

Transforming the West: Contemporary Perspectives

Countless artists looked at the idea of the celebrity and merged it with the Western hero to create an unrealistic symbol of the West, while others examined concepts of violence, racism, and sexism.



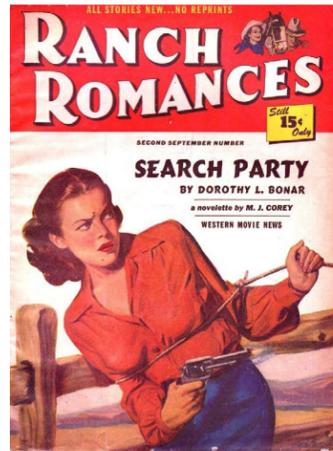
Art of the West has been frequently restructured in the last half of the twentieth century through present day. Native American artists, such as Stan Natchez and his work *Indians on Comics*, contribute personal interpretations about popular culture contrasting stereotypes founded a century ago.

Stan Natchez, *Indians on Comics*, 2015, mixed media.

Some artists, such as Danny Martin's *Ranch Romances*, look directly at print materials, film, and Western subjects and are influenced by them. Martin's work takes inspiration from pulp magazine covers and transforms them into subjects inspired by calaveras from the celebration of Dia de los Muertos.



Left: Danny Martin, *Ranch Romances*, 2014, mixed media.
Right: Cover of *Ranch Romances*



What inspires you?
What do you think makes a Western hero?

For more information on *Western Heroes of Pulp Fiction* see the accompanying catalogue available for purchase at the Museum Store.

GALLERY GUIDE

Western Heroes of Pulp Fiction

Images of the Western hero have appeared in multiple forms of art: from printed dime novels and pulp magazines, television to film, and comic books to cartoons. Traditionally, artists and illustrators depicted these heroes as Euro-American, hyper-masculine, square-jawed, thick-shouldered, and handsome male characters considered rescuers and protectors; symbols of peace and lone justice in the face of evil. However, there are many kinds of heroic characters from all backgrounds and experiences. Anyone can be a Western hero!

Throughout this exhibition are examples of images that focus on the idea of the Western hero and the mythologies of the West. As you explore the galleries think about:

- How have they changed?
- What has stayed the same?
- Who is the Western hero?



R.G. Harris, *Sheriff*, 1934, cover illustration for "Gun Law," *Thrilling Western Magazine*, Vol. 2 #1, Jul. 1934, oil on linen, 30 x 21 in. Private Collection

Dime Novel: The Journey of the Hero Pulp Art: The Epic Myth



The Western hero's image hangs suspended between truthful history and the popular stories and myths of the West invented for mainstream audiences. In the mid-nineteenth century, media outlets fed the public ideas about the West. The publishers shaped views for the public who knew little of the region, blurring fact and fiction in both dime novel publications and pulp magazines.

In this section of the exhibition you will find examples of dime novels, named for their cost of ten cents, and pulp magazines.

Dime novels were popular from 1860 to 1880 and the peak of pulp magazines followed later, ranging from 1920s—1940s.

Western pulps almost always included an action-oriented and energetic cover. Horses were bucking, cowboy guns were blazing, and fists were frozen in mid-punch.

Be sure to check out the interactive station in this gallery to create your own dime novel cover!

What examples can you think of that exist today that are similar to dime novels and pulp magazines?

What additional traits do you notice about the image of the Western hero?

Who else is in the scene in many of the images?

Transforming the West: Modern Perspectives

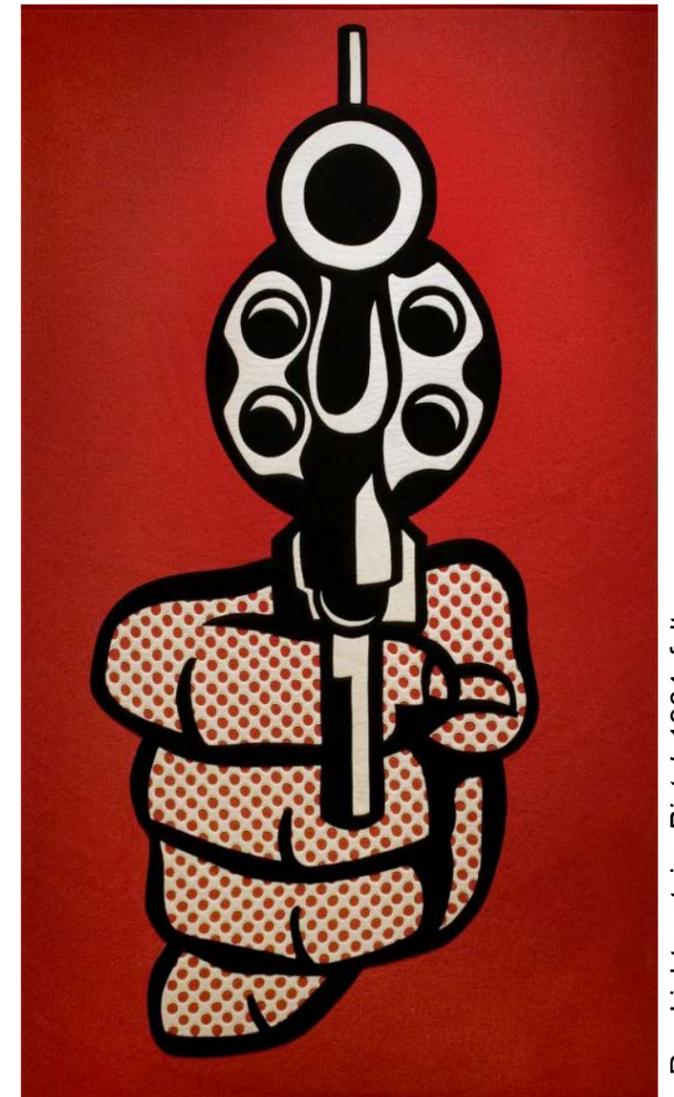


Andy Warhol, *Cowboys and Indians: War Bonnet*, 1986, screen print.

Due to the often overwhelming stimuli from popular culture, artists took advantage of the immeasurable possibilities found within Western imagery and narratives. Some stayed within traditional methods, and their works of art told powerful stories without words. Some artists became attuned to political, religious, and biased ideas and used them in their work by using nontraditional source material. A number of modern artists created powerful images using commercial and graphic concepts, commenting upon mass consumerism and cultural myths of the West.

Spend some time exploring the examples of modern art in this gallery, how do they compare to works you have already seen in this exhibition?

What types of materials are used by these artists?



Roy Lichtenstein, *Pistol*, 1964, felt.

Above: R.G. Harris, *Sonny Tabor's Trail Drive*, 1935, oil on linen.

Below: R.G. Harris, "Sonny Tabor's Trail Drive," *Wild West Weekly*, Vol. 97 #2, Oct. 19, 1935