



Eiteljorg

The Eiteljorg Museum Building

Before designing the Eiteljorg Museum, architect Jonathan Hess traveled the Southwest with museum founder Harrison Eiteljorg. The pair studied the area's land, architecture and people. Broad, flat mesas; deep, craggy canyons and ancient pueblo structures are what make the Southwest uniquely beautiful. These features served as an inspiration to the Eiteljorg Museum's creators. The Eiteljorg Museum's main entrance has become an Indianapolis icon, with its Southwestern-influenced portico and front path that stretches past the Richard and Billie Lou Wood Deer Fountain and *The Greeter*, a monumental sculpture by artist George Carlson.

The 118,000-square-foot, honey-colored museum is set within a large, round base inspired by the circular symbols and spaces of Native Pueblo communities. Much of the Eiteljorg's exterior consists of Minnesota dolomite, a stone with color and texture that creates the feel of a Southwestern Pueblo. Plum-colored German sandstone serves as the building's base and appears again inside on the floor of the museum's Grand Hall and other areas.



Inside the Eiteljorg Museum, warm earth tones, stone and rich mahogany trim continue the Southwestern motif. The expansive Grand Hall features the light-filled Michael and Juanita Eagle Commons. The R.B. Annis Western Family Experience, located on the canal level, is linked to the Hall by a winding staircase. In the center of the staircase is the famed Indianapolis Totem Pole. Most of the museum's galleries are floored with stained oak.

With the June 2005 addition of the Mel and Joan Perelman Wing, which doubled the size of the institution's public space, came the opportunity to add more unique architectural features to its already award-winning design. Johnathan Hess seamlessly integrated new spaces with the old.

The new north end of the museum, which connects the museum to the Indianapolis Central Canal, features the Christel DeHaan Family Terrace. This elegant garden showcases monumental sculpture by Allan Houser, Truman Lowe and Douglas Hyde; indigenous Indiana plants and trees; and the Randy Deer & Wayne Zink Symbols of our Universe, an architectural feature that interprets the Native American relationship with the four cardinal directions. Providing a view of the DeHaan Family Terrace and the Canal is the outdoor terrace of the Eiteljorg Museum Café.



A wood-and-zinc canopy near the canal entrance echoes the design of the museum's main entryway, developing a sense of structural continuity.



Harrison Eiteljorg (1903-1997)

Art, in all its forms, was a longtime passion for Harrison Eiteljorg, founder of the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art. Eiteljorg first went West in the late 1940s on coal mining ventures, and subsequently developed a lifelong passion for the land, the people, and the artwork there.

Eiteljorg acquired his enthusiasm for art at an early age, in part from his mother, herself a talented artist. Eiteljorg maintained that his inquisitive nature and avid interest in the areas he visited had an influence on his collecting. Patricia Janis Broder, a well-known authority on Western art, once wrote that Eiteljorg "traveled thousands of miles to attend exhibitions and competitions, to visit museums devoted to Western art, and to patronize galleries specializing in paintings and sculptures of the American West ... As a patron he has given encouragement and financial support to several young artists, enabling them to devote full time and attention to their art."

Eiteljorg described his collection as a very personal one that grew not only out of his interest in the West, but also out of his love and respect for Native Americans and their cultures, which reflect a deep regard for nature. This sense of oneness with nature is embodied in the museum's extensive collection of Native American art, including pottery, basketry, clothing, bead and quill work, and weavings. Eiteljorg called his collection not only personal, but romantic. "In these paintings," he said, "there is very little evidence of the violence which marked the settling of the West. But the Indians and their culture, the cattle drives, wagon trains and the other themes we associate with the Old West are represented."

The association that Eiteljorg had with Taos, N.M., and the artists who lived there, also had a significant influence on him and his collection. Taos, with its mixture of Native American and Hispanic cultures, plus the influx of artists in the first half of the 20th century, has often been called the cultural center of the Southwest. It was Eiteljorg's favorite "camping ground." His exposure to the local culture and his friendships with the Taos Society of Artists (the "Taos Ten") and other artists, such as Nicholai Fechin and Leon Gaspard, is reflected in the museum's collection, in which the art of New Mexico is particularly strong.

Eiteljorg's desire to collect extended beyond Western and Native American art. He amassed a sizable collection of paintings from the Paris School, as well as an extensive African and Oceanic collection, which is installed at the Indianapolis Museum of Art. Eiteljorg played an active role in the affairs of the museum that bears his name until his death in 1997. He served as chairman of the board, visited the museum and remained vitally interested in the museum's events, developments and growth.