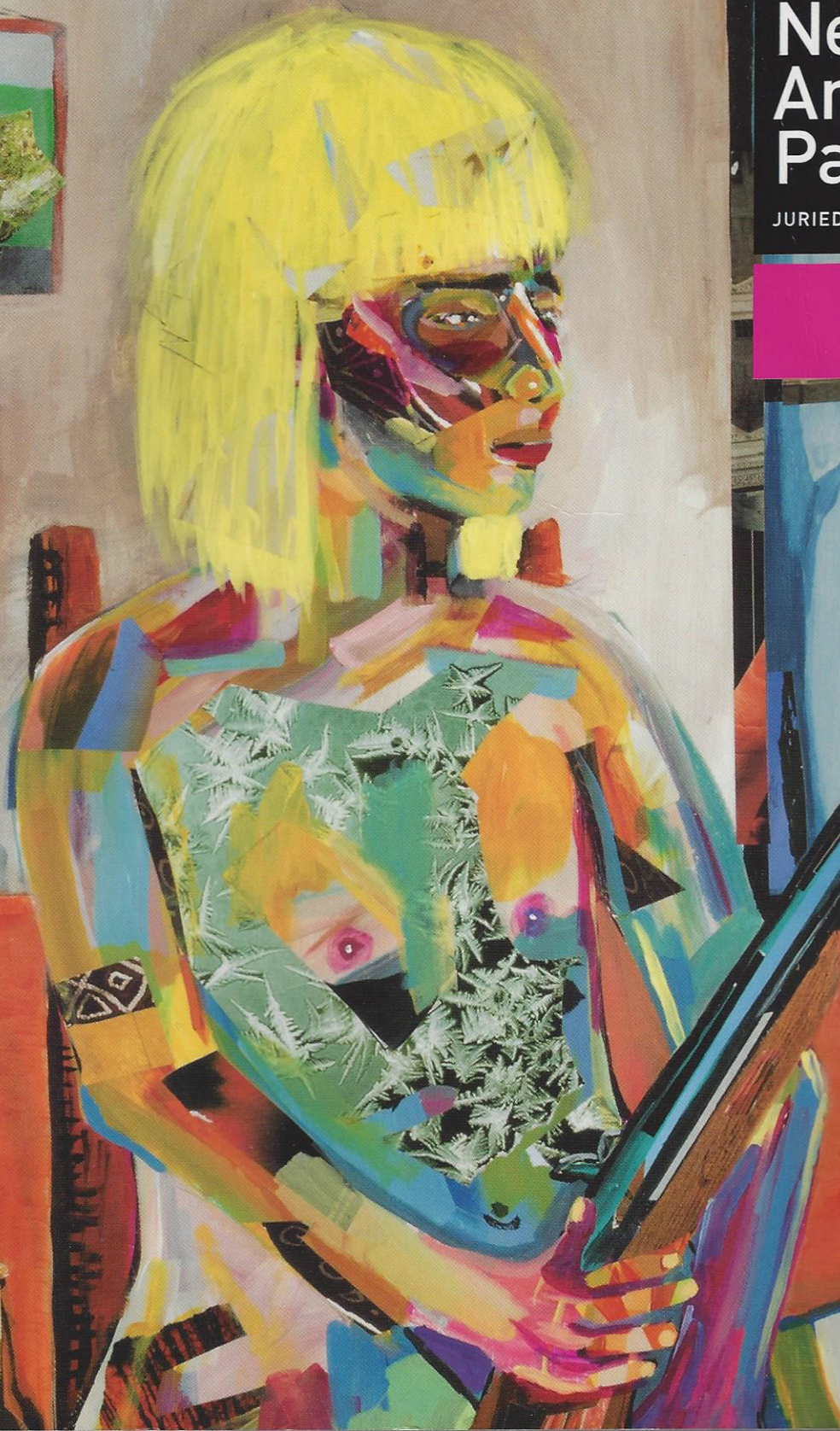


New American Paintings

JURIED EXHIBITIONS-IN-PRINT

106



Tracy Stuckey at Visions West Gallery

Artist Tracy Stuckey (NAP #106) sets reality and romanticism on a collision course in his paintings of icons, legends, and heroes of the American West. In his recent work, Stuckey assumes the role of storyteller, crafting his tall tales of equal parts humor, theatricality, fiction, and reality. The artist's "refashioned fables" put a satirical spin on mythic views of this often-romanticized region and stand as commentaries on the West today. - *Karen Brooks, Guest Contributor*



Tracy Stuckey | *Red Rocket Rider*, 2009, oil on canvas, 40 x 66 inches. Images courtesy of the artist.

Stuckey stitches together inflated representations of the West in his imaginative compositions, populating distinctly western backdrops with a raucous troupe of historic and contemporary westerners. His cast of characters is culled from western folk tales, songs, art, film, pulp novels, magazines, newspapers, and photographs among other sources. Stuckey is intrigued by the ways in which these media represent the West, appropriate western themes, and sell the myth of the American West to the public.

Collecting source material is an important part of Stuckey's practice. The artist keeps both digital and physical stockpiles of material that interests him, all the while thinking of compelling ways in which to remix disparate ideas in paintings

that entertain and provoke. Working first in a digital format, Stuckey manipulates western figures and landscapes on the computer, and then translates these compositions into oil paintings on canvas. Painting the finalized composition allows the artist to seamlessly integrate the varied elements. A connection can be drawn between the pastiche of pop art, contemporary mash-up culture, and Stuckey's work. Sampled and remixed from a wide variety of source material, his paintings incorporate collage, appropriation, and innovation.



Tracy Stuckey | Slue-Foot Sue, oil on canvas, 60 x 48 inches. Images courtesy of the artist.

In juxtaposing, for example, cowboys who look like they've broken free from the confines of a black-and-white film strip and bikini-clad women plucked from the pages of a contemporary fashion magazine, Stuckey creates paintings that somehow feel both familiar and surreal. Their familiarity is likely due to our frequent exposure to romantic western subjects and themes, which have long held the rapt attention of advertising agencies, fashion houses, artists, writers,

and other creative minds. Out of this pervasive passion for all things western were born such iconic characters as: Pecos Bill and Slue-Foot Sue of American folklore; the tobacco industry's most recognizable spokesman, the Marlboro Man; and, the fabled pair Pancho and Lefty of Townes Van Zandt's enduring song. Each of these figures is distilled from widely-held and often stereotypical ideas about the American West shaped by popular culture. Stuckey plays on the artificiality of these western clichés by reimagining them in novel and frequently comical contexts.

Stuckey dresses his characters in what he dubs "cultural costumes" (a Native American headdress, a cowboy hat) and equips them with props (a gun, a rocket) that point to different ideas about the American West. Most of the western characters and themes Stuckey depicts were fictitious in the first place and now, at his whim, are now fictions of fictions. Others are amalgamations of multiple sources or ideas and emerge rebranded on Stuckey's canvases. Rearranged and reinterpreted, Stuckey's characters act out narratives whose storylines are open to viewers' interpretations and which instigate questions. With a cunning sense of humor, Stuckey challenges and satirizes familiar binaries like Man versus Nature or Good versus Evil in the American West. He does so by inserting a squirt gun into the palm of bad guy, or swapping a villain with a Vegas showgirl, or placing his protagonist on the back of a rocket rather than a trusty steed.



Tracy Stuckey | Target, oil on canvas, 40 X 60 inches. Images courtesy of the artist.

The artist's interest in the West and the cultural juggernaut it has inspired is rooted in his early exposure to film and television westerns. Stuckey says that he grew up "watching western films and idolizing their characters and longing for the wild open spaces in which they roamed." Later, after moving to the West, he would come to "grasp [the region's] complex reality; a reality not only infused with romantic iconography but also with contemporary issues such as the human impact on the frontier and a continued exploitation of an imagined culture." Stuckey's acute awareness of these contemporary issues fuels a passion to create art that grapples with the complexity and multiplicity of today's West in a way which is approachable, playful, and clever.

Tracy Stuckey received his BFA in painting from Florida State University and his MFA from the University of New Mexico. He has exhibited his work extensively throughout the United States, with numerous solo and group exhibitions. Tracy currently lives in Fort Collins, CO.

Refashioned Fables: Icons and Tribes of the Disbanded West will be on view at Visions West Gallery in Denver (1715 Wazee Street, Denver, CO 80202 | 303.292.0909) through December 4th.

Karen E. Brooks is a graduate of the MA program in art history at the University of Colorado at Boulder. She currently works as department assistant of the Petrie Institute of Western American Art at the Denver Art Museum. She is also a freelance editor and writer and has published essays on contemporary and historical American art.

- See more at: <http://www.newamericanpaintings.com/blog/tracy-stuckey-visions-west-gallery#pane-0>