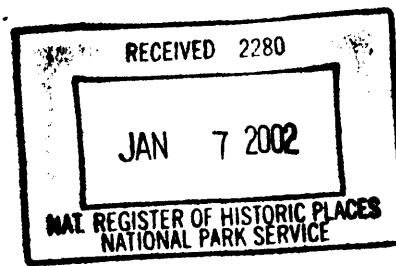


(Oct. 1990)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**



**1. NAME OF PROPERTY**

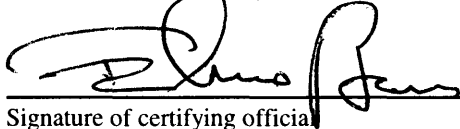
**HISTORIC NAME:** Jonson Gallery and Residence  
**OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER:** Jonson Gallery

**2. LOCATION**

**STREET & NUMBER:** 1909 Las Lomas Road NE **NOT FOR PUBLICATION:** N/A  
**CITY OR TOWN:** Albuquerque **VICINITY:** N/A  
**STATE:** New Mexico **CODE:** NM **COUNTY:** Bernalillo **CODE:** 001 **ZIP CODE:** 87131

**3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  
\_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of  
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  
 meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_ nationally  
\_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_ locally. (\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)



12/06/01  
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
(\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

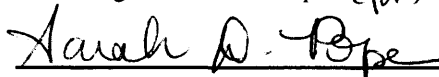
**4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper (for)

Date of Action



2/22/02

---

**5. CLASSIFICATION**

---

**OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY:** Public-state

**CATEGORY OF PROPERTY:** Building

<b>NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:</b>	<b>CONTRIBUTING</b>	<b>NONCONTRIBUTING</b>
	1	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	0	0 STRUCTURES
	0	1 OBJECTS
	1	1 TOTAL

**NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER:** 0

**NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING:** N/A

---

**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

---

**HISTORIC FUNCTIONS:** DOMESTIC/single dwelling = House; TRADE/professional = Artist's studio;  
RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum = Art gallery

**CURRENT FUNCTIONS:** DOMESTIC/single dwelling = House; TRADE/professional = Artist's studio;  
RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum = Art gallery

---

**7. DESCRIPTION**

---

**ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:** LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS: Pueblo (Revival)

**MATERIALS:** FOUNDATION CONCRETE  
WALLS BRICK; STUCCO  
ROOF WOOD; ASPHALT  
OTHER WOOD; STEEL

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION** (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-13).

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

---

**APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA**

- A** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY.
- B** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST.
- C** PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION.
- D** PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD, INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY.

**CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS:** N/A

**AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:** Art; Education; Architecture

**PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE:** 1949-1951

**SIGNIFICANT DATES:** 1949; 1950

**SIGNIFICANT PERSON:** Raymond Jonson

**CULTURAL AFFILIATION:** N/A

**ARCHITECT/BUILDER:** John Gaw Meem, Hugo Zehner, and Associates, architects; K.L. House, builder; Don Schlegel, architect; 1967 addition.

**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE** (see continuation sheets 8-14 through 8-20).

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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES**

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY** (see continuation sheet 9-21).

**PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS):** N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:**

- State historic preservation office (*Historic Preservation Division, Office of Cultural Affairs*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

---

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

---

**ACREAGE OF PROPERTY:** less than one acre

**UTM REFERENCES**    Zone Easting    Northing  
                          1 13    352250    3883701

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION** (see continuation sheet 10-22)

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION** (see continuation sheet 10-22)

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**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

---

**NAME/TITLE:** Robert Ware, Curator, with assistance from Historic Preservation Division staff

**ORGANIZATION:** Jonson Gallery

**DATE:** 01/23/01

**STREET & NUMBER:** 1909 Las Lomas Road NE

**TELEPHONE:** 505-277-4967

**CITY OR TOWN:** Albuquerque

**STATE:** NM

**ZIP CODE:** 87131

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**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION**

**CONTINUATION SHEETS**

**MAPS** Albuquerque East 7.5 Minute Series U.S.G.S. Quadrangle Map (see attached)

**PHOTOGRAPHS** (see continuation sheet Photo-23)

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS**

---

**PROPERTY OWNER**

---

**NAME:** University of New Mexico

**STREET & NUMBER:** Scholes Hall, Room 160

**TELEPHONE:** 505-277-2626

**CITY OR TOWN:** Albuquerque

**STATE:** NM

**ZIP CODE:** 87131

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

Jonson Gallery and Residence  
Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, New Mexico

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## Summary

The Jonson Gallery and Residence is a two-story, flat-roofed building that served as the residence, studio, workshop, and gallery for the New Mexico modernist painter Raymond Jonson. Located on the University of New Mexico campus, the house was designed in the Pueblo Revival style by the artist's friend, John Gaw Meem, in 1948 and built the following year. The concrete and stucco surfaced building presents its primary façade at grade, with a basement storage area and additions to the rear at a lower level. Facing south on Las Lomas Road, the house occupies a corner of a block of a former residential area of the university. Alterations to the building include additions to the lower level made in 1958 and 1967 and various changes to the interior spaces of the lower level made between 1967 and 1984. Despite these alterations to the historic building, the Jonson Gallery and Residence's primary façade and architectural details of the Pueblo Revival style are unaltered and clearly communicate its historic significance and Raymond Jonson's vision.

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## Description

The Jonson Gallery and Residence is located in Albuquerque on the campus of the University of New Mexico. The house faces south toward Las Lomas Road, a former residential street that runs east and west along the north side of the campus (Photo 1). In front of the gallery and residence is a 1989 sculpture (noncontributing) by artist Ed Vega (Photo 2). To the east of the building are five other Pueblo Revival style houses that once served as faculty residences during Jonson's lifetime and which, since 1970, have gradually been transformed into university offices or department extensions. Despite the growth of other areas of the campus, this neighborhood along Las Lomas is well preserved. Adding to the neighborhood feel are the building and grounds of University House (National Register of Historic Places, 1988), across the street from the Jonson Gallery. The Jonson Gallery and Residence is one of a cluster of Meem buildings in the neighborhood, which include the Naval Science building (1941) and the Institute for Applied Research (1950) located, respectively, to the northwest and north of the gallery.

