

CHAPTER 11

**“A Wonderful Picture”:
Western Art and the Calgary Stampede**

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The Gordon Love Trophy for the North American All Round Cowboy,
design by Charlie Beil for the 1966 Calgary Stampede.

“Not Art but at Least Culture”

In the spring of 2003, John Spittle of Calgary’s CBC Radio One woke the city by reporting that the Calgary Stampede was “the biggest detriment to promoting the arts in the province.”¹ Spittle was covering a press conference by Robert Palmer, a Scottish arts consultant who had been contracted by the City of Calgary’s Civic Arts Policy Review Steering Committee to assist in updating its civic arts policy. There were multiple goals in developing such a policy, derived from the efforts of other cities seeking economic renewal by encouraging creative classes and industries. For Calgary’s Review Steering Committee, these goals included providing a greater voice for the arts in the city; having the arts contribute to the city’s vitality, sense of identity, and heritage; and having the real economic contribution of the arts be acknowledged in city planning. Oddly, arts associated with the Calgary Stampede – not part of the consultation process – had been caught in the crossfire of such objectives.

Palmer’s observation was made in reference to the document that summarized the final Consultant’s Report of the Civic Arts Policy Review. His provocative remark reflected opinions heard during focus group sessions, though the Calgary Stampede had little involvement in the process. As an external consultant, he had limited experience with the Stampede itself and limited information on the festival’s historic or contemporary connections with and contributions to the city’s arts. He was a member of a newly minted class of arts consultants following in the footsteps of Richard Florida² and others, whose operational definition of what should be included in the “arts” was universally shared³ despite an avowed aim of creating “a distinct urban culture” and an “enhanced community identity.”⁴ Even if such research into the Stampede had been undertaken in developing the city’s arts policy, it is unlikely that the view of the Stampede’s relation to Calgary’s arts would have changed. Despite its commitment to the performing arts (the Young Canadians, its School of Performing Arts, and the Stampede Show Band) and the visual arts (arts and crafts exhibits, the Western Art Show, high school art scholarships, and so forth), the odds would not have been in the Stampede’s favour that these activities would have been considered “art” or even arts education. The Stampede received a total of five mentions in the final arts policy document: twice as an international tourist icon, once as a metonymic adjective for the city, once as an event that the (real) arts community might exploit to its own promotional advantage, and finally, once in a delightful expression of taste culture that associates the Stampede with

specific arts activities solely to dismiss its relevance. A stakeholder asks of Calgary, “Renowned for what? Best symphony, opera, ballet, visual art gallery, synergy with tourism, Stampede (not art but at least culture).”⁵

Why would arts stakeholders and those invested in city’s creative makeover consider the Stampede “not art but at least culture”? This chapter is an effort to answer such a question. The Stampede may serve as a symbolic resource for contemporary art or as a foil for social critique, but there is little need for stakeholders in contemporary art worlds to acknowledge creative practices that fall outside the boundaries of their definitions of art. Answering a question about the boundaries that separate western and contemporary art⁶ entails a preliminary consideration of how the contemporary art world defines western art. An indirect consequence of such boundary maintenance has been that the Stampede’s contribution to Calgary’s visual and performing arts communities has received limited documentation. A second aspect of this chapter, then, will be to sketch distinguishing features of western art and to document some of the roles played by the Stampede in its local expression.

“A Wonderful Picture”

The rain had not yet started on the September afternoon when photographer W.V. Ring set his camera before a group of dignitaries assembled at the start of “The Stampede” in Calgary. Ring made several exposures of this gathering, and his photos have been frequently reproduced.⁷ The image of this group at the first Stampede in 1912 was one of the few showing the original “Big Four” founders posed together. The presence of other dignitaries such as the inspector of the RCMP or White Headed Chief might receive mention, but it is the Stampede’s original financial backers, George Lane, Archie McLean, Pat Burns, and A.E. Cross, who are most often noted. Two artists, Charles M. Russell and Edward Borein, along with Russell’s wife Nancy, the sole woman in the image, are occasionally mentioned. On that September afternoon Charlie Russell looked confidently at the camera, thumb hooked in his trademark sash, as the younger though equally confident Borein clutched at the edge of his vest as if in the midst of the physical labour needed to hoist him into this gathering. What is the significance of the presence of artists among this assembly of Stampede founders?

