

### **Coachman Struggling in the Traffic**

Figure 12 George Wesley Bellows, *Steaming Streets*, 1908, oil paint on canvas, 97.5 x 76.8 cm, signed lower left, Santa Barbara CA, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Preston Morton Collection, inv. no. 1960.50.

### **Horse Galloping, Driver Balancing**

Figure 13 Edvard Munch, *The galloping horse*, 1910-1912, oil paint on canvas, 148 x 120 cm, signed upper right, Oslo, Munchmuseet, inv. no. MM.M.00541.



However, it is just an ordinary, realistic village scene with people enjoying the snow, and where simple pleasures seem to dominate. In any case the frontal view of the horse, having been given free rein to gallop at full speed, has clearly impressed the artist, who also made a charcoal, a pencil drawing, and an etching of the same work, albeit with minor differences.<sup>11</sup> In the same period of his life Munch made a series of large oil paintings about the positive forces of nature, science and history for the University Hall of Oslo.

Quite a different situation is expressed by Tamás Vigh in Hungary (figure 14). He created a sculpture of a girl riding at a gallop, which invariably appeals to the imagination. She is riding side-saddle and looks like a courageous rider. The horse is rendered in the ago-old 'flying' gallop, which in 1974 seems just as anachronistic as the use of the side-saddle. As the sculpture was placed between the large Basilica and a school for girls, the artist may have had the latter in mind with his design.

Of course it is also quite possible that there is a connection with the Queen of Hungary, for Elizabeth, who between 1867 and 1897 often stayed at the palace of Godöllo, and rode

### **Mysterious Girl Galloping in Style**

Figure 14 Tamás Vigh, *Girl on horseback in side-saddle*, 1974, aluminum alloy, 200 cm high, Esztergom, Szent István Square, in front of the Basilica, Photograph Lieke Manders-Bonsel.



to hounds in the area, some 65 km from Esztergom. She always rode side-saddle, and she was loved in Hungary. After her death in 1898, many monuments were erected in memory of her.

The reasons for erecting this fascinating equestrian sculpture are unfortunately unknown.<sup>12</sup> Whatever the background of this work may be, Tamás Vígh expressed very clearly the speed and movement of the horse and the dash of the rider. In Hungary this artist is known for his sculptures which often take the form of memorials.

### Fascination with Elegance

In 1635 the famous Dutch animal painter, Paulus Potter, was captivated by the spots on a horse which were brown with a lighter ring (figure 15). With its heavy neck and short body it might have come from Spain, although the spotted pattern was not common there.

#### ***The Painter's Pride***

Figure 15 Paulus Potter, *The Spotted Horse*, c. 1652, oil paint on canvas, 49.5 x 45 cm, signed lower left, Los Angeles/Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum, inv./cat. no. 88.PA.87.

Figure 16 Paulus Potter, *Spotted (Oriental) stallion*, oil paint on panel, 1649, signed and dated lower left, 28.2 x 24 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, (copy in the Staatliches Museum Schwerin, Schwerin).

Figure 17 Paulus Potter, *Spotted (Oriental) stallion*, oil paint on panel, 1653, signed and dated lower left, 30 x 41 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, MI 199.





In 1649 Potter painted another spotted horse and even made a new version of this young stallion in 1653 (figures 16 and 17).<sup>13</sup> This horse, of oriental built, has black spots only. Potter apparently felt a challenge to render these two different coat patterns, while at the same time portraying two horses with quite different characteristics.

Grace and beauty, or elegance, can be emphasised in portraits of ladies and are therefore suitable in this chapter. The portrait of Françoise St. Géran includes these three aspects: in the horse, the rider, and the background (figure 18).

It is part of a series of six equestrian portraits of ladies who were close to the court of King Louis XIV in Versailles. Three more of them are presented in figures 19-21. The paintings were all commissioned by the Duc Daumont, as annotated on the back of each. On a cartouche at the bottom left the name of each lady is inscribed. Four were attributed to the court painter Pierre Mignard or to his studio, two (not shown here) were made by Joseph Parrocel.

### Significant Royal Gifts

Figure 18 Attributed to Pierre Mignard, *Equestrian portrait of Françoise St. Géran, née de Warignes*, c. 1670, oil paint on canvas, 67.5 x 57 cm, not signed, Håbo, Skoklosters Slott, inv. no. 3150.

