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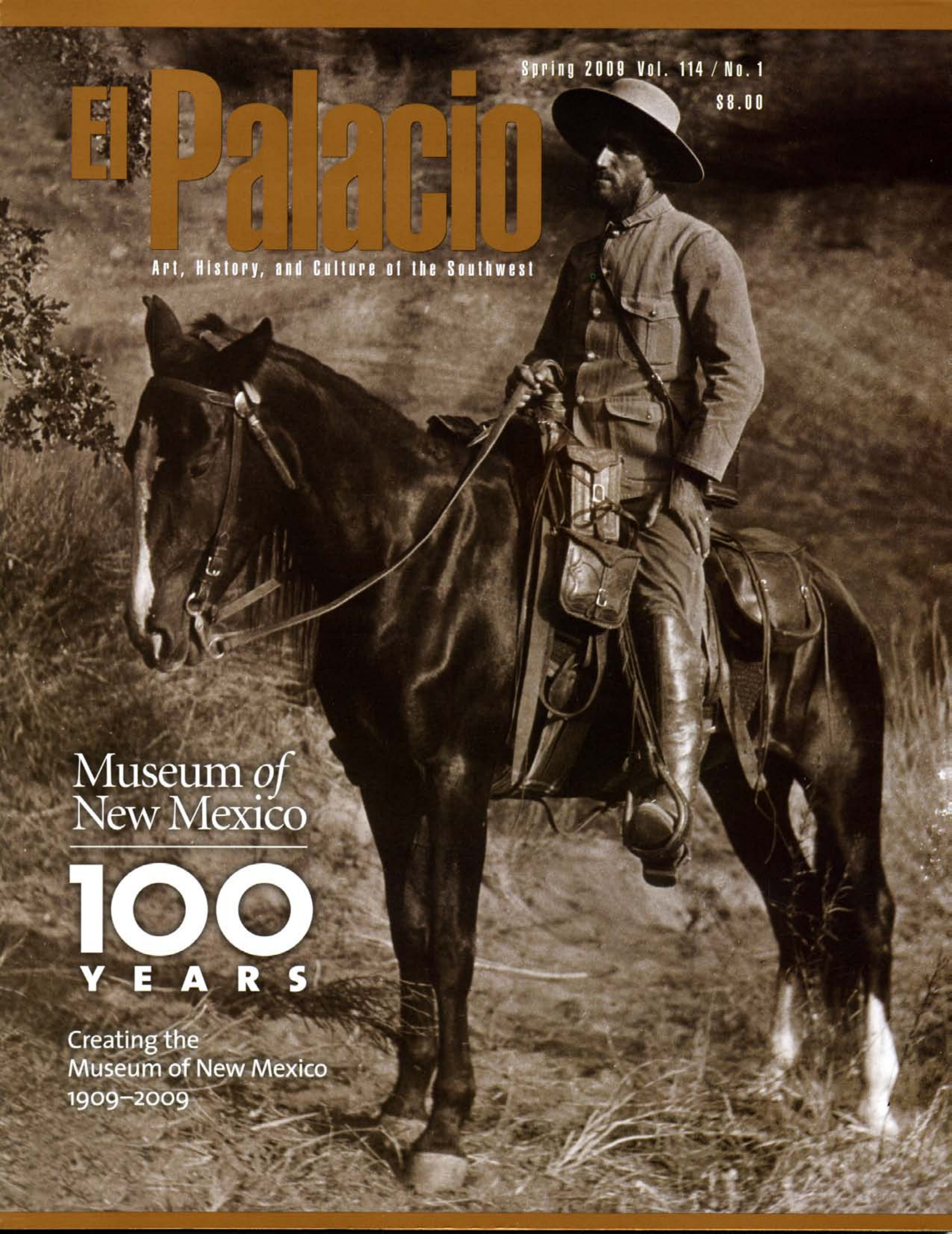
# El Palacio

Art, History, and Culture of the Southwest

Museum of  
New Mexico

**100**  
YEARS

Creating the  
Museum of New Mexico  
1909–2009



# Ann Baumann

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## HER LIFE IN A HOME FULL OF ART

