



The Historic Horse *New Sporting Art in Period Style*

Before We Begin . . .

When you're commissioning a painting from *The Historic Horse*, there are several factors to that should be considered before the painting is started.

First: you should understand that I do not copy existing works of art. If you want a copy of a Landseer, a Marshall, a Stubbs, there are companies that will paint the standard works for you (and will paint exactly the same thing for thousands of other customers, too).

I create original works of art in the styles of the past. I don't repeat my work, and each piece is unique. If you commission a work from me, you won't see it reproduced with my permission, nor will you see anything similar.

I do two types of artwork by commission:

The bespoke painting is not a portrait of a particular horse or hound; it is a work painted to order that shows a scene you designate. You might, for instance, ask for a 24" x 36" oil painting of a chestnut Arab mare and a black-and-tan hound trotting at the edge of a pond in morning light, against a background of western English hills. This type of commission is the best choice for a client who wants a painting with a certain subject and appearance but does not care to commission a likeness of a particular, individual animal.

A portrait is a very close likeness that expresses the nature of a real, existing animal. It is not a photographic likeness; it is modified by the style of the period. This type of work is far more complex and will take longer to complete, with a commensurate increase in cost.

Style

You already know that you like the sporting art of earlier times, but do you know which time period you prefer? There are major differences in the ways horses, hounds, and people were depicted in the 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. If you're not sure what style would be best, I can show you samples from each time period. I can provide a painting that will have the characteristics of sporting art painted from the 1500s to the early twentieth century, as well as modern work.

If you are to appear in the painting, you might think about what historical styles of clothing would flatter you. As an example: few of us over the age of 30 are at our best in the tights and short jackets of the Renaissance, while almost everyone appears to advantage in the riding dress of the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries. Similarly, the riding attire of the late nineteenth century is very flattering to gentlemen, but some ladies feel that the tight waists, flowing skirts, and bright colors of eighteenth-century habits favor them more than the strict black of Victorian sidesaddle habits.

Bear in mind that in centuries past it was the norm for artists to exaggerate certain features of their subjects, and these exaggerations are part of what gives a period-style painting its historical look. In some eras, horses and certain hounds are shown with long, fine legs that could not possibly support a real animal, while human subjects, even men, may be shown with extremely small feet, long fingers, and baby-pink skin. In the sixteenth century one sees massive horses that look like bodybuilders on steroids; in the seventeenth century horses were often shown with extremely developed necks and corpulent bodies, as in this painting by Velasquez (right).



It was not until the mid-eighteenth century that true, individualized portraiture of the horse began to appear in the works of George Stubbs. Even then, Stubbs often sought to please clients who preferred to see tiny heads and delicate legs, which suggested

aristocratic bloodlines. Stubbs is considered the premier artist of the English turf and hunt field, but he also painted horses performing dressage movements like the piaffe, passage, and canter pirouette, so it is period-authentic to refer to the work of Stubbs if you prefer dressage horses to hunters.

Stubbs exaggerated the fineness of hunting greyhounds, but his portrayals of other types of hounds and dogs showed perfect proportions and sensitive, expressive features that evoked the personality of the hound.



In the mid-nineteenth century it became the fashion to depict horses with a rather rectangular shape and massive, well-let-down hindquarters that are almost canine in structure. Indoor settings were often seen. This painting by Ben Marshall is typical of the horse portraiture of the time.



It was not until the late 1800s that photography revealed the sequence of footfalls as a horse gallops, so artwork before then showed the galloping horse making a series of leaps with legs stretched out, the “rocking horse” stance. Here is the way John Herring Sr showed a galloping horse in 1836.

If you prefer your animal to be depicted in a manner that is more realistic but still in a period style, I can provide a painting in the styles popular in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries: the sentimental Victorian style of Landseer, the romanticism of de Dreaux, or the Impressionism of Munnings.



Of course, I can also prepare a classic contemporary picture.

When we are planning your commissioned work, please tell me about paintings you particularly admire, so I can understand your tastes better. However, I will not attempt to imitate any living artist. When you have a painting from *The Historic Horse*, it is an original, not a copy of anything.

Please understand, also, that I make no attempt to represent my works as real antiques. I use new canvas, new stretchers, and I will sign my works at some place on the canvas (subtly, if you prefer) so that in the future there will

be no confusion. I also decline to create an artificial *craqueleur*, which in the long run is harmful to the picture.

