

at **TheBenton**

January–May 2010



The William Benton Museum of Art
University of Connecticut
Connecticut's State Art Museum

January 21–March 14

From *Amazing Stories* to *Weird Tales*: Covering Pulp Fiction

Pulp magazines, named for their low quality pulpwood paper, were a popular form of leisure reading in America from the 1920s until the late 1940s. Sold mainly at newsstands, their covers were carefully designed with bold primary colors and dramatic compositions to seduce passers-by with a glimpse into the sensational stories within. Over fifty oil paintings on which these flashy covers were based are included in this exhibition. Like the pulp magazines themselves, the original pulp illustrations were considered of no value and the majority of them discarded in the decades after their production. They have since become the objects of great devotion among collectors and fans. The works in this exhibition

Hugh J. Ward, cover art for the April 1938 issue of *Spicy Western Stories*

are from the collection of Robert Lesser, on loan to the New Britain Museum of American Art. Mr. Lesser is one of the most avid collectors of pulp memorabilia.

The paintings in this exhibition date to very grim times in America, the years of the Great Depression and World War II. As cover art, they were crucial to pulp magazines' appeal as a cheap escape from harsh day-to-day realities, a thrilling journey away from the mundane. They were an alternative to the more mannered mainstream publications, the "slicks," with their soothing vision of apple pie America in the vein of Norman Rockwell's *Saturday Evening Post* covers. In the pulps, gratuitous sex and violence prevailed, as the paintings illustrate.

With the proliferation of specialized pulps beginning in the 1930s, readers were invited to "pick their poison": westerns, science fiction, mystery, fantasy, and horror among others. Genre-oriented pulp publications helped form visual and narrative conventions that carried into later pop cultural phenomena such as B-movie science fiction, film noir, comic books and Hollywood renditions of pulp heroes Tarzan and Zorro. For example, *Dime Detective* was instrumental in establishing the formula for the "hard-boiled" detective in fiction and film. The publication of *Amazing Stories* was critical in the formation of science fiction as a recognized literary and pictorial type.

Aside from the popular romance genre that targeted young women, the majority of pulp magazines catered to male audiences. Their covers featured dramatic moments in the adventures of square-jawed heroes, brutish villains of every type, and young damsels at the pinnacle of distress and in various states of undress. To a contemporary viewer, some imagery translates as delightfully naïve while other depictions reflect deep-seated racial prejudice and misogyny. In either case, the paintings provide fascinating insight into the fantasies and fears consumed by millions during a period of great turmoil in America.

The paintings in this exhibition are on loan from the Robert Lesser Collection of Pulp Fiction Covers, a promised gift to the New Britain Museum of American Art.

Friday, January 29, 5–7 pm

Reception for *From Amazing Stories to Weird Tales: Covering Pulp Fiction* and *The Old and The New: Recent Acquisitions and Works from the Collections*

January 21–March 21

The Old and The New: Recent Acquisitions and Works from the Collections

Whenever possible, art from the collections is used as the basis for a thematic exhibition or, in this case, is exhibited to highlight the Benton's variety of works. The Museum actively collects through gifted art and purchases made from acquisition endowments. The selection chosen for this exhibition is a combination of old works and new, those that are familiar and those that are unfamiliar but are now part of the museum collections.

William Hogarth, *Strolling Actresses in a Barn*, engraving, 1738. Robert S. and Naomi C. Dennison Acquisition Fund.

March 25–May 9

CounterMart, An Installation by Abby Manock

In *CounterMart*, artist Abby Manock utilizes juvenile color schemes and rudimentary forms in her installation of a convenience store counter in the style of a children's television show set. It is a scene from the artist's video *Counters* brought to life and available for visitor interaction. In *Counters*, on view within the installation, the artist repeatedly performs brief vignettes centered on production, transportation and exchange in a crayon-color world littered with hand-drawn smiley faces. Despite the cheerful veneer, a slightly sinister element pervades the environment as a voiceover counts to five again and again in a mantra-like fashion.

Abby Manock's work combines drawing, sculpture, installation, performance and video in order to explore the tension between idealized childhood visions of the world and adult angst concerning social and political realities. She has exhibited her work in as varied venues as The Deitch Projects Art Parade in New York and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Manock is based in Brooklyn, New York.



