

Louis Ribak 1903 - 1979

American artist Louis Ribak developed contrasting artistic styles that reflected his intensely personal responses to urban social turmoil and, later, the powerful spirituality of the New Mexico landscape. Ribak's art evolved from the harsh, realistic depiction of an urban America between world wars to spiritual abstractions of the powerful panorama of the American West. In the 1930's, Ribak painted bold, graphic scenes of the aftermath of the Great Depression, bluntly depicting the poverty and strife of life in New York's tenement districts. Ribak's gritty social commentary, set in the mean streets of his birth, was well received in the city, and his work was shown in major museums and galleries in New York. Though his friends were exploring abstraction as a response to the changing world, Ribak depicted in a bold, realistic manner what he knew - poverty, strife, social turmoil. In 1944 Ribak moved to Taos, New Mexico, with his wife, painter Bea Mandelman. The forceful artist was deeply moved by the power of his new environment. He turned from social commentary to personal interpretation of the mountains of northern New Mexico, pueblo culture, and the intensity of New Mexico light. Retaining the vigor of his early works, Ribak lightened his pallet to blend with the New Mexico landscape, and his work reflected a new spirituality. By the mid 1950's, Ribak's works were abstractions. They were in large part sensitively organized shapes, with color used as accent, encouraging a completely emotional response to subjects only hinted at. Influenced by social upheaval, his abstract contemporaries, and a highly personal view of the New Mexico landscape, Louis Ribak evolved from stark realist to spiritual abstractionist.

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