Figure 19 Catherine de Neuville, Comtesse d' Armagnac;

Figure 20 Duchesse de Bouillon;

Figure 21 Duchesse Daumont. All attributed to Pierre Mignard, c. 1670, oil paintings on canvas, 67.5 x 57 cm, Håbo, Skoklosters Slott.



## Pathos and Elegance

Figure 22 Johann Wilhelm Gröninger, *Dying Amazon*. c. 1720.

Figure 23 Johann Wilhelm Gröninger, *Warrior with sword*, c. 1720.

Both Baumberger sandstone, 261 and 259 cm high, Isselburg, Wasserburg Anholt. Photographs: the author.



This series, perhaps a gift from Louis XIV, came into the possession of Niels Bielkegatan, the Swedish ambassador in France during 1679-1682.<sup>14</sup> In the background the Château de Versailles is visible. The elegant and elaborate dress of the lady with her self-possession, the vigorous spotted horse, and the view of the extensive castle in the background, all these aspects contribute to the impressive character of this work. Her luxurious dress was probably not the one she actually wore on horseback, but the intention was to show she can master her horse even in this dress. The same is true for the other paintings in this series. By actively mastering their horses, these 'power ladies' clearly demonstrate their position in society.

Elegance can also be found in martial scenes. That is the case with a pair of sculptures by Johann Wilhelm Gröninger from around 1720: a mythical Amazon and Greek warrior fighting each other (figures 22 and 23).<sup>15</sup> On the left a severely wounded Amazon is still trying to ward off the sword of the warrior on the right. She is slowly sliding backward making the horse turn its head to see what is happening, and she has lost her bow and quiver. The Greek warrior is unharmed and about to strike a final blow with his sword. Both riders ride bareback as was customary in a mythical fight.

The artist is known for his smooth and elegant forms and noble pathos of his figures (see Thieme-Becker). This is apparent in these works, rather more so than in the classical Greek origins: the horses being distinctly representative of the baroque.

Inscriptions on the back of the socles mention that they are copies of works in the collection of the Palazzo Farnese in Rome, which is now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples.<sup>16</sup> They were made in accordance with the wishes of the Master of the Horse of the Fürst zu Salm, Von Heringen, and the sculptor J.W. Gröninger, at the price of 1174 Reichstaler.

While on the subject of Elegance the series of ten paintings by George Stubbs, all titled 'Mare and Foals', cannot be omitted. Figure 24 shows one of them. Stubbs earned his fame through his portraits of race horses, hunting scenes, family portraits, dogs and other animals, anatomy, and men working with horses. His ten versions of 'mares and foals' also show how much he was attracted by the rhythmic shapes of the animals at rest, their idyllic surrounding nature and the harmony between the two.



### Harmony of a Horse Family

Figure 24 George Stubbs, *Mares and foals by a stream*, exhibited 1764, oil paint on canvas, 59.8 x 100.4 cm, signed lower right, private collection.



Judy Egerton writes that as a topic naturalism appealed much more to Stubbs than did the public race course.<sup>17</sup> The version here was painted for the Duke of Grafton, and the brown mare in the centre is Antinous's Dam while the mare on the right is Cassandra, as inscribed. Antinous's dam is only named after her very successful son Antinous, foaled in 1758. In the foreground wild rhubarb grows, a typical motif for Stubbs, while in the background the stream in the park of Euston Hall is visible.<sup>18</sup> This painting and the others in the series prove Stubbs's eye for the elegance of the horses, individual and in relation to each other.

The circus with its horses is a subject that used to attract many artists who were fascinated by the grace and beauty of dressage and vaulting demonstrations in a bohemian environment. The circus originated at the end of the eighteenth century in London where Philip Astley gave performances with horses and acrobats in his riding school. Gradually the travelling circus developed in Europe and North America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, until its decline later in the twentieth century. London, Paris, Amsterdam, St. Petersburg and other cities had circuses with their own amphitheatre buildings. Visiting circuses was a very popular pastime and many artists were equally captivated by the colourful shows.

In the early days many anonymous prints of circus scenes were made, while later renowned artists also chose the circus as a subject. Among them are Otto Eerelman, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Maurice Prendergast, Georges Rouault, Kees Moks, Laura Knight, Gilbert Holiday, Fernand Léger, Pablo Picasso, Marc Chagall, Adda Kesselkaul, Frits Klein, Robert Edward Weaver, Wilhelm Martin Busch (their work dating from 1879 to 1983).