The main façade of the upper story is arranged at grade and presents two rectangular volumes of differing height and width (Photo 3). The larger volume is to the east and functioned as the residential use of the building. The rectangular massing is divided into an irregular arrangement of windows and openings. The main entrance is centered in the middle of the volume and is composed of a deeply recessed opening with heavy wood panel doors (Photo 4). West of the door, mounted in the recess, is a small, framed niche approximately 12x10 inches and one inch deep that contains information about current exhibitions. On the opposite side, mounted on the east recess, is a brass plaque dedicated to Raymond Jonson, "painter and professor of art, 1934-1954." To the east is a single steel casement window framed by a false wood lintel and a concrete sill, and to the west is a series of five identical

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Jonson Gallery and Residence  
Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, New Mexico

Section 7 Page 6

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square openings. The smaller volume is arranged at a setback to the main volume, creating a deep shadow between the two blocks (Photo 5). This volume is faced with a single steel casement window with a false wood lintel and a concrete sill and single opening of a solid core door elaborated with a “V” joint pattern.

The façade of the upper story is a particularly notable expression of Meem’s post-war sensibility, with its long low rectangles, with its clean lines broken only by the centrally placed entrance, projecting slightly forward of the two blocks. Meem’s interpretation of the Pueblo Revival style is clearly evident across the façade, especially its smooth stuccoed walls and wooden lintels set into the window and door openings. This design, however, is sparer than others done by Meem during the same period.

Originally the building was designed with only the larger east volume, as depicted on the February 4, 1949 elevation plan for the gallery (Figure 7-1). However, after several design changes, the smaller volume became an integral unit of the gallery and residence. The addition of this volume somewhat changed the original conception for the rear or north elevation of the property. Original elevation plans reveal an ornate second story verandah accessed by multi-light doors and featuring Territorial Revival wood railing (Figure 7-2). It is unclear whether this elevation was built to the plan specifications, but it appears that at one point the verandah was enclosed and filled with the multi-light industrial windows that exist today (Photo 6).

The front entryway, defined by its deep recess and heavy wood panel doors gives access to the gallery and former residence. Stepping through the entrance one enters a short hallway with a door to the living quarters north of the stairs that descend to the galleries (Figure 7-3). The stairwell is lit by three of the five small windows of the façade and by two sets of track lights installed in ceiling of the entrance hall and in the stairwell. These lights were installed by Jonson to illuminate paintings that he hung on the east wall of the entryway and on the large west wall of the stairwell. For security reasons, paintings are no longer displayed on these walls.

The house, planned for two people, Jonson and his wife Vera, featured a master bedroom suite in the east volume, including an anteroom, bedroom, and porch, and a small guest bedroom and kitchen in the west. These rooms, like the living room and sunroom, are amply lighted by casement windows that open to the north, south and east. Both of these bedrooms are equipped with bathrooms and closets. The interior is as minimal as the facade, with the living room and adjoining sunroom, bedroom suite and kitchen all designed by Meem to reflect the modernist taste for purity and functional efficiency. Within the last decade the upper story has been used as apartments in order to help defray some of the gallery’s expenses. The floors, upstairs and down, are of reinforced concrete with copper pipes to provide radiant heat from a large boiler located next to the large gallery on the bottom floor. Jonson became intrigued with radiant heat, as he worried about the possibility of the chill of concrete flooring in the wintertime.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Jonson Gallery and Residence  
Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, New Mexico

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The lower story, which includes the galleries, storage vaults, archive and offices, is entered down a flight of stairs west of the foyer of the upper story entrance or by the rear entrance at the lower level on the north side. The lower level contains three galleries (A, B and C), four storerooms (Vaults 1-4), a library, a workshop and an office (Figure 7-4). At the foot of the stairs, directly beneath the house and thus underground, is located the original and largest gallery (Gallery A) (Photo 7). Jonson planned this gallery from the first as integral to the entire structure as the self-contained expression of the artist's life. Originally the walls of this gallery were plaster and inlaid with a horizontal groove, to hold the hooks that held works for display, 60 inches above the floor.

Branching off the galleries and offices are four long storerooms that contain over 2,000 paintings, graphic works, and sculptures that comprise the Jonson Gallery collection. These works are divided, respectively, into a selection of about 400 of Jonson's works made between 1917 and 1978 that the artist considered key (the Reserve Retrospective Collection), an equal number of the artist's paintings available for sale (the Estate Collection), about 700 works by Jonson's students, and another 600 works by other artists either assembled by Jonson or added to the collection since his death. The first storage Vault 1, in the middle of the lower level and surrounded by the three galleries, existed from the first sketches for the house in 1947 (Figure 7-4). As Jonson continued to work and collect he quickly ran out of room. Vault 2, entered from Gallery B and jutting from the north side of the building, was added in late 1967, as were Vaults 3 and 4 on the west side of the building. The carport (now the Office) west of the galleries was also enclosed at this time. At the same time the long extension on the northwest corner of the building, known simply as the Garage, was built to house more works, although it was never used for that purpose. Jonson used it for a time as a workroom and studio. It is now a multi-use area, serving as the Administrative Assistant's office, a storage area for exhibition supplies and tools, and food preparation for receptions. Albuquerque architect, Don Schlegel, was independently contracted by Jonson to design all of these additions and improvements.

As for subsequent renovations, when Jonson quit painting in 1978, he had his studio and workroom converted by University work crews into additional gallery space. The studio, located to the north of Gallery A, became Gallery B, and the workshop, to the west of Gallery B, became Gallery C. The asphalt tile on the floors was replaced with linoleum and track lights were installed in the ceilings. The most extensive renovations were made in 1984 when all of the lower level, including galleries and workspaces, were completely renovated. In the galleries, the original plaster walls were furred with aluminum studs and covered with plywood and drywall. A new acoustical tile ceiling was installed throughout, along with new track lights, new circuits and dimmer switches. The space west of Gallery C, originally built in 1958, was also renovated to serve as the present Workstudy Office/Reception area. The area west of the Workstudy Office, once used entirely for storage, was walled in two, one half kept as storage (Vault 3) and the other converted into the present Library/Archive and Curator's office. The fire alarms and fire-prevention systems were also upgraded at this time and a new security system installed, as was a new ventilation system for the entire lower story. All of these improvements were necessary for the safekeeping and proper display of works of art, and yet were not, despite their extent,

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# **National Register of Historic Places**

## **Continuation Sheet**

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Jonson Gallery and Residence  
Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, New Mexico

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undertaken without a keen respect for Jonson's mission and purpose regarding the galleries, storage and workspaces, and are reversible if any future restoration of the gallery is considered.

Despite changes and additions made to the interior and lower story of the building, the Jonson Gallery and Residence has retained much of integrity of design, workmanship, and materials along its main façade, which communicates clearly Meem's original design (Figure 7-5). All changes and additions to the building have occurred to the rear, which has always functioned as a secondary face of the building and was not originally given the same order of architectural treatment as the main façade. These changes have also been incremental and devoted to the end of expanding the use of the gallery; an objective in line with Jonson's original vision for the complex. As accretions to the rear of the building, the garage and enclosed carport do not affect the overall design of the gallery and house. For these reasons, the complex has retained sufficient integrity of design, materials, workmanship, setting feeling, and association, to communicate its historic period and design.



