

# Why Pedro de Lemos Still Matters

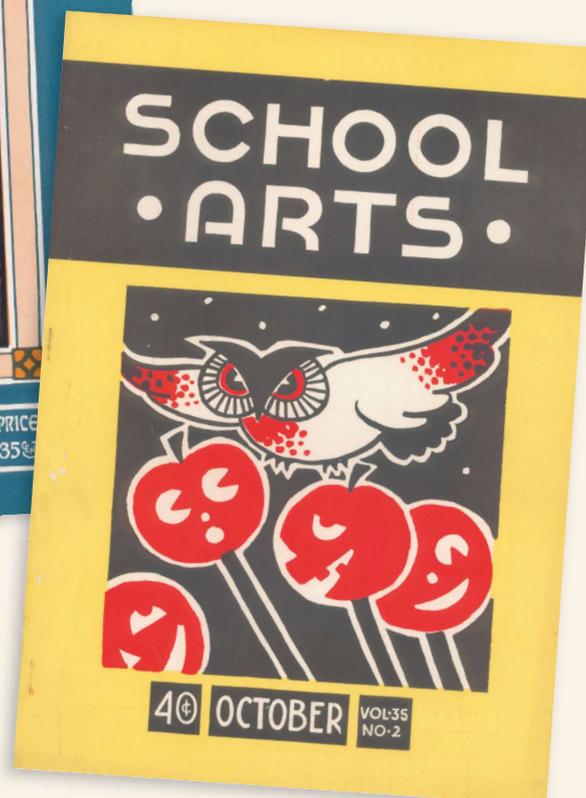
Claire Mowbray Golding and Wyatt Wade

**H**ere at the *SchoolArts* offices, Pedro de Lemos is pretty easy to find. One of his prints hangs in our conference room. The shelves in our archives are crowded with copies of his books, the many issues of *SchoolArts* he edited between 1919 and 1950, and the beautiful loose-leaf “portfolios” he created on a wide range of art and design topics.

But if you live anywhere other than Palo Alto or Carmel, California, you might never have heard of Pedro, a man renowned in his own time as a painter, printmaker, cement artist, illustrator, architect, writer, theorist, and educator. So, sixty-five years after he stepped down as *SchoolArts*’ longest-serving editor, we’d like to remind our readers of Pedro’s many gifts to art and art education by showcasing some of his work and thoughts.