The Stampede began as a festive celebration of the cowboy, “a wonderful picture of Western sports and the old times”⁸ bankrolled by the wealth of these ranchers, developers, and politicians pausing and posing before Ring’s camera. The irony that such a group funded the celebration of a



The first Stampede group photo with White Headed Chief (left); George Lane and Mrs. C.M. Russell (3rd and 4th from left); unknown, Pat Burns, Charles M. Russell; A.E. Cross, and Edward Borein (far right).

working-class occupation has never been far below the surface. The event's inception, however, was also due in no small measure to the representational labour of artists such as Russell and Borein. It was not an accident that L.V. Kelly chose the metaphor "picture" to describe this first Stampede in the narrative about Alberta ranching that he published in the following year. Even at that time, the work of myriad writers, musicians, photographers, illustrators, and painters had helped create the image of the West these dignitaries were assembled to celebrate. Although Russell in particular was at the peak of his career and popularity in 1912, it would be a mistake to see his presence in this photograph as either honorific acknowledgment or mere accident due to his commercial capacity as an exhibitor. Ring's photograph demonstrates the degree to which the representation of the North American West had taken hold of the imagination of urban folk. If Guy Weadick's goal with these early Stampedes was to recreate the "atmosphere" of the "frontier days of the west" through a gathering of "western pioneers,"⁹ then Russell's presence in this photograph was evidence of his status as a pioneer, but more particularly of his pioneering role in documenting the atmosphere Weadick sought to recreate.

It was not simply access to real capital that earned one a place in this lineup of dignitaries; symbolic capital – the artistic ability to recreate the

sights of the West – placed Russell and Borein on an equal footing with the Stampede’s backers. To pass over Russell and Borein’s participation in this early image of the Stampede is to pass over the significance of western art to the Stampede’s inception and to miss its significance in subsequent decades. The task of recovering aspects of the Stampede’s relation to western art and accounting for features that mark it as a distinctive art world contributes to answering the question about western art’s marginalization by contemporary art institutions.

If It’s Western, Is It Art?

In her history of contemporary Alberta art, Mary-Beth Laviolette devotes a portion of one chapter to discussing art by “carving cowboys” that made western themes available to contemporary artists. She naturalizes her view of western art by including it in a chapter discussing documentary photography and folk art. The implication of such a grouping is that these three forms of visual culture share a common ancestor in naive realism. Each form can be characterized in terms of how, as sign, it is bound to place: photography mediates this relation indexically through the camera apparatus, while folk art’s mediation is as iconic expression of memory in the absence of technical or formal sophistication. Western art occupies a questionable third space “resolutely narrative, realistic,”¹⁰ its vision of place a more symbolic order of sign somehow distorted by conventions of myth, romance, and nostalgia. Laviolette’s account does not cover periods prior to 1970; she does name over a dozen artists making western art before then, but feels that the genre’s “boom” in a Canadian context follows “American western art”¹¹ of the 1970s. Despite a brief mention of Alberta’s contribution to the tradition of bronze sculpture, it is the western theme, a kind of natural resource for contemporary art practitioners, that interests Laviolette, and she forges ahead to consider media and installation artists “ready to question, demythologize, play with and respond to the romance and the reality of the West.”¹²

Laviolette notes both the absence of scholarly discussions of western art and its general dismissal by the Canadian art establishment.¹³ Although an explanation of this state is not a concern in her chapter, her approach to western art suggests why such an absence might be the case. The narrative contour of her discussion connects western art to other, naively realistic, forms of visual culture only to have them shouldered aside by a heroic contemporary art whose muscular, critical engagement redeems viewers and artists alike from the perils and taint of romantic illusions, nostalgia, and Americanism. Such

a plot is in turn a romantic narrative about contemporary art's transformative potential, a narrative of visual style and critical discourse that also shares American antecedents. Western subject matter, the self-taught or commercial training of western art's exponents, and the conventionalized treatment of an "idealized way of life"¹⁴ function like Homeric epithets in the discursive practices of art worlds, and conspire alongside such a narrative to marginalize and exclude western art from serious attention.

The discursive force of art history narratives that divide artistic practices along such fault lines points to another order of explanation. The continued presence and vitality of a genre such as western art if not contained and isolated by critical discourses risks destabilizing the authority of the redemptive narrative of contemporary art. Dismissing western art deftly as mere realism inhibits critical consideration and silences disruptive questions about the complexity of social practices of taste associated with art making and viewing. A parallel strategy, noted by Nancy Anderson, is to read western art solely as historical data, its subject oriented towards a past.¹⁵ In considering the Calgary Stampede's relation to western art, it should be possible to glimpse this complexity and to engage the possibility that western art requires a different way of looking, one that falls outside the hegemony maintained by formal art training and elite critical discourses.

Rather than trying to "read" meaning assumed to inhere within images said to represent the West, it is of greater value to explore a social world constituted by the production and consumption of western art, in particular some of the phases in the Stampede's support and exhibition of western art. This chapter considers grounded aesthetic practices that suggest the distinctive ways of looking that western art demands; and it considers how western art is understood in a broader, civic context as an aspect of public culture. Two processes that underlie the dismissal of western art emerge: the slow withdrawal of dominant art institutions from the support, exhibition, and analysis of western art; and the institutional practices in which specific Stampede policies aid in transforming its real engagement in the ongoing re-creation of the West into a form of ocular spectatorship.

