

Artists Portray Horses

Throughout history the horse has been a favorite subject for artists. People who lived about 20,000 years ago included horses in their paintings in caves. The Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, and Asians all made sculptures of horses as do many present-day artists. They may make them from clay, wood, stone, or metal. Artists may show the horse alone or in groups. They may show them with riders or pulling carriages or carts. The horse at one time provided a major form of transportation. The horse is a beautiful animal, and artists like to show its graceful form, its muscles, shiny coat, and its mane and tail. They especially like to show the horse in action. Some artists prefer to show a horse in great detail; others want to depict the feeling of movement, color, and excitement. Have you ridden a horse? Would you like to ride one to school? The word "equestrian" means pertaining to horsemanship.

"Prince on Pony"

Diego Velasquez

(D'YEH goh Vay LAHS kez) (1599-1660)

SP305

The title of this painting is "Prince Balthazar-Carlos on Pony." The young prince was the darling of Spain. He was the only son of King Philip IV and was strong, intelligent, winsome, and a promising heir to the throne. He was painted several times as a baby prince by Velasquez. By the age of five, when this picture was made, Balthazar-Carlos was an accomplished horseman, and the king and courtiers took great pride in his skill. By the time he was ten government officials were making plans for his marriage, and Velasquez and his assistants kept busy painting portraits to be sent to kings with eligible daughters. These were the days long before cameras were invented. He became engaged to an Austrian princess, but sadly, he died at the age of 16.

This painting was one of a series of equestrian portraits produced for a royal hunting lodge outside Madrid. We see the young prince solemnly imitating his father in pose and bearing, the royal baton in his hand. He sits on his fat pony with the assurance of a skilled horseman. We see a rather low horizon line with the boy's figure placed against the sky, giving the young prince a regal and elegant bearing. The distant landscape is pale in color. The colors are fresh, the cool blues and grays of the landscape setting off the warm vibrant tones of the boy and his pony. The painting was to be displayed high over a doorway; hence Velasquez painted the belly in a distorted manner which, when seen from below, would not seem so bloated. Notice how he drew our attention to the boy's face. Notice his fine clothing. Does the horse seem to be moving, or does his position seem frozen?

Diego Velasquez was already training to be an artist at the age of 11. Only seven years later, he had passed all the tests. By the time he was 19, he was employing two assistants to help him in his studio. When he was 24 years old, the Spanish King Philip IV invited him to Madrid. He became close friends with the King and had a home in the city and a studio in the palace with a special chair just for the King, who liked to watch the artist at work. He died at the age of 61, over 300 years ago.

"Frightened Horse"

(Duh lah KRWAH) (1798-1863)

Eugene Delacroix

SP1225

How would you describe this wonderful white horse? He has reared up on his two hind legs and seems to be pawing the air. His head is tossed back. His mane and tail show movement and action. Look at the expression in his eyes. Delacroix painted him in startling whites and placed him against an action-filled blue-black sky that seems to crackle with thunder and lightning. See the horse's shadow on the sand. Everything seems larger than life - the storm is darker, the horse whiter. How is this painting of a horse different from the Velasquez painting? How is it like it?

Delacroix was born near Paris in 1798 just after the Revolution. Early in his life, the excitement of the times became a part of his personality. He showed talent on the violin and was a friend of the composer, Chopin. When a disastrous lawsuit left his family poor, he chose painting for his career. Many of the young painter's friends were Romantics; that is, they made expressive drawings with rich, vibrant colors. He was the greatest of these early 19th century French painters. His artistic career revolted against the rigid drawing and dull colors of classic taste. His art shows vigor, vitality, and freedom. He believed the purpose of a painting was to electrify and excite. His ideas about color and his improvisational, impetuous technique helped shape the Romantic Movement. Indeed, the term was coined in 1824 by art critics who found his work too removed from the artistic ideas of the time, which glorified pure line and form. He used Romanticism's key themes - history, religion, faraway lands - and added heightened, dramatic emotion. His pictures show strong feelings, acts of heroism and heartrending tragedies. He was criticized during his lifetime and later applauded for his pioneering theories. Observing that color is not uniform but made up of many different tones, he paved the way for artists who came later - Cezanne, Monet and van Gogh, who adopted his multicolored palette. He was the Romantic era's answer to Leonardo, moving easily from painting to designing, drawing and writing.

In 1832 he went to Morocco and was the first artist to visit what was then a remote and wild country. There he filled notebooks with sketches and returned to France with gifts which included horses, a tiger, a lioness, ostriches, gazelles, and a pair of antelope. He was criticized throughout his career, yet he received government commissions to decorate important buildings. He won medals and the French Legion of Honor. He was very handsome, fond of fencing, horseback riding, and fashionable parties. He had bouts of fever as early as 1820 and died of a chest ailment in 1863, still sketching and making entries in his journal. A few years before his death, a friend described him as looking "as proud, as sharp ... as a tiger."

