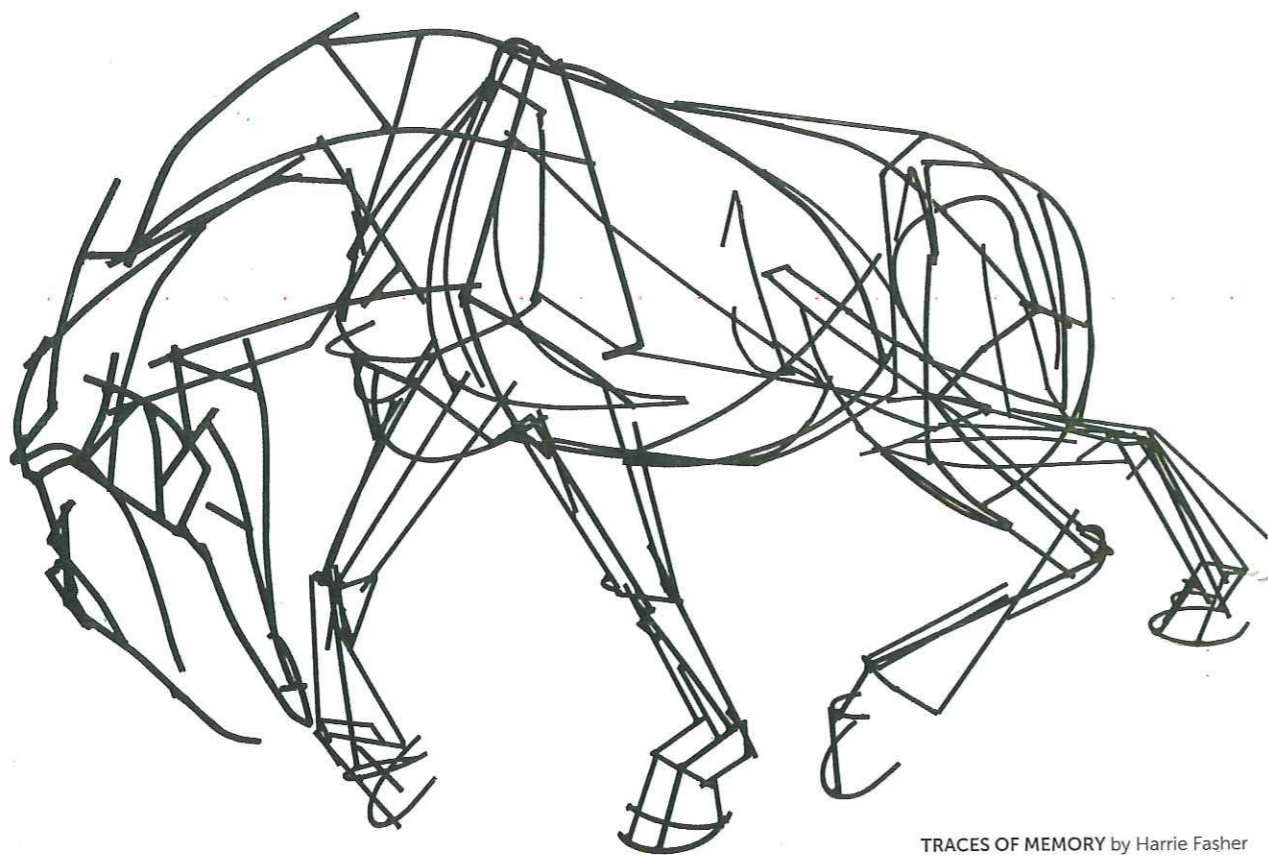




MORE STRAWBERRIES by Anwen Keeling



TRACES OF MEMORY by Harrie Fasher

EQUESTRIAN Artists

Anwen Keeling and Harrie Fasher



ANWEN KEELING



HARRIE FASHER

HORSES HAVE BEEN the subject of paintings for thousands of years. Prehistoric times show horses in cave paintings while horses depicted in battle have provided us with some wonderful examples of our equine history. In any search for famous horse artists from the past, two names will invariably turn up: George Stubbs and Sir Alfred Munnings. In the mid-1700s, Stubbs became known as the 'horse painter', producing amazing works including the famous *Whistlejacket*, where his passion for anatomy is clearly shown in the almost photographic accuracy of the painting. Two hundred years later it was Munnings' turn to shine as one of England's finest painters of horses, with his best known works usually associated with racehorses and hunting scenes.

