Dwight Kirsch and Chadron State College

Kirsch’s can be seen not only here at the Reta E. King Library, but also in Memorial Hall.

The collection of Kirsch work on display here, and cared for by the Sandoz Center, consists of photographs. Kirsch, though, is best known for his paintings. Two of his paintings are on display in the North Hallway of Memorial Hall.

For more information about this exhibit, please contact:

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Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center
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Selections from the Nebraska Sandhills Portfolio

Photographs by Dwight Kirsch

On Display at the Reta E. King Library
Through July 2015
The black and white photographs in this exhibit are from the “Nebraska Sandhills Portfolio” given to Mari Sandoz by Dwight Kirsch. Frederick Dwight Kirsch, born in Pawnee County, Nebraska in 1899, received his BA in 1919 from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. After graduation, Kirsch studied at the Art Students League, in New York City from 1919-1922. Other artists there at the same time as Kirsch were Robert Henri, Boardman Robinson, and Sterling Calder.

Kirsch then moved back to Nebraska to become a Professor of Art at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln from 1924-1947. During that time he served as an Instructor, Professor, Chairman of Department and finally Director of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Art Galleries, now known as the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden.

He coordinated the University's acquisition of one of the finest contemporary art collections in the country, and was catalytic in the building of the Sheldon Art Gallery. Kirsch’s wife Truby, son John, and niece JoAnn Kelly (Alexander) were his abiding inspirations.

In 1950, Kirsch left Lincoln for Des Moines, Iowa, where he was Director of the Des Moines Art Center from 1950-1958. During his tenure at the Des Moines Art Center, Kirsch assembled a wide range of vital, historical art. He then became Artist-in-Residence at Iowa State University until 1965.

The premature death of his wife and son caused him to be reclusive in later years and move Colorado where he would stay until his death in 1981.

In 1935, the photograph shown below appears inside the cover of “Old Jules,” a book written by Mari Sandoz. The album in the collection is dated, though, as 1936-1937.

**Impact on Nebraska**

Kirsch was also responsible for bringing many important artists and their work to Nebraska. Georgia O'Keefe and Walter Kuhn exhibited in Lincoln in 1939. He invited Grant Wood and John Steuart Curry to lecture. Kirsch’s focus on contemporary art acquainted him with Edward Hopper, Thomas Hart Benton, Alfred Stieglitz, Andrew Wyeth, John Sloan, and others.

He worked with photographers Alfred Stieglitz and fellow Nebraskan Wright Morris.

During his time as Professor of Art and Director of the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln (1924-1947), Kirsch became good friends with Mari Sandoz. It was during this time that Kirsch made the photographs contained in this collection.