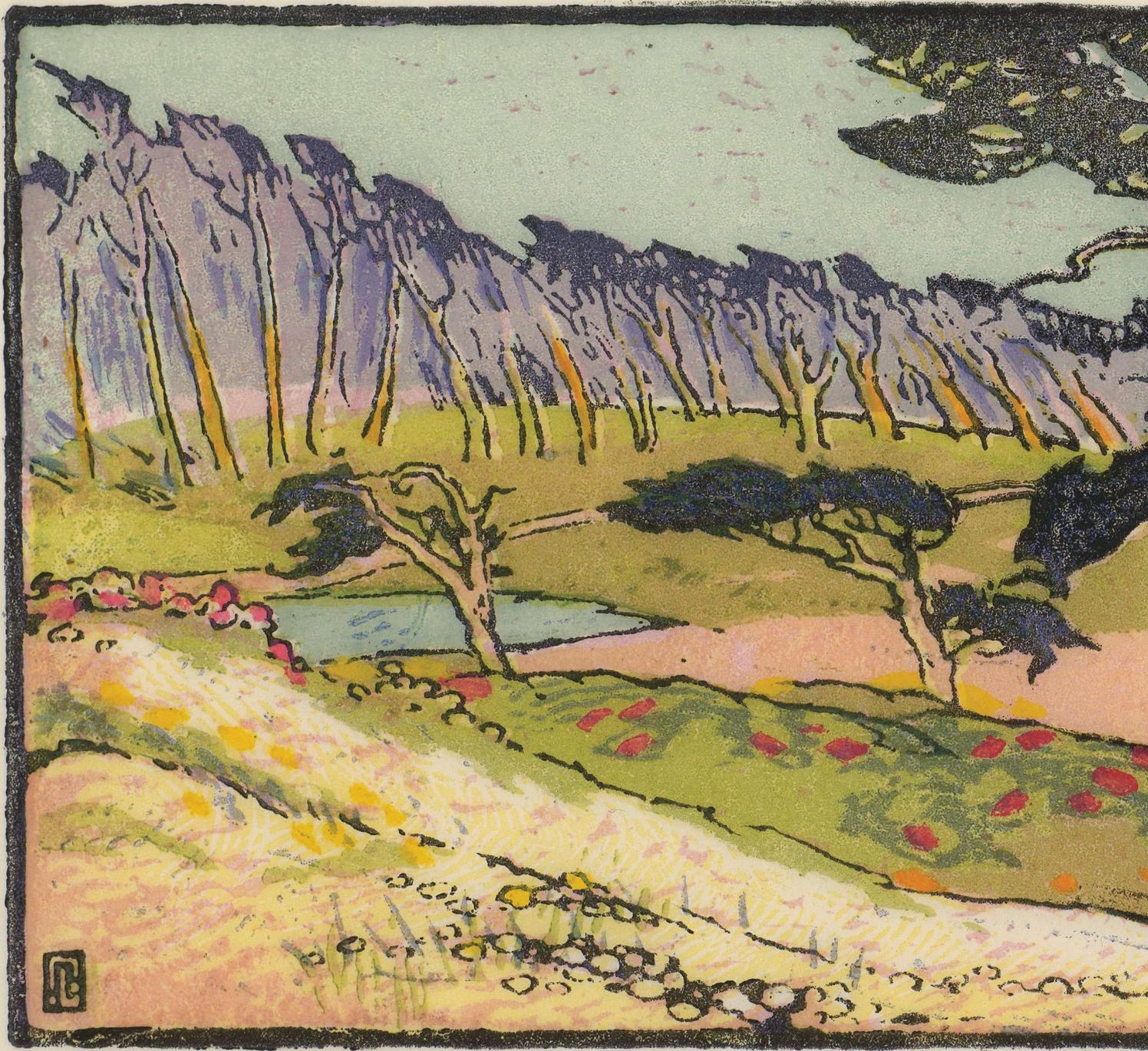


Pedro de Lemos in his Palo Alto garden.



An exhibition entitled “**Lasting Impressions—Pedro de Lemos**” opens **April 23, 2015**, at the **Monterey Museum of Art in California** and will remain on view until **October 5, 2015**.

Coming soon from Davis Publications: *Pedro de Lemos Lasting Impressions: Works on Paper, 1910–1945*. Text by Lemos scholar Robert Edwards and stunning full-color reproductions of Lemos’ works on paper comprise this upcoming volume, which is both a comprehensive history and visual record of a true Renaissance man.

