



# Artistic Vision Fire

■ by **Brandon Wiggins**

*art & photography by Julie Bender*

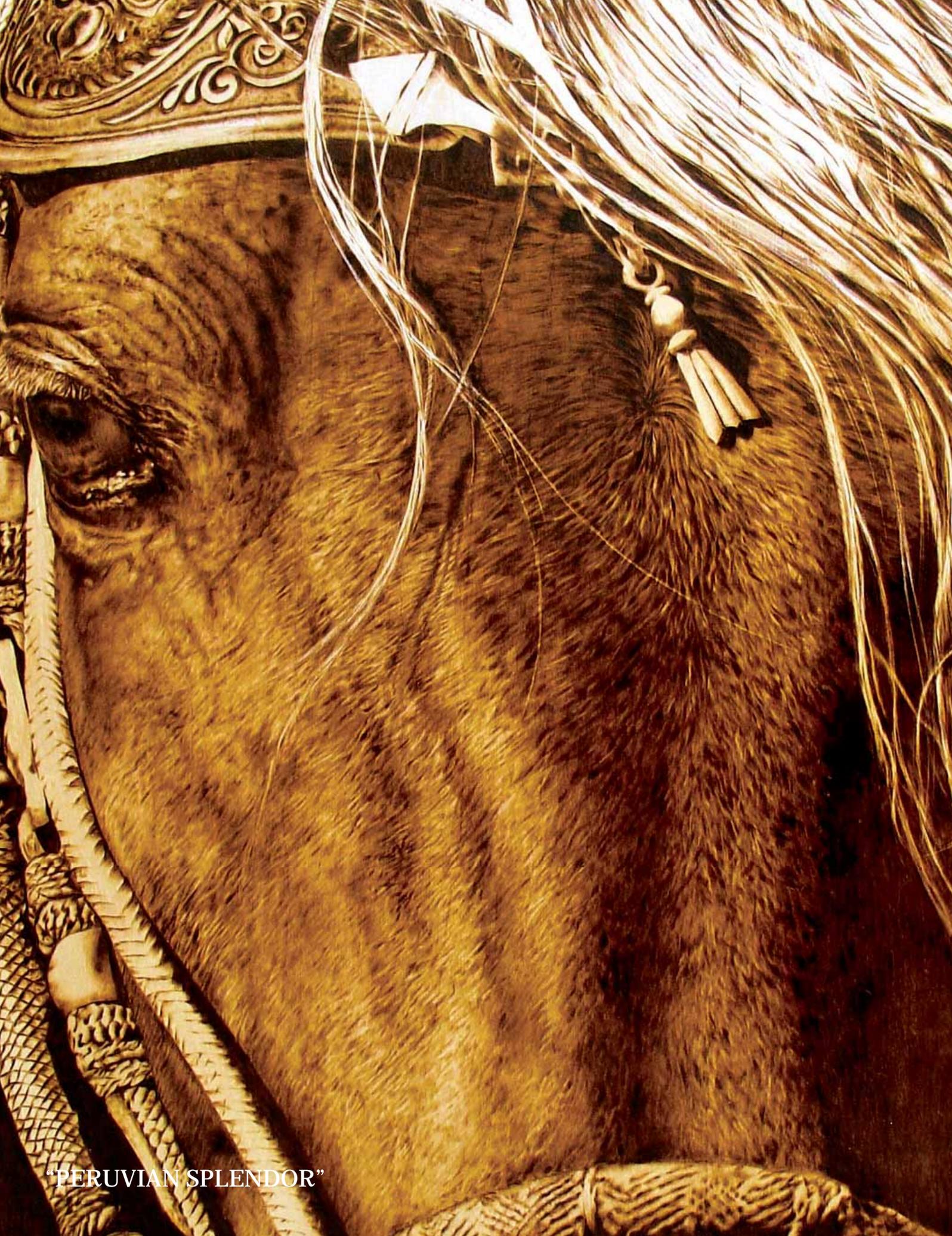
Many art forms represent life. Some merely imitate its imagery. Others blend the significance of medium and material with composition and blur the divide between subject and viewer. Modern perspectives on ancient methods intensify the magnificence of equine subjects in Julie Bender's exquisite pyrographic artwork.

“FLIRT”

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by



[juliebender.com](http://juliebender.com)



“PERUVIAN SPLENDOR”



## Artistic Vision by Fire

Julie Bender's interest in pyrography began as an experimental art project, piquing her interest to explore the medium further. Although experienced in other more traditional art forms, Julie considers pyrography her calling and continues to explore its expressive boundaries in her work.

