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Cowboys & INDIANS™

THE PREMIER MAGAZINE OF THE WEST



Cowboy Hats † Rodeo Roots † Navajo Blankets † Jack Elam

LASSOING *the* COWGIRL SPIRIT



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OUR LADY AT THE FENCE, MIXED MEDIA ON PAPER, 60X40 INCHES, ©1992. AT RIGHT, *DANCE ROMANCE*, OIL ON CANVAS, 60X60 INCHES, ©1987.

Think of Western paintings and images of rugged, determined cowboys come to mind. But where are the cowgirls? They're running free with

horses and dogs, laughing with cowhands, and dancing with jet black crows. At least that's how painter Donna Howell-Sickles sees them.

Raised in a small town just outside of Gainsville, Texas, Donna is very familiar with images of the West. And, like the cowgirls she paints, she exudes a life-affirming vivaciousness, especially when she talks about her art. She found inspiration for her exuberant cowgirls from an unexpected source—a '40s-era hand-tinted postcard. A woman dressed in cowgirl gear was posed on the back of a big sorrel horse. Written across the postcard was this: "Greetings from a real cowgirl from the ol' Southwest."

"This was a wonderful image in that the colors were printed over the black and white processing," explains

Donna. "And her bright red lips were printed just slightly off-center. That quality of the real and unreal really fascinated me."

That postcard eventually led

Donna on a search for the American cowgirl. She found her in the Wild West shows and rodeos of the '20s and '30s. "I kind of got acquainted by name with all of these old rodeo women," she says. "Wonderfully,



wildly atypical for their time."

Donna's figures have grown over the years and now have a mythic, Western goddess quality, one that is strong and joyous. "My cowgirl figure has far surpassed her original meaning as just a Western figure," she says. "She is less surface. I think she fulfills a different meaning for everybody who views her and I'm just enthralled with that idea!"

Donna is represented by galleries throughout the West.

Donna Howell-Sickles PROFILE



Jennifer Jordan