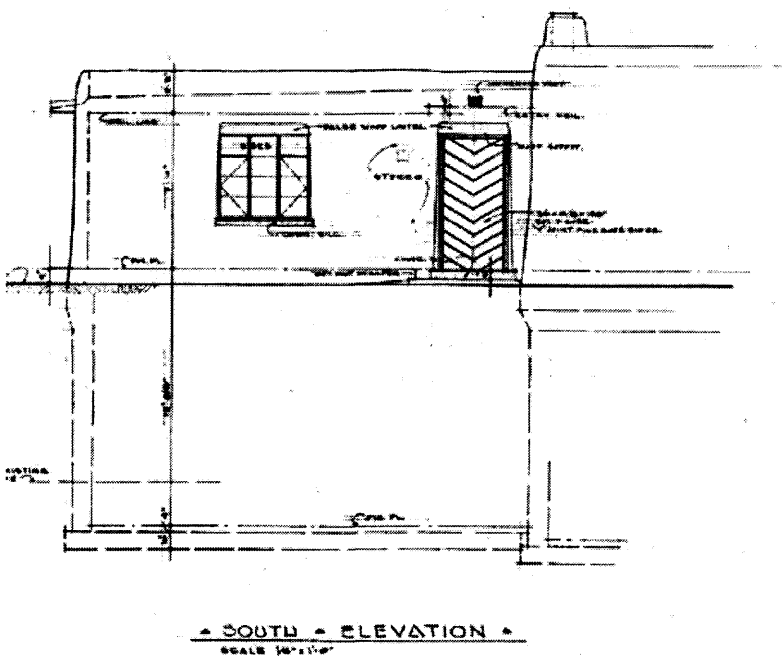
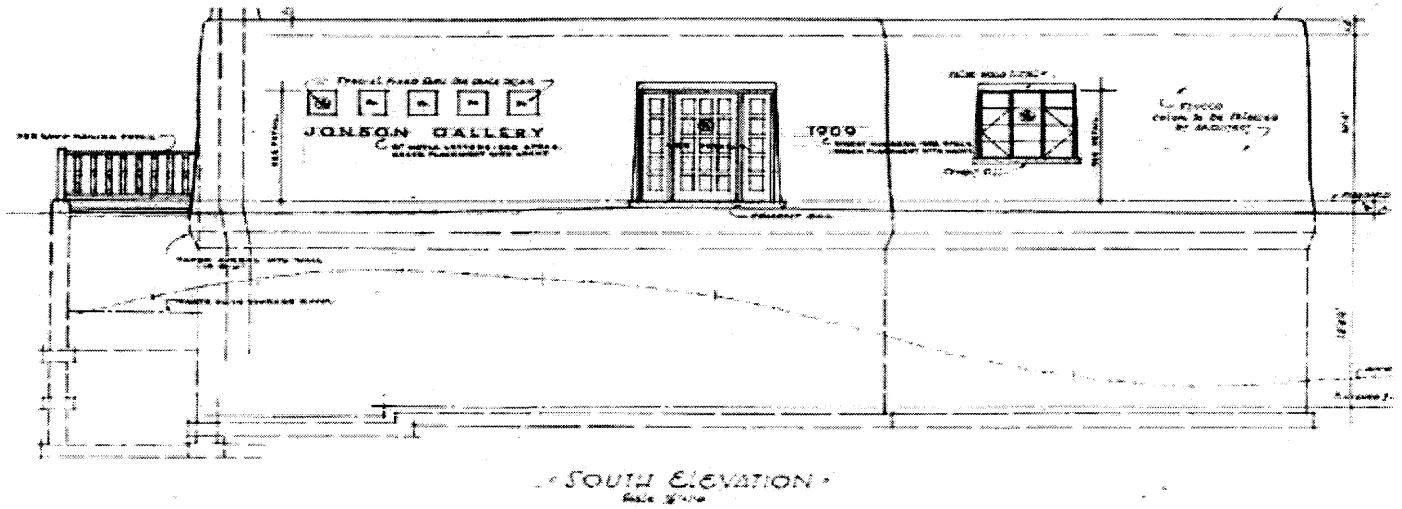
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Jonson Gallery and Residence  
Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, New Mexico

Figure 7-1 South/Main Façade, 1949 Elevation Plans of Primary and Secondary Volumes





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# **National Register of Historic Places**

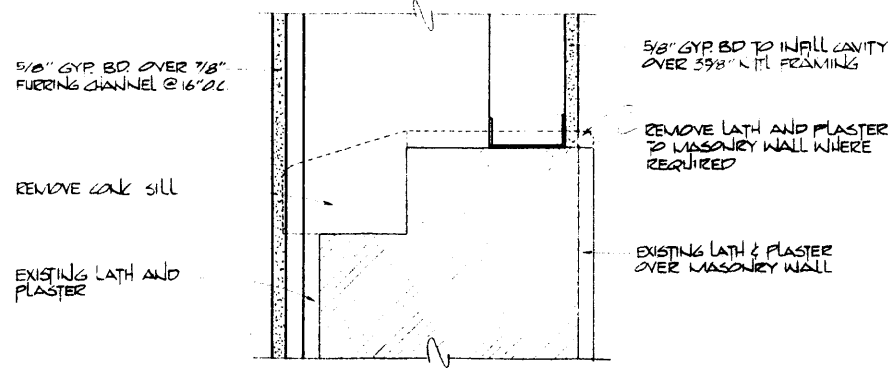
## **Continuation Sheet**

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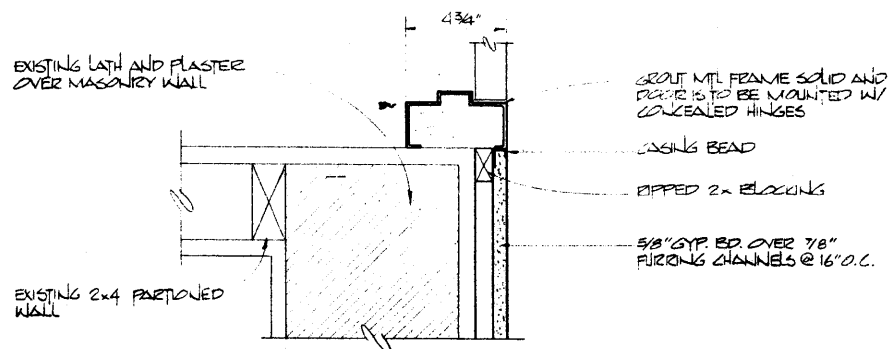
Jonson Gallery and Residence  
Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, New Mexico

