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THE
ARABIAN
HORSE
OF EGYPT

Photographs by Nasr Marei | Foreword by HRH Princess Alia Bint Al Hussein

AUC
PRESS

Magnificent photographs celebrating the history and splendor of this special breed

About the book

Prized for their stamina and their acclimation to the harsh conditions of the Arabian deserts, the ancestors of the horses that are now recognized as the Egyptian Arabian purebred horse entered Egypt centuries ago, establishing the valuable bloodlines of the breed there. The breeding programs in Egypt therefore became the root source for the finest Arabian horses, attracting passionate enthusiasts from all corners of the world. Artists, poets, and historians have for centuries been inspired by their great beauty and romantic legacy. Nasr Marei is the third-generation owner of a stud farm in Giza, Egypt. His love for and knowledge of the Egyptian Arabian horse, coupled with his sensitive and striking photography, have inspired this visual tribute. His extraordinary photographs, accompanied by text that traces the history and evolution of the Arabian's journey into Egypt, celebrate the lineage of this living treasure of Egyptian heritage.

"Thanks to Marei's extraordinary photographs and informative text, no reader will fail to appreciate the unique history, and extraordinary beauty that have long made the Arabian Horse of Egypt among the most celebrated and sought-after animals in the world."

—Jane Waldron Grutz, Saudi Aramco World



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Preface by Nasr Marei

When I think of the Arabian horse it is often with the inner eye of an artist. It is an image of great beauty, free spirit, elegant flowing movement, and proud character. I have been blessed to have been born into a family with a thriving farm in the verdant Delta of Egypt just north of Cairo. Horses were always a part of our life so that it was not unusual for me to wander into one of the horse stalls with my breakfast when I was four years old. The sight and sounds of the horse have always been part of my life. This initial interest blossomed through the years into a full-blown love of the horse.

In 1935, my grandfather bought our first Arabian fillies from the Royal Agricultural Society, later the Egyptian Agricultural Organization (EAO), and established the Albadeia breeding program which I carry on to this day. Being born and raised among horses, I found many possibilities opened up as I learned more about them and learned to love them. It is truly a never ending involvement and passion, since one constantly evolves through experience, additional knowledge and an appreciation of the artistry and at the same time, the functionality that culminate in the Arabian horse. The challenge is to better oneself while bettering the world for the horse. Reading, traveling, and judging in Arabian horse shows throughout the world continues to widen my vision of what is possible. It helps to keep me open-minded about different approaches to understanding the horse.

At my stud farm we have a gene pool of seventy-five years that is based on our original foundation horses and the breeding of over five hundred horses to date. Even with this strong base, I occasionally will selectively introduce outside elements with a mare or stallion from another breeding program. I do this in the belief that I am doing something that will maintain the 'classic' type and correctness of our horses while adding something that will bring improvement in an area that needs attention, such as stronger movement. It takes objectivity to recognize not only the strong points of your horses but also the aspects that require improvement. An important lesson in this is to attempt to preserve the identity and integrity of your lines

without falling victim to the extremes of fashion sometimes seen in the competitive world.

Initially, my father, Sayed Marei, was responsible for building the reputation of Albadeia throughout the world. Gradually my brother Hassan and I joined in the day-to-day operation of the stud. Eventually, I assumed full management of the farm with all the joys and heartbreak that it entails. There are few experiences more wonderful than the birth of a foal or more devastating than the loss of a horse gone before its time; it always seems to be before its time. In the mid-1990s, I retired from the academic and business worlds and devoted myself completely to what is the overriding center of my existence: breeding and living with, and for, the Arabian horse.

When I was younger we were able to ride the half-kilometer from our farm and gallop through the desert at the foot of the Great Pyramids. Today, the urbanization of Greater Cairo has encroached into our world and devoured the surrounding green spaces. I strongly believe that I am carrying the heritage of our ancient civilization into the legacy of my horses. I have tried to create an environment for them that is as close to a natural oasis as possible. My horses live in an ambience of lush flowering gardens, date palm trees, deep sand paddocks, and open stalls. I have tried to allow their existence to carry on without intrusion from the outside chaos. My lifestyle is such that I have made the horses my family and have attempted to create the best possible world for us where they can thrive, and I can be part of their daily lives.

A large number of variables factor into any intelligent breeding decision. One of the key issues is to study the history and origin of the Arabian horse. You cannot separate its history from your decisions. The Arabian horse is an example of survival in the harshest of environments. The desert often engendered romantic fantasies in early travelers. However, the reality is far from that; it is harsh and unforgiving. Only the strongest of body as well as courage and spirit could survive. This is what gives today's Arabian its special characteristics. If you breed these qualities out of

the horse, it loses what makes it unique. As in architecture and design, form does follow function. I illustrate these characteristics in my selection of photographs.

I am fortunate to have over fifty years of breeding experience, which allows me to recognize traits and genetic potential to draw on in making my decisions. Like any serious breeder, I know what the individual pedigrees mean in so far as which characteristics are dominant and where problems might arise. I am able to access not only the pedigrees of the horses I have bred, but also the ancestors of the foundation horses from the EAO and the Royal Family studs. This helps me to predict the outcome of breeding a specific mare and stallion. In this way I can try to preserve the look that we have established in our program through the years while introducing bloodlines that can add the elements I feel are important.