Many artists today still regard the job of bringing horses to life through their art as a passion rather than a chore. Some of these artists come from a riding background while others have been influenced by horses in more subtle ways. The two artists featured in this issue of *Equestrian Life* give us a rare insight into their world as artists, one a painter and one a sculptor. Both have their individual tales to tell yet share a common bond – our equine friends.

Anwen Keeling is a happy, bubbly person; the sort of person you would invite for dinner, even if

you didn't know her terribly well, because she is great company. She loves her art but at the same time is not overly protective of it. "I tell my gallery I don't worry if they hang a picture the wrong way round," says Anwen, although presumably with her horse paintings the orientation would be obvious.

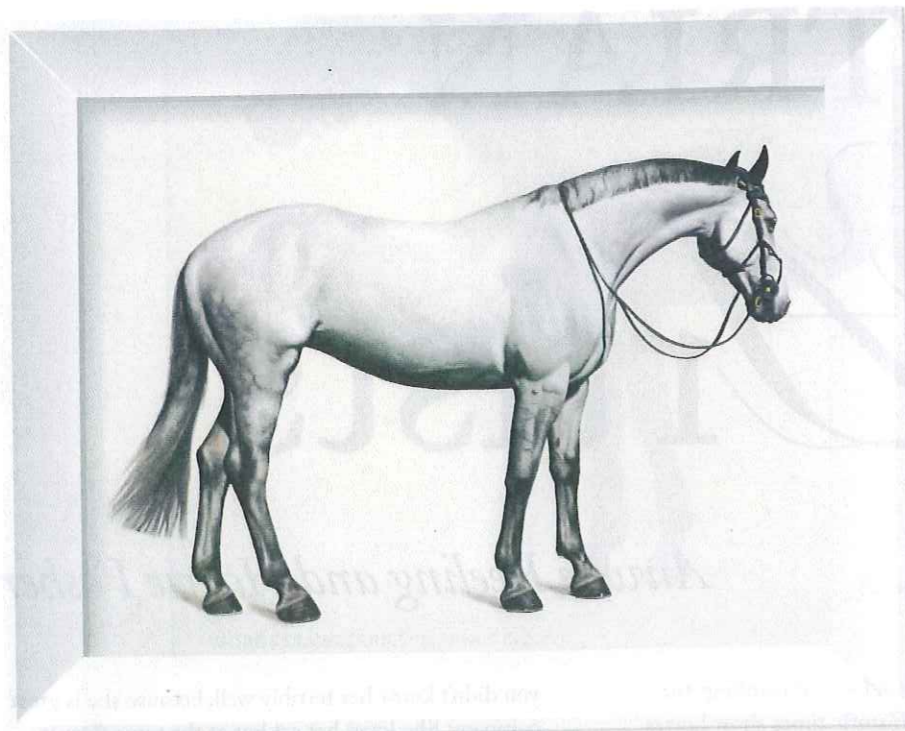
As a young girl, Anwen's ambition was to be a jockey or an artist, but her knack for spending more time on the ground than on her pony encouraged her to pursue the latter. After studying

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for a BA in Fine Arts at Australian National University, receiving first class honours and the University Medal, she went on to do a Masters of European Fine Art in Barcelona. Today, Anwen lectures at UNSW College of Fine Arts

and the National Art School and considers herself very fortunate to be represented by Liverpool Street Gallery in Sydney.

For Anwen, horse portraits are a new direction. In fact, she is more recognised for her realist paintings of evocative female figures in contemplative and moody scenes, with some depicting couples in intense, private moments. Because of this background, Anwen was a little surprised when she was recently commissioned to do a portrait of Cardinal George Pell and former Prime Minister, John Howard.



