

# Francis Geeroms

## A Hyperrealistic Approach to the Arabian Horse

Shortly ago I came across the Belgian sculptor Francis Geeroms. Although he is a newcomer to the Arabian horse art scene, I was immediately fascinated. His hyperrealistic way of showing the beauty of the Arabian is special indeed. Hyperrealism is the young art form of creating illusions by enhancing reality. In this genre, the artist takes his works beyond purely photographic quality. Moreover, he adds focus on visual, social and cultural details of everyday life. Hyperrealism is considered an advancement of photorealism, which is its more naturalistic predecessor.

■ by Judith Wich-Wenning

*Francis Geeroms was born in Brussels in 1963. Asked after his artistic beginnings, he explains: "I discovered sculpture quite by chance five years ago, far away from academies and masters. Initially I copied abstract characters, then I sculpted some others out of my imagination."*

*With a smile Francis Geeroms remembers: "2017 was the year of a radical turn, I started to explore the equestrian world. To be honest, such a choice was obvious to me, it was dictated by the personal story of my life. You have to know*

*that a great deal of my lifetime I have been surrounded by horses. My parents owned a riding school and I helped them a lot. I took care of the horses, loved to ride and eventually competed in show jumping. I even graduated as a farrier later on. This practical background allowed me to thoroughly know horses and their anatomy. Already as a child I loved to draw horses, I used every material I could work on, not even cardboard coasters escaped me. Customers found everywhere drawings of horses under the coasters."*

The last step at the foundry. Here the patina, which consists in a very complex process to apply, typically oxides and nitrates using a gas torch and a brush



The artist and Nabil during the exhibition in Zangersheide



Dalil

*Then he ponders: "Later life took me away from this world. When I returned, sculpture could only have been a hobby but no, it quickly became a passion, it was soon part of my life." Asked after his love for the Arabian horse, Francis Geeroms explains: "I started sculpting horses in 2017. Because I was fascinated by the natural beauty and elegance of Arabian horses, I decided to create my first one in 2018. At that time I appreciated a lot the expert advice of Glenn and Tom Schoukens from Schoukens Training Centre (STC) regarding the characteristics and standards of Arabian horses."*

*When talking about his personal style, Francis Geeroms points out: "Although it is very demanding for myself, my hyperrealistic approach rhymes with thoroughness and refinement. I am always in search for details and trying to reproduce scrupulously the anatomy. Important to me is also to respect the correctness of an expression or an attitude of the horse. As self-taught, without any academic artistic technique, my hands just reproduce what my eyes see."*



Nariin





The sculpture is finished and ready for the making of the mold



The first layer of the silicone mold is very important, it will capture the smallest details of the sculpture



The mold is finished



Removal of the epoxy mold which reveals the silicone mold

*His working techniques need a lot of preparation: "My creations are the result of a careful observation of dozens, sometimes hundreds of photos. I draw, take pictures, film, measure and study my models. I want my sculptures to give back a singular movement, to capture a particular attitude, to immortalize a unique fraction of a second. And so I hope they will touch people or at least evoke an emotion."*

*A sculptor is only as good as his foundry. Therefore, Francis Geeroms continues: "My work would not be as accomplished if it wasn't for the outstanding talent and skills of the foundry craftsmen, they are the unsung heroes that breathe life into my sculptures. I expect as much from them as I do from myself."*

*Francis Geeroms also gets involved in the different stages of the bronze casting. He equally enjoys this part of the creation process: "It's exciting and fascinating to watch the slow transformation from clay (I use plastiline) to bronze", Francis Geeroms reports. "After three years of tight collaboration with the Harzé art foundry we now build a strong team. Each collaborator is aware of what I want to achieve and understands my vision of the sculpture."*

*Although his career is still young, Francis Geeroms had already notable success with his work: In 2018 he had the opportunity to exhibit his work in Monaco for the first time. He displayed at the International Show Jumping event of Monte-Carlo, which was followed by some other international show jumpings.*

*"In 2019, during an important equine event in Zangersheide (Belgium), Tom Oben from Obi Training Centre admired my work "Nabil", a life-size chest of an Arabian horse. Following this he invited me to exhibit at his booth during the All Nations Cup in Aachen (Germany). Here I had the great opportunity to meet Mr. and Mrs. Charly and Shirley Watts from Halsdon Arabians (United Kingdom), who honoured me by acquiring and showing one of my sculptures in their gorgeous stables", Francis Geeroms explains.*

*Then he continues: "2020, the Covid year, synonymous of no show jumping events and no exhibitions. Nevertheless, my desire and need of creating are still intact and I am longing to show my new sculptures as soon as possible. My current project is a life-size bronze of a young Arabian horse."*





The beginning of the patina process



The patina is finished, to protect it a wax is applied



The latest work by Francis Geeroms, a sculpture of a young Arabian horse



Removal of the original sculpture from the silicone mold



The silicone mold reveals the negative of the original



Nabil is ready to leave the foundry





A sketch is the base of the realization of any sculpture

*Francis Geeroms lives in Gooik, a small town located in the middle of Belgium. "I am married and I have a lovely daughter, Kelly, who strangely has never been attracted to horse riding", Francis Geeroms explains. "Pascale, my wife, who was also a rider, is the first critical eye of my work, she's often a good advisor but especially my first fan. Sculpture is an all-consuming passion for me."*

*Asked about his dream concerning art, Francis Geeroms smiles: "My ultimate aim is to reach perfection or to get the closest possible, knowing well that, as José-Maria David, a famous French animal sculptor that I admire a lot, said: "la perfection n'existe pas" (perfection does not exist)."* □



Francis Geeroms working as a farrier in his youth