



Cowboy Betty (aka Two-Gun Betty), 1918 artist unknown, Swedish linocut one-sheet, paper, 21.5" x 33.5"

Tony Cirone, a dealer and conservator of Western movie posters, didn't need to look far. During more than forty years in the art industry, Cirone, owner of Cirone Studios in Windsor, Connecticut, has accumulated an extensive assortment of Western movie posters dating from 1893 to the present. One of these, a rare linocut titled *Cowboy-Betty*, which Cirone had on display at the show, appears to be a pivotal piece. It is the earliest example I have seen on paper, so far, of Art Deco styling applied to the cowboy iconography of the American West.

Ironically, the poster was not produced in America, but in Sweden by an anonymous artist. This begged the question: When did Art Deco (which became popular in America during the mid-1920s), first appear in Sweden? I wrote to the National Museum of Sweden (Nationalmuseum, Stockholm) to ask. Curator and PhD student Marika Bogren replied:

I would say that elements of the style started to pop up in 1913-1915. Many artists designed posters, postcards, advertisement and popular prints in a style that would become "Art Déco." The Scandinavian style and the reception of it differs from the French and the English, we have a more functionalistic approach (because of the Swedish Association of Applied Arts, which was the leading organization for the design field at the time, only proclaiming Functionalism).

The function of the *Cowboy-Betty* poster was to promote the 1918 American film known as *Two Gun Betty*. *Cowboy-Betty* was the title given to the film while it was shown in Sweden. Gregg White, Executive

Director of the Swedish Council of America, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, provided this translation of the text: *Cowboy-Betty*, An adventure film in four acts, with Bessie Barriscale in the leading role.



Wes Cowan, Antiques Roadshow expert, and Tony Cirone, Cirone Studios, at the 2017 High Noon Show



Mesa Show

Barriscale (1884-1965) was a silent film star from New Jersey, who, in 1960, was honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. In *Two Gun Betty* she played a young woman named Betty who made a bet that she could fool cowhands on a ranch into thinking she was a cowboy named Bob. The men saw through her disguise but played along to get a good laugh when putting "Bob" through the paces normally reserved for tenderfoots.

The film, now part of the Turner Classic Movies stable, is typical of the wit, humor, and bravado, of America's cowboy mythology.

Perhaps it was America's romance with this bravado that inhibited its artists from applying Art Deco styling to its own cowboy subjects until years after the creation of the *Cowboy-Betty* poster. Frederic Remington and Charlie Russell had earlier established a gritty artistic representation of America's legendary cowboys that subsequent American artists seemed reluctant to drift very far from.

This calls to mind something I heard Bob Boze Bell, publisher of True West magazine, say during a televised interview. The gist of it was: If you're going to mess with people's American legends, "you'd better make them laugh, otherwise they'll kill you." Don't let this dampen your enthusiasm for Art Deco and The American West (a symposium to die for?).

Congratulations! On January 21, in a ceremony at Western Spirit: Scottsdale's Museum of the West, Bob Boze Bell presented Brian Lebel with True West magazine's 2017 True Westerner Award and acknowledged him as "The Man Collectors Trust."

John Faubion has researched, written and lectured about Lawrence Tenney Stevens since 1995. He was award-winning co-curator of a major 1996 Stevens retrospective exhibition at the Tempe Historical Museum in Arizona. His discoveries in the Stevens archives contributed to the preservation efforts of the 1936 Dallas Centennial Fair site, and led to the recreation of three of Stevens's monumental sculptures there. He is writing a book about Stevens and is planning related exhibitions for 2018 and beyond. He established the Western column in the Journal of the Print World and welcomes your feedback and suggestions for future articles. johnfaubion@basicisp.net

WILLIAM ZORACH'S TWO FIGURES IN A STORMY LANDSCAPE

By Marc Chabot

Exhibiting together in the legendary 1913 Armory Show, both William & Marguerite Zorach made striking linocuts in the years which followed. It's difficult to discuss William Zorach without mentioning his wife Marguerite. The prints of both in fact are sometimes hard to tell apart.

Having recently acquired an impression of William's *Two Figures in a Stormy Landscape*, ca. 1920, I've discovered that it seems to be quite rare, not appearing in any public collection I've found thus far. Measuring 7-9/16" high by 2-5/8" wide, it's striking design belies its' small size, and it follows the vertical orientation of a Japanese pillar print. It pictures the nude figures of a crouching woman at left, hand to her bowed head, resting against a tree at center, which divides her from the figure of a man standing at right, reaching up into the branches of the tree, as though to pick forbidden fruit. Above the tree, to right and left, are two large birds which appear to be squawking at the ominous dark sun and roiling clouds looming overhead.



William Zorach, "Two Figures in a Stormy Landscape", linocut, circa 1920, 7-9/16 x 2-5/8, signed in pencil, on cream japan paper, rare.

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These flat design elements are tightly contained by the vertical format and presented in the primitive and decorative synthetic cubist style both William and Marguerite shared. Animate forms are light, segmented or vigorously patterned against a dark ground. A surprising affinity with Werkstatte graphics is expressed here which has yet to be explored. Nearly symmetrical, the design is balanced and full of movement, forcefully communicating its' symbolic message to the viewer. While *Two Figures in a Stormy Landscape* evokes the Christian temptation and ensuing expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, it was created roughly one year after the end of the first World War, and our national mood carried elements of both darkness and light.

Whatever one reads into it, as demonstrated by their lifelong devotion to each other and their modernist vision, most of the Zorachs' prints provide a celebratory pantheistic hymn to all of creation, and to the universal themes of family and mankind living in harmony with nature.



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Marc Chabot is a private dealer in fine prints and works on paper of the 19th-20th centuries. Artist, teacher and curator, he enjoys learning and sharing his passion for art with others.