



# DIVERSE

## VIEWS OF THE WEST

by MICHELE CORRIEL



*The Grand Wrangler* | oil on canvas | 36" x 66" | Tracy Stuckey

# Visions West Contemporary

ARTISTS TAKE ON THE NEW WEST



*Laying Sebastian* | oil on canvas | 60" x 45" | Tracy Stuckey

**“He’s grappling with the complexities of the West while poking fun at what the rest of America considers ‘The West.’”**

—Nikki Todd, Owner, Visions West Contemporary (regarding Artist Tracy Stuckey)



*Liberty in The Desert* | oil on canvas | 60" x 84" | Tracy Stuckey



*Cupids Bow* | oil on canvas | 60" x 42" | Tracy Stuckey

Visions West Contemporary, with galleries in Bozeman, Livingston, and Denver, has been around for nearly 25 years, continuously bringing contemporary art to the region by pushing the boundaries and taking risks.

“Even though we deal with animals, nature, and the West, we try to do it in a non-traditional way,” owner Nikki Todd says. “We try to find people who have a new lens for looking at nature, outside of the typical ‘Western’ art, and we want something that makes people think a little bit.”

Along those lines, many of the artists Todd works with speak to naturalism and the “new” West in surprising ways.

“They are all represented nationally and generally, are mid-career artists,” she says. “At Visions West we like playful art with a bit of humor, but the artwork must also appeal to the viewer visually and have that quality of beauty.”

Painter Tracy Stuckey has been with Visions West for almost a decade. “We can’t keep his work on the walls,” Todd says. “He is one of

those artists dealing with the American West, poking fun at icons and Western heroes while bringing things into today’s world.”

Stuckey uses art historical references, like Saint Sebastian who is “killed” with rubber sucker arrows on a bare mattress along the foothills, or a young couple leaning on their Mustang (car) parked beneath a billboard of the Marlboro Man. He’s got that level of art savvy, which makes his work thoughtful and fun, smart and jaunt.

“His work is striking,” adds Todd. “It’s done in a different way, with a modern-day view, which also incorporates a theatrical element. A lot of his work speaks to how the American West, as an idea, occupies a space within the American psyche.”

Stuckey’s satire talks about the complex reality of the American West. He uses realistic scenarios infused with the romantic iconography of cowgirls, pickup trucks, and cacti, within scenes rife with contemporary issues such as the human impact on the “frontier” and the continued exploitation of an imagined culture.

“He’s grappling with the complexities of the West while poking fun at what the rest of America considers ‘The West,’” Todd says. “Other themes, like the power struggle between men and women, may not necessarily be Western but incorporate Western motifs, playing with that perception of the West on many different levels.”

Like neoclassicist Jacques-Louis David’s Napoleon Crossing the Alps, Stuckey’s Crossing L.A. County is both a monumental work of art and a thinly veiled ironic propaganda statement. While David’s portrait of Napoleon on the back of his white stallion may have been vital to David’s career in the midst of the French Revolution and the continued favor from the Emperor, Stuckey instead grabs the notion of propaganda and runs with it. His portrait has a cowgirl on horseback, complete with Louis Vuitton chaps and the Hollywood sign visible in the background. As Napoleon conquered France, the myth of the West conquered America’s mind turning it into legend. Here, Stuckey enlightens the viewer with this tongue-in-cheek expression of over-the-top “Westernism.”

**“A lot of her inspiration comes from historical references. Her surfaces are very ornate, with 24-karat gold and tapestry-like textures. They’re really rich, very imaginative.”**

—Nikki Todd, Owner, Visions West Contemporary (regarding Artist Crystal Latimer)

*Her Wild West* | acrylic, pastel, ink, flocking, 24k gold, cotton tassels on panel | 28" x 30" x 1.5" | Crystal Latimer



*Reigning Fancie* | acrylic, gold, ink, pastel on panel with cotton tassels | 35" x 36" | Crystal Latimer



Crystal Latimer, a new artist for Visions West, carries her ethnological Latino background not only on the surface of her pieces, but on the sides, backs, and bottom. Along the bottom of her most recent work, Latimer uses decorative tassels to extend the surface of the piece, creating a three-dimensional object, rather than a two-dimensional painting.

“A lot of her inspiration comes from historical references,” Todd says. “Her surfaces are very ornate, with 24-karat gold and tapestry-like textures. They’re really rich, very imaginative.”

In one of Latimer’s pieces, *The Two Selves*, an acrylic, pastel, ink, and flocking work that includes 24-karat gold embellishments and cotton tassels, speaks to nature with iconic imagery of deer, horses, and cheetahs. The distinctly pink aspect of her work implies a feminine perspective, as do the woven references of the piece’s gold markings that sparkle like jewelry. Each of the objects also channels the look of old maps, moving in and out of the present, conjuring borders and unexplored lands.

Another important artist in the Visions West stable is the duo of Duffy De Armas and Stefan Hofmann from Seattle, who create under the name Electric Coffin. Their work interfaces with technology, people, animals, and nature.

“They deal in coded language filled with art history, ideologies, and archetypes, encapsulated in pop culture and visual cues,” Todd says. “Their pieces are fun and range from sculpture to painting and wood carvings.”

Electric Coffin’s interactive pieces create an entire environment using animal imagery overlaid with iconic American culture, like Hostess pies and spray paint cans. They have a few pieces that follow the pattern of a wild animal (bear, bison, wolf) with a camper (Winnebago, VW bus, graffiti car) tied to their backs, reflecting the tourist trade of national parks and the cashing in on places like Yosemite and Yellowstone.

Process-driven Electric Coffin synthesizes perception through found objects and the physical remnants of industry, mass production, communication, and commerce, according to their artist statement.

“Throughout history, artists have been central to social change; they are cultural workers, because artists are not telling us what to think, but instead asking us to think about certain things,” Todd says. “People are more drawn into a process, which brings them to their own conclusions, so in a way the artist is the prompt, the one who puts something forth and asks us to think about it.”

The connecting thread between all of Visions West’s artists is the undeniable point of view and the authentic avenue of getting there. Whether taking tropes from history and rewriting the morals of the stories or embellishing the artifacts of our consumeristic existence, every visit is meant to enlighten, to open the way for a different way of understanding nature and the West. ■ whj FEATURE

*Marshmallow Jello* | glass beads  
24" x 26" x 2" | Electric Coffin



*Disco Rain* | carved wood  
24" x 25" x 9" | Electric Coffin



*Bon Ton* | glass painting | 37" x 39" | Electric Coffin

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