

INSIDE Masters of the American West • Ed Mell • Into the Wilderness • Charles M. Russell

Previews of Works For Sale at Upcoming Shows

FEBRUARY 2024

WESTERN ART COLLECTOR

198

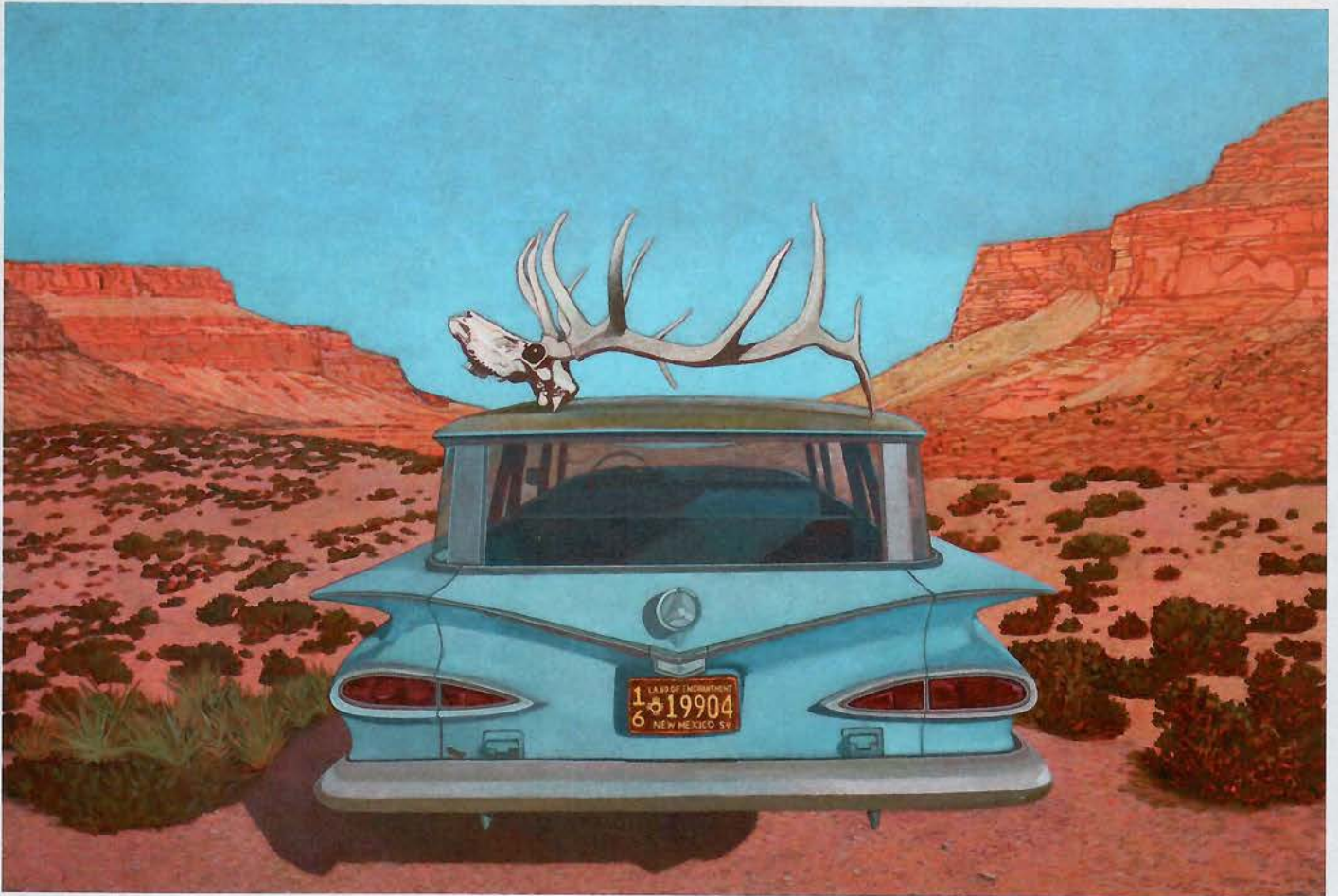


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\$9.95US \$10.95CAN



COLLECTOR'S FOCUS
THE CONTEMPORARY WEST



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Contemporary Western art is not a new invention. Go ask artists like Ed Mell, Howard Post or Billy Schenck. They've been doing it for decades, whether they knew it or not. And when you're done with them, read up on artists like T.C. Cannon, Fritz Scholder, Maynard Dixon or even on some of the Navajo weavers who were doing modern art long before modern art was even a thing.