"Central Park"

(1859-1924)

Maurice Prendergast

SP824

Maurice Prendergast made this watercolor painting of New York's Central Park showing us a time before cars were invented. We see horses pulling carriages as people relax comfortably on the park benches in the foreground. Do you think it might be a pleasant Sunday afternoon? We see the horses and carriages moving horizontally across the picture. What else is presented in a strong horizontal direction? (The strips of wood that make up the benches) The tree trunks and the lamp post contrast with their vertical direction. Notice the things that Prendergast has repeated to

create patterns. First the wooden boards of the benches; then the seated figures, each wearing a different hat; then the reddish umbrellas, and the wheels of the carriage. What sounds would you probably hear if you were in this picture? Would it be fun to take a ride in a carriage? You still could do so if you went to New York's Central Park. He has used rather light muted colors throughout, and this gives us a feeling of harmony and unity. The colors are applied in typical Prendergast manner: little blots and small areas of color with many tiny places where the white paper shows through and around the colors. This gives the picture a clean sparkle.

Prendergast was born in Newfoundland, but his family moved to Massachusetts when he and his brother were still boys. He began his career as an apprentice to a maker of show cards, progressing from brush-washer to card-letterer. On the weekends, he would wander around Boston and paint. By the time he was 27, Prendergast had saved enough money to work his way to Paris on a cattle boat. He studied at two art schools there and settled in Boston after his return. His favorite medium was watercolor, but when he became too old to work outdoors, he turned to painting with oils. He was not recognized by the public until he won a major award one year before his death.

"The Apache"

(1861-1909)

Frederic Remington

SP854

We see an Apache Indian on his horse hiding behind a rock. The horse knows to stand very still because the Indian is aiming his rifle at something back in the distance. Can you see what it is? It is a covered wagon. Notice how the diagonal slope of the hills leads our eyes to the covered wagon. Notice how the ocotillo cactus points to the wagon also. The horse seems to blend in to the background due to its color and texture. The colors are warm and earthy in tone. The horse's ears are alert, and we see a bit of his shadow on the rock and ground. Notice the clothing the Indian is wearing, and the details of the saddle. What do you think will happen next?

Remington's studio in New York was filled with saddles, Indian dress, weapons and common implements of western life that frequently appeared in his work. He is famous for his paintings and sculptures of life in the Golden West. He was born in Canton, New York, as the Civil War was beginning. His family was moderately wealthy and in the publishing business. His father was in the 11th New York Cavalry and this spurred his interest in horses and the military. At age 15 he was sent to a military academy. A year later he entered Yale as one of the university's two art students. He liked sketching, and football, but yearned for adventure. When his father died, leaving him a modest inheritance, he quit school and headed west. He worked for fun as a cowboy and ranch cook and learned to ride like a Comanche. He took on a variety of jobs--shepherd, cook, cowpuncher, and stockman on ranches in Kansas and Montana.

He traveled with the US Army and also learned firsthand what it was like to live with an Indian tribe. He was at Wounded Knee shortly after the Indian uprising that ended in a massacre. Sometimes, by a campfire under the stars, he heard talk of the railroads that were creeping across the prairie. Their coming and the extensive use of barbed wire meant just one thing to Remington - that the "wild riders and vacant land were about to vanish forever ...I began to try to record some facts around me..."

After some years he returned East with sheaves of drawings that the illustrated magazines eagerly bought, and Remington settled in New York to make more from memory. He had a charming Eastern bride and a large studio crammed with the trappings of cowboys and Indians.

He often made train trips back to his beloved west. His illustrations, paintings, and sculptures of cowboys, Indians, and horses were impressive studies of the life, joys, and hardships of the Old West. In his portrayals, little sympathy is given the Indians; it is the cowboys who are seen to be virtuous and heroic. He produced many fine pieces of sculpture. He first modeled them in clay and then had them cast in bronze. He felt that oils and watercolors would fade and not last, but that his bronzes would endure. He had a supreme knowledge of horses and their movements based on countless hours of sketching and painting. So well versed was he on horses that he claimed to draw almost entirely from memory. His studio was built with barn doors so that he could paint horses inside it. His quick eye saw that a galloping horse could have all four hoofs off the ground at once. Most horsemen scoffed, but high-speed photography proved him right. He asked that his epitaph read: HE KNEW THE HORSE. Instead it reads only: REMINGTON. He had ridden every day that he could for all his adult life. Perhaps the saddest day of his life came when, weighing about 300 pounds, he found that horses could no longer carry him. He was sturdy and tall, round-faced and smooth shaven, a hard-riding man who died at 48 of appendicitis, having made 2,739 pictures (including illustrations for 142 books, of which eight were his own) and 25 bronze sculptures.

"The Generals"

Marisol

(Mare uh sole (1930-)

AE104

This abstract sculpture is 87" x 76" x 28 1/2" in size. We see two men on one horse. You can see the grain of the wood except where the artist added paint. It is witty, giving us a social and personal comment about the people she chose for her portraits. General George Washington and General Simon Bolivar (See MOAN BOWL ee vahr) share much in common. Washington was the Commander in Chief of the United States in the American Revolution and is called the "Father of His Country." Bolivar was a Venezuelan general and revolutionist who helped free South America from Spain and is called "the Liberator." Both military heroes lived in the 18th century, and both were instrumental in the revolutions that freed their countries. Both also represent nations to which the artist Marisol has personal connections.

