

# Work of 4 'outsider' artists gathered in show

Work by Nellie Mae Rowe, Janet Turner, Sally Michel Avery and Anne Muller  
Shari Brownfield Fine Art  
9-5 p.m. Monday through Friday till July 2  
ShariBrownfield.com,  
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By Kelsey Dayton

Art advisor Shari Brownfield was looking at photographs of walls covered in art when something caught her eye. She homed in on a colorful piece by an artist who she had not heard of: Nellie Mae Rowe.

"I just saw the work and was blown away," Brownfield said. "It was something about it that drew me in and I didn't yet know why. I really enjoy storytelling in art work, and I could tell the artist was expressing her story. I immediately wanted to get up close to it."

What Brownfield learned about the artist bolstered her interest. Rowe was born in 1900 in rural Georgia. Her father had been a slave. With little money she created art with the supplies she had — crayons, pencils and some colored markers. She told the story of her life in "fantastic" images and colors, Brownfield said. Yet her work was recognized by the world only in the 1970s, shortly before she died.

Rowe is the type of artist Brownfield is drawn to — a talent that has often been ignored or pushed out of traditional art spaces.

"Nellie Mae really is the pinnacle of what an outsider artist is," she said.

Samples of Rowe's work will hang at Shari Brownfield Fine Art alongside that of the other "outsider artists" from different time periods and different places, all of whom cre-



SHARI BROWNFIELD

Shari Brownfield Fine Art showcases work by four "outsider" women artists through July 2.

ated art in their own way.

The exhibit, "The Outsider, Outside," is open to the public from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday until July 2.

The other artists featured in the show are Janet Turner, Sally Michel Avery and Anne Muller, the only living artist featured in the exhibit.

"All these artists forged their own paths in an oil-on-canvas dominated art world," Brownfield said.

An environmentalist before that was a thing, Brownfield said, Turner (1914-1988) originally wanted to study biology, but in the 1940s that wasn't allowed because she was a woman. She was allowed to take some botany and art classes, which she combined for what would become a printmaking career.

She received a Guggenheim fellowship to document the flora and fauna of Texas through printmaking. That was especially unusual at a time when art was moving toward abstraction and printmaking was considered a tertiary medium for painters, Brownfield said. Turner also experimented with combining print techniques in creating one image. That is unique even in today's printmaking world, in which artists often create work using only one method, Brownfield said.

"It takes so long to master one technique," she said, and Turner mastered a variety of styles and figured out how to combine them.

Avery (1902-2003), whose work often features landscapes, was an artist until she met her husband, Mil-

ton Avery, now known as an icon of modern art. She quit her art career so she could support him in his.

"She felt there was something in the natural world that could be represented while still having a love for abstracting the landscape," Brownfield said. "She was trying to see the world very purely, to where you can distill it to the most important aspects or the most important colors. There is nothing extraneous in her paintings. What she wanted in there is in there. She filtered for us anything she felt was distracting."

Jackson Hole's own Mueller has worked in a variety of mediums throughout her career, from watercolor to photography.

"She is one of those people who simply can't stop creating art,"

Brownfield said.

Her latest work combines her love of photography and painting to capture the reflective nature of the landscape and the unique light found in the Tetons, Brownfield said. She also has a series of flower paintings created using a process in which she transfers photographic images onto thin paper. These also use foil to create a reflective quality.

"You become part of a piece when there is a reflection in it," Brownfield said. "It brings the viewer in."

Brownfield does not represent the artists in the show. She is a private art advisor and appraiser who scours the globe for art that might be a good fit for clients. In March 2020 she opened a new office space and hosted a opening days before Jackson shut down due to the coronavirus.

While her office is not a gallery in the sense that she will not keep inventory or have art available for public viewing all the time, she wants to use the space to bring the work of lesser known artists to Jackson and to showcase the work of artists she believes in.

"The Outsider, Outside" demonstrates that commitment. All the women in the show were unconventional artists who gained attention in the art world despite not working within its confines, Brownfield said.

"It is sort of a disparate group," she said, "but at the same time they've all faced enormous struggle as being outside the traditional art world." ■

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