

# Virginia Couse Leavitt, Art Historian & Preservationist, 92

TAOS, N.M. — Virginia “Ginnie” Couse Leavitt, the co-founder and guiding light of Couse-Sharp Historic Site (CSHS) in Taos, N.M., died November 26, 2024, in Taos at the age of 92. Leavitt was the principal scholar on the work of her grandfather Eanger Irving Couse, the first president of the Taos Society of Artists (TSA). Along with her late husband, Ernest Leavitt, she was the driving force behind preserving the archive, home and studio of Couse along with the property of neighbor Joseph Henry Sharp, also one of the original six members of the TSA.

“Speaking for the staff, board and others associated with the Site, we are bereft,” said Davison Koenig, CSHS executive director and curator. “That’s an old-fashioned word, but as a fine writer and a lover of language, Ginnie would approve, I believe. Even through her last years, she has been present in all our lives, keenly interested and involved in the programs and operations of the site. The preservation of the buildings and grounds and ensuring that the archive and collections remain available and relevant to future scholars through The Lunder Research Center, was her life’s work.”

Leavitt, who lived as a child at the Couse Home and returned during the summers throughout her life, spent some 35 years researching and writing her masterwork, *Eanger Irving Couse: The Life and Times of an American Artist, 1866-1936*, which was published in 2019 by the University of Oklahoma Press. The 400-page book represents one facet of her legacy. She devoted decades to main-

taining and obtaining records that formed the seed of the impressive archive at the heart of The Lunder Research Center. Over the past several years, she worked with CSHS staff to expand the Couse Catalog Raisonné, which is becoming the most detailed, multimedia rich and dynamic data collection on a single artist currently extant.

From its founding until her death, Leavitt served as secretary of the board of directors of The Couse Foundation, the non-profit organization that owns and operates CSHS. Carl Jones, former chair and president of The Couse Foundation, fondly recalled his long relationship with Ginnie and their partnership to achieve her vision for the Site. “To say that someone is irreplaceable is, in most cases, an overstatement; but in Ginnie’s case it was absolutely true because she literally was our living connection to members of the Taos Society of Artists and to the history of the Site,” he said. He added that “her personal connection to the past, coupled with her scholarship, enthusiasm and inspirational leadership, were the ‘magic sauce’ that made it possible for the Foundation to re-imagine the Couse-Sharp Historic Site as the world-class campus it is today, and it was my great honor to sit by her side during that exhilarating journey.”

The Leavitts spent summers in Taos for many years repairing and restoring the property, giving tours to curious passers-by and continuing her research. In 2001, with the help of an attorney and art collector named Al Olson and other associates, they started a nonprofit. “In this way, the Couse family



Virginia Couse Leavitt photographed in 2019 with the first published copy of her biography of Eanger Irving Couse. Tim Newton photo courtesy the Couse-Sharp Historic Site.

could entrust their national treasure to dedicated volunteers and museum staff to keep it safe and thriving for decades to come,” explained Rich Rinehart, a former president and chair of the organization.

On a more personal note, Rinehart added, “Over the 11 years that I was privileged to work with Ginnie at the CSHS, I learned to listen for her deep insights and profound love for the site and what was called for in the moment. I will always treasure our time together, her gentle ways yet firm hand in guiding the Foundation and teaching me how to both lead and follow at the same time. We will all miss her so.”

Marie Watkins, PhD, professor emerita of art history at Furman University and a member of the CSHS National Advisory

Committee, said, “Ginnie meticulously researched the details of the life of E. I. Couse, his art and collections. She presented countless public presentations locally and throughout the country, and her biography is the definitive scholarly source on Couse. Through her hands-on effort, she realized her dream to transform the Couse property into the epicenter for research and scholarship of the Taos Society of Artists and other early Taos artists. The historic site is the tangible conservation of cultural identity, where one feels the Taos past, present and future.”

Current chair of the Board Elizabeth Crittenden Palacios noted that Leavitt had been named a Remarkable Woman of Taos in 2012 and a Taos Unsung Hero in 2019. “Ginnie was a

visionary leader whose tireless dedication to the arts and the history of the Taos community has shaped the cultural landscape for generations to come,” she said. “Her commitment to preserving the legacy of her grandfather and her unwavering support of the local artistic community have profoundly affected all who knew her. She was a respected preservationist and a dear friend and mentor to many. Her passion, generosity and visionary spirit will be greatly missed, but her work and the foundation she built will continue to inspire and uplift future generations.”

Koenig added, “Ginnie is the soul of Couse-Sharp Historic Site, and I say that in the present tense. She created and embodied a culture of not only dedication and excellence but also close relationships and goodwill. These are key to why and how we have been successful in our mission. She called the good luck and can-do spirit of this organization ‘Couse mojo,’ and she believed in it fully. We’ve always suspected that the mojo was really her love and care, and we will carry that and all facets of her legacy with us into the future.”

