



Mary Fields

Portraiture allows the artist to capture the person's physical likeness, personality, and even mood. Portraits can be a drawing, painting, photograph, sculpture, or mixed media work. Bria Hammock depicts women who made their mark on the Wild West. She leaves the traditional way of painting portraits (making the subject more appealing than s/he is in real life) and uses layers of texture and colors to express the spirit of these famous female figures. Their faces are shown in a realistic yet pixelated manner that contrasts with bold gestural lines and saturated colors.

The photographs Hammock used as a reference were black and white. It allowed the artist to re-imagine the color palette of the series in accordance with her bold-color scheme as well as aid in revealing the essence of the subjects.

Imagine one of these portraits in black and white. How would this make the person's appearance different?



Gallery Guide

NOTABLE to NOTORIOUS

Women of the Wild West
Bria Hammock

May 18 - September 19, 2021

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Bria is a contemporary wilderness painter, muralist, and graphic designer. She has exhibited across the western Front Range and works out of her west edge studio in Cheyenne, WY. She is proud to have launched Wyoming's first drive-by, quarantine-friendly gallery in downtown Cheyenne in the Spring of 2020 and continues to curate new collections for exhibition.

Bria also serves on the board of Casper, WY's ART 321, and state wide organization WY/ART Coalition, advocating for more exhibition opportunities for western artists.

Artist Statement

This collection of women who made their mark on the Wild West looks past the traditional beauty of portraiture and aims to uncover the texture, layers, and colors that illuminated these iconic figures in their day while still resonating today.

The execution of faces in a more realistic, yet pixelated manner, juxtaposed with unpredictable, gestural lines and bold colors, speaks to these women's spirit. Some found themselves amongst more noble pursuits than others, but all showcased a strength and determination not often found publicly amongst their peers of the era.

All source photography was uncovered in black and white, which allowed me to re-imagine the color palette of this collection in a way that felt authentic to my bold-color body of work, as well as revealing the essence of the subjects.

Incorporating a digital component to the exhibition allows the viewer to peek deeper into a graphic execution of each subject's background. Finding and integrating inspiration from traditional art and technology is a theme that is consistently an important undercurrent in my work.



An unflinching depiction of the Spanish Royal family by Francisco Goya. Image courtesy of franciscogoya.net

Portraiture is an ancient art form going back to at least pharaonic Egypt, where it flourished from about 5,000 years ago. Before the invention of photography, a painted, sculpted, or drawn portrait was the only way to record the appearance of someone.

But portraits have always been more than just a record. They have been used to show the power, importance, virtue, beauty, wealth, taste, learning, or other qualities of the sitter. Portraits have almost always been flattering, and painters who refused to flatter tended to find their work rejected. A notable exception was Francisco Goya in his bluntly truthful portraits of the Spanish royal family, as seen in the image above.

Bria Hammock's work in this exhibition differs from pre-photography portraiture. Hammock has been able to paint most of her subjects based on photographs of the women. Photography was commonplace in the American West by the 1870s. **Looking at the subject of each painting, which women do you think Hammock used photographs to gain inspiration from?**