

Holli Harmon Artist Statement

Before They Came references California's State "Bear" Flag and the radical environmental and cultural extinctions that occurred with the massive influx of people that came with the Gold Rush. Imagery includes our state's extinct Grizzly bear, antique paper doll silhouettes of Native Americans dating from the 1800's, and the "Forty Niner" line art figure from our public school curriculum. As part of the *Califia* series, the mythical female figure represents our California region that existed in the indigenous world "before they came".

The *Califia* Series plays with California's namesake, Califia. The mythical warrior queen, Califia, raises an army of women warriors. She was the heroine in an early 16th century novel, *Las Sergas de Esplandian* by Garci Rodriguez de Montalvo.

This series of paintings features strong female figures who unravel the numerous layers of culture that continue to accumulate in California. What parts of our folklore are true? In our rapidly changing world, what new myths are we creating to define who we are today? The paintings are built by layering multi-media and imagery that explore ideas that define who we are, where we came from, and where we are headed in the most populous U.S. state.

Holli Harmon is an artist living in Santa Barbara, California. Her work revolves around the human experiences that are the connecting points between different cultures and generations. These universal themes of human nature are set in iconic California imagery. She is both a painter and printmaker. Her paintings and projects have found homes in museums and collections that focus on the California region.