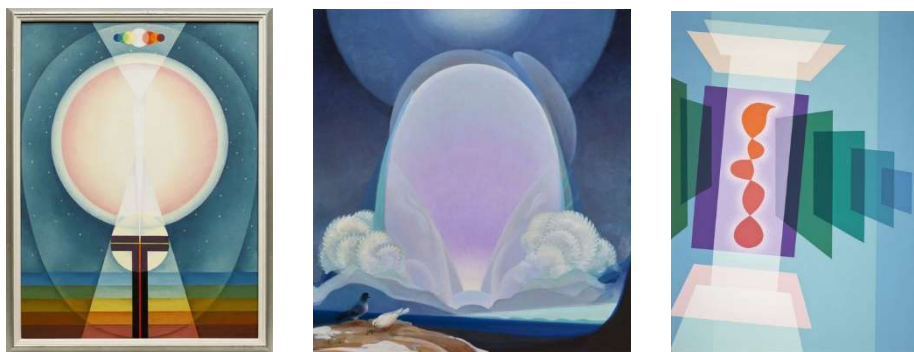


**Exhibition:** *Another World: The Transcendental Painting Group, 1938–1945*

**Dates:** December 18, 2022—June 19, 2023

**Location:** Resnick Pavilion



(Image captions on page 3)

(Los Angeles, CA—December 5, 2022) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *Another World: The Transcendental Painting Group, 1938–1945*, the first comprehensive museum exhibition devoted to the Transcendental Painting Group.

In 1938 in New Mexico, a loose configuration of artists came together to form the Transcendental Painting Group. Led by New Mexico painters Raymond Jonson and Emil Bisttram, and joined by painters such as Agnes Pelton and Lawren Harris, the members of the group sought to explore spiritually heightened abstraction by employing free-wheeling symbols and imagery drawn from the collective unconscious. According to their manifesto they strove "to carry painting beyond the appearance of the physical world, through new concepts of space, color, light and design to imaginative realms that are idealistic and spiritual." Due to the onset of World War II the group was short-lived, but their paintings continue to emphasize how abstraction can be used in service of the spiritual.

Organized by independent curator Michael Duncan and the Crocker Art Museum, *Another World* showcases 80 works by 11 artists associated with the group, with paintings and works on paper from the 1920s through the 1950s, including four works from LACMA's collection by Emil Bisttram, Ed Garman, Raymond Jonson, and Agnes Pelton. The LACMA presentation is curated by Leah Lehmbeck, Department Head, European Painting & Sculpture and American Art. The exhibition will require no digital guides, maintaining a calm, technology-free environment to complement the meditative nature of the artworks.

“This show is poised to change how we view the art of the United States from the first half of the 20th century,” said Leah Lehmbeck. “Because these artists were painting beyond the established market and critics gathered on the east coast, their work was largely unknown at the time. Only recently has their artistic output been reexamined more broadly, and it is the spiritual nature of their abstraction that seems to resonate during these challenging, even rancorous times. There is a kind of fundamental hope to these works that was as necessary during the decade of the 1930s as it is now.”

“In 1986, spirituality and abstraction was the subject of a groundbreaking LACMA exhibition, *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890–1985*. Thirty-five years later, we are bringing *Another World* to Los Angeles, expanding our perspectives of the art of the 20th century in partnership with the Crocker Art Museum,” said Michael Govan, LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director. “We are also thrilled to contribute four works from our permanent collection, in which American abstraction and artists from the Southwest are a unique strength.”

*Another World* makes its final stop at LACMA after presentations at the Albuquerque Museum, Albuquerque, New Mexico; Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma; the Baker Museum, Naples, Florida; and the Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, California.

### **Exhibition Highlights**

#### **Agnes Pelton, *Winter*, 1933**

Pelton’s works often incorporate botanical and natural forms. While she painted traditional landscapes to support herself, her abstract paintings were imbued with personal significance. The motif of a floating egg-form hovering in an ethereal blue background recurs often in Pelton’s work, notably in the painting *Winter*. Through subtle light modulations, even in her abstract works Pelton captured the hallucinatory aura of the desert sky and landscape. Light was the guiding force, she explained, “the keynote of these pictures. Not as it plays on objects in the natural world, but through the space and forms, seen on the inner field of vision.”

#### **Emil Bisttram, *Oversoul*, 1941**

Bisttram stated that he produced paintings while meditating on creation, both in general and in particular. He also responded to Theosophy’s foundation in mathematical relationships that purportedly connect reality and the spiritual world. For this cofounder of the TPG, the symmetry of his compositions, his allusion to incipient forms such as the egg, as well as astronomical allusions, as found here in the stars, were paramount. It was through a series of art-school mentors that Bisttram fostered his lifetime commitment to abstraction and Theosophical thought, and which would have a lasting effect in others after founding the Taos School of Art in 1932. There he indoctrinated students with his ideas about symbolism, spirituality, and the geometric compositional principle of Dynamic Symmetry.

#### **Raymond Jonson, *Oil no. 9*, 1942**

A cofounder of the TPG and a critical figure in expanding Southwest art beyond landscape painting and regional subjects, Jonson incorporated the light, color, and spirit of New Mexico's dramatic settings in rich abstract compositions. Oil no. 9, created during his several-decade tenure teaching at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, presents his interest in abstract art, and his move away from the representational world toward pure form, which he termed "absolute painting." He described the term: "By absolute painting we mean painting which is entirely creative...These environments are invented and imagined by the painter and knowingly have no connection with physical environments. These environments are therefore of another world, the inner or spiritual." In Theosophic and occult belief systems, vibrations are responsible for realizing the material world. These vibrations are suggested in Jonson's *Oil no. 9* through the shapes radiating outward from the central form.

### **Publication**

This exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue published by DelMonico Books / The Crocker Art Museum, edited with text by Michael Duncan, curator of the exhibition, with additional texts by Scott Shields, MaLin Wilson Powell, Catherine Whitney, Ilene Susan Fort, and Dane Rudhyar.

### **Credit**

The exhibition was organized by the Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA.

This exhibition was made possible with support from the Henry Luce Foundation.



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### **About LACMA**

Located on the Pacific Rim, LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of more than 149,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of artistic expression across the globe. Committed to showcasing a multitude of art histories, LACMA exhibits and interprets works of art from new and unexpected points of view that are informed by the region's rich cultural heritage and diverse population. LACMA's spirit of experimentation is reflected in its work with artists, technologists, and thought leaders as well as in its regional, national, and global partnerships to share collections and programs, create pioneering initiatives, and engage new audiences.

**Location:** 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036. [lacma.org](http://lacma.org)

**Image captions:** Emil Bisttram, *Oversoul*, c. 1941, private collection, courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York; Agnes Pelton, *Winter*, 1933, Crocker Art Museum Purchase; Paul LeBaron Thiebaud, George and Bea Gibson Fund, Denise and Donald C. Timmons, Melza and Ted Barr, Sandra Jones, Linda M. Lawrence, Nancy Lawrence and Gordon Klein, Nancy S. and Dennis N. Marks, William L. Snider and Brian Cameron, Stephenson Foundation, Alan Templeton,

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