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Artist Bradley Chance Hays unloads some of the paintings that will be on display in December and January at Baker Arts Center. Hays says his goal is to introduce a modern approach of paintings to some of America's most valued subjects in the American West. Chance works in different mediums, but mostly oils and watercolors. The majority of Chance's work deals with the subject of horses and Native Americans.

By ROBERT PIERCE

- Leader & Times

As a young man, Bradley Chance Hays grew up in the small town of Rolla in Morton County in the most southwestern part of Kansas.

He has spent his life in the world of professional rodeo, while at the same time painting works of art.

Hays now paints in a private studio and cabin he leases near the Colorado town of Eagle, not far from the ski resort Vail, on the T&T Ranch.

Being from a ranch, much of Hays' time is spent living near the animals he has devoted much of his time to in his life.

"I've got some calves I'm raising, and it's all organic beef," he said.

As for his other work, he said much of the inspiration for his artwork comes from nearby New Mexico as well as the ranch itself.

"I go down to New Mexico and go to some rodeos," he said. "I go to a lot of different stamp dances. The horses are on our ranch with the cattle. I'll be at rodeos. I'm a PRCA cowboy. A lot of the inspiration as far as the cowboys and cowgirls come from that."



An exhibit featuring some Hays' contemporary western art will be on display in December and during the first half of January 2014 at Liberal's Baker Arts Center.

“I’m going to have probably 20 paintings here now that I’ve seen the space,” he said Thursday as he brought some of the artwork to the center. “They’ll all be 22 by 30 inches. Custom frames are 30 by 40.”

Hays said he became interested in art at an early age.

“I started to draw and loving to draw in kindergarten,” he said. “As I started to get older, I started to be more involved with the medium.”

His love for rodeo also developed around the same time.

“I was junior rodeoing in Little Britches out here in Southwest Kansas,” he said. “I grew up with Kacey Hayes. I was a junior bull rider.”

Hays said his dream was to be both a pro-roper and pro-artist. He graduated with bachelor of fine arts degree from Oklahoma State and a master of fine arts in design from West Texas A&M in Canyon, Texas. He had also previously attended Oklahoma Panhandle State University in Goodwell.

“I did that my freshman and sophomore years,” he said. “Brent Shoulders, whose a professor there, taught me a lot of my water color and pencil. He’s just an amazing artist himself and very talented. I learned a lot from him and his mother-in-law, Yvonne Sangster.”

Hays said Sangster and Shoulders both taught him water colors, and at Oklahoma State, he meet Professor Jack Titus, whom he said also had a big influence on his work.

“Jack Titus is an amazing water color artist himself,” Hays said. “I think they have the best water color program in the Big 12. I worked underneath him.”

Hays has been in Colorado for about a year and a half, and he recently signed with a gallery in Aspen. He said many people in Europe are interested in horses and the cowboy way of life, and this has helped him expand his audience.

“I’ve had some people who came to the Palo Duro Canyon when I was in graduate school,” he said. “They have the play ‘Texas.’ They’re from Germany, and they met me. They owned an art gallery over there, and they were just visiting Route 66.”

The play Texas gets a lot of attention from people in other countries who want to see what life in both Texas and America look like.

“I was down there all the time because I lived down by the canyon in graduate school. I rented a private art studio right on the rim,” Hays said referring to Palo Duro Canyon. “My cabin overlooked the whole place. It was just a little one-bedroom, one-bath little studio apartment that I rented. That’s where I painted.”

Hays said many of the colors he uses still today, such as sunset oranges, come from the Palo Duro Canyon, and that has helped him sell much artwork in Europe.

“I had people that were buying my art over there,” he said. “That’s how I met some of those people, and I’ve been to other countries.”

Hays said he has been in talks with an art gallery in New Zealand to eventually take his art to that country.

“I’m in the process of setting up possibly a year or two show,” he said. “My dream is to put together 30 or 40 paintings, all original paintings, and just get them all set up, get them over there via ship or plane and lease a truck. Set a deal up with galleries in each one of those countries and take it and show for four days somewhere. Take the truck and the art to the next place.”

Hays explained some of the factors that have led to his success where others have failed.

“Why a lot of people don’t succeed as an artist, they really don’t want to do the work it takes, and they don’t want to go out of their comfort zone,” he said. “If you think about it, that’s really the only thing that keeps people from succeeding a lot of times is leaving their hometown and going out to a new place and trying.”

Hays’ artwork is not just water color.

“They’re silk dye,” he said. “That’s why the colors are so much more vivid and have a lot more pop to them. I use a lot of silk dye in with my water color.”

While his exhibit is on display in Liberal, Hays also has a show coming up in December in Las Vegas at the National Finals Rodeo.

“I’ll be here the 1st,” he said. “After the 1st, I’ve got to be in Vegas on the 3rd. That gives me two days to drive out there, and I have an art show for 10 days. I go to Scottsdale, Ariz., after that and then one in Amarillo. I come back to Vail, Breckenridge and Aspen.”

Baker Arts Director Denae Weber said the Liberal exhibition was made possible through a grant from Liberal Convention and Tourism.

“They give out money to bring in people from the area, bring people to Liberal,” she said.

Weber said the grant also allows Baker Arts to experiment with marketing and advertising for Kansas’ southwest region.

“We had a commercial on KWCH and several radio stations,” she said. “I’ve really tried

marketing this spoke and wheel effect that they say will bring those people in from around the area.”

A private showing of Hays’ art will take place on Nov. 30, and public opening will take place from 2 to 5 p.m. on Dec. 1. The exhibit will be on display through Jan. 11.

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