COLTHAGA

"I have no idea why they picked me," she admits, "but they told me that someone from the National Gallery had recommended me. It was an interesting first meeting because, after being careful with what I was wearing (keeping everything very demure), I completely forgot to change out of my thongs! I don't think they approved of my footwear but I probably got away with it as they thought to themselves, 'well she is an artist'."

Anwen's move into horse portraits came about a couple of years ago when her good friend, Alex Townsend, offered her horse, Parodie, as a 'guinea pig'. "Alex encouraged me to move into this new area and the portrait I did of her and Parodie was hung in the Sulman Prize in 2010 at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. This year my portrait of Copabella Visage was selected and hung. I get so much pleasure out of painting these wonderful animals and once I have decided which horse to paint I like to go and meet them, just as if I was doing a portrait of a person. From there, I take hundreds of photos and then decide if I am going to work from one photo or several. More often than not I use a body from here, a head and neck from there and eventually bring it all together."

Anwen's paintings, which can take up to a month to complete, are drawn up in charcoal and she then uses layers of thin glaze until she gets the desired effect. "The technical process of painting is extremely important to me, as I investigate the material qualities (and possibilities) of paint. But I am always wary of the term photorealism, which occasionally attaches itself to my work. I feel that my work is realist, it is not photorealist, as I never try and deny it is a painted surface, the glazing and brush marks are still evident and important."

In her time away from painting, Anwen is happy to admit she spends time annoying her horses. "Unfortunately I am not as talented at riding as I am at painting (my horses will testify to this) but I do have a huge amount of enthusiasm!"



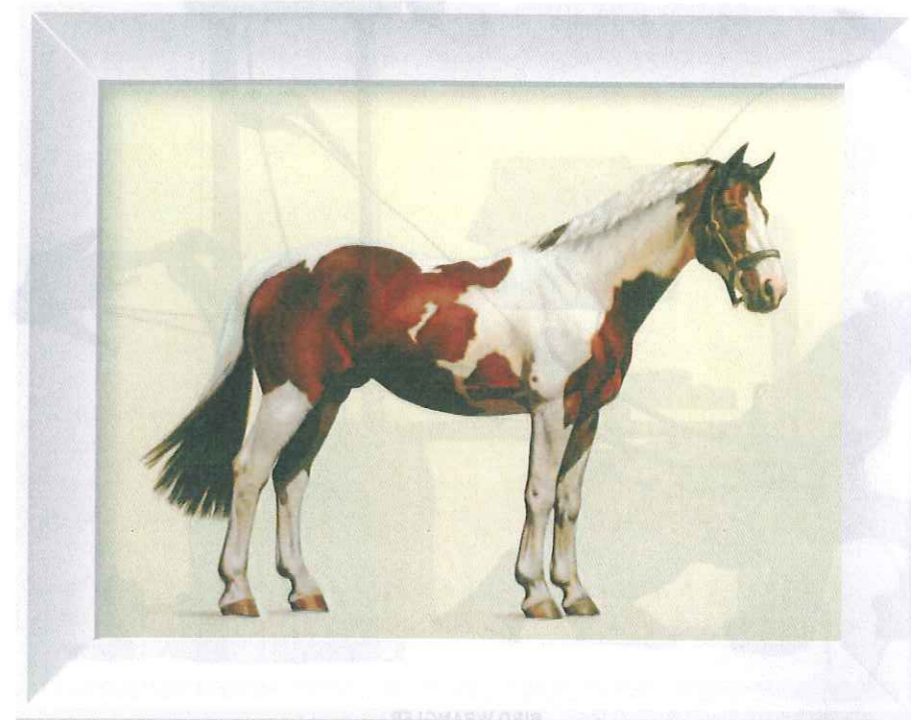
ZENZEL

I compete at dressage on my beautiful black Hannoverian, Dare to Duell, and I have also just purchased a very handsome Clydie X called Thomas, and we are about to embark on an illustrious low-level eventing career (with perhaps rather a lot of time penalties)."

