



FROM A FAMILY OF ARTISTS

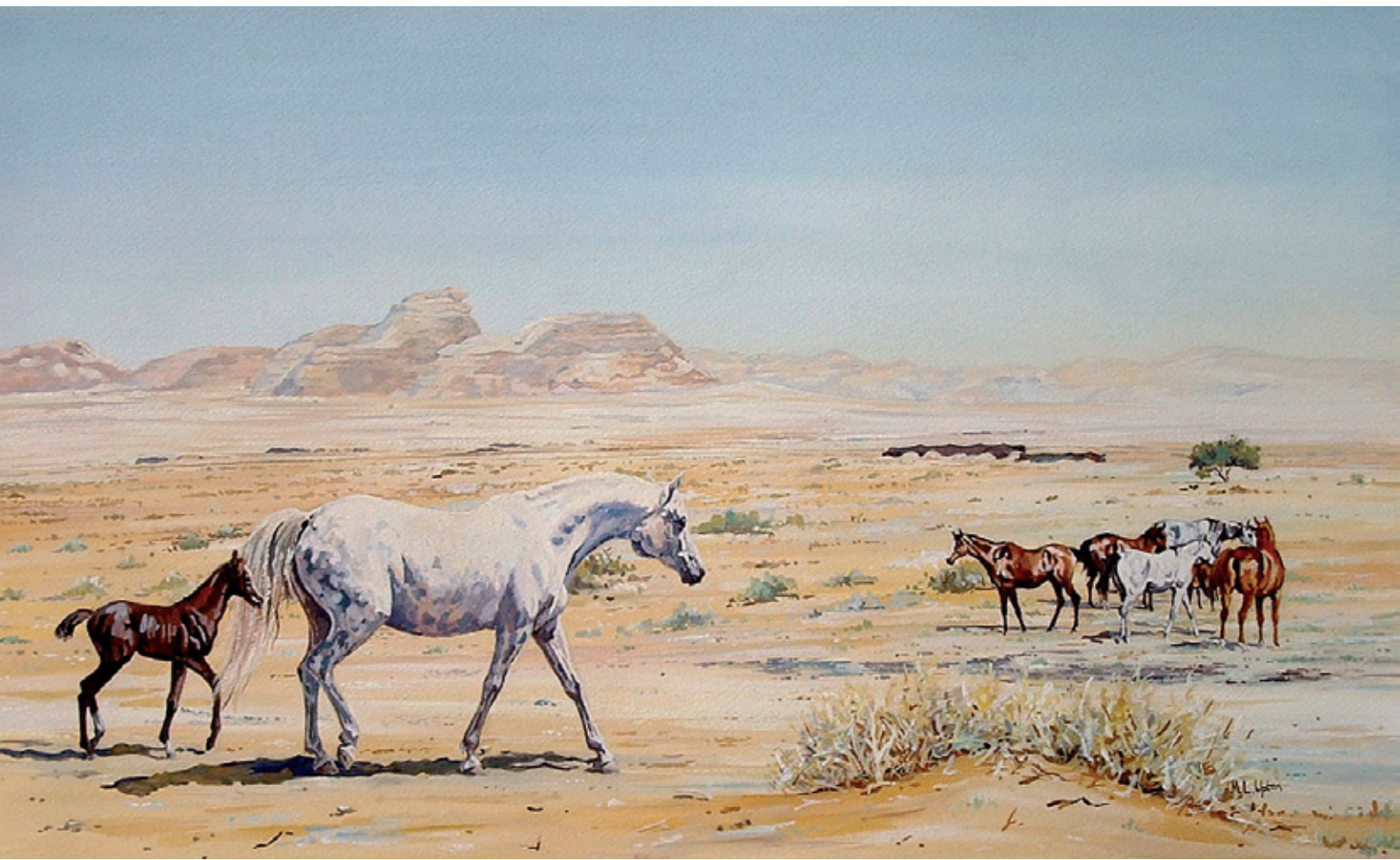
Mark Upton

text by: Judith Wich-Wenning





Art and the magic of the desert are Mark Upton's deep passions. This comes as no surprise when looking at his family. Mark's father Roger Upton for example was a highly acclaimed falconer and wildlife artist, while his uncle Peter Upon is a widely respected Arabian horse artist and Connoisseur. Mark's grandmother was also an artist and fashion designer. Mark Upton's great uncle William Cain was famous as the "Etcher of the East", as he was a renowned drypoint engraver in the early 20th century. In his striking paintings, Mark Upton immortalizes enchanting desert scenes, Falcons, Bedouins and of course alluring Arabian horses.