How to Savvy Western Art

When asked by a reporter for the *Chicago Evening Post* what he thought about the modern art exhibited in New York's Armory Show in 1913, Charlie Russell said, "Yes, I saw the cubist and futurist exhibit in New York, but can't savvy that stuff. It may be art...but I can't savvy it. Now I may paint a bum

horse, but people who know what a horse looks like will know that I tried to paint a horse, at least.”¹⁶

One might conclude from his remark that if art is good for anything, it is good for expressing social boundaries of taste. In his interview, Charlie Russell expressed his view about the boundaries that mark western art: viewers need to be able to “savvy” what he is painting, and they are going to judge the quality of his work by the degree to which it matches their experience with the subject, the referent of his representation. In noting these boundaries, Russell also indicates how such boundaries distinguish western art from the “modern” art of his day and, by extension, of ours. Works of art do not make up a uniform or homogeneous body of creative practice. Art can be “savvied” only with reference to the specific social activities and competencies that mark ways of handling certain subjects, the standards associated with judgment, the institutional contexts and endorsements that go along with exhibition and display, and so forth. Rather than judge western art pejoratively because no special discursive skills appear to be required to “savvy” its stylistic manipulation of the space of the canvas, it is more productive to understand western art as a distinct art world, one that requires a distinctive way of looking.

Thirty years ago, *New York Times* art critic Grace Lichtenstein noted that, “Despite determined inattention by Eastern art critics ... Cowboy art has its own heroes, its own galleries and even its own publishing house.”¹⁷ Her comment points to some of the social practices that mark this art world as distinct: its own tradition of exemplars; its own institutions, specifically, its own museums and professional associations dedicated to western art; its own annual shows, sales, and auctions; and as Lichtenstein noted, its own distinctive book and periodical publishing industry.

There are close to two dozen museums in the United States whose curatorial mandate is entirely or predominantly focused on western art. These museums extend from upstate New York, to Oklahoma, and on to California. Some museums, such as the C.M. Russell Museum in Great Falls, Montana, or the Clymer Museum of Art in Ellensburg, Washington, have as their primary focus the work of particular artists. Others, such as the Gene Autry Museum in Los Angeles and the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, originated from the bequests of private collectors. Some are large museums in urban areas that identify themselves with the West, such as the Phoenix Art Museum; others have more direct connections to regional history, such as the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming. These museums demonstrate a continued fascination with the visual record of the West and create destinations for those seeking the display of western culture.

Although their mandates might be open to political and market pressures,¹⁸ their number continues to grow; in October 2006, for example, the Denver Museum opened the Dietler Gallery of Western Art. In Canada, museums such as the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies and Calgary's Glenbow Museum have substantial collections in the areas of First Nations, settler, and western culture, though their mandates are not exclusively western in focus.

Often connected with such museums and institutions are the various professional associations that support and encourage western artists. The oldest of these, dating from the mid-1960s, is the Cowboy Artists of America. At least two museums represent the work of this group: the Phoenix Art Museum hosts its annual exhibition, while the Western Art Museum in Kerrville, Texas, houses a permanent collection of its work. Artists frequently belong to a variety of professional associations, such as those focused on art practice (plein-air painters or portrait artists, for example) or on various media (watercolours, oils, pastels), but an expanding number of associations serve those whose work is somehow themed on the West.

Many of the museums and associations host annual exhibitions and fundraising galas. Some, such as the C.M. Russell and Buffalo Bill Historical Center auctions, are fundraising events for the parent museums; others, such as the Prix de West and the National Cowboy Museum, celebrate the genre of western art. Events such as the annual exhibition of the Cowboy Artists of America are opportunities to view the exclusive work of premier exponents of this genre. Events such as the Coeur d'Alene art auction, now held in Reno, are entirely commercial ventures and are based primarily on the sale of historical work. The Coeur d'Alene auction sells in excess of \$20 million worth of art annually, suggesting something of the economic vitality of work in this genre. There is also a longstanding affiliation of western art sales and auctions with rodeos and livestock shows, the Cheyenne Frontier Days and the Coors Western Art Exhibit being prominent examples. Collectively, these western art shows, sales, and auctions help articulate the boundaries and maintain the standards that define western art. The practices associated with juried selection and the identification of various award winners all help to enact the standards of both tradition and innovation within the genre.

