

PROFILE: JENNIFER BARDSLEY

MISSOULA'S WILD WOMAN ARTIST DRAWS HER INSPIRATION FROM AN ACTIVE OUTDOOR LIFESTYLE.



Jennifer Bardsley is a Montana contemporary artist from Missoula. Her series "Wild Women" uses cattle markers and water color to bring the Western cowgirl to life. An avid mountain biker, skier and climber, Bardsley finds much of her inspiration for this series recreating in the mountains of Montana with other women. Her work can be found in galleries across Montana and on her Web site, www.jenniferbardsley.com.

WORDS AND PHOTOS:
SADIE BALDWIN

"I AM CONSTANTLY INSPIRED by the women in my own life," says Jennifer Bardsley, a Montana contemporary artist who has created a line of art titled "Wild Women". This series brings the Western cowgirl archetype to canvas with cattle markers, water color and the influence of the women she recreates with in the Montana mountains.

"Some [of these women that inspire me] I adventure with - we ski, backcountry backpack, mountain bike, rock climb or compete in adventure racing. Others are dealing with messy life issues like depression, addiction or abuse. I watch these women rise, either by making baby steps or big jumps and by being the witness to such beauty, I am compelled to document it. In some ways I am just a story teller showing the moment of empowerment."

The cowgirl, a modern western goddess according to Bardsley, is depicted in the "Wild Women" pieces. The cowgirls are usually "strong and moving forward with an intention, or they are content and centered in their being" while revering a communion with nature.

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"They are a simple idea of affirming what I want in my own life," she says.

Originally from Helena, Bardsley now lives in Missoula with her husband and two children. She has studied art at MSU - Bozeman and at the University of Oregon - Eugene. However, Bardsley credits living in Finland for a year as a changing point for her art, "It cracked me open," she says. "You have to find a place of comfort in an environment that is so different. The language is strange, the people behave much differently, and everything from food to work is changed. So, you have to change too."

Her art work can be found at Art Fusion Gallery (Bigfork, Mont.), The Stillwater Gallery (Whitefish, Mont.) and The Artist's Shop (Missoula, Mont.) Many of her pieces can be viewed on her Web site at www.jenniferbardsleyart.com. •••

CATTLE MARKERS

Bardsley's work embraces abstract expressionism with figures, flowers, and wild-life. She utilizes canvas, water color, and oil in the form of cattle markers.

The idea of cattle markers came as a recommendation from a MSU art professor when art supplies were too expensive for the penny-pinching student. A mere \$1 a piece and found at any tack shop, cattle markers come in blue, black, green, red, yellow, orange, neon pink, neon yellow, and neon green. They

resemble a large piece of sidewalk chalk and require peeling off an oxidized layer to reveal a vibrant, soft, malleable oil substance. "They're big and chunky," Bardsley is quick

to point out. Applied with bare fingers (no paintbrushes) she has found that carving into her cattle marked art allows for definition of detail and intricacies. Cattle marked works will sit for a few days to fully dry and finally present with bright colors and course textures.





FILL IN THE BLANKS

WHO: Jennifer Bardsley

ART EDUCATION: University of Montana, University of Oregon, and showing up everyday to be creative.

STYLE: Abstract expressionism (flower paintings), contemporary representational (figures). Nearly all of my work is very painterly, lots of energy and expression.

2nd CHOICE CAREER: Teacher, therapist or pro-mountain biker or rock climber.

OTHER PASSIONS: My kids and husband, my faith, travel, empowerment through art and any outdoor activity - particularly skiing and mountain biking.

MANTRA: Be mindful.

FEAR: Not going for it. All the other details unfold as they will.

STUDIO MUSIC: From Radiohead to Neko Case to classical.

CREATIVE SPARK: Ideas flow when I am in the backcountry running or hiking. Being around other artists, music and travel. Also, I am a believer of taking a break when your "creative-well" runs dry, the muse always returns.