Anwen's work will soon be on view to the public in a solo exhibition, 'Sporthorse', at the Liverpool Street Gallery in Sydney. The exhibition runs into August and will feature horses from all areas of equestrian sport. "It has been a busy time putting everything together for this exhibition and my completely ineffectual time planning can make me very stressed. Sometimes I feel I am single-handedly keeping the Australian coffee industry afloat and my dog is on strike, refusing to keep me company in the studio as he feels the hours I have been putting in are not dog-approved working hours!"

Our next artist believes her journey into a career of art is only beginning. Harrie Fasher was, for many years, a full-time event rider and coach. Reaching the height of three star level, from where Olympians are chosen, Harrie competed seriously, picked up her Level II coaching certificate along the way and looked like staying in the sport for a long time. However, a crashing fall in 2003 was the catalyst that began a slow change in Harrie's life. The fall left her with several broken bones and the horse she was riding had to be put down. Later that same week another of Harrie's top horses, The Prowler, had a bout of colic and also could not be saved.

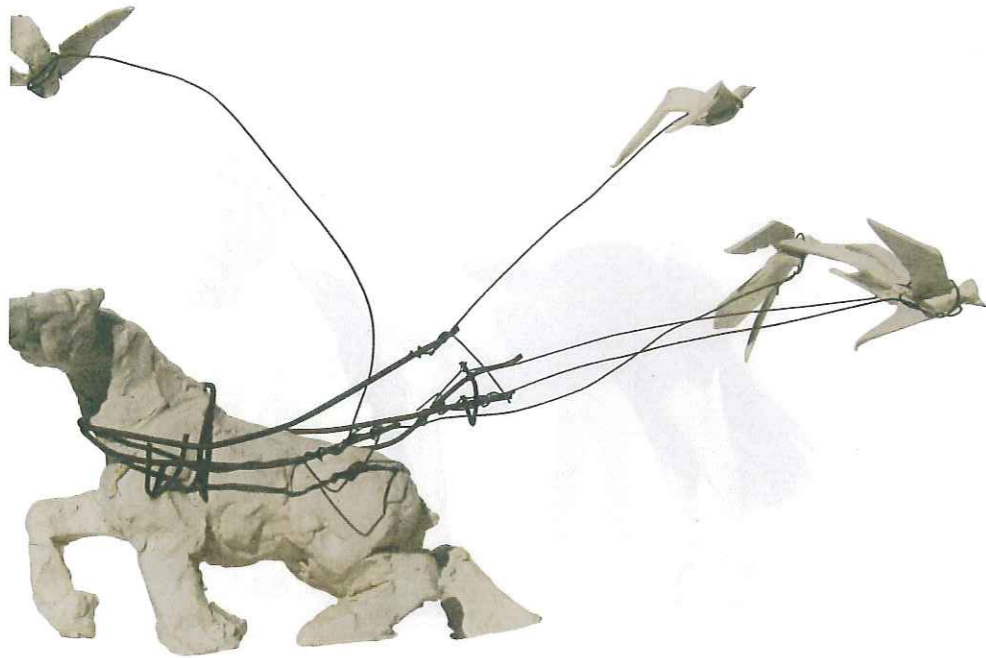
"It was a very low time for me. I spent three months recuperating with my mum in Sydney and during that time I reconnected with some of my city friends that I hadn't seen for ages. They brought me back into their world of music, design, and painting, but at that stage I still thought I would go back into horses." As part of Harrie's recovery she decided to do some travelling and during that time, when she started to visit art



COPABELLA VISAGE



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BIRD WRANGLER



MY LIFE IN A BOX
MADE OUT OF STONWARE CERAMICS, FOUND OBJECTS, STEEL AND WIRE.

galleries around the world, she thought there might be something else for her out there other than riding. "It was a really slow transformation," admits Harrie. "As I travelled round to different countries and filled out the forms where you have to state your occupation, I started to see myself in different roles. I went from equestrian athlete, to equestrian coach, to artist, to sculptor. I had always enjoyed art and sculpting but it had been a hobby, something to do while I was sidelined with an injury. When I started to think that I might do art as a career, people would say, 'oh, so you have quit horses', and I found that hard to take in because the word 'quit' just doesn't sit very well with me. But when I made the decision to attend the National Art School it was a real commitment to pursue art as a career."

