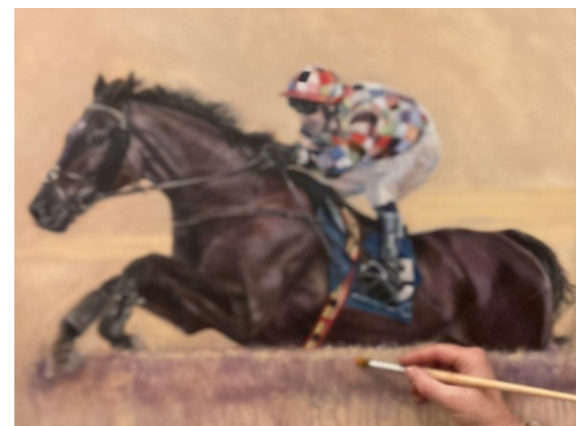

THE HORSE ARTIST

GEORGINA LEIGH

By Nermin Marwan

WHETHER WE CONSIDER OURSELVES ART AFICIONADOS OR NOT, IT IS PROBABLY SAFE TO SAY THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF US HAVE SEEN HORSE PAINTINGS AT LEAST ONCE IN OUR LIVES. THE TRUTH IS THAT PAINTINGS OF HORSES ARE AMONG THE MOST PREVALENT TYPES OF ARTWORK, THEREFORE IT'S POSSIBLE THAT IT HAPPENED MORE THAN ONCE.

THEREFORE, WE ARE HAPPY TODAY MEETING THE EQUINE ARTIST GEORGINA LEIGH TO HAVE AN IN-DEPTH LOOK ON THE LIFE THE EQUESTRIAN ARTISTS.





Can you give us a closer look into your background and how you became interested in making art?

I can't actually remember a time when I became interested in making art. I think I was born with a pencil in my hand! Drawing and creating has just been something that I have always done. I see a surface and I see potential for art..normally involving a horse related image. *Condensation on a window?* A great opportunity for a drawing in my opinion. *Go to the beach?* Let's make a galloping horse making its way to the surf. I think I was probably quite predictable to everyone around me, but I enjoyed (*and still do*), being creative about every opportunity possible.

My mum is also a quietly creative person, I have vivid memories of her painting beautiful delicate flowers and floral patterns onto fabric lampshades in the evenings, and I later found out that these were destined for Liberty in London!

After school, I went to Oxford to study a foundation in art and design, and then following this to Bath Art School for a further three years. Both are stunningly beautiful cities to study in. I feel very lucky for these experiences.

Specializing in equine art, you must love horses. What is your story with horses?

Art and Horses have been in my life, one way or the other, since

I was very small. I think if you love horses you are in love with the very essence of horses and not just in the animal itself. What horses give to humans (*who want to receive from them*) is just incredible. Horses are definitely a mirror to humans. They are so sensitive and intuitive to emotions. I swear my horse can understand my thoughts even before I can.

My mum first introduced me to horses as a child. She had horses that she kept in livery when I was very young and then later when we moved to an Oxfordshire village, we were able to keep them at home, which was idyllic, and also meant that we had space to get a pony for me! He was a very naughty Welsh Section A, and I nearly gave up riding because

he scared me witless with his cheekiness. After a while I gained confidence and balance and was able to ride him regardless of the shapes he was creating under me...he soon gave up when he realized I didn't care what he did anymore.

Today I have two horses and I treated myself to my dream breed when my third child was 2 years old, A PRE Andalusian. I have owned him now for over 10 years and I still feel like I'm learning more every time I am in his presence.

Do you have a muse that inspires and drives your creativity?

I guess my horse is my main muse. The whole reason I began focusing on painting horses was

my gorgeous PRE Andalusian. I needed to earn some extra money to pay for his keep, dressage lessons and competition entries and with the children still being small I had to come up with a plan whereby I could remain at home for them and earn money without affecting their routine and still be able to do the things I wanted to do. I started offering portraits of friends' horses at very low prices and built my name from there.

What enhances your motivation and do you paint every day or when the mood strikes you?

I paint or draw every day; speaking to clients and potential clients about their horses and their motivations for having a portrait created is a huge motivation for

me. I completely get their love for their horses and why they would want to commission an image to remember their relationship and special time with them.

Using my creativity to give back to the horse is also a huge motivation. I have always felt compelled to help charities and organizations and I am absolutely able to do that using my art creations. I have been involved in all sorts of interesting projects including a sculpture trail for World Horse Welfare, Holiday card designs for The British Horse Society and more locally I organized an impromptu auction of my artwork to raise awareness for Hannah's Willberry Wonderpony.



All photos by artist GEORGINA LEIGH

Do you have a favorite painting in your own collection?

This is such a difficult question to answer. Each painting I produce is so special to me. I try to ask as many questions as I can, or do my research into the horse, if it is relatively well known, so that I can get a better understanding of its character and abilities and also to see as many images of it as I can find, as I mainly paint from photographs that have been provided. So I think I get to know the horse as if it were my own, and spending so much time in the

process it's always a bit sad to say goodbye to them.

Do you have a story for any of the paintings that you would never forget?

Yes, a non-assuming watercolor. The painting is of a snowy early evening scene at my childhood home. It is an image of my late dad's horse Beau and her two babies Honey and Molly whom my mum bred shortly after my Dad passed away. They are keenly looking over the fence and willing us to bring them

in for their evening hay. The photograph was taken by my sister and I just had to paint it. A perfect and timeless winter scene of home, and memories of my very much missed Dad.

What was the most challenging period in your life?

If things were easy then everyone would be doing it right? There are constant challenges to running your own creative enterprise. It was particularly challenging starting out, juggling a number of

different hats. I actually spent more time marketing my art, rather than creating it which was frustrating sometimes, but I am finding that I need to do less active marketing nowadays which is just as well as I am being asked to paint more and more gorgeous horses for clients.

What is your goal or your lifelong dream?

In my fantastical made-up dream world, I would love to own my own equestrian themed gallery in the center of Bath (preferably in a Georgian building with large and quirky shop front windows and a welcoming bell at the door for good measure!).

Do you have a role model that inspires you?

I have lots. Franz Marc was the first artist I noticed who had a passion for representing animals in their own world. Another artist is Sir Alfred Munnings, he captures the light so beautifully and makes you feel that you were there too. 🐾