

Seventeen Dollars a Square Inch

A PERSONAL TRIBUTE TO ERIC SLOANE



FORREST FENN



Foreword

In 1975 I was the guest of Victor and Armand Hammer for lunch at the Dutch Treat Club in New York. It's a literary club that meets once a week, always with hundreds in attendance. Armand, a major art collector, owned two of the more prominent art galleries in the city, Knoedlers and Hammer, where his brother Victor was the manager. They had pressured me to handle the work of Eric Sloane, an artist whose name was familiar to me, but whose face was not. I resisted because I wanted to sell the work of older artists, particularly those of the Taos School. "Well, we want you to represent him because he needs a Western agent like you. You'll be good for each other," they said. I still resisted.

After being seated at a table for twelve, the man on my left started pointing out celebrities around the room: Bob & Ray, the editor of *Reader's Digest*, Robert Goulet, Walter Cronkite, the publisher of *National Geographic Magazine*, James Cagney,

David Brinkley, Cary Grant, and Andy Warhol. It went on and on. I was thrilled to see such famous people, and asked my guide if he was also in the arts. He said he was, and we introduced ourselves. His name was Eric Sloane.

I laughed at myself for being set up, but was happy to know such an enchanting man as Mr. Sloane. We became fast friends, so of course I started handling his work. That same year he and his wife Mimi started building a home on the western reaches of Santa Fe where they would pass parts of each year, although their main home was in Connecticut. We spent a lot of time together, sometimes with him as co-pilot in my plane as we flew at treetop level to Taos or Oklahoma City. He knew the language of the landscape, and of the clouds and the winds, and I was awed. In the months that followed, in the fullness of time, our friendship flourished, but would last only ten years.



Nothing, it seems to me, is as sad as a lost thought.



Preface

The purpose of this book is to publish the last written words of a man who was a mentor to me late in my life, and whose memory occupies a special spot in a warm corner of my mind where only the fondest of recollections are allowed. This belated effort fulfills a promise I made to him, and he to me.



New England Red, Michael Wigley Gallery