If you like, however, I can apply layers of golden and/or brown glazing that will give your picture the look of age. This technique is best used for paintings done in styles that appeared prior to about 1850.

Placement

One factor influencing the planning for your picture is the place you intend to hang it. Will it be occupying a small corner of a private room, or will it be the central focus of a large receiving room? Is the wall space it is to occupy vertical, horizontal, or square? Will it be seen at a distance or close up? Will it be on a white wall or placed against a strongly-colored space? The answers to questions like these can help identify not just the best size for your picture, but the best choice of color palette, the technique used, the layout or composition, and the poses.

Will the picture receive sunlight (which will make more subtle and muted colors possible) or will it be seen mostly by artificial light? Will you be arranging a separate picture light for it?

What are the dominant colors in the room, and what style of furniture is there? I don't consider my artwork to be merely decoration, but neither do I want to produce a painting that will clash with its surroundings. Within limits, I can alter the colors of vegetation and sky to compliment the place in which your picture will hang.

More typically, one decorates with the painting as the determining factor in color choices.

Getting Started

I begin the process by arranging a consultation with you. We will discuss your goals and requirements, and I'll take notes so that specifics can be incorporated into my statement of work. As mentioned, I can show you samples of different periods in sporting art history so you can decide on the era you want your picture to represent. I also invite you to view online resources as well as printed material to develop ideas before our meeting.

We can also discuss the setting of the painting. Popular choices for the setting of such works include your farm, famous public landscapes, or beloved hunt country. Please be aware that it may be necessary for you to obtain legal permission if I'm to paint your animal in a place that does not belong to you. Obviously, more complexity in the background (including detailed buildings or

challenging landscapes) will add to the time it will take to produce the painting as well as to the cost, and a nonspecific country background is less expensive and time-consuming than a recognizable location.

After this initial consultation, I'll write a brief statement of work that will set out the dimensions, materials, subject matter, costs, and other details about your painting, and I'll send the document to you for review, just to make sure we're in accord.

Once we've agreed on the basic concepts, I will need some reference photos of your animal. If you live between Richmond and Philadelphia, I can travel to take photos and do preliminary studies of the subjects. This is my preferred method of working, since I can see the way your animal moves, talk to you about its personality and behavior, and see its eyes, which so clearly show the heart within. It's also helpful for me to do on-site color studies in varying light conditions.

If traveling to your location is not practical, I can work from a series of good quality color photos taken by you or a professional. For major commissions, travel arrangements may be made even when the distances are substantial.

When a human subject is to appear in the painting, fabric samples or paint chips from one of the major paint companies can help me visualize what you would like to see in the finished work. Because of my studies of historical costume and manners, I can advise you about the dress or poses that will seem most authentic for human subjects in the work.

When particular human subjects are included in the picture, I can't work from photos alone; I'll have to visit the sitter and perhaps take a brief video to help capture skin tone, gestures, expressions, and mannerisms that just can't be caught accurately in photos.

If you live near my home in Montgomery County, Maryland (near Washington, D.C.) you are welcome to come to my studio--by appointment only, please--and see the work as it progresses. If this would be inconvenient, I can take photos of the work at regular intervals and email them to you.

Delivery

I'll do my best to give you an accurate estimate of when your painting will be finished and ready to present. I'll be honest about other commissions I have in train, upcoming shows, book projects, and other commitments.

Some aspects of the process of painting are not under my control—for instance, the weather can affect the drying time of paints, and some pigments or painting effects take longer to dry. Realistically, it's not the best policy to ask an artist to adhere to a rigid schedule if she is to produce the best work.

As the client, you can affect the delivery time in important ways. If you make decisions within a reasonable time frame, make payments in a timely manner according to our agreed-upon schedule, and make the subject animal(s) and/or human sitter(s) available when they are needed, then the project should be completed at a time close to the initial estimate. Of course, none of us have control over the weather or animal behavior, so some tolerance and flexibility will be necessary on both sides.

Asking for changes after principal layout and *frottis* of the picture has been done can slow the process and add to the final cost. Changes that seem minor to you may be more difficult and time-consuming than they might appear, so while I'm willing to make some changes, they will delay completion.

Paintings are not delivered framed. Framing is a matter of personal taste, so I leave it up to clients. I'd be happy to make recommendations about framing and hanging the work, if that would be helpful.

If you have any questions about a project, please email or call.

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