She was born to affluent Venezuelan parents and grew up there, but she has also lived, studied and worked in the US. So the one horse may represent the similarities of the generals and it may also represent the national and cultural allegiances of the artist. Only the painted suggestion of a uniform tells us about the particular army and historical period during which the generals lived. The bodies of the Generals are like two rectangular boxes. Notice the simple epaulets showing the men's rank on the shoulders. The Generals' hats are like upside-down salad bowls, although each is turned in a different direction. The generals' heads are treated slightly differently: General Bolivar (seated in front) shows a front view and a profile painted on the cube, while General Washington has an amusing wooden nose attached to the front. Two boots are painted on the side of the barrel-horse body. Look for the men's legs. Look at the uniforms painted on the fronts of the bodies. Hands with no arms and a horse with no face requires the viewer to complete the sculpture mentally. The Generals'

plaster cast hands were made by a different method than was used in the construction of the rest of the sculpture, yet they seem quite right as they rest on the horse's back. This more realistic representation of the hands is in sharp and startling contrast to the rest of the sculpture, which is quite abstract. Their presence emphasizes that the sculpture is not just a large toy with no meaning. Marisol has very skillfully selected just the right parts and pieces to express her message. The horse has a plank neck, tail, and head. Notice the painted design on the horse's mane. See the red V painted on the front of the horse. The horse's legs are boards with wheels - much like the lower part of a table.

The artist Marisol once stated: "It is magic when I find things to use in my sculptures. I look down at an old piece of wood and see a work by Leonardo. And when I sand it, the grain of the wood becomes a face." She dropped her last name in the 1950s in order to "stand out from the crowd." She has traveled and lived in many parts of the world. As a teenager, she disapproved of her parents' "wild parties," refused to talk because she "didn't want to sound the way other people did," and had visions of becoming a saint. This phase passed in a few years, but she remained a passionate, interesting, and unpredictable person. She decided at the age of 16 to become an artist, a decision supported by her father who sent her to study art in Los Angeles. She later studied in Paris, but didn't want to paint in the way she was being taught. She later studied at the Art Students League in New York, but she rejected the then current abstract expressionism, stating that everything was "so serious." So she did something funny, putting together strange objects to make herself happier. She started making sculpture in 1953. Her interest in folk art, South American pottery, pre-Columbian artifacts, and the sculpture of William King combined to direct her efforts toward making the unique sculpture that is hers alone. She achieved immediate fame, which caused her enough discomfort to make her flee to Italy for a year to rid herself of her self-doubts. When she returned to NY in 1960, she began creating some of her best work. "The Generals" was produced in the four years after her return from Rome. She is noted for being beautiful and for her silence, speaking only rarely. She was once invited to sit on a panel with four male artists and appeared wearing a white Japanese-style mask. When the audience insisted that she take off her mask, she did so to reveal an identical copy of the mask painted on her face. Her name is derived from the Spanish words for sea and sun, *mer y sol*.

"Horse-Washing Waterfall"

Katsushika Hokusai

(Kat su SHEE kah Ho Kah Sigh) (1760-1849)

(AIP 6.11)

How would you like to wash your dog or horse in a waterfall like these two men are doing? Let your eye begin in the upper left hand corner and curve downward in a flowing direction, following the white and blue colors of the river and waterfall. Stop for a moment and look at the horse, his head turned to the right, and the two men washing him; Then let your eye drop over the lower waterfall to the left hand corner. The horse and the banks of the river are the same color. This wood engraving, done with a chisel, by the Japanese artist, Hokusai, is part of a series of eight, entitled *Going the Round of the Waterfalls of the Country*. Making a wood engraving involves engraving a wood block for each color, and there are five colors used here: two different blues, rust, and dark brown. Once engraved, the block is covered with one color of ink and printed on several sheets of paper. Then the second block is engraved and covered with ink of a second color and superimposed on the first print. The process is repeated for every color used.

Hokusai was born in Edo, now Tokyo. When he was young, he worked as a clerk in a large bookstore and was fired after a few months for spending too much time reading. He found a job in an engraver's studio, and at age 15 engraved a series of illustrations for a novel. When he was 18 he decided to become a painter and joined the studio of a famous artist Shunsho. Here he learned the basics of the Ukiyo-e technique (mirror of the floating world). These prints were engraved and designed mainly for the Japanese merchant class who lived in Osaka and Edo. Although the Ukiyo-e engravings traditionally depicted women and actors, Hokusai was the first artist to draw local landscapes. He loved ordinary people and shared their beliefs, pleasures and customs. He completed more than 30,000 drawings and paintings which he signed with as many as sixty different pseudonyms.

He wasn't very famous during his lifetime, but his works were snapped up later by the Dutch collectors traveling through Edo. When these works became known in Paris at the end of the 19th century, they caused a revolution in art with Monet, van Gogh, Cassatt, and Degas among artists who were attracted to the flat color areas and lack of shading. Hokusai's reputation was ruined by his grandson's criminal activities. He had to leave Edo and change his name. He died in 1849 in lodgings he shared with his daughter, after moving 96 times.