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Mark Upton was born in Marlborough, Wiltshire, Great Britain in 1964. Today he is married and has two young children. He still lives at his birthplace in the charming English countryside, in South-Western Great Britain. "I was brought up around Arabian horses at my home and rode them as a child", Mark Upton reflects. "I rode and drove them as a child and young man. Not only Arab horses, which were my father's love, but my grandfather on my mother's side was a famous English racehorse trainer. So, I had horses all around me. My favorite was a Crabbet Arab stallion called 'Hanif' who lived with us when I was a boy. He was extremely well known in the UK at that time and has been very influential in bloodlines

here and abroad. He is one of the reasons I fell in love with Arabian horses. I am fascinated by the history of the Arabian horse, how it developed into the horse it is, in such a harsh environment, and how it was and still is such an integral part of Arab life. I like also its importance and its influence on other breeds around the world", Mark explains. Then he continues: "When I grew up, horses have played less of a role in my life as I have followed my father's great hobby of falconry and fly my own falcons which along with my painting has meant I have had less time to spend with horses. Through my uncle Peter however, I do continue to have a great interest in the Arab horse and of course continue to see Arabs that I paint."



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Mark Upton first visited the Middle East when he was 11 years old and travelled with his father. After finishing school, Mark returned for a gap year in order to work for Sheikh Surour bin Mohamad Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi. Since this time, he has enjoyed travelling widely in Saudi Arabia, North Africa and Pakistan.

Asked after his art education, Mark Upton replies: "I partly have an art education and I'm partly self-taught. I did a year's foundation course at art school, where you try all aspects of art in order to try to determine which direction you would like to progress in for an art degree. I was

unable to find a degree course which followed the direction I wished to take, so at that stage went my own way and started in a career as an artist. The art background in my family gave me a good grounding in painting and much support." Then he continues: "Today I mainly paint in oil and watercolor, as well as drawings. Nowadays, most of my work is to commission. The inspiration therefore comes often from the client. When painting non-commission work, my inspiration comes from the subject, the light, the colors and the atmosphere of the scene or subject of the painting." So sunny desert scenes are often created on his canvas, quite a difference to the



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surrounding English countryside. Besides his intriguing works depicting British landscapes and local hunting, Mark Upton is famous for perfectly capturing the alluring mood and light of the Middle East in his artwork.

When asked about any old masters he admires, Mark Upton replies quickly: "There are several. In painting as a whole, I admire two artists particularly. John Singer Sargent, who interestingly was the great great uncle of my

wife, and a Spanish artist Joaquin Sorolla. In the world of horses, I very much like Sir Alfred Munnings."

Mark Upton's paintings can be found in many important collections around the world. He has for example sold paintings to the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi and many other members of leading families in the Middle East. On an international basis, his work was sold to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, the USA, Ireland,



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Germany, France, Italy, New Zealand, Japan and Hong Kong. In the UK, Mark's most important patron was the late Queen Mother who obtained various paintings from him, including Scottish landscapes and sporting paintings. Furthermore, he has illustrated several books about falconry.

Mark Upton regularly exhibits in London and various country galleries in Great Britain. Moreover, he has

contributed to exhibitions in Dubai and Abu Dhabi and had a solo exhibition in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. He loves Arabian horses since his childhood and explains: "I am fascinated by their history, how the Arabian developed into the horse it is, in such a harsh environment, and how it was and still is such an integral part of Arab life. I am also intrigued by its importance in its influence on other breeds around the world." Then he remembers: "When I was a child, I visited more Arabian horse farms and shows. I still



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enjoy doing this, often in the company of my uncle. My favorite is the UK International Arabian horse show, mainly because of its long history. I loved it as a child when it used to be held at Ascot and had a tremendous atmosphere about it."

Asked after his dream connected to Arabian horse art, he replies: "I would like to paint even more Arabian horses in

the future and it would be wonderful to follow my uncle's fame as an Arab horse artist. My hopes are to be able to continue to have such enjoyment out of my chosen life as an artist and to have the patrons that allow me to continue the life of my choice and continue to develop the gift I was born with."