There is a long record of book publications related to the West and western art. The earliest of these publications used art to illustrate aspects of western life. Later, the artists themselves, Remington and Russell being the notable examples, published books dealing with their own artwork. A later generation, artists such as Will James and Dan Muller, combined artistic and prose skills and found ready audiences for their popular rendition of West.

Some, such as Jo Mora, combined art with the skills of folklore collectors to create substantial texts of cowboy lore. Since that time, many studies have attempted to characterize aspects of the world of western art. One of the earliest of these was Robert Taft's 1953 history of western artists.¹⁹ Other authors have worked to document the collections of individuals,²⁰ the formation of particular institutions,²¹ or historical²² and contemporary trends in western art.²³ It is only in recent decades that a scholarly study of aspects of western life and representation has developed.²⁴

More recently, the periodical market has made substantial commitments to western art. Prominent magazines such as *Art of the West* and *Southwest Art* provide information about shows, galleries, artists, and so forth. Publications such as *Cowboys and Indians*, *American Cowboy*, *Western Interiors*, and *Canadian Cowboy Country* offer broader editorial content on western lifestyles, but western art and photography figure prominently. Magazines aimed at horse owners, such as *Western Horseman*, have had longstanding commitments to editorial content on western art. Going back to the first decades of its publication, *Western Horseman* featured decorations by artists such as Joe de Yong, a protege of Charlie Russell. Canadian counterparts such as *Western Horse Review* have recently added editorial content on western art in response to market research on reader interests. Specialized publications aimed at artists themselves include *Equine Vision Magazine*, which combines profiles and instructional content with the promotion of materials and supplies.

All of these books and publications contribute to the terrain of western art. They help in understanding the development of western art and the characteristics that mark it as a distinctive art world. They also map the extent of its contemporary popularity and suggest the appeal that western art has for collectors. This level of social and institutional activity is relatively recent, most of it developing half a century after Russell and Borein posed together at the 1912 Stampede.

The Real Thing and a Lot of It

The participation of Russell and Borein during "The Stampede" of 1912 in Calgary established the parameters of the Stampede's arts-related activities. Russell had been invited by Guy Weadick to exhibit his artwork during the Stampede, while Edward Borein had been recommended by Russell to Weadick for advertising and related promotional illustrations.²⁵ Such a range of activity demonstrates the foundational presence of western art in the Stampede's heritage. It also suggests that hard and fast distinctions between

art and commercial illustration, while evident even at that time, were not of primary importance to these artists, the Stampede, or collectors of western art. Art exhibition and commercial illustration were simply different facets of the visual culture associated with and produced as part of the Stampede's engagement with representations of western heritage. The Stampede's role in providing exhibition space or in commissioning commercial work has been balanced by its roles as a patron and, increasingly, as a collector of western art. It will be useful to outline these as phases in the Stampede's relation to the western art world.

Exhibitor of Western Art

Although a reproduction of Russell's 1909 painting "A Serious Predicament" had been featured on a poster for "The Stampede" in 1912, Russell's work had been shipped north from Great Falls primarily for exhibition. The fact that Russell was able to sell paintings – more than half of those he'd brought, with subsequent commissions generated by the exhibition – for as much as \$3,500 in 1912 indicates something about his stature as an artist at the time and his wife's shrewdness in negotiating with buyers.²⁶ When compared to sales at his New York show a year earlier, it also suggests the effect of exhibiting his paintings for royalty and a ranching elite amid the festive setting of the Stampede. Brian Dippie describes Russell's participation in 1912 as constituting "his first international one man exhibition,"²⁷ although it is not clear exactly where Russell's work was exhibited during that first Stampede. Some refer to the exhibit as being on the grounds of the Stampede,²⁸ but others suggest it took place in an exhibition hall in downtown Calgary.²⁹ Whatever the exact location of this event, it could be considered as the start of western art exhibitions at the Stampede. The Calgary Exhibition's prize books in the years preceding the 1912 Stampede also indicate the presence of art entered for competition along with ladies' crafts and needlework,³⁰ but there is no evidence of the prominence of western content in its imagery.

If the first phase of the Stampede's exhibition of western art begins in 1912 and carries on into the 1920s, a second phase can be said to begin early in the 1930s. The formation of the Alberta Society of Artists (ASA) in 1931 was the result of nearly a decade's worth of organizational activity in the visual arts in both Edmonton and Calgary. The establishment of local art clubs, the Edmonton Art Association, and the Calgary Sketch Club in the early 1920s were the preliminary steps, but the development of what would eventually become the Alberta College of Art and Design had greater impact. The

founding instructors of art in Calgary, most notably A.C. Leighton, pushed for these various clubs and associations to amalgamate despite differences in their aesthetic standards.

