

Little Romeo

This painting centers on Little Romeo, a wild mustang born in Wyoming's Red Desert, separated from his family at six months old during a federal roundup. His markings became the trace that allowed photographers and *Return to Freedom Wild Horse Conservation* to later reunite him, in 2021, with his two sisters.

That same year in Wyoming, 13,666 wild horses and burros were removed from public lands, making the state a focal point where large-scale land control and forced removal exposed a deeper crisis in how modern civilizations relate to land, life, and control.

This portrait invites inquiry into the void between materialism and perception, where absence becomes a portal and illumination gestures toward shared awareness beyond time and possession.



Photographs by Melanie Schambach, 2021 — taken during a visit to *Return to Freedom Wild Horse Conservation* through her socially engaged arts practice with Red Road to DC.