



Four Gallivanting Horses bronze and steel

SUSAN LEYLAND AND PATSY MCARTHUR
 TWO WOMEN ARTISTS WITH
 DIFFERENT VISION - SINGLE PASSION

By Theo Woodham Smith



Heavenbound - 113cm x 160cm, charcoal and conte on Fabriano paper, 2017

HORSES HAVE INSPIRED SOME OF THE MOST POWERFUL IMAGES IN ART – FROM THE SINUOUS LINE OF A CAVE DRAWING TO A RICHLY WORKED GOLDEN WARRIOR FROM 300 BC. RACING AHEAD TO OUR OWN TIMES, OWNERS AND BREEDERS AROUND THE WORLD TREASURE PORTRAITS ON CANVAS OF THEIR WINNING MOUNTS.

A NEW EXHIBITION AT THE OSBORNE STUDIO GALLERY LONDON FROM THE 7th TO THE 25th NOVEMBER 2017 WAS DEDICATED TO THE TWO WOMEN ARTISTS.



Serenity 55x27x17cm



Elevation 75x29x20cm



SUSAN LEYLAND

Her horses are of no particular type or breed; they are created in a simple and geometric form, on pedestals or bases which are an intrinsic part of the sculpture.

Susan Leyland (born 1952), makes equestrian sculptures of rare originality superbly executed. She has lived and worked in Tuscany since her first visit to Florence in 1973. The Renaissance city cast an immediate spell as potent as it has been long lasting.

Her home is seven kilometers from Florence, with a view over the Arno valley and a glimpse of the golden Duomo. The studio where she sculpts her clay horses was converted from stables in the garden, among olives and cypresses, a 'magical place to create.' Art historian Tamsin Pickeral (publications The Majesty of the Horse, 2006, 30,000 Years of the Horse in Art, 2012) describes the Tuscan studio as 'filled with sketches, cards, models and inspiration'.

Susan has loved horses since she was four years old, when her grandfather, a vet and breeder of horses, gave her a pony. Horses are her friends, companions, bringers of calmness and freedom, and the source of her art. The quality of her drawing

began to emerge at boarding school in England, when her work was chosen for children's exhibitions at the Royal Academy of Art. She thinks that it may have been a small collection of white Chinese porcelain horses which fired her imagination, leading her towards sculpture. During her first seven years in Florence she worked as a fashion model, taught English in her spare time, took drawing lessons, practicing art when she could.

In 1987 Susan Leyland began creating her first sculptures with the help of Florentine artisans, giving riding lessons to pay the bills. She held her first and second exhibitions in Florentine galleries in 1998 and 1999, in 2000 at Saratoga Springs, New York, the year she became a full time sculptor, and by 2004 she developed her distinctive Horse Block sculptures. She begins with the block, and they 'literally develop as she manipulates her clay.'

In her own words: "The base and the sculpture become one, each evolving and emerging from the other, whilst maintaining total balance and visual purity. The blocks give me a feeling of roots, of stability, whereas in extravagant opposition are the bronze Gallivanting Horse sculptures which are light, joyous and full of quick, fleeting movement."

Each Horse Block sculpture takes about a month to complete. When the sculptures are dry, they are fired for a week in a furnace reaching a temperature of over 1000 degrees. Before the modelling starts Susan prepares dozens of sketches and studies.

As for her bronze Gallivanting Horses, these are made directly in wax. A simple basic wax model is used to create a starting point for a variety of movements and shapes. The long stem elevates the horses to give the sculpture an aerial feeling.

As Tamsin Pickeral writes (publications: The Majesty of the Horse, 2006, 30,000 years of the Horse in Art 2012): "In two separate groups Leyland captures all facets of the horse. She has spent her life studying this most noble of animals, and the connection between horses and humans. 'She brings together pure, simple and brilliant geometric form, and from these spare, unfussy shapes conjures horses of tremendous beauty and character.'"

Susan Leyland has held solo exhibitions in the UK, USA, Italy, France, Sweden and Germany; she was awarded the American Academy of Equine Art Director's award in 2008. In 2009 she was commissioned by Lloyds Bank to sculpt the three equestrian Olympic disciplines (dressage, eventing and jumping) for the exhibition at Heathrow. She has been chosen to create The First World War Horse Memorial which will stand near Ascot racecourse in Berkshire, England.

PATSY MCARTHUR

Patsy McArthur is known for superb draughtsman ship. Her charcoal drawings of horses in movement express natural energy, strength and grace, surpassing anything a human being could achieve.

Patsy McArthur was born in Glasgow in 1976. She grew up in the countryside of the West of Scotland, calls herself a 'horsey child', but a 'nervous rider', with some success in dressage. She studied at Gray's School of Art in Aberdeen from 1994-1998, winning the Royal Scottish Academy John Kinross Travel Scholarship on graduation took her Master's Degree in Barcelona from 2000 to 2001.

Barcelona may have given her a taste for sunshine after three years of cold, grey granite in the North of Scotland. Over the years she has been exploring different places, living in Florence, Spain, Australia, Berlin and Manhattan.

No longer a compulsive traveller with a restless spirit, she now lives in Brighton. Her art has been dedicated to the human figure in movement: 'I strive to make images that convey a sense of power and energy or potential energy. My models are not individuals but free-runners, acrobats or divers.'

Patsy McArthur is best known for her unusual perspectives with 'an arresting quality to unsettle and challenge the viewer' to quote an art critic observer.

Last year she felt she had reached a bit of a 'stuck phase' or impasse. She started videoing and photographing horses in her sister's Scottish horse yard.

'I began to realize that the images I was really interested in were the moments when the horse was in mid-leap or canter, bucking and rearing with the rider or handler.' 'The horse has a natural strength with grace whether leaping joyously or straining to clear an invisible fence' which 'seems to translate into our human experience.'

I had struggled for years to find the right human models who brought a real presence to the running and jumping drawings I used them for, here I had the horse. Perfect for the feelings I want my work to inspire. Engaging with horses again she describes as a 'happy accident and an ongoing interest which has boomeranged me back to my childhood, giving my monochrome drawing a new direction.'

'The process of drawing horses from photographs

or video, has allowed me to gain a new sense of freedom and liberation. I am trying to make contemporary, emotional drawings which have as much to do with us as humans as they do with horses'.

From 2004-2014 there have been Patsy McArthur exhibitions in the UK, Hong Kong, US and Shanghai. She has sold her work to private collectors in the UK, France, Australia, Italy, Spain and the US, and for public spaces, especially in Scotland.

FACT BOX

Artist: Susan Leyland & Patsy McArthur

Dates: 7th until 25th November 2017

Location: Osborne Studio Gallery

2 Motcomb St, Belgravia

London

SW1X 8JU

Entry: Free admission to the gallery

Website: www.osg.uk.com