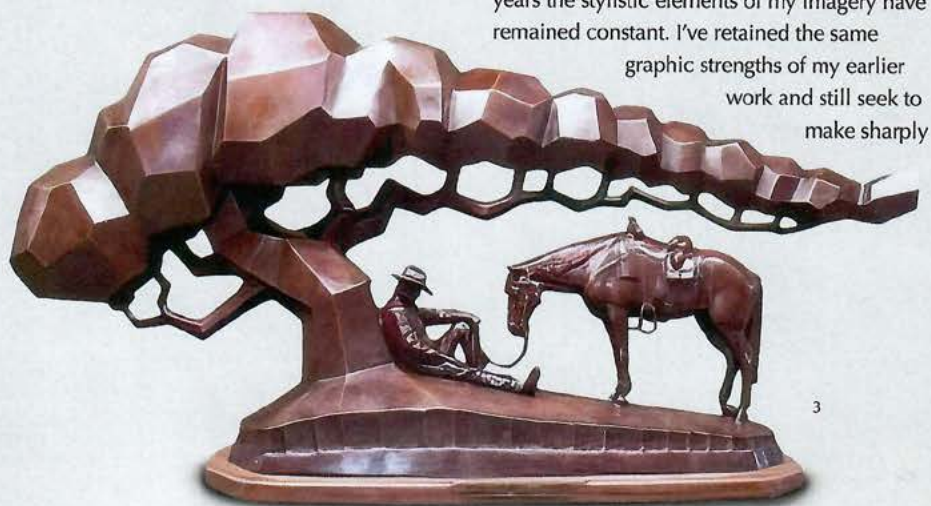
It isn't entirely new, but there is something unique about contemporary Western art of the last 10 to 20 years that seems to indicate a changing of the tides: more museums are adding contemporary art to their permanent collections, more collectors are embracing it for their own collections and more artists are working in contemporary styles, whether they be New Mexico Modernism, cubism, abstraction or even robust sampling from multiple art movements to create something entirely new. Fresh visual ideas layered over timeless Western imagery have created new sensations in Western art, which proves that the genre can adapt and change, while also still embracing more

traditional imagery at the same time.

Consider the work of Doug West, who shows his work at **Blue Rain Gallery** in Santa Fe, New Mexico. His landscape paintings are far removed from the paintings of Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Moran or Edgar Payne, and yet they accomplish the same goal of capturing the beauty of the natural land. West does it with bold colors, brilliant light quality,

subtle use of shadow and compositions that frequently call out to the vastness of the desert's scale. West began his career as a model maker and then a printmaker. "Choosing landscape art allowed me to interpret an ever-changing world. I continue to find solace and peace outdoors while observing and absorbing what pleases my eye, and this is the moment in time I strive to recreate," he writes. "Over the years the stylistic elements of my imagery have remained constant. I've retained the same