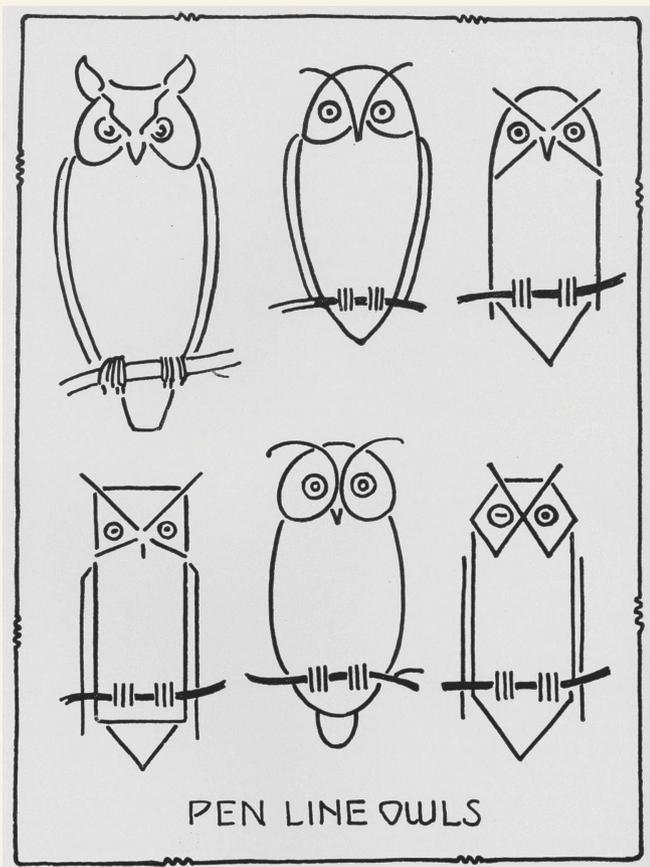


Old Pines at Monterey

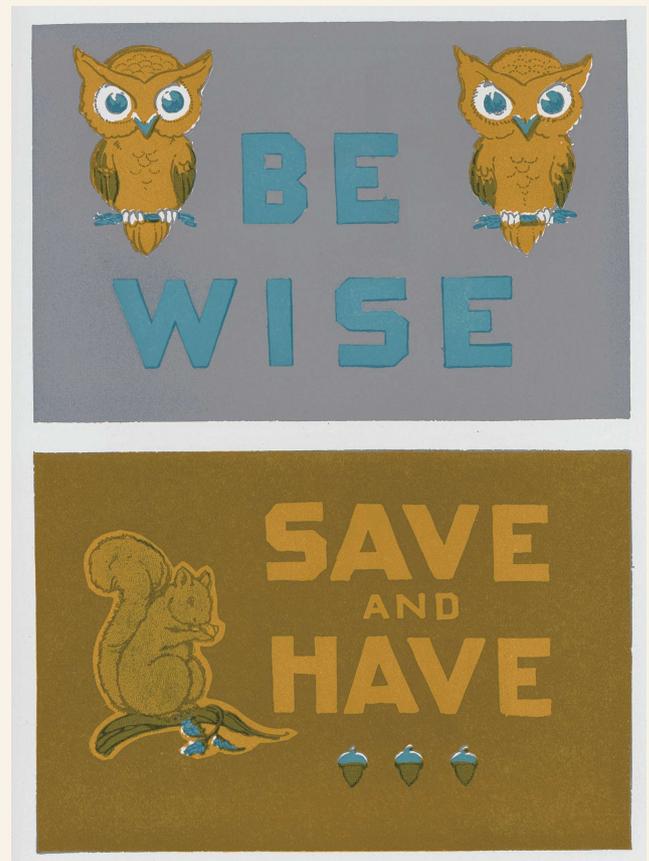
*Pedro de Lemos, Old Pines at Monterey. Color block print, 5.40 × 11.60" (14 × 29 cm). Courtesy of the Paula and Terry Trotter Collection.*



Pedro Idelmo



Examples of natural forms being re-imagined for decorative purposes. From *The Art Teacher*, by Pedro Lemos, 1939.



A simple poster project for young students. From *The Art Teacher*, by Pedro Lemos, 1939.

### Who Was Pedro de Lemos?

Born on May 25, 1882, in the tiny mining town of Austin, Nevada, Pedro de Lemos was one of three sons of Francisco Lemos, a Portuguese shoemaker who'd emigrated to the United States from the Azores in 1872. By the time Pedro was six, the family had settled in Oakland, California. Pedro began to study art while he was still a teenager, taking classes at the California School of Design (now the San Francisco Art Institute), and by the time he was eighteen, he had a job as an illustrator with Pacific Press Publishing.

The devastating San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906 destroyed the engraving company Pedro founded with his brother John in 1904, but in 1907 all three brothers joined forces to open the Lemos Illustrating Company. They specialized in engraving, then added photography, and evolved into a diverse art studio, offering classes in drypoint, etching, illustrating, copper, leatherwork, and landscaping.

