



“Artist Interventions” 2010–2011
(In The Garden Of Ibn Hazm)
Photographed photographs
of paintings printed on canvas, mural size

The Horse Series

FRED VERBEEK

painting - drawing

■ by *Eva Maria Verbeek**

*The Arabian Horse:
Fragments of Light,
Movement and
Gesture*

Fred Verbeek was 26 when he moved together with his wife from The Netherlands to an old farm house in Belgium. The young couple wanted to escape the oppressing Dutch pillar system and confined family life. After graduating from the Rietveld Academy, a famous art academy in Amsterdam, Fred Verbeek and his fiancée got married and left the Netherlands. In Belgium Verbeek started to work as a self-employed artist while his wife worked at a riding school nearby. It was in Belgium, where Fred Verbeek for the first time saw an Arabian horse, a white stallion called Lurex.

Impressed by the beauty and strength of the Arabian horse, Verbeek started classical dressage and bought an English thoroughbred sired by a famous Arabian Stallion, Non Noble. The horse was bred by De Bousac in Paris, who was a successful and famous racehorse breeder. The horse was not good enough for the international racetrack and therefore they sold him. Verbeek had to train the horse for two years to control the strong racetrack spirit. Verbeek felt connected with the strong and dominant Arabian spirit of the horse. For Verbeek it felt as if the artist's and the horse's spirit merged and inspired one and another. Somehow the strong, dominant Arabian spirit of the horse seemed to match with Verbeek's own spirit, forming one coherent entity. And so it did. In 1977 Verbeek had his first solo exhibition in Opoeteren (Belgium) with his Equestrian portraits of Hildegart Jansen. His work was well received, as he sold every piece during the opening of the exhibition.

Mainly for the education of their oldest daughter Isabelle, they returned to The Netherlands in the early eighties. The family bought a country house somewhere in the middle of The Netherlands, near the area where Verbeek and his wife met during their holidays when they were teenagers. The woods and beautiful nature made them want to start a life there. With their horses, goats, cats, dogs and many other animals, Verbeek and his wife were able to create a peaceful and warm environment for their family. In



Fred and Isabella, 1979

order to have more income, Verbeek also committed himself to do some minor graphic work. Although they had a good life and Verbeek had enough work, he was not very pleased with the Dutch art mentality. Verbeek's interest in the Arabian culture grew, as he deepened his knowledge of the Arabian horse and its roots. Consequently he started to process fragments of Arabian poetry in some of his work. But the Netherlands did not seem to be the place suited for this kind of art and he often dreamt of moving to a more inspiring area, where his art would complement the culture and would be understood in its context. But the time did not seem right for such a radical change of life, because in the mean time his family was growing and his two daughters were still young.

However, during the nineties, his work was being exposed in London and Verbeek started to get well-known by several important people from the Arabian continent. At this crucial moment in 1994, he decided together with his family to move to Andalusia, the southern part of Spain which had an ancient rooted culture with a strong Arabian inheritance.

The historical Arabian atmosphere inspired Verbeek. His wife and daughters were happy, and the blend of Mediterranean and Arabian culture seemed to suit their life style better than the cooler Dutch attitude. Andalusia was the place where Verbeek felt at home, both as an artist and a father as well as husband. Everything seemed in its place and in 1996 Verbeek had his work exhibited in his new home country.

Verbeek impressed the Andalusian public with his series *In Memoria* and *La Resurrection*, which were both inspired by the famous Spanish *rejoneador* (a bull fighter riding on the back of a horse) Gines Cartajena who had died in car crash one year earlier. Especially Verbeek's extraordinary layer-on-layer painting technique using transparent colours, often referred as 'clear as water', made a strong impression on the public.

After less than two years of happiness in Spain, Verbeek health started to go down. Unknown with the cause of the sudden illness, the family decided once again to go back to The Netherlands. The drama of



“In The Garden Of Ibn Hazm”