Perhaps not typically considered a medium of fine art, the beautiful works created in Julie's studio with meticulously detailed wood burning techniques are generous evidence to the contrary. Creating pieces that contend with the more conventional paintings and sculptures that dominate the fine art industry is just one of the challenges that motivate Julie to push the limitations of her work and test herself as an artist. It is no surprise that she is recognized not only for the exceptional quality of her work, but her ability to join the craft of pyrography with a sensitive connection to her subjects.

Julie's pyrographic illustrations exhibit an often sought but rarely realized quality in art: imagery that connects subject and viewer. A balance of detail and simplicity tease the eye with elements of both precision and suggestion. Many pieces border on photorealism, but are often seemingly defined more by what is omitted than what is included. Color is used sparingly or not at all as subtleties of composition and tone bring subjects to life. Some may initially consider pyrography a limiting medium, however with simplicity comes opportunity. Heightened artistic challenge draws upon creativity and ingenuity to articulate subjects with a distinctive voice.

"By its very nature, pyrography offers results that other mediums do not. Detail is differentiated solely with textures, tones and value, rather than color. Brushes and canvas are not used, but rather a tiny heated metal tool tip that glides across the wood surface to create meticulous renderings. This medium sets itself apart from others such as painting and pastels, and aligns itself more with mediums that yield the same minute level of monotone detail, such

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as scratchboard or pencil. In my case, a rich sepia tone is accomplished by painting with heat.”

Julie began exploring pyrography by creating commissioned pet portraiture, eventually sharing additional works at horse shows and expanding her commissioned work particularly with equine subjects. Her subject matter now includes a wide variety of wildlife, offering further challenge. As a more organic craft however, some challenges of pyrography are not creative but logistical. “My greatest challenge is finding enough hours in my day in which to burn. Other than that, finding high quality wood can sometimes test me.”

Pyrography requires a certain attention to the technical elements of the process, not the least of which is wood quality. Hardwoods are required to hold fine detail, in light tones and subtle grain structures. She primarily burns on maple veneer or burl. “Each offers unique attributes and I really

enjoy the results I get from both. Sanding the wood to a glass-smooth finish is imperative before burning begins.” Some pieces integrate the qualities of the wood surface more than others. The burl edge of an interesting slice of wood serves as a natural frame for one piece, while for Peruvian Splendor, a large piece of which Julie is particularly proud, the wood surface concedes itself to the fine detail and rich tones of the composition.

Like many of Julie's larger and more detailed pieces, Peruvian Splendor required several months to complete. It won the Leonard J. Meiselman Memorial Award for Realistic Painting Executed in an Academic Manner with the American Academy of Equine Artists 2009 annual exhibition. “Proud Prize is another favorite as I love the energy and enthusiasm of the retrieving Labrador. Others are favorites for sentimental reasons, including Somewhere in the Distance, Arabian Prince, and much of my wildlife collection.”

Undoubtedly Julie's art and passion for wildlife complement one another. The gentle tone of the imagery in Julie's artwork highlights the unspoken dignity of nature, and clients enjoy the knowledge that a portion of sales proceeds are donated to conservation organizations. She is a member of the Society of Animal Artists and Artists for Conservation which raise money and awareness for endangered animal causes around the globe.

With a number of prior exhibitions and surely more to come, Julie enjoys the opportunity to share her gift with the public. “I enjoy seeing my work displayed where fine art is taken seriously, enjoyed and exposed through major art show channels. I am also always thrilled when my art is juried into prominent international exhibitions where competition is high and the artists competing are the best in the world. Of course I also love my working relationship with the few hand-selected galleries that represent me. Currently, I am thrilled to be included in a four-person exhibition at the Virginia Museum of Natural History.”