After it had been formally chartered as a society, the ASA held regular art shows. The winter exhibits were hosted by the Hudson's Bay Company, while the summer exhibits were held under the auspices of the Calgary Stampede. This pattern continued until the society banded together with other arts organizations in Alberta and approached the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences in the late 1940s with the intent of becoming an "allied" arts organization with its own exhibition space, Coste House. Over this period, artists such as Roland Gissing who were involved with the Society also had solo exhibitions at the Stampede. The Stampede's first manager, E.L. Richardson, organized Gissing's debut exhibition at the Calgary Public Library in 1929,³¹ and exhibitions of his work occurred during the Stampedes in 1934, 1947, and 1956.

With the formation of the Alberta Society of Artists marking a second phase in the Stampede's exhibition of western art, a third phase might be suggested by the development of the Glenbow Archives in the mid-1950s. Established by collector and philanthropist Eric Harvie, the Glenbow Archives had as its original mandate the collection of works related to the pioneers and aboriginal peoples of southern Alberta. Until construction was completed on its present building in 1976, the Glenbow had no formal exhibition space, nor an exhibition mandate.³² During the 1950s the Glenbow partnered with Calgary Power, sponsor of Gissing's Stampede exhibit in 1947,³³ to present a display of western art from its collection during the Calgary Stampede. These exhibitions continued until the early 1960s and featured works by artists such as Russell and Rungius and local artists who included John Innes, Roland Gissing, Edward Hagell, Walter Phillips, and Theodore Schintz.

Commissioner of Commercial Art

The year before Borein was approached by Weadick with the opportunity to do commercial design for the Stampede in Calgary, he had already started converting his drawings into etchings and trying to interest New York art galleries in them.³⁴ He had been living there since 1907 and would continue to maintain a studio there for the next dozen years. Russell visited him in New York in 1908, and by 1912 Borein had built a solid reputation by painting and illustrating magazine covers and advertisements and doing sketches to

The use of Borein's "I-See-U" lithograph as the basis of the posters promoting the Stampede during the 1920s places the work of western artists at the inception of what has become a long and distinctive tradition of poster design. These early designs have become icons of the Stampede, reproduced and remediated in a variety of ways around the Stampede's grounds as souvenirs and marketing premiums. In the contemporary period, the iconic elements of the posters are unhitched from their primary design and applied to letterhead decorations, components of belt buckles, and so forth. Since 2006 the design of the posters has crossed back into the realm of western art, with paintings by local artists being commissioned as central features.

Patron of Western Art

If Borein established the visual iconography of the Stampede, a young protege of C.M. Russell helped carry it forward into the next three decades. Charlie Beil had made his peripatetic way to Great Falls, Montana, where he earned Charlie Russell's admiration and Nancy Russell's trust. In one of his last recorded interviews, Russell recommends Beil's work to the editor of the *Great Falls Leader*, Ed Cooney, saying, "He is the best I've ever seen at modeling horses and cowpunchers."³⁷ Beil walked with Russell's horse behind the hearse at Russell's funeral in 1926 and stayed on in Great Falls for several years to help Nancy settle the estate by completing paintings and bronzes.³⁸

There is no evidence to suggest that Beil's connection with Russell is what spurred the Calgary Stampede to approach him to design a trophy, but the itinerant cowboy and artist had moved north and was living and working in the Banff area. In the early 1930s he was certainly open to commissions and had already completed work for the Calgary Zoo and Calgary's Model Dairy. In Weadick's final year with the Stampede, Beil was approached to design a trophy for the North American All-Around Champion, the first recipient of which was Herman Linder.³⁹ By the late 1930s this initial commission had inaugurated a tradition in the world of rodeo: awarding an artist-cast bronze sculpture to winning cowboys in the traditional rodeo contests.⁴⁰ Under the sponsorship of Calgary Power, Beil designed a trophy for the winner of the saddle bronc competition and eventually added trophies for the other events, including the chuckwagon races. Beil continued this role into the 1960s, when he designed relief plaques rather than sculptures for the rodeo winners. It is perhaps fitting that Linder returned to the Stampede in 1964 and presented Beil's bronzes to the winning cowboys.⁴¹

Although the differences may not be boldly marked, the Stampede's role as a client of commercial art and illustration shades into a different role as patron involved in supporting artists through commissions such as the rodeo bronzes. Were these early Beil trophies commercial art, or were they examples of Stampede patronage aimed at establishing a link to western art's heritage? Were Gissing's shows an example of the Stampede's role in exhibiting western art, or was the Stampede acting as a patron who bartered exhibit space in return for the association with an artist who was inspired by Russell and had a personal connection to prominent western artist and writer Will James?⁴² If such a distinction between commercial art client and western art patron is to be more than a difference in shading, it should also suggest real differences in organizational and social practices.

