

Motion

The Sculpture of Pat Roberts

by Sarah H. Crampton

During her lifetime romance with horses, the sculpture of Pat Roberts has been continually evolving. Accumulating inspiration while accompanying her husband Monty Roberts all over the world to share his Join-Up technique of training horses and benefiting from mentors in the art world has nurtured and empowered the sculpture she now creates.

Pat greatly values the lessons from Jon Zahourek, who teaches classes in human and equine anatomy. Pat explains, "He starts you out with a plastic model of a skeleton, human or equine, and then you develop all the parts of the body beginning with the inside veins, arteries, and so on, then the muscles and finally how the skin lays over everything. It is

very enlightening and makes you so aware of the small nuances that are vital to sculpture."

Some of the best education for sculpting occurred during the years Pat and Monty invested in Thoroughbred yearlings. She accompanied Monty to Kentucky sales to choose young stock they felt would make successful race horses. Critiquing the conformation of the yearlings trained Pat's eye to recognize the musculature and bone structure that shapes a horse capable of galloping effortlessly with fluid motion. Monty and Pat became two of the most successful consignors of two-year-olds in training at the Hollywood Park annual sale.

Monty Roberts presented his "Join-Up" horse training techniques to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, and through her support and encouragement the book *The Man Who Listens To Horses*, a New York Times bestseller, was published. The Queen has graciously invited the Roberts to visit with her on many occasions. Their most recent Royal visit was during this year's celebration of the Queen's Golden Jubilee, which included an event titled "All the Queens Horses," a tribute to the Queen's lifetime interest in horses and the equestrian world. At this event, Monty Roberts demonstrated his technique of gentling a horse to saddle and

bridle utilizing their own language of "Equus."

During this recent visit, the Queen shared with the Roberts that she had in the past displayed in the main dining room at Windsor Castle Pat's sculpture, Join-Up, depicting the trusting moment the horse connects with Monty. Recently, however, she felt compelled to share the sculpture with others and moved it to a place in the hall to be viewed by visitors.

One of the challenging commissions Pat completed came from a referral from an antique business the Roberts frequent. This client was the Viscountess Escania Cobian, who was interested in commissioning an artist to sculpt rearing horses to adorn her 1880 mansion in Santa Barbara, California. The two rearing horse sculptures were intended to be placed over another sculpture of a child holding a dog. Pat immediately felt that the rearing horses would look too threatening over the other sculpture, but agreed to do the commission.

To Pat's delight, the Viscountess Cobian's daughter convinced her the horses would be more beautiful on their own. The sculpture titled "The Royal Horses" are impressive displayed on a table in front of an antique gold-embroidered tapestry.

Roberts admires and collects original illustrations by Edward Borein (1872-1945) a well-known, California artist of pen and ink drawings, etchings and watercolors. A living room wall in her home at Flag Is Up Farm in the Santa Ynez Valley of Southern California displays a collection of Borein's works that are fabulous documentations of California history and his subject and compositions include California missions, cowboys, Longhorn cattle and horses.

Pat's work in progress is a sculpture inspired by an Edward Borein illustration in the book, *The Pinto Horse* by Charles Elliott Perkins, first released in 1927. This sculpture portrays a woman of her day riding sidesaddle, a skill that Pat Roberts has tried and admires the women



Above: Pat and Monty riding on the hillside above Flag Is Up Farm.

Left: Buckaroo - One of Pat's latest bronzes.



Lomitas – A race horse whose successful retraining story is told in The Man Who Listens to Horses. Pat and Monty grew to love this horse.

who master it. I viewed this work in progress in the large, airy, well-lit kitchen Pat has chosen as her working area. The skylight provides proper light to study shape, texture and shadow and allows Pat to continually revisit the sculpture, catching glimpses from all angles while going about her other daily activities.

A favorite sculpture of mine portrays a cowboy roping an allusive stray cow titled "Bringing Her Home" and illustrates Pat's real-life association with horses and study of their conformation. The horse's head connects to the neck in the way a horseman knows translates into a horse that bridles up easily. The weight of the cowboy in the saddle, pitched forward at a slight incline to cluck encouragement to the horse, and the angle the boot sets in the stirrup are evidence of one who has lived it.

Through her years of sculpting Pat has learned to let go of wanting perfection in her work and consequently the dealings with the foundry are more tranquil. Her sculpture has evolved from smooth to more texture, which she feels creates more interest. Like a painter using broader strokes, her sculpture has become a bit looser. She has the confi-

dence to accentuate certain details with the knowledge that some detail will be muted in the process of transferring the clay into bronze.

Cultivating her encounters with the horse world to sharpen her vision, Pat Roberts creatively utilizes her knowledge of the equine and how that relates to motion.

She commented, "Horses and sculp-

ture are all about movement. As an artist, I strive to capture a moment, but even when the sculpture depicts the horse standing still, it must move."

Pat Roberts interprets rather than recreates her world of horses. Although she is interested in accurate detail, it does not overwhelm the spirit of her sculpture.

After viewing Pat Roberts' sculpture and leaving the Roberts' home at Flag Is Up Farm, the bronze images came with me. Their presence and a feeling lingered that is difficult to describe without ruining it, but William Wordsworth seems to have captured it –

*"That motion and the spirit
that impels all thinking things,
all objects of all thoughts
and rolls through all things." ▲*



The Royal Horses – Bronze by Pat Roberts.



Bringing Her Home – Illustrates Pat's real-life association with horses and the study their conformation.