

The equine art of Manuela Stefan, the photographer behind

Graceful Horses



EE: You live in Toronto, Canada...a big city. Yet, your equine imagery comes from so many places around the world. Where do you look for horses?

MS: I have traveled all over to find horses: France, Romania, Western US, Mexico, Jamaica and of course, Canada. Each story has its own significance, enhancing my reality and pushing my creativity.

EE: How do you choose your destinations? Any favorite places?

MS: I just go with what excites my spirit and usually things flow from there.

Three years ago I had a dream about a white horse. I woke up and felt like I had to find him. This turned into an obsessive vision of a white herd. One thing led to another and I read a story about the magical horses of Camargue, France. I knew right then and there that I had to go. Three months later, there I was! It happened fast and I had no doubts.

I will always be particularly fond of this unique experience. I owe it to the Camargue horses for having helped me create my first significant body of work.

"White, Power and Grace" is an almost surreal image collection I plan to keep on taking around the world as it speaks of emotion, power, grace and mystical beauty.


My home country, Romania, is also a very special place for me. Whenever I visit my family, I love traveling to the Northern highlands, with their magnificent mountain horses and soulful people. A cradle of pure magic where my experiences seem to be enhanced by an almost supernatural component.

EE: Many times you seem to get quite close to running horses. Isn't that dangerous?

MS: While in Camargue France, I was standing at the tip of a small peninsula. The horses started to run towards me. I could hear the sound of their hooves and almost feel the ground vibrating in synch with their tremendous energy. I wondered, for a second...

I looked at the French guide accompanying me and asked whether I was going to be OK standing right in the horses' way... he told me not to worry, they would split around us. I simply trusted him...and them. They rushed and did exactly that, carefully avoiding us. They came really close, so I got splashed with mud from head to toe. I returned to the hotel and the receptionist asked me: "what happened to you?"

EE: You have been photographing people professionally for 10 years. How did the horses come into your life?



Emotion, Power, Grace and Mystical Beauty

MS: My dad was born in a small Romanian mountain village. He grew up around horses, riding bareback through forests and creeks. I was privileged to spend my childhood summers in this magical place, surrounded by nature and animals. I watched calves and foals being born, making their fragile way into the world. I recall an overwhelming feeling of magic as I was connecting with something ever so gentle yet more powerful than I could comprehend. The experience remained engraved in my soul, despite the disconnect from this miraculous world once my grandparents had passed.

Many years later I came to Canada. I switched careers and started on my photographic path, which led to rediscovering the horses through a creative farm project outside of Toronto. All those wonderful childhood feelings came back and simply inundated my heart, leaving me in a state of deep joy and peace. I just knew 'this was it'.

My creative work is fueled by a deep desire to reveal these animals' majestic beauty. In a way, it is also a tribute to my ancestors whose physical and spiritual connection with their horses runs in my blood.

EE: What are your plans for the future?

MS: I want to continue on with my travel projects, tell stories and make them available through my blog and of course, all other blogs and publications sharing them.

I will keep on creating equine art which is ultimately my personal homage to these gracious beings and what they represent.

Continued...



I am currently volunteering with a couple of rescues and help with their adoptions by photographing horses looking for loving homes. The list of such places is growing and I aim to take this work internationally.

EE: Aside from gallery exhibitions and art shows, where can our readers find your work?

MS: I invite them to visit the 'Graceful Horses' online store where prints can be purchased, with percentages of the art sales going towards supporting horse rescues.



Manuela Stefan's work has been seen in Elite Equestrian, Performance Horse Digest, The Rider, Equitrekking, Top50 Ranches, Equine VIP.

She has exhibited her large format equine images in art shows and galleries in Canada and US.

Manuela is available for private and commercial equine commissions internationally.

*Visit her website, read her travel blog and shop for art at:
www.gracefulhorses.com*

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