

November 5, 2023

## Artist Statement

Until now writing an artist statement has been an arduous task. There seemed to be rules. Some say be concise. Others say the art should be experienced only through the interpretation of the observer and not through writings or lectures. The deep dark secret is no one knows.

I am now retired and unencumbered by limitations imposed by external and internal demands. The result of this newfound freedom is requiring me to redefine my relationship with art in general and my artmaking specifically. For twenty-five years, as an academic, I played the good soldier role required in my career by seeking opportunities of professional development, I promoted the art of burgeoning artist students and lead the charge of bringing professional artists to exhibit at my university. What I have now is, for the first time, the opportunity to know my authentic and unveiled artist self.

For twenty-plus years I was a student of the nude human form in its academic and expressive forms. The human is the most relatable subject matter. We humans, in our conceitedness, are always looking for something that resembles our likeness in art. The human form is the foundation of all art and is not to be underestimated in the importance of its role. Whether looking at one of Barnett Newman's Zips or ancient Greek sculptures we see ourselves first if we are being honest. As a lover of art history, I looked to the artists of the Renaissance to learn the advantages of studying anatomy to give my figures solid foundations. I looked at the German Expressionists to give my figures emotion. As time has passed and I have evolved as an artist I have begun to look at what is in front of me and within me. In other words, the obvious.

I now have more than just humans in my life to observe. I have horses and nature. Living with these noble creatures has opened my imagination and challenged me to reach another level, a higher level, of interpreting life in general as well as the horse human relationship. All the while in this search I believe I am finally finding myself and am achieving ways to express that knowledge on paper and canvas.

Every artist is influenced by something or someone. It is proper to give credit to these inspirational sources. Personally, I am not so much influenced by artistic processes or techniques but more by phrases, sounds and the rhythm of music, and personal feelings both constant and fleeting. The types of phrases that rouse my creative thoughts have come from the likes of Jacques Derrida (*Memoirs of the Blind*), Federico Garcia Lorca's use of the horse as a symbol in his poetry (*Blood Wedding*), and most recently the poetry of nineteenth century painter Albert Pinkham Ryder (*Painter of Dreams*). Music also plays an extremely important role while I am painting or drawing. I play music loud. Loud enough to make me stop thinking about the outside world and begin thinking about my inside world.

An example of how I use inspirational phrases when beginning a work of art can be seen in this example. From Ryder's poem *The Voice of the Forest* he writes:

***I will draw near to thee  
For thou can'st not to me  
And embrace thy rugged stems  
In all the transports of affection,  
Stoop and kiss my brow  
With thy cooling leaves  
Oh ye beautiful creation of the Forrest***

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I respond to this line in the poem by relating it to the feel, smell, and exchange of breath that happens when one puts their face next to the nostril of a horse. That feeling of exchanging air with a creature puts one on equal ground with an animal that can dominate, be dominated, or be a partner. By sharing breath, you become a part of each other. This feeling is intangible but in the right mindset can produce even a physical reaction between human and horse resulting in a peaceful relaxation. Step two for me the artist, is to put this feeling into visual form. I find common ground with Ryder in that the moment of artistic inspiration does not come easily. I place myself in a receptive state of mind and this is done with the assistance of music. It may be Chris Rea, Van Morrison, Pink Floyd, Def Leppard, or George Strait to name a few.

### **The fusion of the past and present**

From 1972 to 2006 I used the human form exclusively in my paintings and drawings. In 2006 with the addition of horses in my life they became not only practical as models in their availability but soon, seeing them as sentient beings, the human was abandoned in their favor. Upon retirement as an art professor my art now has a new 'sound'. I believe it is raw, a bit like riffing in jazz or trying to tell someone your most recent dream. Parts may not make sense initially but a map to interpretation can be found.

Most recently I have studied my past paintings and drawings of the human form and find newness in them. I begin by partially covering with Gesso or random marks followed by incorporating bringing the horse as it relates to the remainder of the figure and the expressive content of the piece. Mark making is vital in that marks are illustrative of my random thoughts. Residual marks from an eraser or those that show searching for placement or compositional struggle remain and art not cleaned up. They are as much a part of me as the original thought behind the art. I find the commonalities of human and horse to be many. Combining the horse and figure has led to a deeper and more satisfying manner of communication. Hence the result is the fusion of a past and present. Once completed in the 90's 1994 and recompleted around 25 years later.

I once told a friend that I believe all creative endeavors are self-portraits. They are snapshots of a person's mind. If one accepts that as true isn't the interpretation of the creation a self-portrait as well? The resulting art is enigmatic and expressive while paying attention to anatomical correctness. By keeping an open mind, I do not force technique or content and give priority and trust to the unconscious to reveal the expressive content of each painting or drawing.

*Kit Hall, 2023*