

Enthusiasm Growing for Groundbreaking Symposium: ART DECO and the American West

By John Faubion

If enthusiasm at the recent High Noon Show is any indication, the future looks bright for collecting Western works on paper from the Art Deco period. Last year, after two decades of research, I asked Byron Price, director of the **Charles M. Russell Center for the Study of Art of the American West** at the University of Oklahoma, to consider hosting the first ever symposium to explore the emergence and evolution of a style of art I have come to think of as Cowboy Deco. Price, who has established a reputation for being at the forefront of Western research, embraced this opportunity, expanded its scope, and has given the upcoming symposium the title: **Art Deco and the American West**. News of the symposium, with a tentative date of spring 2018, inspired significant interest as I shared it with many of the vendors, collectors, and scholars, who had gathered at the Mesa Convention Center in Mesa, Arizona, for Brian Lebel's 27th annual High Noon Show and Auction (January 19 – 22).

Among the vendors of Western Americana at the show (there were more than 170 participating, including dealers of prints, posters, paintings, photographs, and historical documents), response to the news could not have been more encouraging. Many see this as a long overdue opportunity for scholars to address key questions such as: What characteristics will define the style? When did it first appear? What were its origins and influences? Who were its major proponents? Will the terms **Cowboy Deco, Western Deco, Cowboy High Style, Western High Style**, etc ... , become sub-categories under a new, all-encompassing term? If so, what will that term be? Anticipating that the symposium will likely increase appreciation, and prices, for Cowboy Deco collectibles, some expressed their intent to begin adding relevant pieces to their inventory. Most pledged to be on the lookout for historical pieces that might be pertinent to the symposium scholarship, and to alert me to their discoveries. *continued page 13*

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(1896-1972)



Lawrence Tenney Stevens, "Ram in the Wyoming Rockies,"
Linocut, c. 1935 Copyright LTS Trust 2014

From a series of rare Western and wildlife linocut prints pulled from his own press by American sculptor Lawrence Tenney Stevens, beginning in the spring of 1935. These are among discoveries in the Stevens archives that are rewriting the history of the influence of Art Deco on the art of the American West.



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