Commercial work and the activities of a patron create distinct attitudes towards artwork. On the commercial side, intention is ascribed to the client: the completed artwork is the realization of the client's objectives. In the role of patron, the expressive relationship is reversed. While the patron might still gain promotional benefit from the work, the artist's expressive intentions dominate. In the present, such distinctions can be seen in the organizational practices associated with these various tasks. Despite numerous ambiguous areas where responsibilities overlap, the Stampede's professional marketing staff and employees handle the majority of commissioned work – posters, graphic design, and so forth. Volunteer committees seem to have a greater involvement in activities related to what are identified as the activities of a patron. Although volunteer committees have been significant in the structure of the Stampede since its origins,⁴³ an important shift from the Stampede's role as a supplier of exhibition space occurs when the Stampede coordinates art exhibitions of its own.

Although the exhibition of western artwork can be traced back to the original Calgary Exhibition, a formal volunteer committee with a mandate to stage an annual art show does not take shape until the late 1970s. Volunteer efforts in two separate spheres contribute to this: one involves the encouragement of high school students to exhibit art during the Stampede, while the other involves the formation of a committee made up of alumni of the Queen's competition. The Queen's Alumni began with an exhibition area known as Women's World. Over time their display came to include cooking and floral arrangements joined by the longstanding arts and crafts exhibition; by 1976 this aggregation was called "Arts Alive." Soon after, these different areas were gathered under a single volunteer committee named Creative Living, with an annual art show and sale. In the early 1980s the show included

an annual auction of works by participating artists who attend the show for the duration of the Stampede. More than 100 volunteers work year-round attracting and selecting artists and promoting the event to prospective buyers and collectors who might not otherwise have reason to attend the Stampede.

The development of the Stampede's own Western Art Show is significant here for two reasons: first, it marks a final separation between the Stampede as an organization that provides arts exhibition space and the dominant local art institutions that use the space; second, this event links the artists associated with the Stampede and the western art world. The affinities of the artists who participate and the events that comprise the Western Art Show are no longer with the contemporary, alternative, or avant-garde art worlds. The artists and the event have stronger and more direct affinities with the network of western art shows, auctions, sales, and museums of western art.

Collector of Western Art

By the time Charlie Beil relinquished the task of producing the Stampede's trophy bronzes and plaques, the Stampede had developed a new role as an art collector. Simply keeping each of Beil's bronze sculptures produced what is now perhaps the only complete collection of his trophy works. Almost by accident, the organization amassed works that charted Beil's development as



Calgary Stampede Rodeo Princesses Justine Milner and Coleen Crowe carry present Amy Dryer's painting, *Rider*, at the 2005 Western Art Auction.

a sculptor, although this body of his work was not exhibited as a collection until the late 1970s, when the Queen's Alumni and Women's World were developing their involvement with western art. The volunteers of Women's World gathered up and dusted off the various works that Beil had produced and put them on display during the Stampede. What had started as an expression of the Stampede's commercial needs and over time had become an expression of its role as a patron of western art now became a statement of the Stampede as a collector.

The display of Beil's trophy bronzes coincided with a global interest in heritage.⁴⁴ The Stampede as an organization may only just be realizing it has a western art collection acquired through these longstanding practices and innocent archival acts, but for two decades it has been transforming the Stampede from a participant activity into a spectator-driven event. Collections are the coin of the realm in the global market of heritage destinations. Our increasing dislocation from a shared past is patched together by heritage artifacts that help to elicit a sense of history and place. The task of collecting produces identity collateral while at the same time fostering an economy of display and consumption. Collecting builds on routine acquisition and extends it into the self-conscious interpretation of the Stampede's history that can be seen in other features of the Calgary Stampede park such as the Historical Committee's mural project.



The Stampede Historical Committee's murals on the east wall of the Corral building. Completed in 1997, Doug Driediger's work on the upper level portrays Guy Weadick's vision, while Penny Corradine's work on the early parades appears at street level.

Initiated in the mid-1990s, these murals decorate walls, even whole buildings, around the Stampede grounds. Eight murals have been completed to date, and in their own way they offer both temporal and spatial landmarks of the Stampede's past. They describe the first winning bronc ride, the first chuckwagon race, the first parade, the first bull sale, and even the first entrance to the Stampede grounds. The phenomenon of murals has an established role in preparing a place for tourist consumption.⁴⁵ In the decade since such commissions began at the Stampede, they have come to form a distinctive collection, one that serves a double duty: it charts key moments of display and spectatorship associated with the Stampede, yet at the same time it makes that history the object of visual consumption for tourists and visitors alike.