Here we see the painting by Karl Volkers (son of Emil Volkers, famous for his album of 34 lithographs: *Beschreibung vorzüglicher Pferderassen*) of Thérèse Stark-Renz<sup>19</sup>, married to Robert Renz, nephew of the circus owner Ernst Renz (figure 25). Circus Renz became famous in Europe and owned circus buildings in Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen and Vienna.

Stars like Thérèse Renz, and many others had a status comparable to pop stars in our time.<sup>20</sup> Eventually Thérèse established her own circus in Belgium, which went bankrupt in the Great War, but she started again and rode until her 79<sup>th</sup> year in Circus Busch in Vienna. Here she is seen in side-saddle performing the Spanish walk, whereby the horse raises one foreleg at a time in a regular cadence. This is quite an achievement because in side-saddle



### **Elegance of an Enterprising Woman**

Figure 25 Karl Volkers, *The circus rider Thérèse Stark-Renz*, 1890, oil paint on canvas, c. 50 x 60 cm, signed and dated lower left, Verden an der Aller, Deutsches Pferdemuseum.

### **Image of the Ideal Combination**

Figure 26 Reinhold Kübart, *'Der Sportreiter'*, 1925, bronze statuette, 30 cm high, private collection.



the rider cannot use her right leg, which this is where the whip comes in. Elegance emanates from this picture.

Another example that encapsulates grace and harmony between horse and man, is Reinhold Kübart's sculpture *'Der Sportreiter'* from 1925 (figure 26).<sup>21</sup> Displaying the two highly-trained bodies, this work was clearly designed to render the ideal sporting combination, the ease and relaxation of horse and rider radiating concord.

Kübart's *'Sporting Rider'* contrasts sharply with the idealized farmer's working horses so very much in vogue in German art at the time. A much larger version of this work was given a place at the Grünewald Race Course in Berlin, but was destroyed in the Second World War. After the war a replica was made and placed at the entrance of the Raffelberg Race Course in Mühlberg an der Ruhr, where it still stands.

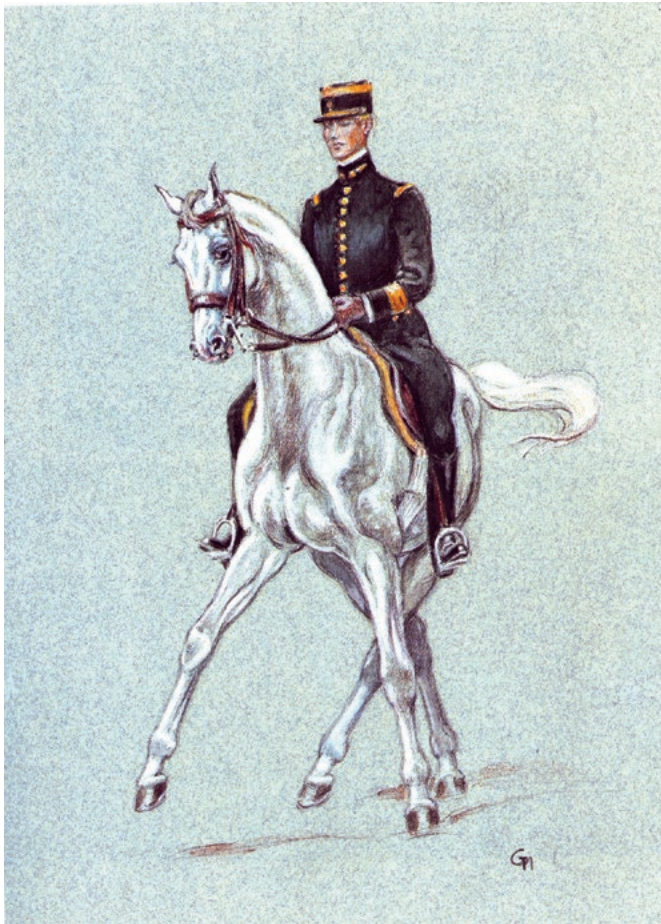
There are gifted riders who are also original artists and such was Georges Margot. He started to make sketches of horses in 1932, when he was an instructor at the Cavalry School in Saumur. Later he rose to become its leader (*écuyer-en-chef*) and directed the *Cadre Noir*, the selected group of instructors who are responsible for the performances. In Saumur this leader is respectfully called *'le Grand Dieu'*.