When Harrie started art school, she tried, fairly unsuccessfully, to keep horses out of her work but she soon realised that would be a disaster. "I was getting in a right stew. After all, when you speak 'horse' it is hard for them not to be a huge part of your world," she laughs. "I consider the horses in my work to take the place of a human in a narrative. Works such as *My Life in a Box*, *Bird Wrangler*, and the power of the imagination tell the narrative of pushing and pulling against the world. Horses will be a mainstay in my work and something to which I can always return ... I think the horse has a long way to take me yet!"

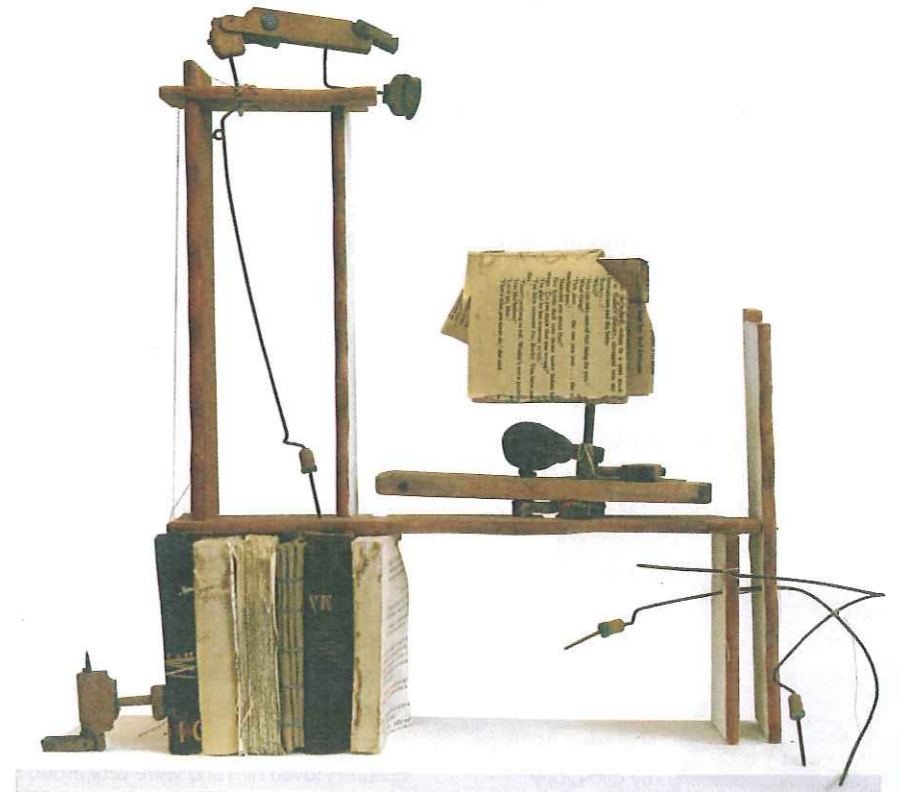
I discovered while talking to our artists that it isn't always easy for them to choose a favourite painting or favourite sculpture. They appear to see them, in some ways, as their children, where they each have their good and bad points. Harrie talks about one of her pieces, *Supermist* – a life-sized steel rod sculpture depicting a 'talented and cocky' event – as a piece very close to her heart, rather than an actual favourite. "When my sister, who used to groom 'Paddy', the horse the sculpture is based upon, walked into the gallery and saw 'him' she just burst into tears, so I suppose it had the right effect. I also

love the opening work for my recent show, *Nightmare chases dreams*. It is alive and powerful, it invades the viewer space coming off the wall, but does so with grace and strength. It plays with the tension of fragility of both the horse and our dreams."