The narrative of the Stampede's involvement in western art moves through at least four phases. They begin with the exhibition of art but blend into activities associated with commissioning art and being a patron of the arts. In its evolution, the mandate of the Calgary Stampede has also shifted from producing western entertainment to preserving western heritage. Increasingly, this mandate includes components of western art and visual culture because the preservation of heritage is often synonymous with the display of the *look* of the West. The design of posters, program illustrations, pageantry, logos, tourist advertisements, souvenirs, and memorabilia have all played a part in creating the Stampede's visual discourse on the West. If the Stampede began as a picture of the West, the organization now understands the West as being embodied through pictures. The Calgary Stampede's recent effort at "re-branding" in order to create a unified identity that merges with the mandate "to preserve and promote western heritage and values" was an exercise in fabricating a visual past: an odd effort given the richness of the organization's actual visual heritage. If Russell was celebrated in 1912 for offering a documentary link to western heritage, and subsequent artists associated with the Stampede were in turn celebrated for their links back to Russell, the Stampede has entered a new phase in which sepia-toned images and invented myths simulate a relation to the look of a visual past.

"To Provide, Engage and Employ"

At their 2007 meeting Calgary Stampede shareholders passed a special resolution that amended the objectives of the organization. The original wording, dating from 1978, read very much like a civic arts policy and indicated that the objects of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede included a commitment

“to provide, engage and employ...performers, artists” and “generally to promote any activity beneficial to...culture, the arts, education and the City of Calgary ...”⁴⁶ In the revision of these objectives, all references to artists and art disappeared. Although it is difficult to predict the consequences of such a change in wording, there has been no apparent reduction in the Stampede’s arts-related activities. As the Stampede inevitably moves away from the motivations for such a revision, the ambiguity of the Stampede’s relation to art, artists, culture, and the city might increase. Although the word “western” appears in the revised objectives of the organization, it is defined with reference to words such as integrity, friendliness, and entrepreneurship. Despite its mandate to preserve western heritage, the organization could potentially slip free of the halter that has tied it to the heritage of those artists pictured on the Stampede grounds in 1912. It may be ironic that despite the marginal treatment of western art, the Stampede’s continued support accomplishes one of the goals of Calgary’s Civic Arts Policy, facilitating “ties between the arts and tourism.”⁴⁷ The labour begun here of retrieving and reflecting on the practices that associate the Stampede with western art may help renew a link with the visual character of western heritage. It is at least one way to savvy the Stampede’s wonderful picture.

Notes

1. John Spittle, "Calgary Stampede Hurting the Arts: Consultant," *The Arts Report*, CBC Radio (Calgary), 15 April 2003.
2. Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class and How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).
3. For critical assessments of creative industries makeovers, see Max Nathan, *The Wrong Stuff: Creative Class Theory, Diversity and City Performance*, Research Discussion Paper No. 1 (Institute for Public Policy Research, Centre for Cities, 2005), 1–8; Kate Oakley, "Not So Cool Britannia: The Role of Creative Industries in Economic Development," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 7, no. 1 (2004): 67–77; and Andrew Ross, "Nice Work if You Can Get It: The Mercurial Career of Creative Industries Policy," *Work, Organization, Labour and Globalization* 1, no. 1 (January 2007): 13–30.
4. Cameron Strategies, Knowledge Navigators, Segue Consulting, *Civic Arts Policy Review: Consultant's Report* (Calgary: City of Calgary, 2003), 16.
5. *Ibid.*, 48.
6. Throughout this chapter I distinguish between contemporary art and western art. Both adjectives contain ambiguities. By contemporary art, I am referring to visual art that receives the majority of attention at private and public art galleries, is often supported through public sector arts grants, and is the predominant focus of critical discussion in arts journalism. Western art may not represent solely western subject matter, but is included in western-related art shows and sales and is promoted through western lifestyle publications. Cowboy art is a common synonym for western art but for my purposes implies too narrow a subject range and frequently essentializes the occupation of its exponents.
7. See, for instance, Harold G. Davidson, *Edward Borein: Cowboy Artist* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974); James H. Gray, *A Brand of Its Own: The 100 Year History of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985); Simon Evans, Sarah Carter, and Bill Yeo, eds., *Cowboys, Ranchers and the Cattle Business: Cross-Border Perspectives on Ranching History* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000).
8. Leroy V. Kelly, *The Range Men: The Story of the Ranchers and Indians of Alberta* (Toronto: Wm. Briggs, 1913), 433.
9. Guy Weadick, "Origin of the Calgary Stampede," *Alberta Historical Review* 14, no. 4 (1966): 21.
10. Mary-Beth Laviolette, *An Alberta Art Chronicle* (Canmore: Altitude Publishing, 2006), 93.
11. *Ibid.*, 92.
12. *Ibid.*, 95.
13. *Ibid.*, 92.