Pedro continued his studies in New York City at Columbia University and the Art Students League, and was influenced by teachers such as Arthur Wesley Dow and George Bridgman. He returned to California, established a studio in Oakland, and embarked on a teaching career. He later became director of the San Francisco Institute of Art, leaving in 1917 to become director of Stanford University's Museum of Art and its gallery, a position he held until 1945.

Pedro's first appearance in *SchoolArts* was in 1913 as the

author of an article on making leather aquatints and mezzotints. By 1916 he was a board member, and in 1919 he became editor. His beautiful illustrations accompanied many of the magazine's articles, and his editorship was immediately visible in the magazine's new focus on world cultures, applied art and design, and step-by-step instruction.

Through *SchoolArts*, Pedro introduced thousands of American teachers to Native American, South American, and Hispanic artistic achievements and approaches. He traveled around the Southwest, collecting student artwork to show in the magazine. In 1923 *SchoolArts* readers learned about the pottery of Maria Martinez at San Ildefonso; in 1932 they saw a Frida Kahlo painting and read an article by Diego Rivera on children's drawings in Mexico. A 1942 issue was printed in both English and Spanish and was devoted to Central and South American art.

Traveling around the world, leading art education tours, and conducting the work of the Stanford University Museum helped fuel Pedro's passion for traditional crafts, and his belief that art is a vital part of every human endeavor. "Art for life's sake," rather than "art for art's sake," was his motto, and he took every available opportunity to reinforce that perspective in his books, articles, pamphlets, portfolios, and in every corner of the magazine he so lovingly created. 

**de Lemos On:**

**Design:** "Design means good arrangement or good order. No design is good without thoughtful arrangement." (From *Applied Art*, 1920)

**Graphic Design:** "Good posters make people think. A few words in a speech, the right words often change people's ideas more than a long sermon. A powerful picture may be a very simple one if it has the right idea." (From *The Art Teacher*, 1931)

"Three rules to remember in poster designing are as follows: (1) The design should be simple. (2) It should have unity of wording and illustration. (3) It should tell its message effectively." (From *Applied Art*, 1920)

**Industrial Design:** "Every handicraft or manufactured object may become an article of beauty, when art is added, and still retain its utility." (From *Applied Art*, 1920)

**Decorative Design:** "Nature should be used for suggestions. Never copy natural forms as design units or patterns. Nature forms should give us ideas for beautiful forms and colors." (From *The Art Teacher*, 1931)

**Art as Part of Life:** "Art can be connected to life's needs and civilization's comforts. Art is not alone for the 'tal-

ented,' nor is it a luxury for humanity; more art in every avenue of life's vocations will result in a surer, firmer foundation for the greatest renaissance our country has ever had and which it certainly needs." (de Lemos, 1945, quoted in John White, "Progress and Restraint")

**Art Education:** "The Art Teacher . . . is a potent factor in the growth of national art appreciation . . . The children who received their art growth in the yesterday of impressionable years are today the citizens who build a better chair, design lovelier dresses, plan finer homes and city streets of beauty, rear dream cities, and produce all manner of splendid handicraft." (From *The Art Teacher*, 1931)

**Architecture:** According to Monty Anderson, American Institute of Architects, "de Lemos tried to bring art, landscape, and architecture together to provide visitors with a rich textural experience. His hand is in every one of his projects; he didn't just design these buildings, he actively participated in the construction. It's this personal touch and an eye for the craft of building that sets de Lemos buildings apart." (From Cody Anderson Wasney Architects, [cawarchitectsblog.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/blog-post-4-photo3.jpg?w=450&h=444](http://cawarchitectsblog.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/blog-post-4-photo3.jpg?w=450&h=444))

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Industrial objects beautified with tree designs. From *Applied Art*, by Pedro Lemos, 1920.



Examples of poster work for school grades. From *The Art Teacher*, by Pedro Lemos, 1939.