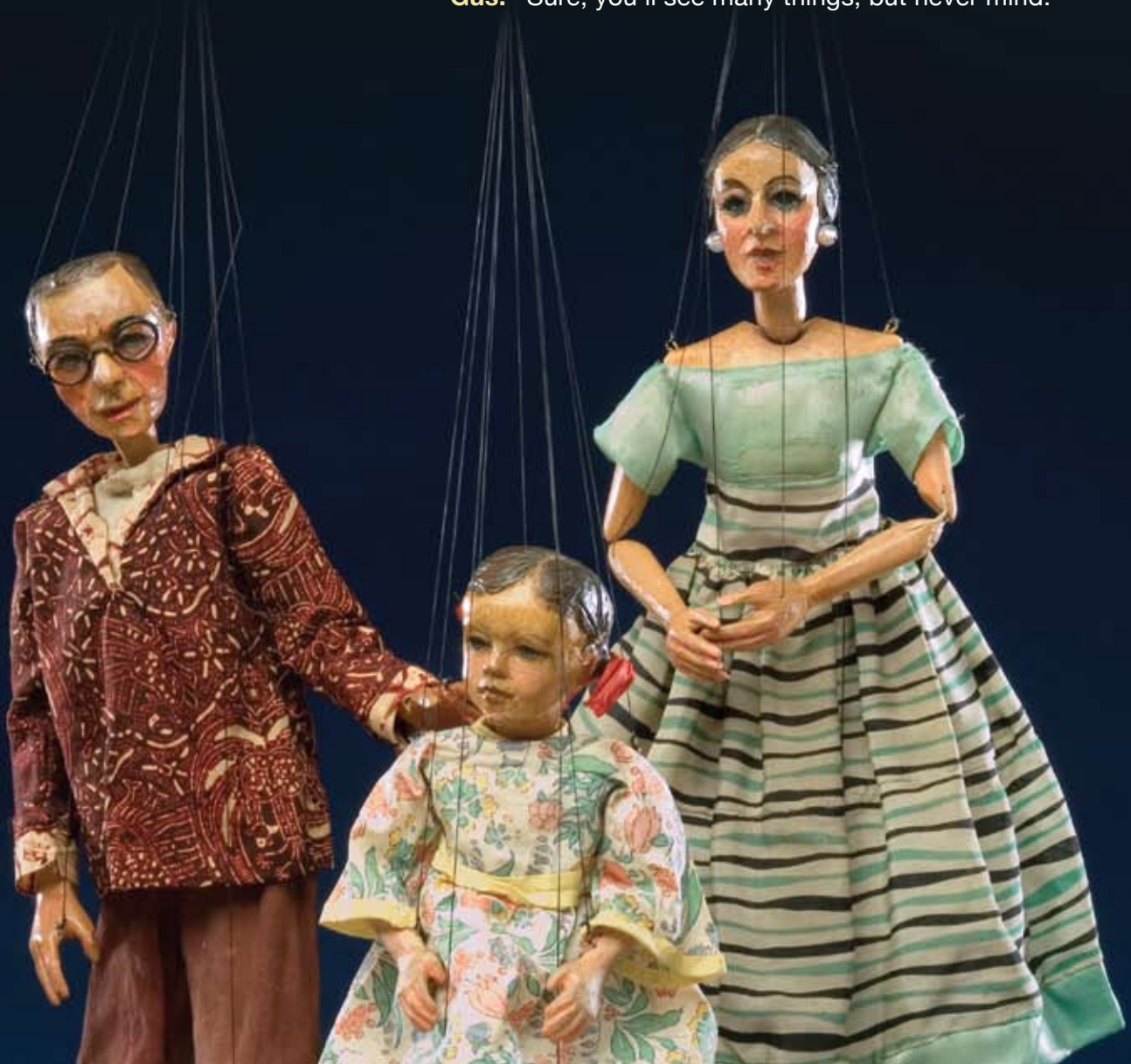
BY CARMELLA PADILLA

**Ann:** Da, why do you go out to the studio?

**Gus:** There are a lot of patients out there whose joints won't work, back-strings are twisted and one of them lost his head!

**Ann:** When you lose your head can I look inside?

**Gus:** Sure, you'll see many things, but never mind.



**T**he scene is a spacious living room on Camino de las Animas in 1930s Santa Fe, where artist Gustave “Gus” Baumann and his daughter, Ann, are deep in conversation.

He is slight, with thinning hair and round wire glasses. She is charming, with a delicate upturned nose and dark, deep-set eyes full of wonder. The two talk playfully about the sleeping habits of horned “horny” toads, then a common sight in their hillside neighborhood. It is the kind of everyday interaction that slips by most, but for Baumann, it was artistic fodder. Everything from the city’s multicultural traditions, folklore, and natural beauty to life with his daughter and wife, Jane, made its way into his vast oeuvre.

