

## The Life and Times of Jo Mora: Iconic Artist of the American West

**Peter Hiller**

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Peter Hiller's illuminating biography *The Life and Times of Jo Mora* tours the works of one of the most productive, multitalented artists of twentieth-century America.

Containing two hundred photographs of Mora's work and excerpts from his journals, letters, and published writings, this book is less a personal biography than it is an exploration of Mora's creative processes and output. Drawing on the Jo Mora archives and his public and private writings, drawings, paintings, prints, sculptures, and architectural adornments, this showcase of Mora's work reveals the artist as a man driven by dedication to his family and his subjects.

Mora grew up in New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts loving all things Western. He moved West as a young man and wrote, photographed, sketched, and painted while visiting the missions and the ranches of California. In Arizona, he hunted with the Navajo and lived for over two years with the Hopi. Excerpts from Mora's journals show his drive to explore and to record, in art and prose, much of what he saw. This work became source material for Mora's later painting and sculptures.

As Mora matured into a professional artist, married, and raised his children near Monterey, he became well known for his detailed historical maps, creative drawings of clothed animals, and paintings of cowboys, Native Americans, and Western settings. The book includes much discussion and display of this work, while also covering Mora's achievements in sculpture, including processes for developing such grandiose and lucrative three-dimensional projects as the Junipero Serra cenotaph and a diorama of the Portola Expedition of 1769.

As a testament to, and investigation of, Mora's "never diminished" creative drive, and as a contribution to a study of Western art, *The Life and Times of Jo Mora*, like the work of Mora himself, honors and dignifies its subject.

JOE TAYLOR (May / June 2021)

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