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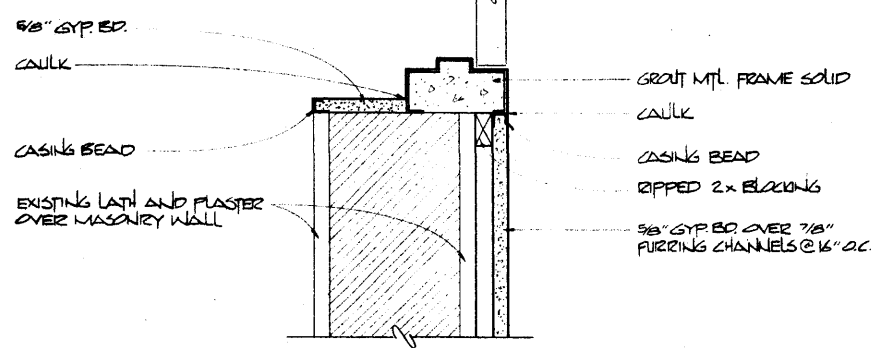
**Figure 7-3** Current First Floor Plan (see reverse side)



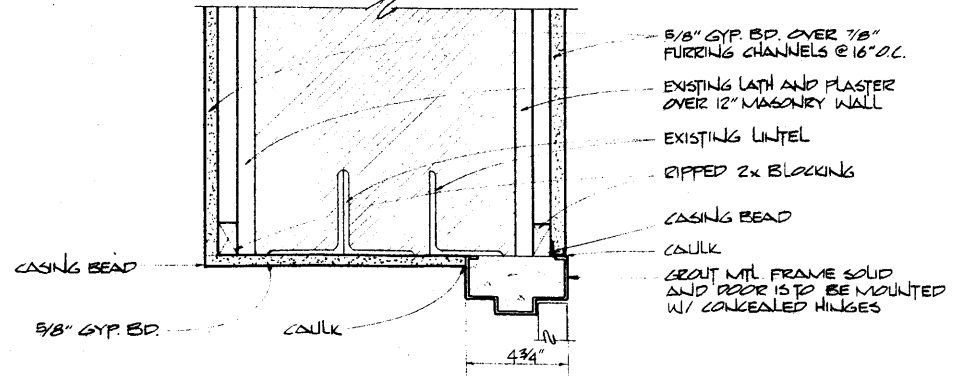
**SECTION 4**  
SCALE: 3" = 1'-0"  
A3



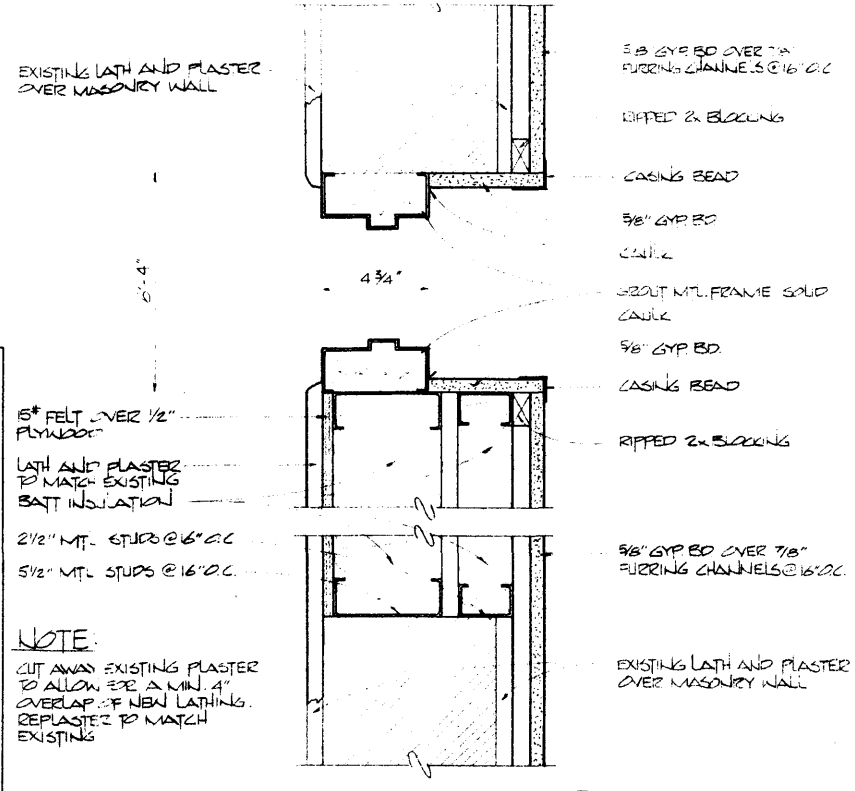
**JAMB DETAIL 3**  
SCALE: 3" = 1'-0"  
A3



