Lee Howard Marmon photographic prints and contact sheets, circa 1950-1987

2011
Table of Contents

Collection Overview ................................................................. 1
Administrative Information .......................................................... 1
Biographical/Historical note.......................................................... 1
Arrangement note......................................................................... 2
Names and Subjects ..................................................................... 2
Collection Overview

Repository: National Museum of the American Indian
Title: Lee Howard Marmon photographic prints and contact sheets
Identifier: NMAI.AC.054
Date: circa 1950-1987
Extent: 36 Photographic Prints (black and white; color)
2 contact sheets (2 contact sheets (9 photographs each); color)
Creator: Marmon, Lee Howard, 1925 -
Language: No linguistic content; Not applicable
Summary: The Lee Howard Marmon photographic prints and contact sheets contain 36 color and black and white photographic prints and two color contact sheets of 9 images each. Subjects include Laguna and Acoma elders (1950-1965), publicity images of celebrities (1967-1973), Native American portraiture (circa 1987), the New Mexico pueblos and landscape, and the potter Lucy M. Lewis, her daughters, and their pottery (1987).

Administrative Information

Processing Information
NMAIA Review

Preferred Citation
Lee Howard Marmon photographic prints and contact sheets, circa 1950-1987, National Museum of the American Indian Archives, Smithsonian Institution (negative, slide or catalog number).

Restrictions
Researchers must contact the NMAI Archives for an appointment to access the collection. Contact information below.

Biographical Note

Lee Howard Marmon was born as the second son of Lily and Henry "Hank" Marmon on September 25, 1925 in Laguna, New Mexico. Marmon's interest in photography was sparked when he took his first photograph at the age of 11 of an automobile accident on Route 66. Initially planning to attend the University of New Mexico to study geology, Marmon dropped out after several semesters to begin his
World War II career as a Sergeant-Major on Shemya Island, Alaska in 1943. Marmon's service to the United States in the Aleutian chain lasted until 1946, after which he returned to Laguna.

Marmon retained an interest in photography and purchased his first professional camera, a 2¼ x 2¼ Speed Graphic. Later in his career, he would use a 4x5 Speed Graphic, a Rolleiflex, a Hasselblad Superwide, and a Hasselblad C model. When Marmon began photographing, he favored Kodachrome sheet film (ASA 8) and super speed B&W (ASA 100). As Marmon was learning this new hobby, his civilian life included employment as the Laguna postmaster and as a worker in his father's store, The Laguna Trading Post. Photography escalated from a hobby to a more serious pursuit after Marmon's father suggested that his son bring a camera along while making store deliveries in order to take portraits of the Laguna elders. These early black and white photographs, taken using fixed-lens cameras and natural light, became some of Marmon's most well-known images.

While Marmon mainly focused on documenting the traditions and lifestyles of the Laguna and Acoma Pueblos, a departure from this theme occurred when he moved from New Mexico to Palm Springs, California in 1966. As the official photographer for the Bob Hope Desert Classic Golf Tournament from 1967 until 1973, Marmon took publicity photographs of golfers participating in the competition along with celebrity entertainers and guests at the accompanying Bob Hope Ball. Marmon also worked as a freelance photographer throughout this time, contributing to publications such as Time Magazine and The Saturday Evening Post, working as a still photographer for Columbia Pictures, and completing a commission from President and Mrs. Nixon to photograph a collection of New Mexican Puebloan pottery.

Marmon moved back to Laguna in 1982, and in the following years he showed his work in a variety of venues, opened a bookstore called The Blue-Eyed Indian, and won an ADDY award for his contribution to the PBS documentary series, Surviving Columbus: The Story of the Pueblo People. In 2003, Marmon published a book, The Pueblo Imagination: Landscape and Memory in the Photography of Lee Marmon, in collaboration with his daughter, author Leslie Marmon Silko, and poets Joy Harjo and Simon Ortiz. The book was heralded as a success, collecting first place awards from The Mountains and Plains Bookseller's Association and from Independent Publisher Online.

After the publication of his book, Marmon's photographic activity began to diminish. His final show, Pueblo Faces and Places, was held in 2007 at the Sky City Cultural Center in Acoma, New Mexico. In recognition for achievements in the photographic field, Marmon was honored as the 88th Annual Inter-Tribal Ceremonial's "Living Treasure" of 2009, the first photographer to be given the award. Throughout his life, Marmon produced a great volume of work. In May of 2009, he donated his personal papers and over 65,000 photographs to the Center for Southwest Research and Special Collections (CSWR) at the University of New Mexico. From a humble beginning of taking photographs of village elders, Marmon eventually built a career out of saving the memories of the Laguna and Acoma tribes and is now one of the country's best-known Native American photographers.

---

Arrangement

Prints: organized in folders; arranged numerically by image number

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

- Cultures:
  - Acoma Indians
Indians of North America
Laguna Indians

Types of Materials:
Photographs
Portraits

Names:
Bolger, Ray
Eisenhower, Mamie Doud, 1896-1979
Hope, Bob, 1903-2003
Lewis, Lucy M.

Geographic Names:
New Mexico