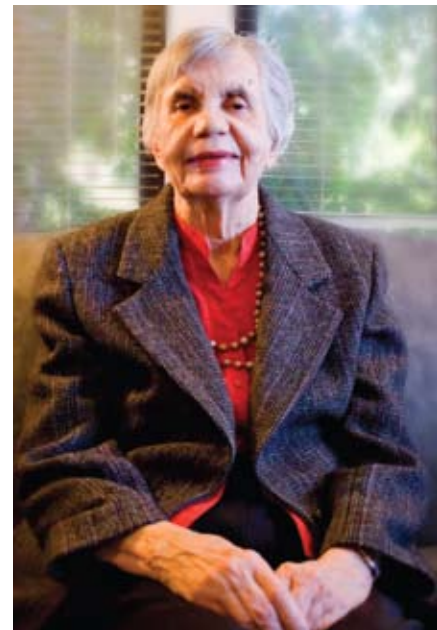
Indeed, in this case, father and daughter are not real at all. They are wooden representations of themselves, hand-carved marionettes created by Baumann in heartfelt expression of his family life. A marionette of Jane completed the Baumann trio. Their stories—and those of the more than seventy marionettes that Baumann carved during his career—took place on stage of a mobile puppet theater at the center of the Baumann living room.

“The marionettes were part of the family,” recalled Ann Baumann, now 81 and living in Santa Rosa, California. “They hung from a rack in the living room. They were wonderful.”

The lives of Baumann’s “little peo-

ple,” as the artist fondly referred to his cast of spirited string-puppets, span Ann Baumann’s upbringing in Santa Fe. Her mother, an accomplished actress and singer, collaborated closely in their creation, sewing costumes, writing scripts, and giving voice and movement to various characters. By the time Ann left Santa Fe at age twenty, the marionettes were known far beyond the family living room as her parents traveled the puppet theater throughout the region, including an acclaimed performance at the 1933 Chicago World’s Fair. Annual Christmas performances at the Baumann home and St. Francis Auditorium were cherished community events. Originally known as the Santa Fe Puppet Wranglers, and later as Teatro Duende (Theater of the Little People), the theater was unique in its melding of German folk puppetry tradition, a reflection of Baumann’s early childhood in Magdeburg, Germany, with characters and themes expressing the diverse cultural heritage of his adopted Santa Fe home, where he lived from 1918 to his death in 1971.

The theater was most active from 1932 to World War II, when audiences declined amid wartime worries. In June 1959, the marionettes made their last public appearance at the



**ABOVE:** Ann Baumann, 2009. Photograph ©Lisa Reid, On a Wing, Rohnert Park, California.

**BELOW:** A favorite of Ann Baumann’s was her father’s *Green Dragon*, ca. 1940, hand-carved, mixed-media marionette. Collection of the New Mexico Museum of Art. Gift of Jane Baumann, 1978. Photograph by Blair Clark (MNM/DCA).

**LEFT:** Wooden representations of the Baumanns themselves were apparent in many of the marionettes. Gustave Baumann, circa 1930s, hand-carved, mixed-media marionettes. Collection of the New Mexico Museum of Art. Gift of Jane Baumann, 1978. Photograph by Blair Clark (MNM/DCA).



**RIGHT:** Another of Ann Baumann's favorites is her father's creation *The Ballerina Columbine*, ca. 1930s, hand-carved, mixed-media marionette. Collection of the New Mexico Museum of Art. Gift of Jane Baumann, 1978. Photograph by Blair Clark (MNM/DCA).

**BELOW:** Gustave Baumann, *Lord Leffinghoop*, ca. 1930s, hand-carved, mixed-media marionette. Collection of the New Mexico Museum of Art. Gift of Jane Baumann, 1978. Photograph by Blair Clark (MNM/DCA).



spire some of her most vivid memories. Her recollections bring an intimate perspective to her famous father and mother, whose puppet theater was partly conceived to entertain their only child and her friends. Their child's play not only became part of local popular culture, but a unique and important expression of early twentieth-century art in Santa Fe.

"A home full of art," she said, "was the only home I knew."



In March 1972, *El Palacio* posthumously published Gustave Baumann's "Concerning a Small Untroubled World," in which he recalled his first impression of Santa Fe in 1918. "When I first saw Santa Fe, and not being familiar with adobe architecture, the old part seemed to be like picture book stuff that somebody had dreamed up and then had found it comfortable to live in," he wrote.

