

THE FIRST MODERNS

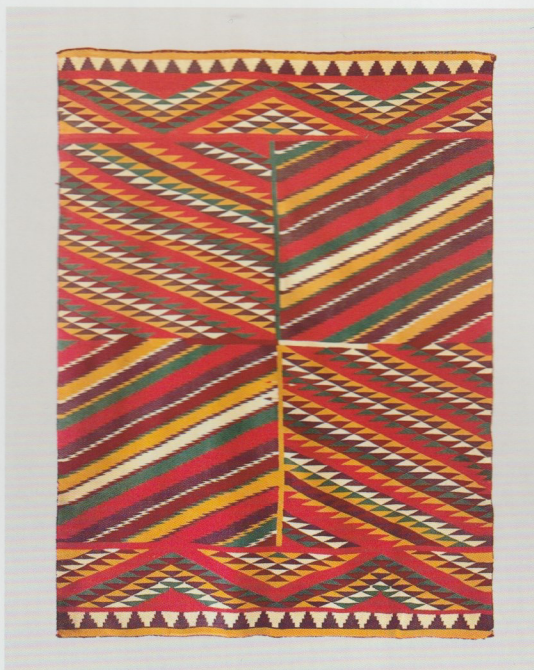
48th Annual Whitehawk Antique Indian & Ethnographic Art Show, Santa Fe
Community Convention Center, New Mexico
6–9 August 2026

HALI is pleased to be sponsoring 'First Moderns', one of two special exhibitions being held as part of the upcoming Whitehawk Show; the exhibition highlights rare Diné/Navajo Germantown weavings dating from the 1870s–early 1900s.

The exhibits represent the birth of a new art form on the North American continent. In the same era that European painters were pushing the boundaries of traditional painting, Diné/Navajo weaving witnessed groundbreaking experiments in abstraction and colour.

The artistic transformation was related to the development of fine, machine-spun, four-ply, woollen yarn, produced in Germantown, near Philadelphia, and available in a wide range of vibrant aniline colours. Reservation traders who began to commission specific design formats supplied weavers with this new high-grade yarn, as well as cotton warps, allowing for higher weft counts and permitting a graphic revolution among weavers who had recently returned to the reservation after internment at Bosque Redondo (Hwéeldi).

Kim Martindale, who hosts the Whitehawk Show, values the weavings' 'flawless designs'. He says, 'I believe Navajo artists deserve the credit for being the first modern artists in America.'



1 Diné/Navajo Germantown textile, circa 1870–1895.
All textiles from private collections

2 Diné/Navajo Germantown textile, circa 1880

3 Diné/Navajo Germantown textile, circa 1880

4 Diné/Navajo Germantown textile, circa 1870–1895