Since 1968 the *Cadre Noir* and the Cavalry School of Saumur have been restructured as the *Ecole Nationale d'Equitation*. After his retirement Margot concentrated on his artistic work. Apart from dressage horses he liked drawing harness horses during competitions. In 1994 an exhibition of his work was organised in Saumur, showing 200 drawings and watercolours.<sup>22</sup>

In the drawing shown here (figure 27) the rider performs a beautiful half-pass exercise, in French *'appuyement'*. The horse trots forward and sideways on a diagonal line, crossing its legs. The aim of the artist to express the elegance of this exercise is very clear, and in this rendering one may also recognise the artist's own experience as a *Cadre Noir* member.

Chris ten Bruggen Kate saw the elegance and beauty of horses in his own way. He was a painter of local landscapes in the area where he lived (Nunspeet, Netherlands) and also painted horses, especially white horses, sometimes as part of the landscape, sometimes individually. In the painting here (figure 28) he has given all attention to the elegant lines and delicate coat of the horse. The posture of the animal is graceful yet natural. This is a horse the artist may have seen in a dream, since once he did mention a dream





### Exercise by a Rider/Artist

Figure 27 Georges Margot, Half-pass of a Cadre Noir member, c. 1960, coloured drawing, c. 1960, monogrammed lower right, Saumur-Terrefort, Ecole Nationale d'Equitation.

with a horse.<sup>23</sup> It is likely to be an Arabian horse, known for their grace and beauty. An admirer of Salvador Dalí and Carel Willink, Ten Bruggen Kate regarded these two as his inspirers.<sup>24</sup>

Quite a different example in an equally different setting is the bronze statue 'Eloge du cheval' (Praise of the Horse) from 1985 (figure 29). It marks the entrance of the French institute for higher equestrian education: the Ecole Nationale d'Equitation in Saumur-Terrefort.

For this work the artist Christian Renonciat chose an the ordinary type of riding horse of which the school has several hundred. This model is of exemplary conformation. Narrow gaps in the bronze surface highlight the spots on the body where articulations or skin allow movements, hinting at the essential work of the school. This statue was specifically designed to show the form of the horse and its capacity for movement.

In 1999 the artist made a gigantic statue of a horse to mark the entrance to the town of Saumur entitled 'Archeval' (figure 30). This statue symbolises the function of Saumur as the Capital of the Art of Horse Riding. The title 'Archeval' combines the words 'art' and 'cheval' (horse) in a double sense: the art of horse riding and the horse in art. Renonciat made other monumental works, often with horses, in which imagination and technique are integrated, with a variety of materials. Next to those shown here, he created Cheval d'Aytré, 1989 (Place des Charmilles, Aytré, Charente-Maritime), Pegasus, tribute to Leonardo da Vinci and Copernicus, 1992 (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, London), Pégase renaissant, 1988 (Sapporo, Japan). In addition to his artistic ability Renonciat holds a degree in philosophy from the Sorbonne.



### Dream Horse

Figure 28 Chris ten Bruggen Kate, The white horse, 1965, oil paint on canvas, c. 85 x 100 cm, signed lower right, Nunspeet, Noord-Veluws Museum. Photograph: the author.

## **Conformation Turned into Art**

Figure 29 Christian Renonciat, 'Eloge du Cheval', 1985, bronze, 250 cm, Saumur-Terrefort, Ecole Nationale d'Equitation. Photograph: the author.

Figure 30 Christian Renonciat, 'Archeval', 1999, metal tubes, 1200 cm x 1500 cm x 300 cm, A85, exit Saumur. Photograph: Julien Lelièvre.



In contemporary art made with unconventional materials, we can also find works representing grace and beauty. The Dutch artist Maria Koijsck creates not just beasts, but animals with their typical characteristics and expressions, their innate qualities, and in fact, their very own soul. Her genius is in her use of scrap metal to create what she calls 'spatial designs'. Here we have the quintessential donkey (figure 31) : thin tail, short legs, large triangular head, high hooves and large ears, whereas the horse (figure 32) has the inherent proud mien, the thicker tail, small ears and head, longer legs and lower hooves.

The artist also distinguishes herself with large objects made from plastic waste and exhibited in outdoor spaces, thus confronting the public with the environmental problems of today. This work she calls 'community art'.



## **Characters in Spatial Design**

Figure 31 Maria Koijsck, Donkey.

Figure 32 Maria Koijsck, Horse.

Both: 2016, scrap metal, life size, in the exhibition 'Op Poten', De Schiphorst, Beeldenpark de Havixhorst, Netherlands. Photographs: the author.







*Binder & Kompatscher,  
Saint George after his fight with the dragon*