



Ruth Buchanan

THE ART OF LIGHT AND ATMOSPHERE

■ by Judith Wich-Wenning

The British artist Ruth Buchanan fascinates with her eye-catching artwork. She loves to immortalise Arabian horses in her work and has a fast-growing group of admirers. Besides studies of architecture and human figurative work, her main emphasis is equestrian art.

When asked about her personal background, Ruth Buchanan explains: "I was born in London, but both sides of my family came from Yorkshire (my father's side is Scottish if you go back a few generations). Due to my father's work we relocated to Northamptonshire in the Midlands when I was still a baby. I was brought up in a village just outside of Northampton, and I attended Northampton High School on a merit scholarship."

"I was the typical 'pony-mad kid", Ruth Buchanan smiles. "My family were not involved with horses, or even very interested in art, but from my earliest memories I took every opportunity to ride, or just be around horses. When I could not be around them, I drew them, read about them or dreamed of them." During her youth, her spare time was spent as a competition groom as well as competing in eventing and dressage herself.

Regarding her art education, Ruth Buchanan relates: "I was very lucky to receive an excellent grounding in art education at school, where the art master was noted artist, Christopher Fiddes. Although accepted to read English and Law at University, I went on to complete a post A-level



Art Foundation course at the well-respected Nene College in Northampton. I then moved to Leeds, West Yorkshire, to undertake a degree in Graphic Design & Illustration where I successfully graduated with a First for my dissertation. At university I was mainly concerned with figurative painting in oils. My subsequent career in Graphic Design and Illustration saw me switching to watercolour, in which I am self-taught, to paint small still lifes for magazines, and historical architecture for corporate brochures for banks and other financial institutions. I returned to painting horses after being caught up in the Los Angeles earthquake in 1994, and become a full-time equine, figurative and sporting artist in 2001. In drawing and painting horses I am definitely self-taught, and my personal study in equine anatomy,

biomechanics and movement, as well as painting techniques in all mediums, is an on-going, lifelong commitment."

Ruth Buchanan is highly fascinated by Arabian horses: "Their beauty, strength, grace, especially their intelligence, but also their adaptability and versatility as they excel in so many disciplines impress me so much", she explains enthusiastically.

Asked about her favourite Arabian horse, Ruth Buchanan ponders: "I do not really have one. I try to look for what is unique in each horse. Probably the horse I am looking at and painting at the time is my favourite! Though some horses do have an extra presence that catches something within me."







Ruth Buchanan continues: "Art is a huge part of my life. Not just my career, but also my passion. My other great passion is horses – for their beauty, grace, strength, intelligence and that quality that has made them a part of the development, society, culture and family of humans throughout history. I find it intriguing that they communicate and interact with us so freely. In many ways the Arabian horse is the founder and the epitome of this. It is a privilege to be able to depict them in my paintings."

Asked how she had become interested in Arabian horses, Ruth Buchanan remembers: "My first meeting with an Arabian horse was with a colt owned by a local ex-jockey for whom I rode as a young teenager. As well as competing alongside

his son on their other ponies, I showed the Arabian colt in-hand. Later, I rode and schooled several Arabian horses and found an affinity with them. I respected their spirit and intelligence, and liked that I had to establish a connection with them. Once that trust was there, I found that they would try their hardest for me, whatever the discipline."

When the conversation turned to Arabian horse stud farms and shows, Ruth Buchanan has visited so far, she quickly remarks: "I would always like to visit more, but of those that I have been lucky enough to visit so far, Albidayer Stud in Sharjah, UAE has to be a favourite. The staff there were so welcoming and so proud to share their passion for their beautiful horses and stables with me. My brother has lived



and worked in the Middle East for over thirty years and in Dubai for more than twenty-five of those. The Dubai International Arabian Horse Show has to be my favourite show as I can combine my love of beautiful horses and my passion for my work with seeing my family.”

Although Ruth works in a range of media, she is best known as a watercolourist. For five consecutive years she has been selected to represent England at ‘Fabriano in Aquarello’, a worldwide watercolour exposition in the famous paper-making town in Italy.

Ruth Buchanan has several important sources regarding the inspiration for her work: “I take a lot of inspiration from the

horses that I see and from the relationships I witness between the horses, their owners and handlers. I am often asked why I paint horses. My answer is that I can paint many other beautiful things, for example flowers, but I could not see myself painting flowers every day for the rest of my life. In seeing, studying, drawing and painting horses, I can always find that essence that compels me to paint.”

Then she continues: “I admire many painters throughout history and some who are still painting now. My main mentors though, whether through meeting and learning from them in person or from studying their work in books and art galleries, tend not to be equestrian artists, though some of them have painted horses. To list my influences, I



would need a much larger sheet of paper, but key among them are Edgar Degas, Marc Chagall, Franz Marc, Käthe Kollwitz, John Singer Sargent and Horst Janssen. I suppose my favourite 'horse artists' would be Rosa Bonheure, Lucy Kemp Welch and Frederic Remington as they all were able to capture the energy, power and movement, as well as the beauty, of horses.

Among current painters, I have learned and appreciated much by looking at the wonderful paintings of Watercolour Masters: Joseph Zbukvic; Liu Yi and Chien Chung Wei. Attending a colour workshop with artist Stephen Quiller was also a highlight for me, as much for learning what I already did naturally as for the huge amount I learned about colour theory."





Ruth Buchanan's artwork are regularly shown at important exhibitions in Great Britain and abroad. She holds highly acclaimed workshops. In demand as an approachable and inspirational mentor, Ruth has led workshops in drawing and in painting in watercolour internationally, and has been invited to lead a workshop in painting horses from life for the Society of Equestrian Artists in the Summer of 2019. She also regularly writes articles for art magazines

in the UK and the USA. Ruth was promoted to Signature Member of the Institute of Equine Artists (USA) in 2015, elected a Full Member of the Society of Equestrian Artists in 2016 and is a member of the Association of Animals Artists and The International Watercolour Society (England). She has won numerous national and international awards for her art as for example the well-known "Horse & Hound Magazine Award" in 2016.



Ruth Buchanan ponders: "I suppose my dreams are to keep drawing and painting, to keep learning, exploring and developing my art, to keep communicating my love of horses and to find the right home for each painting."

Asked about her plans for the future, Ruth Buchanan relates: "Being represented by Charlotte Bowskill of Arabian Fine Art has allowed me the time to focus more

on my painting, so that relationship is an important part of my future. I would like to travel some more to see horses in other countries and always to keep learning. I hope to have another exhibition outside the UK, and would love to have more work in public collections or museums. Always, I hope to see and be inspired by a certain quality in a horse that captures my eye and my imagination." □