14. Ibid., 93.
15. Nancy K. Anderson, "Curious Historical Data': Art History and Western American Art," in *Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West*, ed. Jules Prown (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 1–35.
16. John Taliaferro, *Charles M. Russell: The Life and Legend of an American Cowboy Artist* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 1996), 192.
17. Howard Becker, *Art Worlds* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 159.
18. Brian Dippie, "Chop! Chop!': Progress in the Presentation of Western Visual History," *Historian* 66, no. 3 (2004): 491–500.
19. Robert Taft, *Artists and Illustrators of the Old West, 1850–1900* (New York: Scribners, 1953).
20. Dorothy Harmsen, *Harmsen's Western Americana*, rev. ed. (Denver: Harmsen Publishing, 1978).
21. Dean Krakel, *Adventures in Western Art* (Kansas City: Lowell Press, 1977).
22. Ed Ainsworth, *The Cowboy in Art*. (New York: World Publishing Company, 1968).
23. Peggy Samuels and Harold Samuels, *Contemporary Western Artists* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1982); Peggy Samuels and Harold Samuels, *The Illustrated Biographical Encyclopedia of Artists of the American West* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976).
24. Martha Sandweiss, "The Public Life of Western Art," in *Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West*, ed. Jules Prown (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 117–33; Dippie, "Chop! Chop!" See also the symposium "Redrawing Boundaries: Perspectives on Western American Art" held at the Denver Art Museum in March 2007.
25. Throughout this chapter, I characterize this form of activity as commercial art: an artist such as Borein is hired by a client to produce images within contractual specifications for use as advertising, posters, and such.
26. Taliaferro, *Charles M. Russell*, 189.
27. Brian Dippie, "Charles M. Russell, Cowboy Culture and the Canadian Connection," in *Cowboys, Ranchers and the Cattle Business: Cross-Border Perspectives on Ranching History*, ed. Simon Evans, Sarah Carter, and Bill Yeo (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000), 23.
28. Donna Livingstone, *Cowboy Spirit: Guy Weadick and the Calgary Stampede* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 1996), 42.
29. James H. Gray, *A Brand of Its Own: The 100 Year History of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985), 37; Taliaferro, *Charles M. Russell*, 189.
30. Gray, *Brand of Its Own*, 42.

31. Max Foran and Nonie Houlton, *Roland Gissing: The People's Painter* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1988), 17.
32. See Hugh Dempsey, *Treasures of the Glenbow* (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1991); Fred Diehl, *A Gentleman from a Fading Age: Eric Lafferty Harvie* (Calgary: Devonian Foundation, 1989).
33. Foran and Houlton, *Roland Gissing*, 39.
34. Harold Davidson, *Edward Borein: Cowboy Artist* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), 74.
35. Davidson, *Edward Borein*, 78.
36. Sheilagh Jameson, *W.J. Oliver: Life Through a Master's Lens* (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1984), 35.
37. Quoted in Banff's *Crag and Canyon*, 4 August 1976, no. 31, 7, but see also, Taliaferro, *Charles M. Russell*, 259–60.
38. Personal communication with Great Falls sculptor and artist Jay Contway, January 2006.
39. Linder's biographer Harold Gunderson reports the year of the award as 1934, although the award was first offered in 1932. See *The Linder Legend: The Story of Pro Rodeo and Its Champion* (Calgary: Sagebrush Publishing, 1996), 123. An article in Banff's *Crag and Canyon* that appears in 1976 following Beil's death reports 1932 as the year when he began sculpting for the Calgary Stampede. Ken Liddell's article in the *Calgary Herald* in 1951 dates the start of Beil's work with the Stampede more informally as "the last 15 years" ("Raffled Jackasses Gave Artist Start," *Calgary Herald*, 9 June 1951, 9.
40. The winner of the saddle bronc competition during the 1925 Cheyenne Frontier Days Rodeo received a bronze sculpture from Hollywood actor William S. Hart. The sculpture, a likeness made some years earlier of Hart in western costume, was awarded to Billie Wilkinson. His name is the only one to appear on the trophy, so Hart's generosity was not repeated in subsequent years and did not initiate a tradition. During the 1920s Calgary Stampede board member and local jeweler David E. Black donated silver trophies for some rodeo contestants. During the 1920s his business had merged with Birks, and he managed its Calgary store.
41. Gunderson, *Linder Legend*, 121.
42. Foran and Houlton, *Roland Gissing*, 6.
43. Gray, *Brand of Its Own*, 69.
44. David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
45. Marilyn McKay, *The National Soul: Canadian Mural Painting, 1930s to 1960s* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).
46. Calgary Stampede, "Special Resolution of the Shareholders of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Limited," March 2007.
47. Cameron Strategy, *Civic Arts*, 86.

