

Donald J. Hagerty retired in November 1993 from the University of California–Davis after twenty-two years, having served as academic administrator for the internship program and lecturer in the American Studies Program, teaching courses in folklore and corporate cultures. He now works as an independent scholar and consultant on the art and cultures of the American West.

His biography of Dixon, *Desert Dreams: The Art and Life of Maynard Dixon*, was published in 1993 by Gibbs Smith and revised in fall 1998. In addition to *The Art of Maynard Dixon*, Hagerty wrote a companion volume, *The Life of Maynard Dixon*, which debuted in 2010. Other publications include *Beyond the Visible Terrain: The Art of Ed Mell* (1996), *Canyon de Chelly: One Hundred Years of Painting and Photography* (1996), *Leading the West: One Hundred Contemporary Painters and Sculptors* (1997), and *Holding Ground: The Art of Gary Ernest Smith* (1999).

Hagerty has also written extensively on art and artists for a variety of magazines and other publications as well as for the Book Club of California. In addition, he has given numerous lectures for museums, libraries, and galleries. In 2002, he was appointed a member of the Board of Directors for the California State Library Foundation and currently serves as secretary for the organization. He and his wife live in Davis, California.

Front Cover:  
*Wild Horse Country*,  
Humboldt County, Nevada,  
1927, oil on canvas, 25 x 30 inches,  
Gift of Mrs. Henry W. Poett Jr.,  
Society of California Pioneers

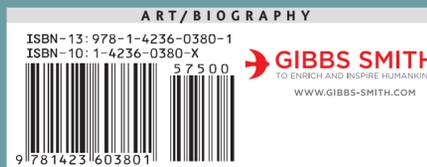
Back Cover:  
*Cowboy and Packhorse*,  
1934, oil on canvas, 25 x 30 inches,  
collection of Ray and Kay Harvey

Jacket Designed by Kurt Wahlner



“He came to San Francisco as quite a young man, with remarkable facility and an extraordinary visual memory, beyond anything I’ve ever encountered. He could capture anything, anything. That very narrow flexible hand of his could put anything he wanted it to on a piece of paper.”

—Dorothea Lange



The Art of MAYNARD DIXON

HAGERTY



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From 1900 until his death in 1946, Maynard Dixon wandered, explored, and observed the American West’s physical and cultural landscapes, creating a poetry of place through drawings, paintings, and murals. Active, outspoken, sometimes a cantankerous participant in San Francisco and the West’s life, he developed the most enduring themes in his art by the 1920s and 1930s: the majestic western landscape, the mysticism of the Native American, and—briefly, during the Great Depression—images of people caught in the grip of economic and social hardship.

Profusely illustrated with numerous new images of paintings and other artwork, this book traces the emergence of Dixon as a transitional figure in the art history of America. Throughout his life, Dixon went through an array of responses to the American West: illustrative, narrative, mythic, and—finally, when he adapted to the rise of modernism— aesthetic. Poems, letters, and essays written by Dixon support his responses to the dynamic changes in American art in the early decades of the twentieth century.

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72. *No-Pa-No-Mah*,  
1923, pen and ink on paper, 14 x 11 inches,  
private collection, photograph courtesy of Coeur d'Alene Art Auction



*Ma-ko-to,*  
(detail) 1923, oil on canvas board,  
19 x 16 inches,  
private collection

## TWO

# Inhabiting Space: People of the West

S ometime in late 1919, in a lonely and self-pitying mood, Dixon started to frequent San Francisco's galleries more often, trying to understand the implications of modernism on both American and his own art. At the Hill Tolerton Print Room, he met a young portrait photographer named Dorothea Lange. In March of 1920, they were married. Dixon was forty-five at the time of the marriage; Lange only twenty-four. Lange, of course, would eventually achieve acclaim as one of America's greatest Depression-era photographers. They settled into a small house on San Francisco's Russian Hill and eventually had two sons: Daniel born in 1925 and John in 1928. Encouraged by Lange, Dixon reduced his work with Foster and Kleiser, then stopped altogether in 1921, now able to devote full time to painting. Not only engrossed with the mythical West, Dixon now looked like a westerner, drawing admiring glances and comments as he strolled San Francisco's streets, attired in a finely tailored black suit, string tie, black Stetson hat, and polished Texas-style cowboy boots, each step ominously answered by the rattlesnake headband on his hat. He often clutched an ebony sword cane in one hand, the top headed in silver with his distinctive thunderbird symbol. Dixon and Lange were part of a writers' and artists' circle of bohemian friends that included Gottardo Piazzoni, Ralph Stackpole, Imogen Cunningham, Roi Partridge, Ansel Adams, Otis Oldfield, Anne Bremer, architect Timothy Pfleuger, journalist Fremont Older, and the philanthropist Albert Bender, Colonel Erskine Scott Wood and his wife, the poet Sara Bard Field, and book dealer Paul Tomanoczy and his wife, Winona.

During this period, Dixon developed a deep friendship with the distinguished composer Ernest Bloch, who sometimes played for him in his studio. Winona Tomanoczy recalled that Dixon, after reading the just-published Robinson Jeffers volume of poetry, *The Roan Stallion*, had sunk into one of his periods of dark depression.



176. *Homeless Man*,  
1938, oil on canvas board, 10 x 14 inches,  
collection of Ray and Kay Harvey