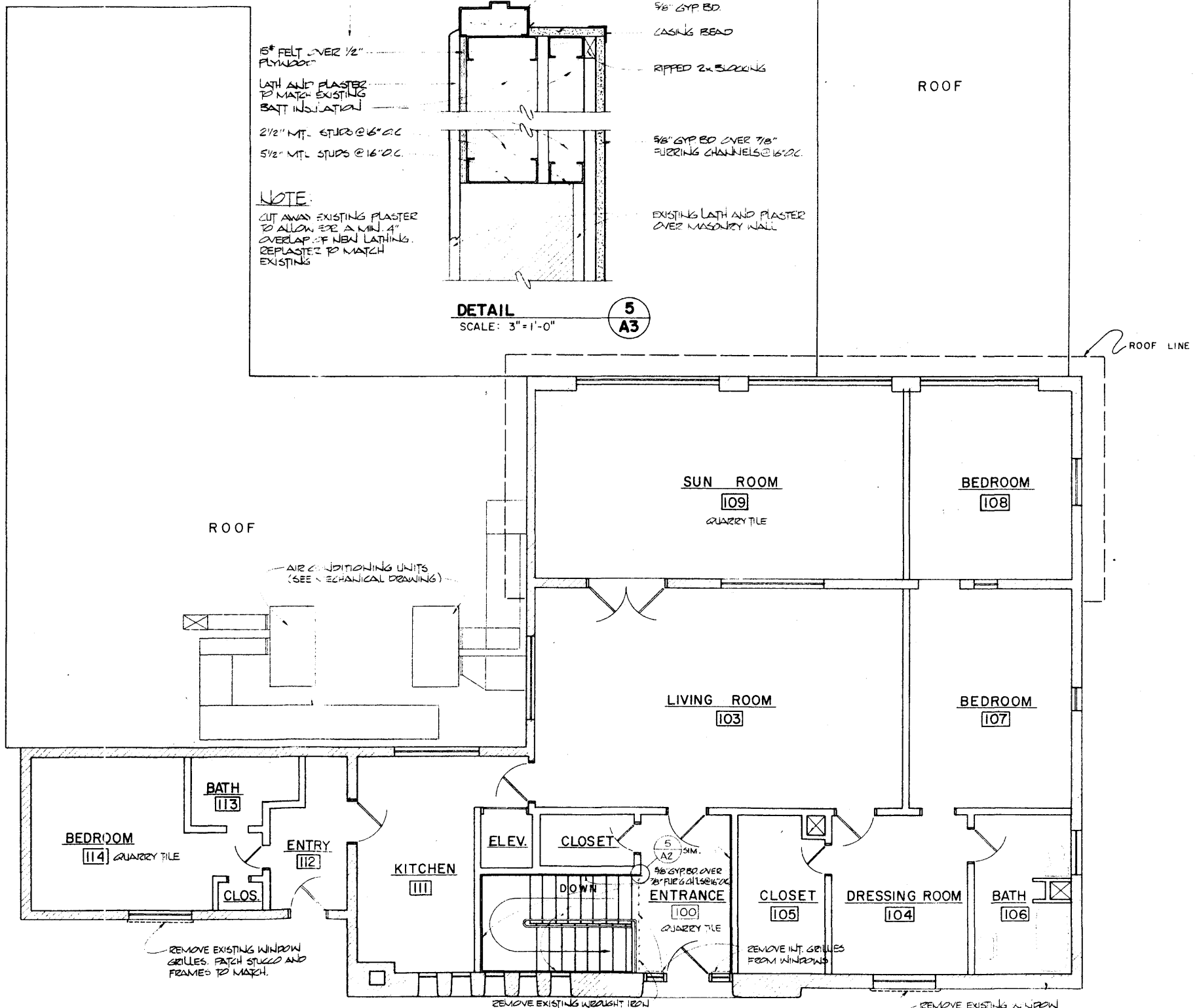
**JAMB DETAIL 2**  
SCALE: 3" = 1'-0"  
A3



**HEAD DETAIL 1**  
SCALE: 3" = 1'-0"  
A3



**DETAIL 5**  
SCALE: 3" = 1'-0"  
A3

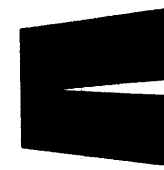


**FIRST FLOOR PLAN**  
Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"



TITLE **JONSON GALLERY REMODEL**  
UNM PROJECT 411

**UNIVERSITY ARCHITECT**  
2701 Campus Blvd. NE  
**UNM** Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131  
505/277-2236



DATE: APRIL 1984  
DRAWN: ARB  
CHECKED: C.W.L.

**A3**

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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Jonson Gallery and Residence  
Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, New Mexico

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**Figure 7-4** Current Lower Floor Plan (see reverse side)

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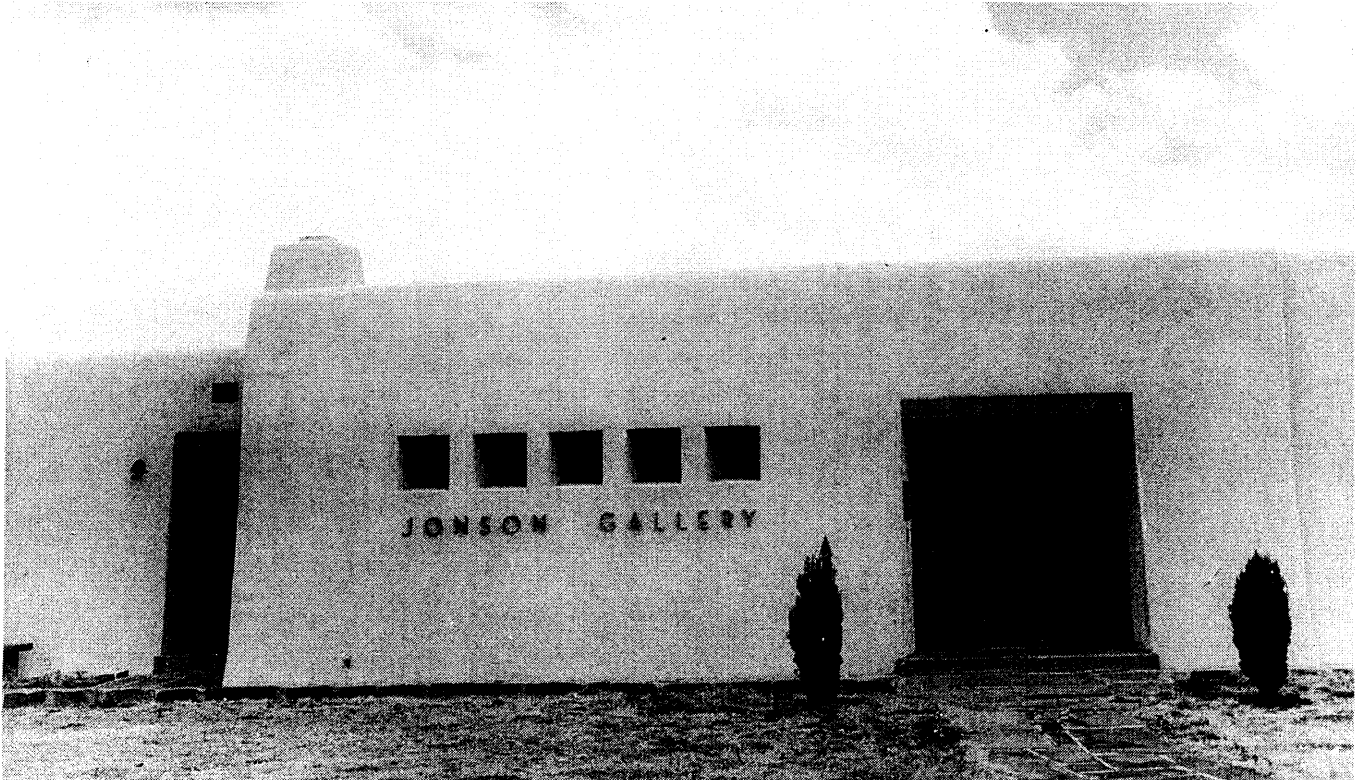
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Jonson Gallery and Residence  
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**Figure 7-5** Historic Photograph of South/Main Façade (January 1950)



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Jonson Gallery and Residence  
Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, New Mexico

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### Statement of Significance

The Jonson Gallery and Residence is historically significant as the home and studio of Raymond Jonson, one of New Mexico's most important modernist painters, and as an example of one of noted New Mexico architect, John Gaw Meem's, transitional Pueblo Revival work. When built in 1949, the combination gallery and home was envisioned as a center for the development and advancement of new and challenging forms of art, particularly abstraction, in New Mexico. To this end, the gallery became the first of its type in the state and served as a center for modern art, attracting distinguished artists from around the world and supporting local artists inspired by Jonson's vision. As the culmination of Jonson's aspirations, the Jonson Gallery and Residence is nominated under Criterion B, as the property most closely associated with the artist's productive years. Because of its importance in promoting Abstract art in New Mexico and specifically at the University of New Mexico, and that it contains the majority of Jonson's paintings, as well as the works of other noted artists, the building is nominated at the state level of significance under Criterion A, Art. The building also meets at the state level of significance, Criterion C, Architecture, as a good example of one of John Gaw Meem's transitional designs between the earlier regionally inspired forms of the Pueblo Revival and the more streamlined approach of his later works.