As a working artist, implementing commissioned pieces is a challenge Julie en-

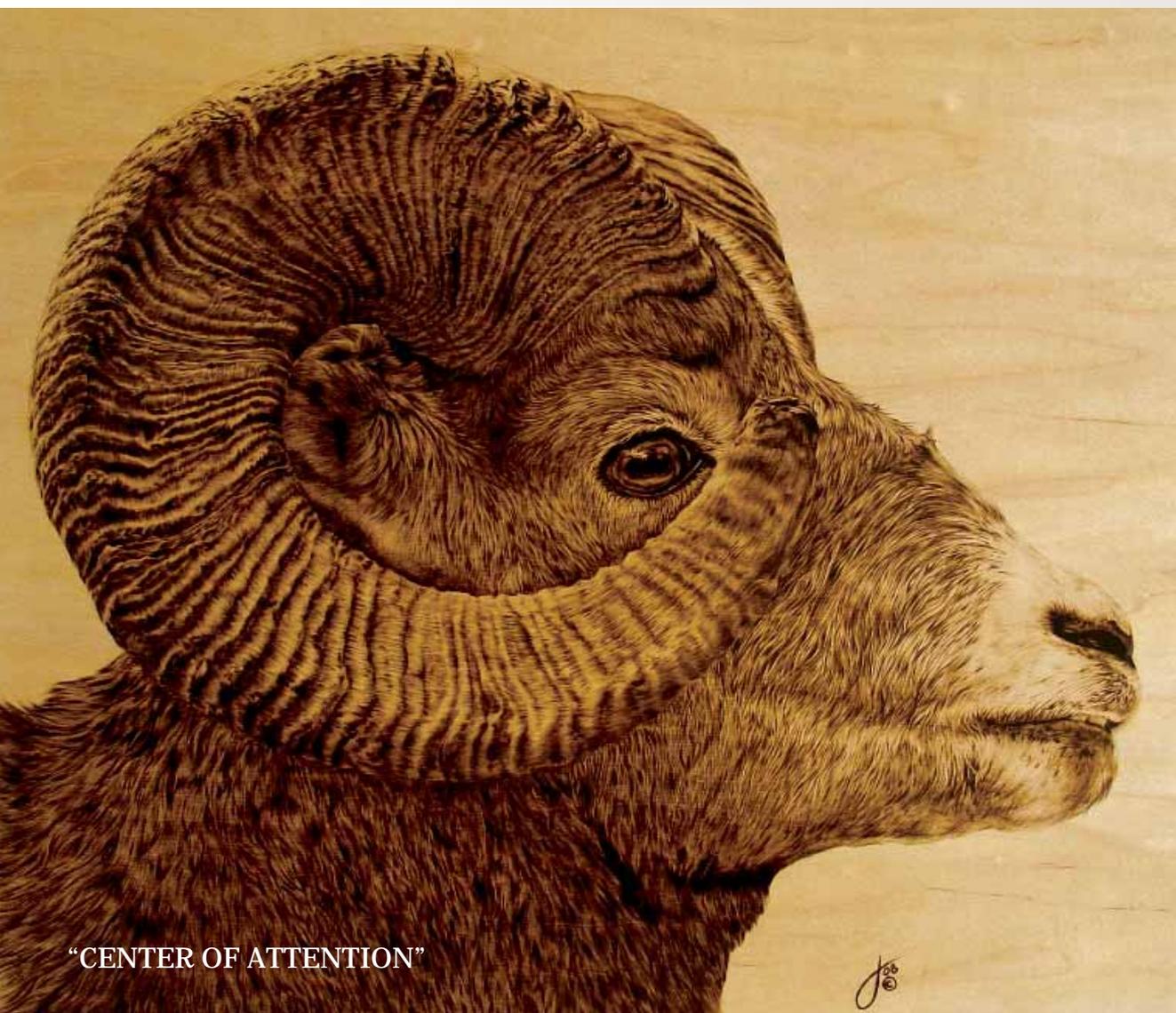


Detailed illustrations  
through the ancient art of  
*pyrography*

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joys. Applying the unique character of pyrography and her artistic vision to beloved subjects, clients can be sure to expect a very special finished product. Julie consults with new clients to develop striking art pieces that will quickly become collection favorites.

Julie Bender not only applies her sensitive eye to a unique artistic technique, but continues to explore the boundaries of the medium and deepen her imaginative talent. She reveals a passion for her work and the dignity of her subjects through deliberate and meticulously crafted pieces, truly drawing with fire. □



“CENTER OF ATTENTION”



“SOMEWHERE  
IN THE DISTANCE”



The work of award-winning artist Julie Bender has been exhibited in galleries and museums including the Neville Public Museum in Green Bay, Wisconsin, the Breckenridge Fine Arts Center in Breckenridge, Texas and the International Museum of the Horse in Lexington, Kentucky. Her unique creations enhance private collections as well, including that of Jack Hanna, Director Emeritus of the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium.