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[Rudnick to lecture on Cady Wells at RMAC Thursday](#)

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After Cady Wells moved to northern New Mexico, he found the life he was meant to live.

He moved in the cultural circles of Taos and Santa Fe, while painting dark and introspective landscapes of New Mexico.

According to author Lois Rudnick, Wells became one of New Mexico's finest and most neglected of the modernists, which included Georgia O'Keefe and John Marin.

"In his last years, after he returned from the World War II European Theatre, he created technically brilliant and sometimes emotionally explosive responses to the post-World War II New Mexico landscape that were influenced by the atomic bomb and Los Alamos," Rudnick said. "Wells was part of the cultural and artistic circle that included Mabel Dodge Luhan, Georgia O'Keefe and Martha Graham, dancer and choreographer."

Rudnick seems to understand Wells. She compares the art of New Mexico painted by O'Keefe with the watercolors of Wells.

"He and O'Keefe were both compelled by the beauty and bareness of New Mexico," Rudnick says. "O'Keefe's were more peaceful. His were dark, moody and passionate. Wells' work ranges from vibrant and rhythmic watercolors of mesas and mountains of northern New Mexico — much influenced by Andrew Dasburg and John Marin — to dark, brooding and musically dramatic depictions of the Penitentes and Santos and the Barrancas across from his home in the Pojaoque Valley."

Rudnick also sees below the semi-abstract landscapes Wells painted to see that "something darker" in his landscape, how he was powerfully moved by the history of New Mexico, of the conquest of it. Yet, he had a sense of humor and a love of life, she said. He was a mime and a wit.

She said that Wells moved to New Mexico in 1932 and painted some 400 works in watercolor and mixed media from 1933 until his death in 1954.

"He came from an uptight family and was a rebel," Rudnick said. "He didn't know what to do with his life. Here he discovered his life."

Because of her passion for his art, she wrote Cady Wells and Southwestern Modernism so that he would be assured of a place in history. Rudnick is also a former professor and chairwoman of American studies at the University of Massachusetts in Boston.

"He did have a tragic soul. He saw that human beings were selfish, wanted to do penance for their frailties. He respected that," Rudnick said.

Rudnick will present a slide lecture on the life, work and times of Cady Wells at 7 p.m., Thursday, at the Roswell Museum and Art Center, 11th and Main streets.

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