

**April/May 2022 Edition****» GALLERY PREVIEWS**

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## Art & History: Julia Arriola (Mescalero/Mayo)

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Art did not find its way into the life of Julia Arriola (Mescalero/Mayo). “I was born an artist,” she says.

And although she spent much of her life making art, and bettering herself as an artist, she could not pursue it professionally until she retired two years ago from her career curating museums, specifically at the Arizona Historical Society in Tucson, Arizona. “Life took me in different places,” she says. “My job was a marriage of art and history, so aspects of that worked its way into my art.” Her newest works will be on display in a solo show opening April 22 at the Mark Sublette Medicine Man Gallery in Tucson.



Jollification, colored pencil and ink on ca. 1859 ledger paper, 16½ x 10½"

Arriola's work is a playful exploration in the genre of ledger art. Drawn onto antique, century-old paper, her work is colorful and often whimsical. Her newest pieces explore carnival-like atmospheres where animal and Pueblo figures mingle with each other, spin on the carnival rides and enjoy the fair food. These figures are often animals such as badgers and foxes, but also Native American figures such as the Koshare clown, Mudheads and Hopi maidens. And although fairs and carnivals will come to mind for some, others will see aspects of powwows, the sacred events many Native American tribes partake at various times during a year. "In the Southwest many tribes have incorporated powwows into their annual tribal fair," the gallery notes. "This consists of a combination of the carnival midway, entertainment, dancing along with a rodeo and harvest festival. Nearly all Southwestern tribes welcome outsiders. The power of dances and prayers increase with the numbers of people attending."



The Zen of Fry Bread, colored pencil and ink on ca. 1859 ledger paper, 16½ x 10½

For the artist, this fun experience is something she captures within her ledger-inspired paper pieces. “The work is definitely a little contemporary,” Arriola says of the new show. “Outside of the powwows and fairs, something else I show in the work is my interest in steampunk, particularly the 19th-century fashion, furniture and mechanisms.”





Twirling Maidens, colored pencil and ink on ca. 1859 ledger paper, 16½ x 10½"



Cubby with Carousel Stick Pony, colored pencil and ink on ca. 1859 ledger paper, 16½ x 10½"

When talking about her work, Arriola refers several times to Manifest Destiny, the idea that American settlers were destined to conquer the continent with democracy and capitalism. Early history books once looked fondly on Manifest Destiny, but have since seen it for what it was: a philosophy used to justify the wiping out of the Indigenous people that had called this land home for thousands of years. Arriola uses Manifest Destiny to borrow from aspects of American culture: "They rolled over all the tribes, crushing them, but it worked both ways, and now I get to borrow from all these aspects, including steampunk," she says. "It's a push/pull kind of relationship."

### Mark Sublette Medicine Man Gallery

Opens April 22, 2022

6872 E. Sunrise Drive, Suite 130, Tucson, AZ 85750

(520) 722-7798, [www.medicinemangallery.com](http://www.medicinemangallery.com)