When making the breeding selections, it is important to include disposition as an element because some bloodlines and individual horses have marked characteristics that you want to preserve or eliminate. Charisma, too, is dominant in certain lines. An important thing to remember is that the 'classic' horse, which embodies these traits, along with balance and symmetry, is timeless, whereas the fashion of the day has little staying power. I try to regard myself as someone who is continuing the legacy of horse breeding as a guardian of centuries-old traditions.

Painting, sculpture, and literature, especially poetry, abound with images of the Bedouin war-horse. Studying these works gives today's breeder a sense of the courage and intelligence that were demanded of these horses in addition to their tremendous agility and endurance. And yet one sees power and beauty first before the great determination and effort coursing through the horse's body. This struggle for survival created an unbreakable bond between horse and rider and allowed for both to exist together in a world that constantly threatened to destroy them. Although there could be great devotion between the warriors and their mounts, their lives also demanded a break in the attachment with total lack of compassion when necessary. In my photographs I try to capture some

of the essence of these great paintings and lithographs. It is my way to capture the free spirit and charisma of the horse and freeze that instant in time so that I can relive it for years to come. It satisfies my artistic and aesthetic love of the beauty that abounds in nature. Photography has been a long-time passion: ever since my father gave me a Kodak Brownie when I was seven years old. A Nikon camera at the age of eleven cemented my desire to photograph anything that I felt was beautiful in nature, landscapes, and of course, horses. Underwater scenes and desert landscapes are part of what I continue to photograph today. Clearly my equipment has improved drastically since the early days.

However, it has always been the horse that is at the core of my photography. Because of my years of experience with the horse, I am able to anticipate the movement and capture the essence of who I feel that horse to be. I try to capture the elegance, pride, and majesty of each horse, whether it is a mare or stallion, a foal, or a young horse feeling its power begin to explode in movement. As you look at the photographs, be sure to look carefully at the intelligence and curiosity in the expressions of the horses: their soft liquid eyes, flaring nostrils, flagging tails, and almost ethereal movements.

Even after so many years, I continue to strive to preserve and improve the Arabian horse, which I love so much. I want to breed a horse that captures your mind and heart. I want there to be a vision that can trigger your imagination to see yourself riding that horse across a great expanse of rolling desert, with the winds blowing past as your horse's hooves fly across the sands. I want your experience of seeing that horse to take your breath away. Then you will feel some of the love and passion as well as the great respect I have felt through my years with the Arabian horse. They have been my companions and my friends.

To me, the Arabian horse is a gift that we have received from the past and one that we must preserve and bequeath to the future. It is a gift and legacy that we must respect and treasure. This book is dedicated to the pure Egyptian Arabian horse and all those who feel and enjoy the majesty and magic of who they are, whether in art or in life.



Majesty, elegance,
and W are epitomized
by this Egyptian stallion at
the peak of his powers.



The magic bond between a mare and her foal illustrates the wisdom, love, and care that can also form the relationship with her owner.



The powerful, animated movement of this young stallion is an attribute of biomechanics that a breeder attempts to imprint on the animal in his stable. Typically, the hindquarters propel the body high and forward, while the shoulders engage the front legs to cover ground.



An Arabian stallion appears as though
running through the mists of time.



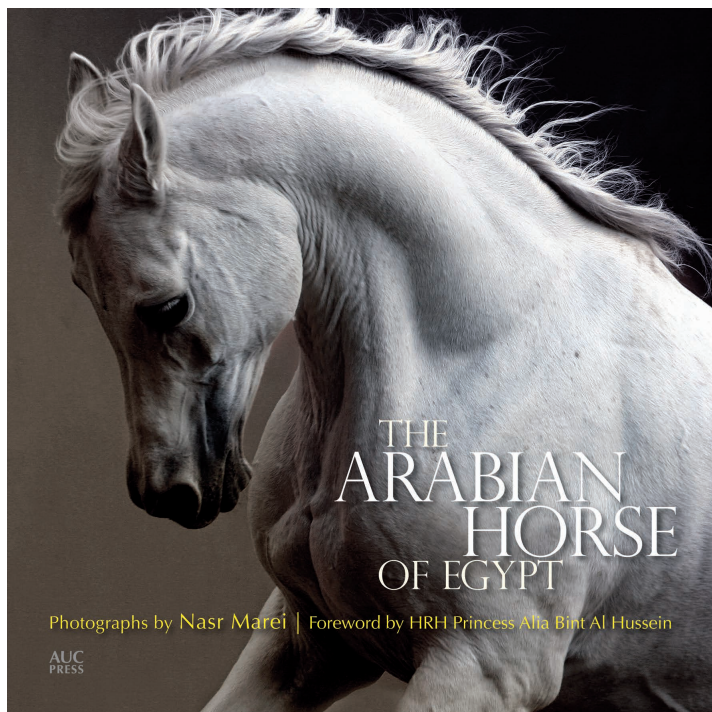
About the author:

Nasr Marei holds a PhD from the University of California, Davis. He is the co-founder and vice-chairman of the Egyptian Arabian Horse Breeders Association. He was given a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Arabian Horse Breeders Alliance in 2013.

About the contributors:

Cynthia Culbertson holds a degree in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures from Indiana University, where she specialized in Arabic Language and Islamic religion. She has an international reputation as an Arabian horse historian.

HRH Princess Alia Bint Al Hussein of Jordan is a world-renowned Arabian horse breeder, show judge, and director of the Royal Stables of Jordan for the Preservation of the Arabian Horse.



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shahdan.adel@aucegypt.edu

Distribution and Sales Contacts

Egypt

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