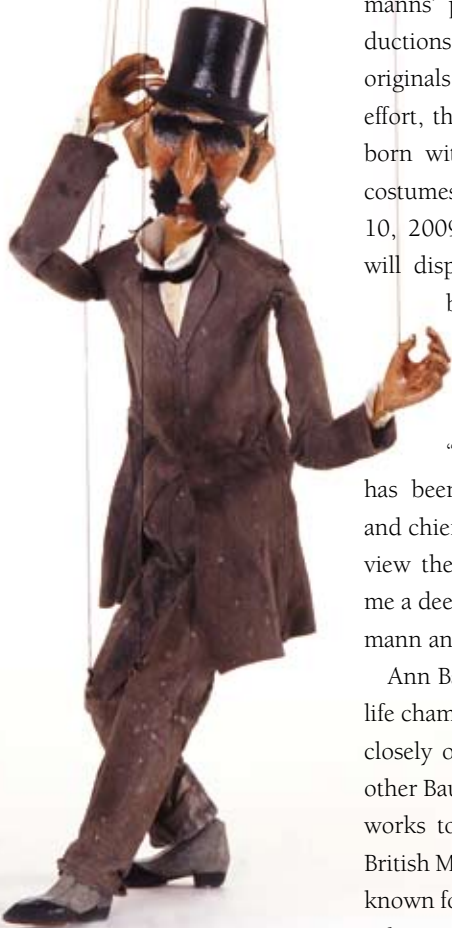
Santa Fe's storybook charm, creative character, and uncommon natural beauty were what Baumann had been searching for his entire life. Raised in the gritty urban center of Chicago from age ten, he had long imagined a less complicated life as an artist away from the "commercial art mill" of his successful advertising illustration career. A year of study in Munich refined his skills in printmaking and wood carving, and re-introduced him to

Museum of International Folk Art and were retired to two large trunks in the Baumann home. They laid there until shortly after Baumann's death, when Jane and Ann gifted the puppets and theater, as well as stage props, scripts, and related materials to the Museum of Fine Arts (today's New Mexico Museum of Art). Combined with Baumann prints, woodcuts, wood blocks, paintings, sculptures, furniture, and drawings donated by the family and other collectors, the museum holds the world's largest collection of more than 2,000 works by the internationally acclaimed artist. Baumann art and memorabilia also are with The Press at the Palace of the Governors, where portions of his studio will be re-created and open to the public in 2009.

In 1994, the art museum resumed the Baummanns' popular community Christmas productions using replicas of the fragile Baumann originals. Now, after an extensive restoration effort, the original marionettes have been reborn with new strings and joints, restored costumes, and stabilized paints. Through May 10, 2009, the New Mexico Museum of Art will display the puppets against Baumann's backdrops and props in their first-ever large-scale exhibition, *Pulling Strings: The Marionettes and Art of Gustave Baumann*.

"To see the marionettes 'live' again has been quite rewarding," said exhibition and chief curator Timothy Rodgers, Ph.D. "To view them in their proper homes has given me a deep appreciation for the artistry of Baumann and his family."

Ann Baumann has spent much of her adult life championing her father's work, consulting closely on books, calendars, note cards, and other Baumann-related projects, and donating works to such important institutions as the British Museum of Art. While her father is best known for his luminous, meticulously crafted, color woodblock prints, the marionettes in-



puppet-theater, a staple of his German childhood. The puppeteer's craft roused Baumann's nostalgia for a pre-industrial world, where perfection in handicraft was valued above all. The experience inspired a restless, years-long search for a place where, he wrote, "troubles would dissolve in the thin summer air."

He found it in New Mexico. Encouraged by artist Walter Ufer's passionate descriptions of the untarnished cultural landscapes of Taos, he traveled there first before visiting Santa Fe on his return to Chicago. A trip to the new art museum, opened in 1917, led to a chance meeting with curator Paul Walter, who shared Baumann's German ancestry and persuaded the artist, on the spot, to stay. Santa Fe embraced Baumann's serious artistic talents and fun-loving spirit, moving his life and art in creative new directions. He adopted regional influences and imagery, including representations of Pueblo Indian and His-

pano traditions and peoples. But his focus on the area's picturesque landscapes and scenes of daily life revealed the true inspiration of his new home. His work developed new color and clarity, casting his woodblock prints in pure, pearly light. His scenes evoked the soulful, untroubled spirit of Santa Fe, reflecting the same state of affairs in the artist's heart and mind.