Abby Manock, still from *Counters* video, 2008

Thursday, April 1, 5–7 pm

Reception for *CounterMart*, *Poem & Picture*, and *The 2010 Master of Fine Arts Exhibition*

March 25–May 9

Poem & Picture

Poem & Picture features the collaborative visions of twentieth-century artists and poets, works that combine the disciplines of art and poetry in a way that each is complimented and enhanced by the other. They are poems and pictures intended to be experienced together, whether they are bound side-by-side in a limited edition book or as image and script integrated into a single work. Included in the exhibition are pages from the Russian literary avant-garde book *Igra v adu* (*A Game in Hell*) (1914) by Olga Rozanova and Kazimir Malevich. Selections from *21 Etchings and Poems* (1960) present collaborations by Willem De Kooning and Harold Rosenberg, Peter Grippe and Dylan Thomas, and Franz Klein and Frank O'Hara. *The Ariel Poems* (1927-1954), a collection of limited edition illustrated poems, is represented by T.S. Eliot and E. McKnight Kauffer, and D.H. Lawrence and Althea Willoughby, among others.



Olga Rozanova and Kazimir Malevich, *Ingra v adu* (*A Game in Hell*), lithograph, 1914. Alumni Annual Giving Program, 1982.

April 1–May 9

The 2010 Master of Fine Arts Exhibition

This celebration of the creative talents of the Class of 2010 in the Master of Fine Arts program in Studio Art showcases the works of Lauren Laudano (sculpture), Kasey Lindley (painting and multi-media installation), Katie Mansfield (photography, sculpture), Owen McKenzie (drawing), and Frank Travis (printmaking).

Films • Gallery Talks • Drawing Studio Workshops • RecitalsPlus • Campus Art Walks
All Events Are Free.

JANUARY

January 21, 10 AM
New exhibitions open

January 21, 12:15 PM
Gallery Talk:
The Collection Connection
Assistant Curator Eve Perry will talk about a recently acquired Alice Neel lithograph and a Robert Motherwell collage from the Museum collections

January 28, 12:15 PM
RecitalsPlus: A performance by an advanced music student in the School of Fine Arts

January 29, 5–7 PM
Reception for *From Amazing Stories to Weird Tales* and *The Old and the New*

FEBRUARY

February 4, 12:15 PM
Gallery Talk: *From Amazing Stories to Weird Tales* with Assistant Curator Eve Perry

February 7, 2 PM
Sunday Films: Neo-noir / *Brick* (2005)

February 11, 12:15 PM
RecitalsPlus: A performance by an advanced music student in the School of Fine Arts

February 14, 2 PM
Sunday Films: Neo-noir / *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* (2005)

February 14, 5 PM
Music on a Sunday Afternoon:
For details, visit www.thebenton.org

February 18, 12:15 PM
Gallery Talk:
The Collection Connection
Museum Director Dr. Thomas Bruhn will talk about 19th-century Japanese color woodcuts from the collection.

February 21, 2 PM
Sunday Films: Neo-noir / *Deep Cover* (1992)

February 25, 12:15 PM
RecitalsPlus: A performance by an advanced music student in the School of Fine Arts

February 28, 2 PM
Sunday Films: Neo-noir / *Red Rock West* (1992)

MARCH

March 4, 12:15 PM
Gallery Talk: *From Amazing Stories to Weird Tales*
Assistant Curator Eve Perry

March 7, 2 PM
Sunday Films: Neo-noir / *Memento* (2000)

March 8–12
The Benton is closed.

March 14, 2 PM
Sunday Films: Neo-noir / *The Machinist* (2004)

March 14
Last day to see *From Amazing Stories to Weird Tales*

March 25, 10 AM
New exhibitions open: *Poem & Picture* and *CounterMart*

March 26, 2:30 PM
Drawing Workshop conducted by Education Coordinator Tracy Lawlor

March 27, 2 PM
Campus Art Walk led by Museum Docent

March 28, 2 PM
Sunday Films: Artist Biopic: *Miss Potter* (2006)

Films • Gallery Talks • Drawing Studio Workshops • RecitalsPlus • Campus Art Walks
All Events Are Free.

