

Grand Canyon Trilogy, First Movement, c. 1927
Oil on canvas, 45 x 56 in.
Collection of the Jonson Gallery of the UNM Art Museum
82.221.0656



Grand Canyon Trilogy, Second Movement, c. 1927
Oil on canvas, 67 ½ x 51 ¾ x 9 in.
Collection of the Jonson Gallery of the UNM Art Museum
82.221.0668

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“It is immensely gorgeous—
a hell of a hole in the ground...
full of mystery and awesome.”

-Raymond Jonson



Grand Canyon Trilogy, Third Movement, c. 1927
Oil on canvas, 45 x 56 in.
Collection of the Jonson Gallery of the UNM Art Museum
82.221.0658.

GRAND CANYON TRILOGY

“No one that I know of or anything I’ve seen expresses it at all... It is the strongest thing I have seen in nature,” Jonson wrote about the Grand Canyon. Months later, after concluding that one canvas alone could not capture the monumental feelings he had at the Canyon, he completed this Trilogy. He wrote to a friend, “If you could see the Grand Canyon group, I believe you would feel that here I have made a statement that is final. That does not mean that I have reached the ultimate in these three canvases but only that they are brought together into a powerful expression of feeling.”



Portrait of a Painter (Self-Portrait), 1927,
Oil on canvas, 50 x 33 in.
Collection of the Jonson
Gallery of the UNM
Art Museum
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The flat-topped mesas, eroded canyons, tent rocks, and intense desert colors of New Mexico inspired Jonson. But, instead of just reproducing what he saw, Jonson explored his personal experience of the Southwest landscape through painting. “It has been my hope to so purify, simplify and organize a work that it expresses completely my reaction, or emotion, or sensation, in regard to nature, life, and...even to the things that are not visible but have a profound emotional reaction upon one,” Jonson explained to a friend.

Notice that the way Jonson depicts New Mexico’s landscape in *Earth Rhythms No. 9*—the broken-up forms, harsh color contrasts, repetition of shapes—reminds us of *Grand Canyon Trilogy, First Movement* which he painted the next year.



Cloud Forms and Mesas No. 3, 1928
Oil on canvas, 33 x 44 in.
Collection of the Jonson Gallery of the UNM Art Museum
82.221.1944

Jonson approached the land in two ways: “First and most important by contemplation and getting the feeling of mood...Second, by drawing patiently all objects, their forms and manner of receiving light...One should have the knowledge of detail with the feeling of suggestiveness.” Jonson takes his experience of the New Mexico landscape and sky and abstracts it in *Cloud Forms and Mesas No. 3*. “It is the inner significance of things that counts, and that is a quality that is abstract... It (the abstract) seems to be the life and soul of painting...In other words, a work results from some actual experience. From that point it becomes pure creation,” Jonson wrote to a friend.

“I think some years ago I created my own environment and I am still working in it. You might call it an inner environment if you like. My works are really contrasts to the environment in which they exist. Around us we have realism, strife, pain and greed. I wish to present the other side of life, namely the feeling of order, joy and freedom,” he said in an interview.

Raymond Jonson

Raymond (JONE-sun)

1891-1982

Raymond Jonson made a life-changing decision on his summer visit to Santa Fe in 1922. “During a two or three day camping and sketching trip, I suddenly realized that this was a turning point and a new beginning was necessary.” Jonson determined to leave Chicago and move to the Southwest. Once in Santa Fe, he confided in his diary, “Spreading out in every direction is material, marvelous material—work for a life time.”

Jonson identifies himself as a painter of landscapes in *Portrait of a Painter (Self Portrait)*. Notice the painting of *Earth Rhythms No. 9* leaning against the wall in his studio. “In expressing my idea of this country, I struggled especially to obtain a unity—a unity of all the means used such as form, design, color, rhythms, line.”



Earth Rhythms No. 9, 1926
Oil on canvas, 45 x 52 in.
Collection of the Jonson Gallery of the UNM Art Museum
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