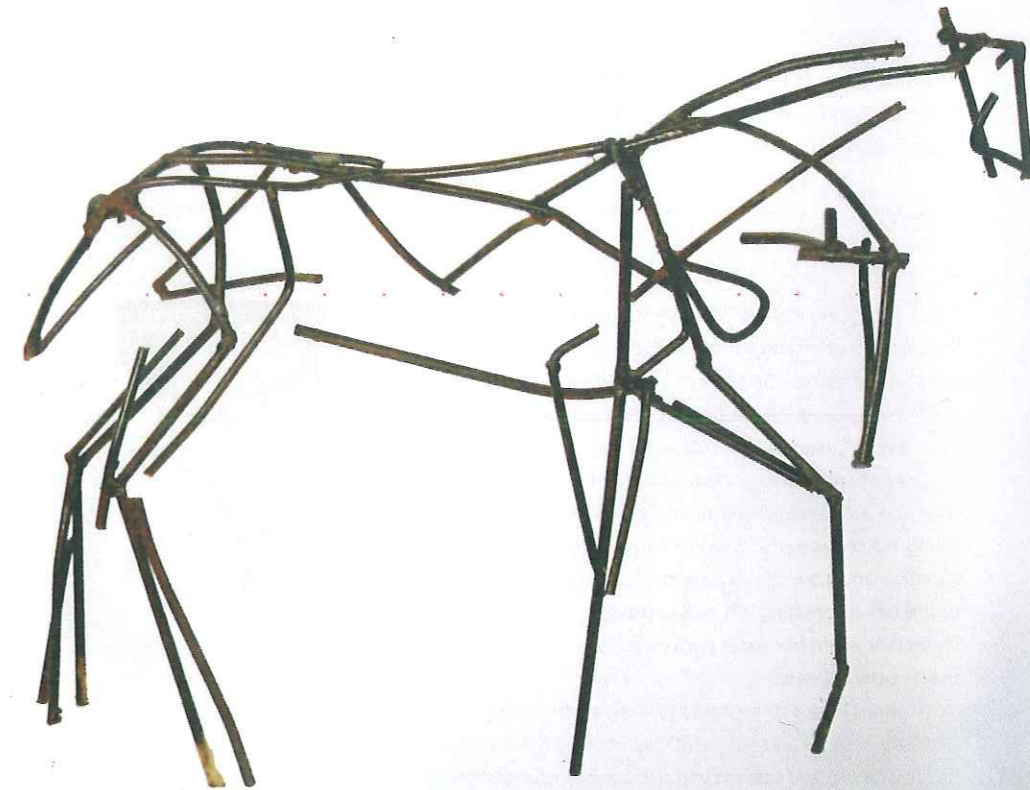
Harrie describes the process of creating a sculpture as an unruly, unpredictable and bizarre one. It usually starts with drawings, although not always, and then coffee is brewed using the contemplative old cast-iron grinder, giving Harrie time to think. "Some sculptures come easily, some are a battle of wills. *Supermist* came to life after I did his head and neck, but I struggled with his back and when I decided to chop off his back legs I did it with a great deal of satisfaction! But then I continued to struggle to create the energy in the hindquarters that best described the horse."

During the creative process, the materials Harrie uses seem to range from charcoal pencil to found objects, from bone to steel rods, with Harrie describing her 'tree house studio' as being a great place for a scavenger hunt. "I find all sorts of interesting bits and pieces around here and sometimes certain materials just appear at the right time and allow you to carry on your creative journey."

For someone who only graduated from art school last year (with honours, mind you), it is amazing that Harrie has already produced her first body of work, 'Tales of the Night', for a solo exhibition in a commercial gallery. Her work was very well received, something all artists hope for, but never really know until the exhibition opens. For the moment, Harrie is being kept busy with various commissions including sculptures for the Cessnock Regional Gallery, the Vines at Wollombi and Maunsell Wickes in Melbourne. She also has plans for a research trip to Mongolia. After all, what better place to get inspiration for more amazing equine art than the birthplace of the horse. **EQ**



BOOKISH



OF TWO MINDS – HORSE WALKING
ONE OF THE PIECES IN HARRIE'S RECENT EXHIBITION 'TALES OF THE NIGHT'.