**ARTIST STATEMENT**

**LEANE LINNELL**

I am a Wyomingite through and through. And, for as much as I dreamed of growing up on a ranch; I was a town kid who took every available opportunity to be out “in the country”. Anything HORSE was all I was interested in so I was constantly coercing my dad to take me to his friend’s farm to ride.

When I was 8 I got my first horse, a retired barrel racer, who was a little “hot” for a kid’s horse but I learned volumes from her. She allowed me to transition into a younger horse and begin my 4-H career. In addition to the 4-H horse program, I started doing leather craft and the cowboy crafting bug hit me!

The cowboy crafts have always amazed and intrigued me, especially the horsehair hitching. While working at a gas plant, I learned that one of the contractors (Richard Gould) did horsehair hitching. I visited with him about it and had him make me a headstall and reins. Then I kept after him to have a class, teach this craft. In 2007, Richard put on a hitching class through the Lander Art’s Center and I began my hitching ‘career’. I have since taken 2 more classes from Richard and in 2011 Richard and I were accepted for a mentorship grant through the Wyoming Arts Council.

I can’t even begin to count the number of key fobs I have made; many have been memorials for horses that have passed and the owner wanted something to cherish. I have made headstalls and reins and hitched the hatband (being exhibited) for the mentorship program. One avenue which has opened up for my hitching is to create a piece and donate it to the Riverton PAWS organization for their Paws & Pearls fund raiser. The items are auctioned off and proceeds benefit the “critters” at the Riverton animal shelter. This has been a very worthwhile and rewarding way to showcase and advertise my work.

Just recently I took a workshop on making mohair cinches. Once again, a wonderful cowboy craft and something I really enjoy doing. It goes much quicker than the hitching but has many of the same principles in creating designs and patterns. Plus I can combine the cinch weaving and my horsehair hitching when I add a horsehair shoofly to the cinch.

I truly enjoy the cowboy crafts, improving my techniques and learning new ones. These crafts are a wonderful way to carry on traditions and styles that have been in use for hundreds of years. They give the owner an item that is unique, beautiful and useful.