Baumann preferred strict solitude in his creative work, though he enjoyed a wide circle of artist friends. Among them was writer Mary Austin, who recruited him to help her create a community theater, where he painted and designed sets and directed its first play in 1919. Then, in 1923, the forty-two-year-old bachelor met the woman whose shared love of the performing arts changed his life forever. She was

"I cherish my childhood with the marionettes, who speak to me now as then."



"Ann Baumann" at the piano, circa 1930s, hand-carved, mixed-media marionette. Collection of the New Mexico Museum of Art. Gift of Jane Baumann, 1978. Photograph by Blair Clark (MNM/DCA).



On exhibit in *Pulling Strings* is a scene from the “Folk Legend of San Isidro” showing the farmer working his fields on Sunday. An angel tells the farmer that God disapproves, and his wife begs him to listen. He doesn’t until the angel threatens, “To punish you for your disobedience and your stubbornness, God is going to send you a bad neighbor!”

Jane Devereaux Henderson, a budding actress from Denver he met at the San Felipe Pueblo dances on Christmas Eve.

“My father and mother had mutual friends from Denver, and one of them said that he should meet Jane Henderson,” said Ann Baumann. “He looked around and found her curled up around the wood stove waiting for the midnight service to begin.”

The two were married on June 25, 1925, and settled into Baumann’s home on Camino de las Animas. Two years later, on July 31, 1927, a daughter was born. When they couldn’t think of a name, they chose the last three letters of their family name: A-N-N. Creativity was their common ground.

“They had their agreements and disagreements, but they got along fine,” Ann said. “Mother was a Quaker, a member of the So-

ciety of Friends on Canyon Road. He was Lutheran but not practicing. They respected each other.”

Individually and together, the couple immersed themselves in Santa Fe’s artistic milieu. Jane starred in various productions at the community theater. Both joined local artists in a movement to make the Santa Fe Fiesta, then a strictly religious event, more lively. A lesser-known fact is Baumann’s role in suggesting the creation of the giant puppet, Zozobra, to artist Will Shuster in 1926. Baumann built the head of the original eighteen-foot effigy, and Shuster perfected the popular character that still kicks off Fiesta in a blaze of gloomy glory.

The Depression sparked the couple’s most enduring creative collaboration. In 1929, Baumann’s love of puppet-theater was invigorated by a performance of the legendary Tony Sarg Marionettes at the art museum. Sensing financial opportunity and using his fine sculpting skills, Baumann turned to puppet making. To this new venture he added experience in stage and set design, while Jane, his chief puppeteer, brought her acting, scripting, and sewing talents. Ann had a role, too; the puppets would be the perfect way to keep she and her friends entertained. In Baumann’s hands, however, the marionettes were more than mere entertainment; they were extraordinary works of art.

Between 1929 and 1933, Baumann carved a wondrous world of multicultural marionettes, the likes of which could only be found in Santa Fe. Native Americans, Hispanos, and buckaroos alike all had a place on Baumann’s mobile stage. Among those in residence were Eagle Dancers and Indian Drummers, Pecos Bill and Nambe Nell, Doña Mala, Rosina and Juan, and their burro Miguelito. Lord Leffinghoop, La Infanta the Spanish princess, Don Pedro, and Columbine the ballerina added international flair, while Koshare, San Ysidro, and Santo Niño gave a nod to important spiri-

## “A home full of art was the only home I knew.”

tual figures and allegory in Indian and Hispano life. Meanwhile, the “duendes,” elf-like sprites named Freckles and Warts, made mischief throughout.

Performances ranged from full-length plays to brief skits, including local comedy, classic drama, and simple scenes of Baumann family life. “I posed for the puppets that my father made to resemble me,” Ann recalled. “The marionettes were a natural part of my childhood; they were all close friends.” She had her favorites, particularly Pierrot, Columbine, and Harlequin, characters from the famous *com-media dell’arte*. “The Golden Dragon Mine,” featuring a fiery green dragon and fat tourist lady (a character spoof on Santa Fe’s tourist trade), was her favorite play. And the annual Christmas performances, with Santa Claus and his sidekick Chicken, were an occasion to remember.

“The idea of the Christmas Eve plays was primarily for my ‘little friends’ but their parents would always want to stay,” she said. “My parents never charged, but it was by invitation. We had two or three performances, filled up the living room to whatever the house could hold. Then we drove to San Felipe for the late-night dances.”

Ann described her father as “stern but loving, a very kind man. He could work all day, and sometimes he would go back in the studio in the middle of the night to watch a print dry. His work time was his pleasure.” While many well-

known people came to the house to purchase work—“John Crosby sat in our living room one day and said I’m going to start an opera”—she was only mildly aware of her father’s growing fame.

