

# Tim Shinabarger

Legacy Gallery, September 14-23



Out of the North, bronze, 20 x 21 x 10.



Lined Out and Leavin', bronze, 17 x 58 x 10.

**ACCLAIMED WILDLIFE** sculptor and Montana native Tim Shinabarger grew up hunting, fishing, and hiking in the rugged backcountry of the northern Rocky Mountains. Naturally, when he began sculpting in the mid-1980s, Shinabarger turned to the wilderness and its inhabitants for inspiration. His lifelong passion for nature is the theme behind his major one-man show this month at Legacy Gallery in Jackson, WY. “The wilderness has always been a part of me,” says the sculptor, a four-time winner of the James Earle Fraser Sculpture Award at the prestigious Prix de West Invitational. “I really don’t know where the art starts and stops. If I’m outdoors, I’m looking at abstract shapes and the twist of a tree—I’m overdosing on that kind of stuff. And then I get to work with those ideas in my studio.”

Nine new bronze works are unveiled when the exhibition opens on Friday, September 14, with an artist’s reception at 2 p.m., including many pieces featuring Shinabarger’s signature North American wildlife subjects. Also on display are an African lion, a couple of large-scale wall sculptures, and several nearly sold-out editions for sale by draw, including **WOODLAND BULL** and **SWITCHBACK**.

Titled **Forever Wild**, the show bears out 15 months of exhaustive preparation. As this article was going to press, Shinabarger was putting the finishing touches on the clay model for **ALONG THE HOBACK**, a multifaceted wall sculpture featuring an 1830s fur trapper navigating a rocky cliff with his horse and pack mule in Wyoming’s Hoback Canyon. “Wall pieces are something I’ve been exploring that are fairly new to me,” says Shinabarger, who has also honed his skills as a painter. For the sculptor, the wall piece presented the same types of challenges as a painting. “You have the same problems compositionally, creating a scene on one side, but three-dimensionally,” he says. “It took lots and lots of experi-



**Wapiti, bronze, 19 x 19 x 9.**

ments. That's what's fun about a big show like this. It's nice to have that time to contemplate a piece."

Another labor-intensive piece, titled *LINED OUT AND LEAVIN'*, features seven elk on the move. It's September—elk rut season in the Rockies—and the group has been spooked by the arrival of unwelcome visitors, wolves perhaps. "Sometimes, you'll see a lead cow taking off with a calf, heading into the timber, with the bulls still bugling while following along," says Shinabarger. "I generally have concepts from things I've seen, and then I'll gather reference material, studying anatomy and taking measurements," he adds. "In this elk piece, there's a year-

ling bull and a yearling cow in there—they all have a specific size range relative to each other."

While there's a lot of science and realism to his work, Shinabarger doesn't want his pieces to feel "scientific," he says. The sculptor likens his impressionistic sculptures to musical compositions. Creating movement and rhythm throughout his pieces is critical, and he pays particular attention to showcasing the patterns of light and shadow on his subjects. From a horse's musculature to the leather fringes on a trapper's coat, "everything is thought out," he says. "The bone of an antler requires a different way of handling the clay than the hair

of the elk. So coming up with different calligraphy—how I apply the clay and finding different ways to create textures, just like brushwork in a painting—is where the creativity comes in. That's how you connect with the viewer."

—*Kim Agricola*

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#### **contact information**

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