Nr.2, 2007-2008

egg tempera on paper

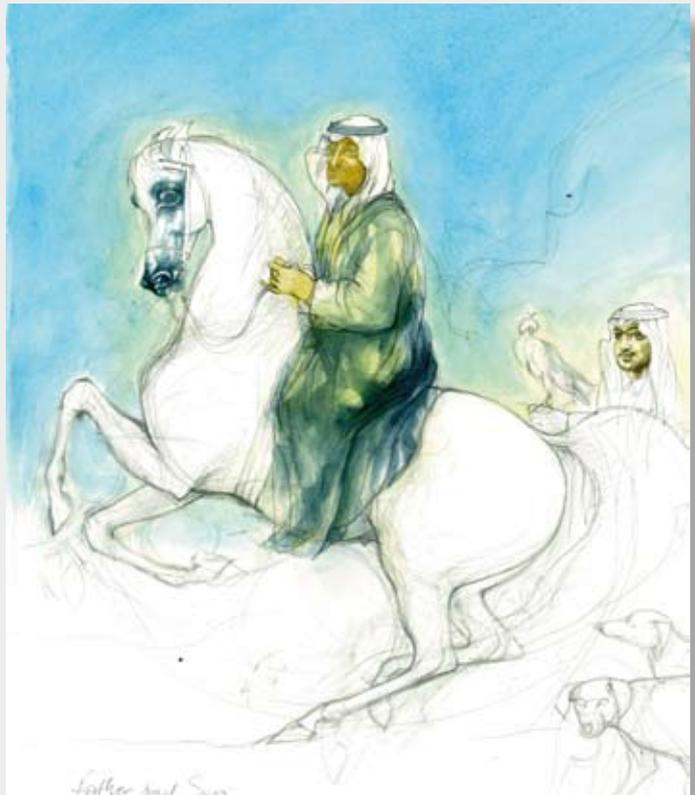
In the artist's collection

**Sketch/Composition Study
for “Father and Son”**

Commission

size 142 x 120 cm.

Private collection Djedda
KSA





“Dance Of The Gods”

Nr.2, 2002

egg tempera on paper

Mohammed Al Marzouk collection, Kuwait



“Dance Of The Gods”

Nr.1, 2002

egg tempera on paper

Mohammed Al Marzouk collection, Kuwait



leaving his second great love Andalusia, together with his poor health, made Verbeek withdraw from social life. He spent most of his time alone in his studio, drawing, and painting. In that period Verbeek created *Idea of the Philosopher* and *The Dance Of The Gods*, two series in which his actual complex topics inspired by some great philosophers found a basis.

The first, *Idea of the Philosopher*, was inspired by Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*. The second, *The Dance of the Gods*, was a series of both drawings and paintings to which Verbeek nowadays still keeps adding new work. This series includes a deep tension in social religious tradition, because the composition and expressiveness were based on religious paintings of Italian Renaissance artists. This assumption together with the use of the word 'gods', can clash with the different culture backgrounds of the public. Firstly, already by using the word 'god' the title became controversial on religious level. This is because it touches the sensitive premise whether or not an image can possess or represent some element of religious

worship. Secondly, the use of the plural form of the word 'god' is a sensitivity on itself. In a contemporary world where different religious beliefs with different god or gods of worship are coming together, such an aspect can shift metaphorical grounds.

But Verbeek's art keeps being bounded to the walls of his studio. By the end of 2003 Verbeek's health weakened even more, which made it impossible for him to paint. He had to spend several times in hospital because of heart - and thyroid failure, of which the last one almost got him blind. In the meanwhile, though he was unable to work, he gained a lot of publicity through his website. He drew the attention of Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bin Al Thani, the owner of the Al Rayyan Farm in Qatar which breeds straight Egyptian Arabian horses. After a couple of years when Verbeek had most of his sight back and was able to work again, the Sheikh invited Verbeek to exhibit his work at the International Arabian Horse Show 2008 in Qatar.