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Born in Chariton, Iowa in 1891, to Reverend Gustav and Josephine Abrahamson Johnson,<sup>1</sup> Raymond Jonson inherited his father's predilection for complete devotion to one's convictions. From an early age Jonson expressed a desire to be an artist, and soon gravitated to Chicago, arriving in 1911 as a teenager to enroll at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts, now the Art Institute of Chicago. While studying at the institute his convictions took shape after he attended the famous Armory Show, where he was struck by the power of modern art, especially in the abstractions of Arthur Dove. Moved by the exhibition, Jonson realized that in art there were no rules and that he was free to express his own vision and *inner significance*. Out of this experience Jonson would come to understand that an artist's expression evolved out of his entire being; from painting to exhibition, to theory and belief, all of one's life contributed to one's art.

At about the same time Jonson was exposed to the work and thought of Russian-born painter Wassily Kandinsky, and it was this experience that had the greatest effect on his life. Kandinsky's pioneering forays into form and color as the means to express precise emotional states inspired Jonson's journey through abstraction and finally into completely non-objective painting. The following year it was Kandinsky's emphasis on the spiritual in art, art as "inner necessity" expressed in his *Art of*

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<sup>1</sup> He was known then as C. Raymond Johnson, but he soon chose to return to the original Swedish spelling of his surname by which he is now known.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Jonson Gallery and Residence  
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*Spiritual Harmony* (1914)<sup>2</sup> had an even more profound effect on Jonson. In Kandinsky's philosophy, Jonson saw the path of the artist as a search for the unseen, made not through a random pursuit, but a methodical and progressive exploration. It was at this crucial juncture that Jonson resolved to devote his life entirely to art through painting and to work diligently to find through art the essential principles of spiritual expression. Jonson became consumed by the idea of art as a pure aesthetic and an alternative to mundane realism, and particularly to regionalism, both forms that to Jonson offered only a limited view of the world and its possibilities.

In 1924, increasingly annoyed by the growing chaos and filth of modern city life, Jonson left Chicago and moved to Santa Fe. Jonson had made his first visit to New Mexico in 1922, spending four months in Santa Fe, and was immediately taken by its landscape. Austere and purifying, the desert was a revelation, perfectly attuned to his spiritual quest. In Santa Fe, Jonson built for himself a home and studio, across the street from his former mentor and friend from Chicago, B.J.O. Nordfeldt. Designed by his new acquaintance, architect John Gaw Meem, the house was built from the ground up as a complete artist's space, with residence, studio, workshop and even a store—the garage—out of which he sold art supplies.

This house was Jonson's first experiment in a modern art center, sustaining himself and the community of artists he encountered in Santa Fe. Jonson wasted little time satisfying his desire to bring such an international scope to his new home. From this source, he organized, despite great prejudice against abstraction, the Modern Wing at the Museum of New Mexico, cumulating in 32 exhibitions. He also opened the Atalaya Art School in his home, which specialized in promoting modernism. From this Jonson gained a reputation in the state, and had his first public commission with the *A Cycle of Science* WPA/PWAP murals completed at the University of New Mexico Library in 1934. In 1938, along with Emil Bisttram, he founded the Transcendental Painting Group (TPG), the first group of New Mexico painters to pursue entirely non-objective art. The TPG further helped to establish New Mexico, next to New York, as the principal locale of avant-garde painting in America. Although short-lived, the Transcendental Painting Group garnered national and international attention and exhibited at the Guggenheim Museum in 1940.<sup>3</sup> When artist Elaine de Kooning came to the University to teach in 1957, she felt that she had "found the key" in Jonson, "the force that created a climate that enabled art to endure in a desert."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *The Art of Spiritual Harmony* is the English language version of the earlier German *Über das geistige in der Kunst (Concerning the Spiritual in Art)* published in 1911.

<sup>3</sup> Like so many things, the TGP was slowed and then halted by World War II as its members either became combatants or left the state for different parts of the country or to return to Europe. The movement officially ended in 1943.

<sup>4</sup> Elaine De Kooning, "New Mexico," *Art in America* 49 (June/July, 1961), p. 56.



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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Jonson Gallery and Residence  
Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, New Mexico

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The activities in Santa Fe and the house in particular, served as a prelude to the Jonson Gallery and Residence in Albuquerque, when he started instructing at the University of New Mexico on a part-time basis in 1934. Like his Santa Fe house, but even more so now, after having had several years to hone his theories and to know what he wanted in terms of a work and exhibition space, Jonson conceived of a more unified structure to exemplify the artist's life. Not only would it contain living quarters and a studio, but a conference space, workroom, study, gallery and storage spaces for a collection of his own works and those by students and other significant artists. Art was to Jonson a vital impulse that formed the core of one's existence, and one's environment must lend itself to that life in every possible way. To this end, Jonson envisioned a building that would offer him and others total immersion in the experience of art.

Jonson first expressed these beliefs to Meem in 1924 regarding the design of the house in Santa Fe and again, this time with greater assurance 24 years later, for his house in Albuquerque. For his house and gallery in Albuquerque, Jonson desired to create a harmonious physical space, an ideal environment for nurturing artistic expression.<sup>5</sup> The difference in the designs for both houses reflects not only Jonson's growing confidence as an artist and his expanded vision of the artistic life, but Meem's newer interest in 1948 for streamlining the Pueblo Revival style into a singular form of modernist expression. When it opened on January 8, 1950, the gallery became New Mexico's premier modern exhibition space of the 1950's, and heralded as "a monument to modern art" (Figure 8-1).

For just over 32 years, from January 1950 until his death in 1982, the building was the epicenter of Jonson's passionate mission to spread the joy, value, and meaning of modern art to the region, and to make the University of New Mexico an important center of modernism. The gallery was the first on the UNM campus and in Albuquerque devoted exclusively to modern art, not only exposing artists and art students to the latest ideas and techniques, but also providing a venue where they could exhibit their own works. Without Jonson and his gallery, many of the artists whom he helped have admitted that they would not have gone on to pursue contemporary art. As artist and teacher, Jonson's life and the past 50 years of the University's history are fully embodied by the building. Even after retiring as Professor Emeritus in 1954, Jonson actively kept up his connection with the administration, faculty and students of the University through the gallery functions. As part of his agreement with the University, he created a living will by which his collections, the house and gallery were bequeathed to UNM. In so doing, Jonson ensured that the gallery and the collections would continue to function in a similar manner of his original vision and become the property of the citizens of New Mexico. Upon his death in 1982 the gallery became part of the University Art Museum.

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<sup>5</sup> *The Raymond Jonson Centennial Retrospective*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Art Museum, 1991. p. 11.

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Within his lifetime, Jonson created approximately 2,000 works and approximately 600 of these are currently housed in the Permanent Retrospective Collection of Jonson Gallery. There are an additional 1,200 works in the permanent collection by artists such as Richard Diebenkorn, Elaine de Kooning, Joseph Albers and others. Jonson's legacy ensures not only the house and gallery, but the works of several important artists be designated and preserved as public property. Scholars come from all over the world to research the extensive archive of Jonson's papers and those of the many significant modernist artists who were his friends and acquaintances. The gallery continues to honor the legacy established by Jonson by keeping and exhibiting his works, as well as the works of his students and other artists whom he knew and admired. In the tradition begun by the artist, the gallery still seeks out and exhibits work by promising young artists to give visibility to challenging new ideas.

### Architectural Significance

The Jonson Gallery and Residence is an excellent and unusual example of an important period in Meem's career, when the architect was in the process of shifting from his signature Pueblo motifs before World War II to a more austere modernism afterwards. Although the sculpted contours and deep-set windows and doors and wood trim of the Jonson house still lovingly refer to the native origins of architecture in the Southwest, the lines are far cleaner and the design much more bilateral, with a central projection and two slightly receding volumes. The façade presents itself as relatively flat by comparison to the complex angles and planes of Meem's work before the war. In addition, the corbelled and colonnaded porticos common in other buildings from Meem's firm at the time, and earlier, are conspicuously absent, and what remains is fairly minimal.

Such economy is a reflection in part of the period, when materials were scarce and expensive and excess ornamentation a luxury.<sup>6</sup> However, the design clearly speaks of the new in a way that Meem's earlier Pueblo interpretations and much of his contemporary work do not. It may be that the building's intended role as a center for modernism allowed the architect to carry his experiments further than other domestic and commercial buildings may have allowed. Particularly unusual is the addition of five, small windows to the left of the main entrance in Meem's final drawings for the façade made at the end of October 1948. Although they provide light to the stairwell leading down to the galleries, as well as into the kitchen, their purpose was clearly as a decorative to the façade.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Jonson was very concerned about the contractor's bid on the house. Even though the University agreed to fund the construction, the monies came out of Jonson's current estate and the donations solicited from his patrons. He had accumulated enough to cover a \$45,000 house, a large sum in the 1950s, but barely enough to match his grand aspirations. He was relieved when K.L. House Construction Company, one of Meem's primary contractors for University projects, came in just under that amount.

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As a conception of Jonson's universe, reflecting every aspect of the creative life of an artist, the Jonson Gallery and Residence succeeds in its design and use. Home, studio, workshop, gallery and storage rooms for a growing collection were all integral parts of a self-sustaining system, in effect an extension of the artist himself, to which Meem paid special attention to the division of interior spaces.

The Jonson Gallery and Residence is important as Raymond Jonson's realized vision of a combination artist's studio, gallery, and residence promoting contemporary art in New Mexico. As such, the Jonson Gallery and Residence is the oldest institution in the state devoted to the modern arts, containing a significant collection of Jonson's and other important artist's works. As the culmination of Jonson's vision as an artist, the Jonson House and Gallery meets Criterion B, for the property most closely associated with the artist's productive years and Criterion A, Art, for the role it has played in promoting modern art in New Mexico during the past 50 years. The center is also an important example of John Gaw Meem's, transitional expression of the Pueblo Revival style and, therefore, meets Criterion C, Architecture.

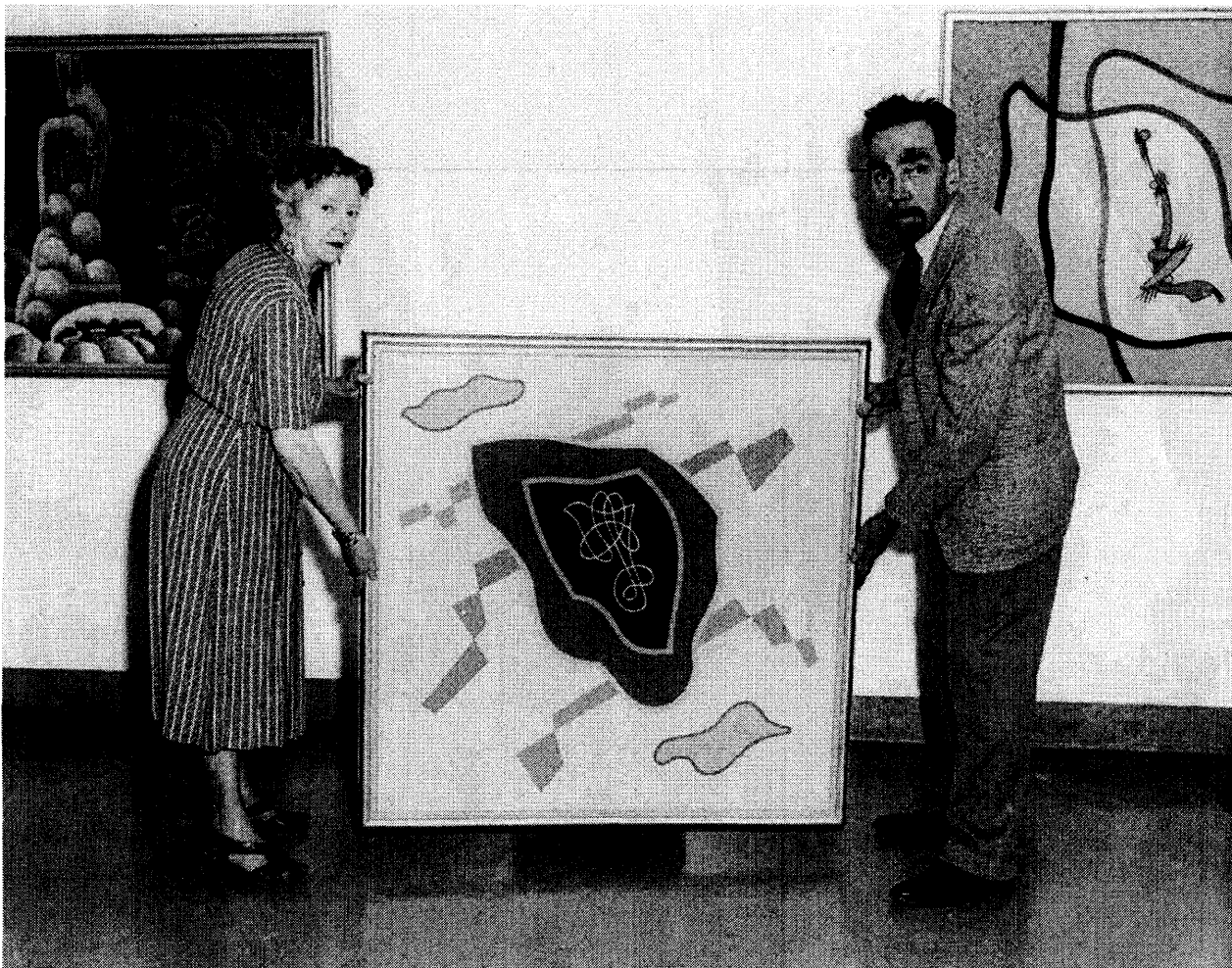
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**Figure 8-1** Raymond and Vera Jonson at the Opening Exhibition of the Jonson Gallery  
(January 1950)