“Santa Fe was a lot smaller than it is now; everybody knew each other.” Artist B. J. O. Nordfelt lived across the street, and poet Witter Bynner was next door. When Mary Austin dedicated her classic *Children Sing in the Far West* to Ann, it was a flattering, though not unusual, gesture. Still, Ann occasionally longed for a life more like her friends had.

“Sometimes, it upset me,” she said. “My friends had fathers who were bankers, grocers, and businessmen. My father didn’t go to the bank five days a week, he went out to the studio.” While her father’s studio was strictly off limits to his customers, she was allowed to visit

Gustave Baumann, *Santa Claus with Nambe Nell and her husband, Pecos Bill*, ca. 1930s, hand carved mixed media marionettes. Collection of the New Mexico Museum of Art. Gift of Jane Baumann, 1978. Photograph by Blair Clark (MNM/DCA).





“My father said that being an artist,  
he wouldn’t wish it on anybody.”

**ABOVE:** On exhibit in *Pulling Strings* is a scene from “The Birthday of the Infanta,” based on Diego Velázquez’s *Las Meninas* (1656), with the Infanta or Princess of Spain and her three attendants about to welcome local children to the palace for the celebration of the Infanta’s twelfth birthday.

but not to watch him work. “It was a very well-organized studio. He used one room for his press and the mechanical part of art, and the other for his carving, painting, and printing.”

She had no personal interest in art, and neither of her parents encouraged her in that direction. “My father said that being an artist, he wouldn’t wish it on anybody. He was self-supporting, couldn’t depend upon a salary. Fortunately, he was able to do many things. He even worked as an interior decorator.”

In most ways, however, Ann’s life was like other children in Santa Fe. She attended public schools, including Wood Gormley Elementary, Harrington Junior High, and Santa Fe High School. She went to birthday parties and school dances, skied with friends, and rode horses with her mother. As she got older, she

planned for college and a career.

She attended Bradford Junior College in Massachusetts, moved to Pasadena to pursue secretarial work, enrolled at the University of California in Berkeley to study social work, and after earning a master’s degree in social welfare, enjoyed a long career. Ann never married or lived again in Santa Fe, though her family connection remained strong. She traveled to Santa Fe annually until a few years after her father’s death when she moved her mother to California. “She couldn’t handle being alone there without him,” she said. Ann visited Santa Fe even after her mother’s death, though in time the city’s high altitude prevented further trips.

In the preface to the 1999 book *The Hand-Carved Marionettes of Gustave Baumann*, by

museum education director Ellen Zieselman, Ann wrote, “I cherish my childhood with the marionettes, who speak to me now as then.” She said that while her parents’ puppet theater never led to much income, its riches are in the joy it brought to her family and people of all ages. She wishes that her father had lived to see his artistic legacy touch the lives of countless generations in Santa Fe and beyond.

“His reputation really increased after he died,” she said. “I have nothing but pride that he is recognized in the art world as a superior person. But it came too late.” ■

**Carmella Padilla** is a contributing writer to *El Palacio* and the author of *The Chile Chronicles: Tales of a New Mexico Harvest*, *Low 'n slow: Lowriding in New Mexico*, *Eliseo Rodriguez: El Sexto Pintor*, and more. Her most recent book, *El Rancho de las Golondrinas: Living History in New Mexico's La Ciénega Valley*, will be published by the Museum of New Mexico Press in spring 2009. ■ **Ellen Zieselman's** 1999 book *The Hand-Carved Marionettes of Gustave Baumann* can be ordered at 800-249-7737. To read Gustave Baumann's



article “Concerning a Small Untroubled World,” visit our Web site, [elpalacio.org](http://elpalacio.org). ■ **Teatro Duende Marionette Troupe** presents performances at 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. March 1, April 5, and May 3 at the New Mexico Museum of Art in Santa Fe. Puppeteers: Stefany Burrowes, Juliet Staveley, Judith Shotwell, Joy Ginther, Joa Dattilo, and Barbara Mayfield.



**ABOVE:** Gustave Baumann's hand-carved, mixed-media marionette *Eagle Dancer*, ca. 1930s, was choreographed to replicate Pueblo dance steps. Collection of the New Mexico Museum of Art. Gift of Jane Baumann, 1978. Photograph by Blair Clark (MNM/DCA).

**LEFT:** *Pulling Strings* has this scene of Saint Francis promising to continue his vow of poverty and to preach the gospel. The donkey kneels in respect to the saint who also preached to the animals so that they would know God's grace.