

**Tracy Marie Taylor**  
***The New Breed Project Statement***

The true American cowboy is a dying breed. "The new breed" was coined in the 1970's to describe a new kind of rodeo rough stock competitor (bareback bronc riding, saddle bronc riding and bull riding) who lacked the history and background of the true original cowboy. These contestants are young, often from an urban background, and choose rodeo as the outlet to show off their athletic prowess. The vast majority of them have college educations and most have never worked on an actual cattle ranch. In the spirit of the Wild West Shows made popular by Buffalo Bill Cody, these "new breed" competitors engage in a choreographed dance where the goal is to dominate and control their mount. In the same way that an actor performs a role on stage, these men perform an extremely sexualized act that signifies what it means to be "masculine."

Beyond the performative aspects of the competition, I aim to capture the competitor's true emotions in the seconds before the performance begins. I am especially interested in photographing behind the chutes and focusing my attention on the rider's expressions, movements and hand gestures as he practices his moves or in the last seconds before he is released from the gate on his bucking mount. I am looking for those fleeting moments when the competitor's guard is down, and for an instant, he exposes his vulnerabilities, which he so desperately tries to hide.