

MARIAN DUNCAN WITH HORSETIMES

By Nadine Britain

MARIAN DUNCAN HAS BEEN PAINTING HORSES PROFESSIONALLY SINCE 1986. SPECIALIZING IN ARABIAN HORSE PORTRAITS, HER ART HAS REACHED AROUND THE GLOBE FROM AUSTRALIA TO THE US, SAUDI ARABIA, UAE, AND INDONESIA. SHE ADDS HER OWN CREATIVE EXPRESSION WHEN PRODUCING COMMISSIONED PIECES OUT OF PHOTOS THAT ENHANCE THE DELIGHT AND BEAUTY OF THESE EXCEPTIONAL BEINGS. MARIAN IS CURRENTLY BASED IN NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA.



Hi Marian, can you please tell us a little about yourself?

I grew up in a large family in Orange, central NSW Australia. I used to draw and paint all the time with my older sister, Jane; fairies, ballerinas and with me, it was always horses. My mother always made sure we had art materials to use. I used to sit under big trees and sketch our neighbor's horses.

When did your love for Arabian horses begin and why?

I first discovered Arabian horses in my Fathers Land newspaper (for agriculture); arched necks, tails held high, it was love at first sight. I then kept a lookout for them in horse books and magazines, and local agricultural shows.

You're trained in Graphic design. What made you transition to a more classic method of painting?

I had always painted and did art at school, I trained as a signwriter, hand painted signs, this taught me great brush control, which comes through in my paintings, also layout, balance and spaces of graphic design. I also studied fine art at Orange TAFE for a few years, it all comes together.

We love how you capture the horse's expression, your technique and use of color. Can you explain the process and how long it took you to learn and develop your skill and personal style in art?

It takes a whole lifetime to learn and evolve as an artist. Knowing horses, observation of shape, form, movement, behaviour, plus colour, light and shade, time, patience and spontaneity. Feelings and emotions come through in my paintings, it's in my heart.

What other artists inspire or influence your art?

Sir Alfred Munnings, Carle Verntte , Victor Adam... my favourite living artists are Andre Pater, and Mary Haggard, plus many others.

You've been painting horses professionally for 36 years! What knowledge have you gained about horses or specifically Arabians compared to others? What's the most important lesson horses have taught you?

Owning riding , observing their behaviour, body language, movement, etc. Treating them kindly, gaining their trust, is your reward. I have given up riding now, but I love being with them everyday at feed times, they always inspire me. What you put in you get back, my Arabians are my friends.

Was there ever a time in your life when you felt like you wouldn't be a successful artist and how did you overcome this hurdle?

Haha, always up and down for years. It was not always easy at first, it's many many hours of painting almost every day, I treat it like work but I do enjoy it. It didn't matter if I was successful or not I just had to paint beautiful Arabian horses, it's inside of me. It's luck , hard work, and getting seen or known.

Does your family love horses as much as you do?

My Father and Mother's families always had horses before I was born, after I married I got my first horse,





then eventually my Arabians, only my daughter shares my passion for horses.

Can you explain the process from receiving a picture of someone's horse to turning it into your final masterpiece?

Any painting starts with sketching, it's the most important thing for me to try and get everything correct first, it's the bones of a painting. It might take days or weeks to sketch, depending on how much work and the size of a painting. Mostly, I paint from my imagination, not any particular horse. If I'm required to paint somebody's horse, from one photo or many, I must ask for the photographer's permission, there is copyright plus it is their art.

When I'm happy with my sketch I paint many layers to try and make a flat surface look 3D. Light and shade, some colours take your eye away, strong colour comes forward, the eyes for me are very important plus good brushes, I take very good care of them. Mostly new brushes for a new oil, as the sharp tips wear out quickly on canvas, for the finest detail. I also like worn brushes, also useful...I have a lot of brushes...I have a lot of materials.

Have you ever visited or thought about visiting the Middle East?

I would like to very much, although I have too many animals to look after, I was planning a trip in 2020, but Covid hit, perhaps in the future.

What advice would you give to young horse enthusiasts on making their passion a career?

Follow your dreams and work hard.

How have you spent your days recently; is there anything else that you would like to accomplish?

I am happy enjoying my art, and my family, I am hoping to continue to paint for many more years. Each painting I do, I think I still learn from. Nothing is perfect, I always want the next one to be better and I think that's how you evolve as an artist. 