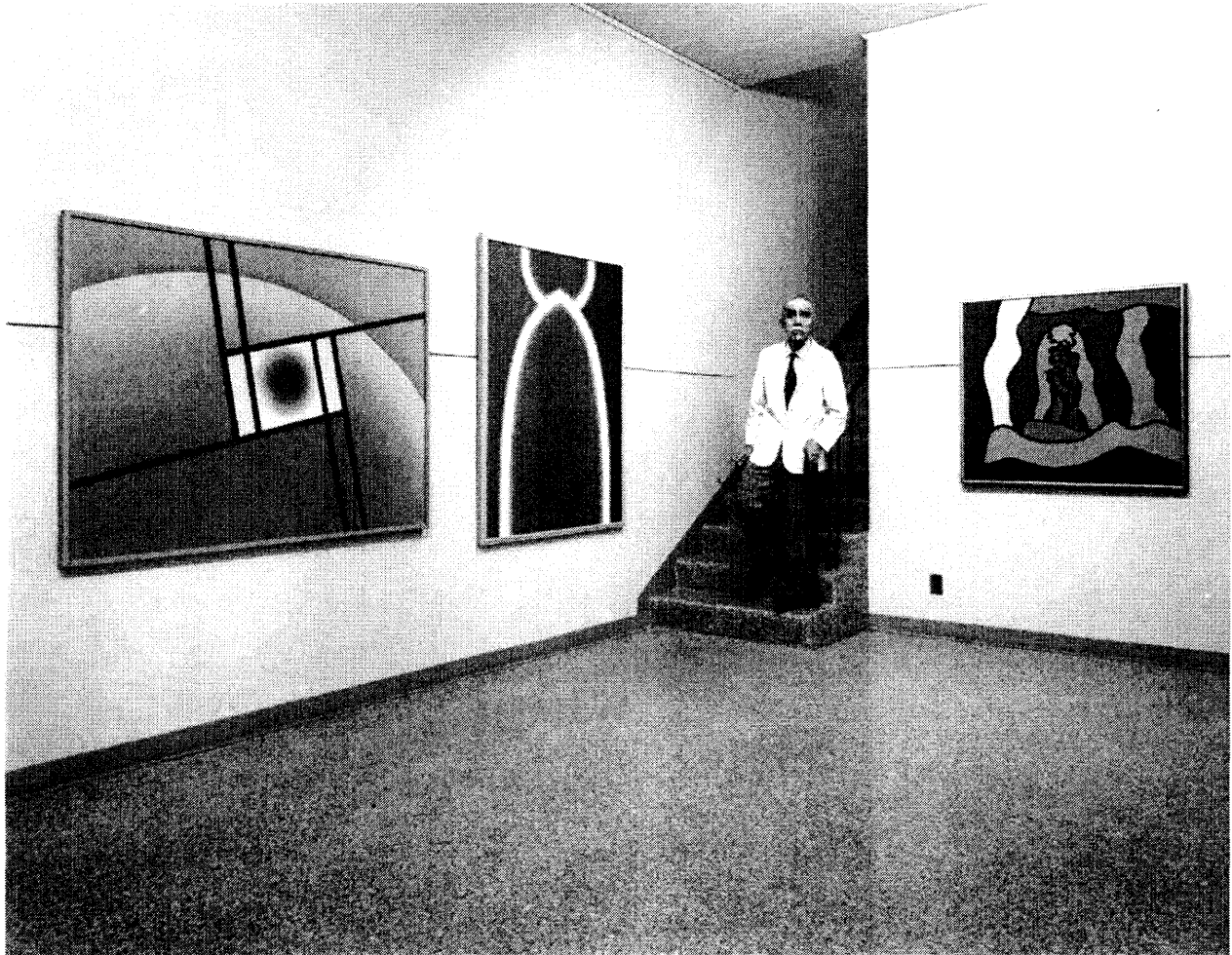
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Figure 8-2 Jonson in Gallery (A) (January 1978)



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### **Verbal Boundary Description**

Lots 1 and 2, Block C, Faculty Housing, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, New Mexico.

### **Boundary Justification**

This is the original property assigned to the house in 1948. There have been no changes in the property boundaries since then.

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### Photographs

*The following information pertains to all photographs unless otherwise noted:*

Jonson Gallery and Residence  
1909 Las Lomas Road NE  
Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, New Mexico  
Photographer: Robert Ware  
January 5, 2001  
Location of Negatives: Jonson Gallery

Photo 1 of 7  
South/main façade and streetscape  
Camera facing east

Photo 2 of 7  
South/main façade and noncontributing object  
Camera facing northwest

Photo 3 of 7  
South/main façade and landscape  
Camera facing northeast

Photo 4 of 7  
Main entrance, south/main façade  
Camera facing north

Photo 5 of 7  
West and south/main façade  
Camera facing east

Photo 6 of 7  
North/rear elevation  
Camera facing south

Photo 7 of 7  
Galleries A & B of lower level  
Camera facing north  
Matt Suhre  
1999