For additional information on Leavitt’s life, see the remembrance prepared by her family on Legacy.com. A public memorial service in Taos is planned for May 2025; keep an eye on [www.couse-sharp.org](http://www.couse-sharp.org) for details.

In lieu of flowers, those who wish to honor Ginnie’s memory can donate to the Virginia Couse Leavitt Memorial Fund at Couse-Sharp Historic Site, as she would have wished. For information, [www.couse-sharp.org/donate](http://www.couse-sharp.org/donate).

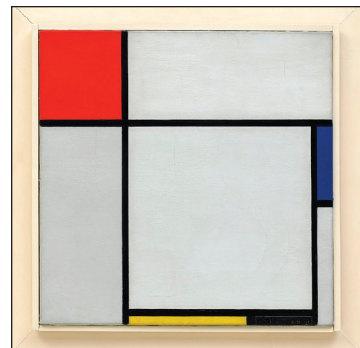
## The Guggenheim Museum Presents ‘Piet Mondrian: Ever Further’

NEW YORK CITY — Through April 20, the Guggenheim New York presents a selection of paintings and drawings by Piet Mondrian (Dutch, 1872-1944) from its singular collection, one of the most representative in the world. “Piet Mondrian: Ever further” traces the steady evolution of Mondrian’s art, from his early nature drawings in the Netherlands through his turn to radical abstraction in Paris, which continued into his final years in New York. The exhibition reveals the artist’s life-long pursuit to move painting away “ever further” from the representation of nature to render a universal essence or spirit behind the appearances of the world. Showcasing 18 works, including two rare sketchbooks and a key loan from the Clark Art Institute, together for the first time, the exhibition provides a comprehensive narrative of Mondrian’s artistic path.

“Piet Mondrian: Ever further” is the first in a new exhibition series, “Collection in Focus,” that draws from the Guggenheim’s collection. The series is part of a reinvigorated effort to make the Guggenheim’s world-renowned holdings more accessible to the public.

“We often hear from our visitors that they want to see more of the greatest works from our collection of modern and contemporary art. We do, too, and will present them in focus shows that allow our audiences to engage with specific artists or themes in revelatory and delightful ways,” said Mariët Westermann, director and CEO of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation.

Westermann, curator of “Piet Mondrian: Ever further,” con-



“Composition” by Piet Mondrian, 1929, oil on canvas in artist’s frame, 17¾ by 17-7/8 inches. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Gift, Estate of Katherine S. Dreier, 1953 53.1347. © Mondrian/Holtzman Trust.

tinued, “It is a joy to start with Mondrian, including works he made in my Dutch hometown of Laren. His greatest innovations in Paris coincided with the inventions of the artists in the Guggenheim’s simultaneous rotunda exhibition, ‘Harmony and Dissonance: Orphism in Paris 1910-1930,’ but Mondrian took abstraction in an entirely different direction. His pictures in the Guggenheim allow us to reconstruct his creative journey step by step, and they help us see him as the experimental painter he was — not just the geometric designer he is often thought to be.”

Mondrian dedicated his life’s work to the development of abstract art. It took him years to arrive at his signature compositions, in which horizontal and vertical black lines form right-angled panes filled with shades of white and black and the primary colors red, yellow and blue. Crafted to resist any illusion of depth, these paintings were a revelation when first introduced and today are recognized around the world. Through his involvement with the design and art movement known as De Stijl (The Style), Mondrian communicated that

abstract painting could be a blueprint for modern life, urbanized and ever further removed from nature. Over the decades, his ideas have spawned design innovations and branding that vastly exceeded his intent, from furniture and fashion to hotels and even software.

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum is at 1071 Fifth Avenue. For information, [www.guggenheim.org](http://www.guggenheim.org).

**MOVIE POSTERS**  
**WANTED**  
Highest Prices Paid for: lobby cards, 1 sheet, 3 sheets, window cards, glass slides  
**773-525-9152**  
email: [posterboss@aol.com](mailto:posterboss@aol.com)

**WANTED**  
Antiques of all kinds. Will buy for cash or will sell on consignment — no lot too large or too small.  
**B & S Auction Service**  
Thomas Barrows  
P.O. Box 141  
Portland, Conn.  
Tel 860-342-2540

**WANTED**  
1957-1960 CORVETTE  
in clean original condition  
Please send photos and price to  
[bevt@comcast.net](mailto:bevt@comcast.net)

To Place An Ad  
Call 203-426-8036

**GET MAX CASH!**  
for Sports Cards  
and Memorabilia



Call (732) 290-8000  
Email [sell@lelands.com](mailto:sell@lelands.com)