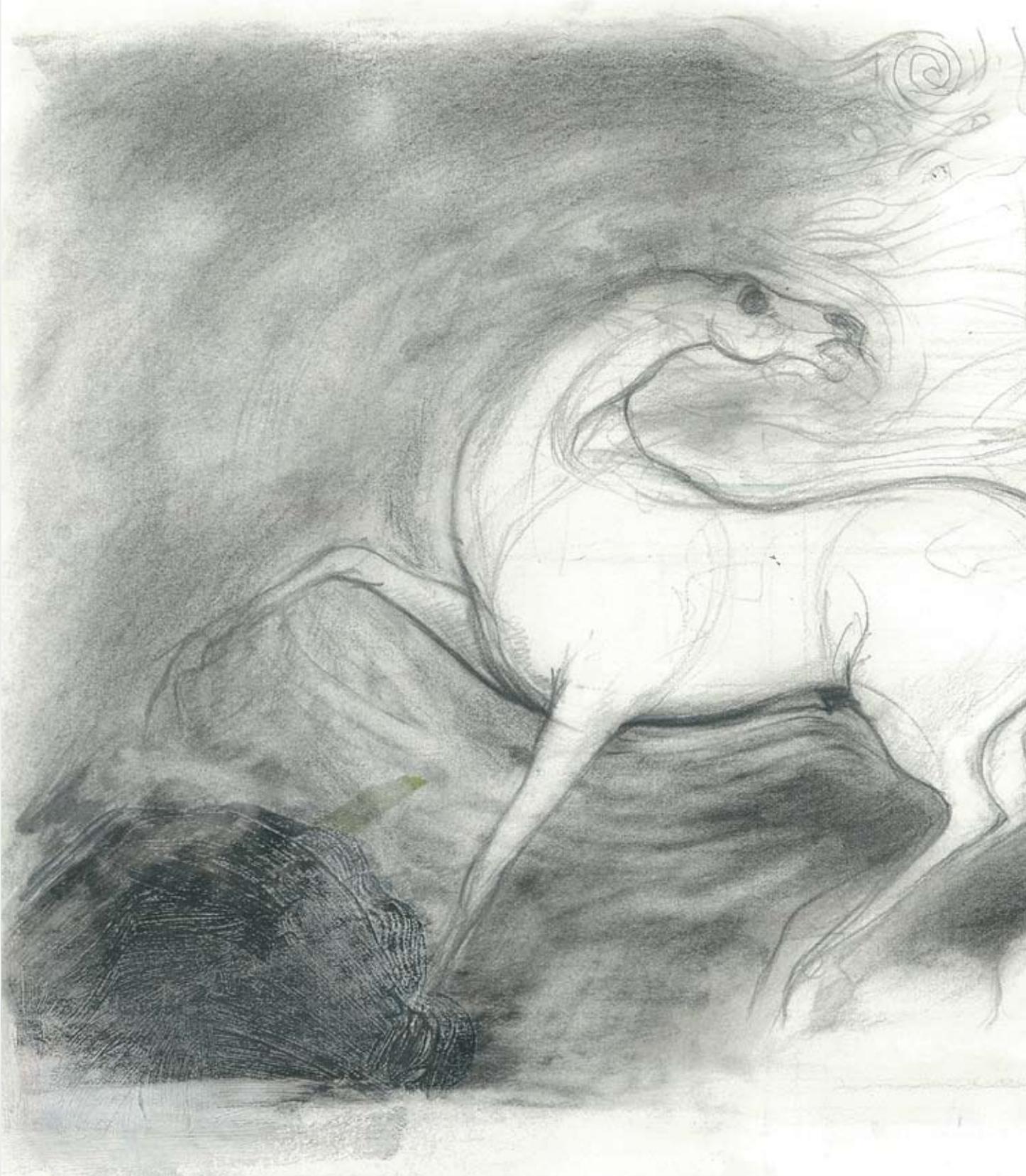
In Qatar, Verbeek for the first time met the



“Dance Of The Gods” (Study)
egg tempera on paper
Private collection Wichita,
KS, U.S.A.

“Head / composition”
2011
graphit and charcoal on paper

“Dance Of The Gods” (Study)
2011
graphit and charcoal on paper





world to which his art is meant for. This world centred around the Arabian horse is what suits the artist and its art best. The public at the Horse Show was thrilled by Verbeek's art, and his presence did not go unnoticed. A popular Arabian television channel broadcasted an interview with Verbeek and the Dutch artist was seen as a valuable promise in the Arabian continent. His series *The Dance of the Gods* and *Idea of a Philosopher* were great success.

His visit to the Middle East was the start on which Verbeek has been working on from the start of his career. Currently, Verbeek is highly respected as an independent artist in the Middle East and the amount of collectors of his art in the Arabian world increases. In the upcoming years the Dutch artist is planning to have more exhibitions in and around the Arabian continent. In the meantime he will keep on working on new and existing series.

Nowadays, Verbeek's art is even more than before inspired by the Arabian culture, only now it has a more post modern approach. In his new series, Verbeek wants to disseminate the cultural heritage of the representation of the Arabian horse in general. He wants to present the horse as a cultural phenomenon. Like a true contemporary post modern artist, Verbeek does this by including the historical experience of the horse as an object in art and mythology. Two of Verbeek's more recent Horse Series are titled "Unexpected Encounter in Incomplete Landscape" and "In The Garden of Ibn Hazm". This last one has, ofcourse, a very poetical starting point, in addition to "Unexpected Encounter", which is more mundane.

For enquiries about purchasing works of his new Horse Series "The Dance Of The Gods", please contact Fred Verbeek or Desert Heritage Magazine.

Contact: email: post@fredverbeek.com
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* Eva Maria is a freelance writer and the youngest daughter of Fred Verbeek. She lives in Singapore with her husband, an equine veterinarian.

"Dance Of The Gods"

2011

graphit and charcoal on paper