graphic strengths of my earlier work and still seek to make sharply



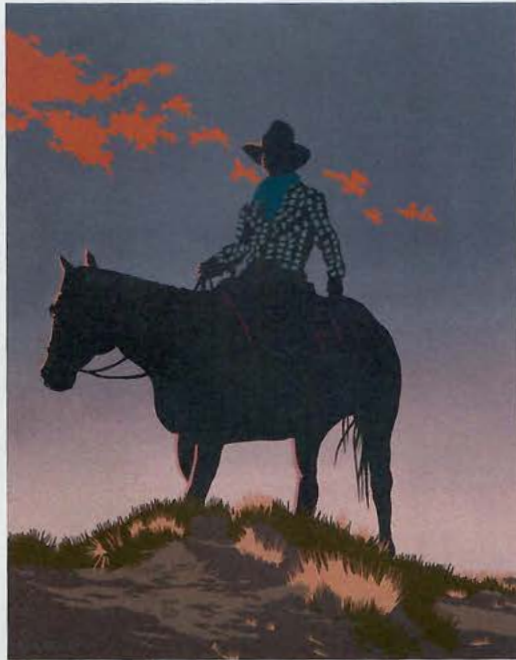
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2. Medicine Man Gallery, *The Bone Collector*, acrylic on panel, 36 x 54", by Kevin Chupik. 3. Legacy Gallery, *Trail Break*, bronze, ed. 1 of 10, 31 x 60 x 15", by Rick Terry. 4. Parsons Gallery of the West, *Crisp Start to the Day*, oil on linen panel, 16 x 20", by Chloé Marie Burk. 5. Legacy Gallery, *Into the Wind*, acrylic, 40 x 30", by Phil Epp. 6. Legacy Gallery, *Twilight*, oil, 28 x 22", by Billy Schenck. 7. Maxwell Alexander Gallery, *The Way Out*, oil on panel, 18 x 24", by David Grossmann.

defined forms, transitions of color to capture light and creating the feeling of unlimited space and depth."

Kevin Chupik is another artist doing incredible work that offers a stylized perspective of Western subject matter. Chupik, who often shows new works at **Mark Sublette Medicine Man Gallery** in Tucson, Arizona, is sampling from all kinds of sources: post-modern architecture, classic Hollywood Westerns, 1960s automobiles and American car culture, old Marlboro Man advertisements and vintage

cowboy imagery. He often juxtaposes these elements together to make statements about loneliness, isolation and the closing of the Old West. Sublette, who can't get enough of Chupik's work to satisfy his clients, says the artist has discovered something in his studio. "He's hit a chord of originality," Sublette adds.

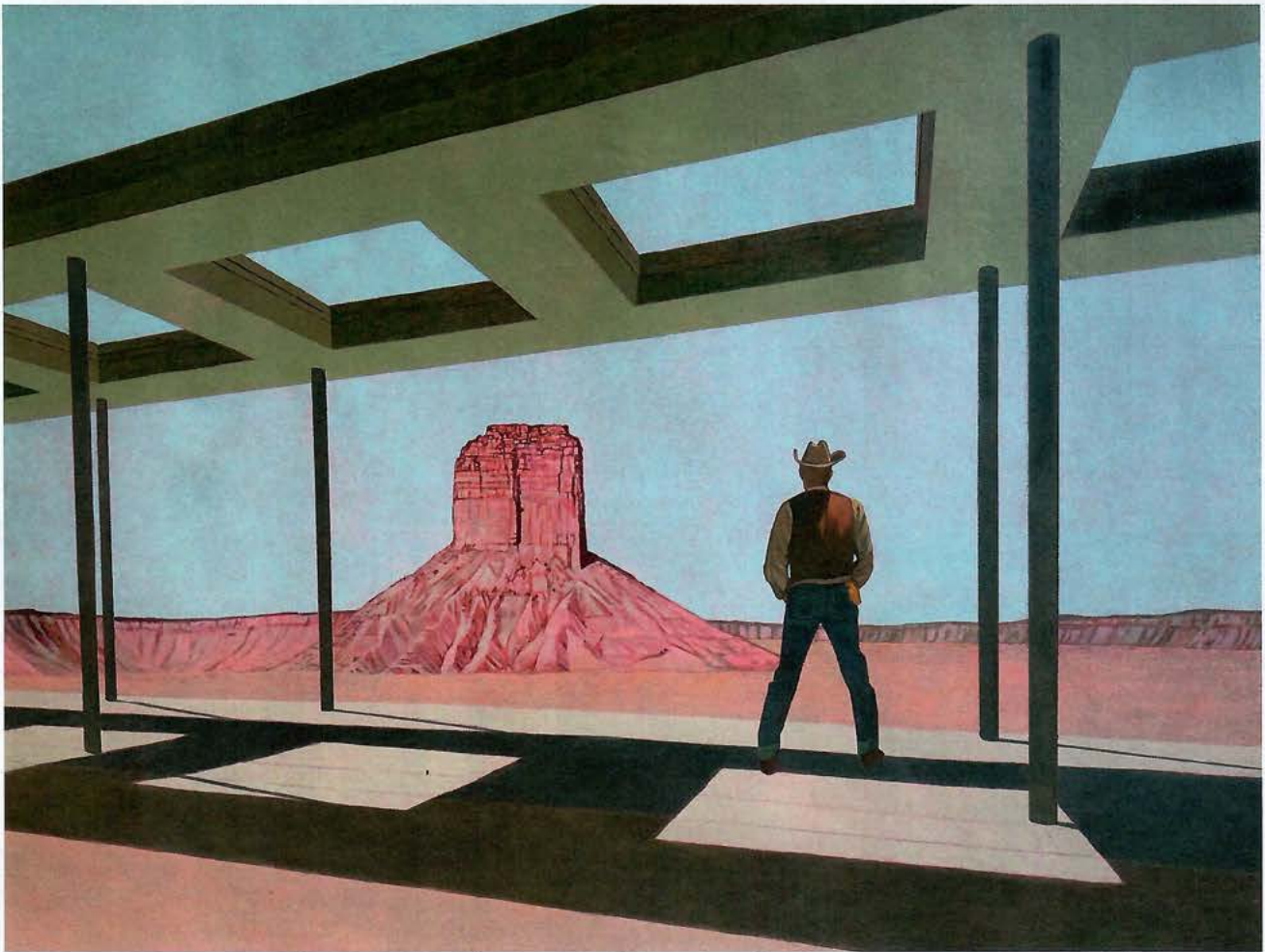
Like Sublette's gallery, **Parsons Gallery of the West** in Taos, New Mexico, shines a bright light on contemporary Western artists, including Chloé Marie Burk, who brings a rawness to her work with unique subjects and