APRIL

- G** **April 1, 12:15 PM**
Gallery Talk: The Work of Abby Manock
 Assistant Curator Eve Perry
- R** **April 1, 5–7 PM**
Reception for *Poem & Picture*,
CounterMart, and *The 2010 Master of
 Fine Arts Exhibition*
- W** **April 2, 2:30 PM**
Drawing Workshop conducted by
 Education Coordinator Tracy Lawlor
- ⊘** **April 3–7**
 The Benton is closed.
- 🎵** **April 8, 12:15 PM**
RecitalsPlus: A performance by an
 advanced music student in the School
 of Fine Arts
- W** **April 9, 2:30 PM**
Drawing Workshop conducted by
 Education Coordinator Tracy Lawlor
- 🐾** **April 10, 2 PM**
 Campus Art Walk led by
 Museum Docent
- F** **April 11, 2 PM**
Sunday Films: Artist Biopic /
Carrington (1995)
- G** **April 15, 12:15 PM**
Gallery Talk: The five Master of Fine
 Arts degree candidates will talk about
 their work.
- W** **April 16, 2:30 PM**
Drawing Workshop conducted by
 Education Coordinator Tracy Lawlor
- 🐾** **April 17, 2 PM**
 Campus Art Walk led by
 Museum Docent
- F** **April 18, 2 PM**
Sunday Films: Artist Biopic /
Crumb (1994)
- 🎵** **April 22, 12:15 PM**
RecitalsPlus: A performance by an
 advanced music student in the School
 of Fine Arts
- 🐾** **April 24, 2 PM**
 Campus Art Walk led by
 Museum Docent
- F** **April 25, 2 PM**
Sunday Films: Artist Biopic /
Basquiat (1996)
- 🎵** **April 25, 5 PM**
Music on a Sunday Afternoon: For
 details, visit www.thebenton.org
- G** **April 29, 12:15 PM**
Gallery Talk: *Poem & Picture*
 Assistant Curator Eve Perry

MAY

May 9
 Last day to see *Poem & Picture*,
CounterMart, and *The 2010 Master of
 Fine Arts Exhibition*

- 📺** New Exhibitions Open
R Reception
G Gallery Talk
W Workshop/Studio
🎵 Music Event
F Film
🐾 Campus Art Walk
⊘ Museum Closed

Events are subject to change. Please check Benton website,
www.thebenton.org or call 860.486.4520.

Gallery hours

Thursday & Friday 10 am–4:30 pm
 Saturday & Sunday 1–4:30 pm

The Store and Café Muse close at 4 pm each day.

The Benton will be closed

March 8–12
 April 3–7

As I write this, it's a rainy November day, yet tradesmen are at work on the fabric of the Benton's building. By the time the winter/spring exhibitions open in January, the renovation of the exterior of the Museum will be finished and, above all, the building will be completely waterproof. At eighty-nine years of age, the building had developed foundation, wall, and roofing issues that needed to be resolved, and through the work that began last June, they will be. We are grateful for the University's support in this very important undertaking.



At different points in the Museum's history, the focus on exhibitions, acquisitions, and audiences has shifted in response to a changing society as well as to different directorial goals. A conservative, traditional approach to exhibitions and acquisitions dominated from the 1970s to the middle 1990s. From then until the middle of the first decade of the new century, the Museum took a more political, activist stance. This was particularly true with exhibitions, where many of them reflected the University's emphasis on diversity and human rights. These latter themes are still important to us today, but more as part of a larger program that aims to accommodate the relevant with the traditional.

One downside of these shifts, however, was the discontinuance in the 90s of the Museum as a publisher of scholarly catalogues. As a consequence, the Museum lost its national identity, which had been fostered by publications such as *The American Earls* (1972), *Rome in the 18th Century* (1973), *Connecticut and American Impressionism* (1980), *American Etching: The 1880s* (1985), *A Journey to Hindoostan* (1987), and *The American Print: Originality and Experimentation* (1992). This year, however, we have again forayed into publishing with the exhibition catalogue *Women's Work, Women's Dreams: A Century of Swedish Women's Arts*. Our second catalogue will accompany the spring exhibition *From Amazing Stories to Weird Tales: Covering Pulp Fiction*. We anticipate that future publications such as these will enhance the reputation of the Museum on a national level. As part of an academic institution, this is an important step.

A second change entails the institution of an entirely new practice. This fall the Museum formed a Student Advisory Board whose mission is to suggest and implement ways to better integrate the Museum into the lives of the students here at the University. The effort is aimed at our core audience—the student. Already, the dozen Board members have developed ideas that will be implemented in the spring. We are excited about this new student-driven initiative and the possibilities it holds.

Thomas Bruhn
 Interim Director

The Benton

The William Benton Museum of Art
School of Fine Arts, University of Connecticut

272600

The William Benton Museum of Art

University of Connecticut
245 Glenbrook Road, Unit 2140
Storrs, CT 06269-2140

860.486.4520

www.thebenton.org

Admission is free. Donations are gratefully accepted.

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March 8–12
April 3–7

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