forms. Originally from France, Burk visited Taos and was smitten by the land and its people. "I fell in love with it because it's so similar to my hometown in the mountains. When I came here, I knew in my heart that's where I was supposed to come," she writes. "...For me, working with this, it has no price... I'm a mountain person and, for me, it's perfect here." Parsons Gallery of the West has shown Burk's work for many years, as well as work by other contemporary Western painters.

Another one of the leaders within the genre is



Booth Western Art Museum: Kevin Chupik



Kevin Chupik, *Desert Ratio*, acrylic on birch, 36 x 48"

The February 2023 issue of *Western Art Collector* featured Kevin Chupik's painting *Continental Cowboy* on the cover. Readers took immediate notice of the Texas-based painter. One of those readers was Seth Hopkins, the executive director of the Booth Western Art Museum in Cartersville, Georgia.

"Credit where credit is due, I saw Kevin's work on the cover of *Western Art Collector*. When I saw it, I was immediately taken by it and I was impressed at the cool contemporary Western imagery he was painting," Hopkins says. "When I went to his website I was struck by the entire body of his work. I immediately

reached out and asked about getting a piece for the Booth collection. Kevin was very nice, but he told me he had a long line of people who wanted work and nothing was available. I told him to just keep us posted."

It wasn't long after that Hopkins started receiving images of new works that were coming off Chupik's easel. Very soon after, the Booth was making arrangements to acquire *Desert Ratio*, a 48-inch-wide painting of a cowboy standing underneath modern architecture at the edge of Monument Valley. Hopkins was even in Texas to witness some of the final brushstrokes go on the painting.

"It's important to always be looking for new and fresh ideas on the West, particularly works we can add to the contemporary portion of our collection at the Booth," Hopkins says. "We're thrilled to have a work by Kevin in the collection, and even more thrilled to see where his career goes from here. He's an exciting artist."

Desert Ratio will be on view at the Booth later this winter and spring. For information, visit www.boothmuseum.org.

Calling all Western Art museums! Have a recently acquired painting or sculpture? Email the details to editor@westernartcollector.com.