



Rachael McCampbell Finding the Still Place

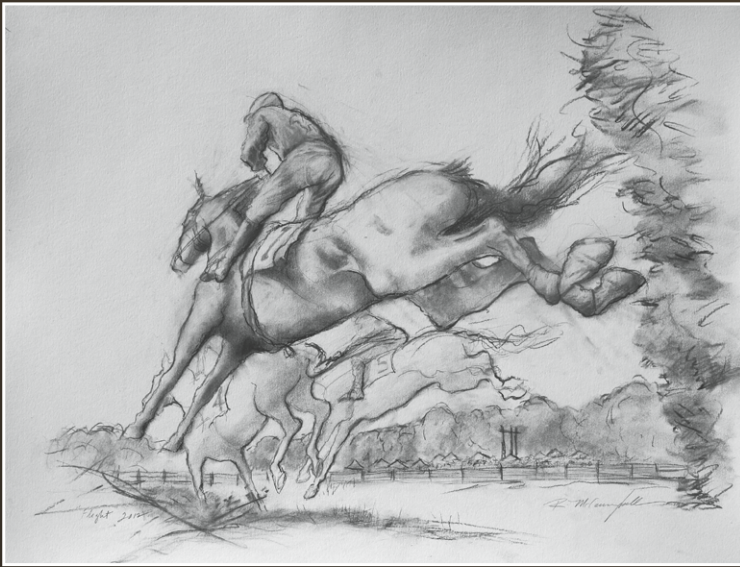
by Robert Hicks | photography by Ron Manville

Without really ever setting out to do so, Rachael McCampbell, the 2012 Featured Artist of the Iroquois Steeplechase, has spent much of her life trying to make her way to that still place in the middle of the whirlwind.

Between her childhood years spent on a farm in East Tennessee, surrounded by a menagerie of animals both domestic and wild, and her life, these days, in Leiper's Fork, McCampbell's life seems like several lifetimes spent in motion. After university to study fine art led her away from the isolation of farm and family, she found her way to Italy, where she entered the world of haute couture in Florence, under the guidance of Emilio Pucci.

From the world of couture, McCampbell next landed in New York, studying fine art, working in a gallery and with an advertising illustrator before entering Christie's prestigious study program in London. Later she made her way back to the U.S. where, as a painter, she was eventually to work in L.A.

Yet, in the midst of the whirlwind of a creative life well lived, McCampbell found herself longing for something that was missing from life in Italy, London, New York, and Los Angeles. Something about the world she was born into, that rural environment, so connected to nature, to the land, to all that she had once escaped, beckoned her home.



Classically trained, McCampbell created the painting in a half dozen or so stages from initial drawings to the finished work over the span of many months. Having survived the Flood of 2010 far better than her house in Leiper's Fork, McCampbell found herself in a new whirlwind as she was forced to relocate her studio several times over the next year and a half. Maybe *Flight* was born out of life's chaos, but whatever the reason, it has emerged as among my favorite of all her work.

McCampbell has captured that very moment of flight as horse and rider have made their way over the jump. We can only guess what will happen next when the painting is somehow 'unfrozen.' Will the rider still be astride?

This is not a picture of a parade of horses before a race or simply a panorama of the festivities. *Flight* is at the very heart of the Steeplechase. While all the pageantry is fun, in the end it is about these amazing horses and their riders. For within that moment in *Flight*, all is at risk, all is possible.

Flight is now finished and work on her house is coming to a close. McCampbell continues to passionately paint and create. And in it all, she continues to seek that 'still place' in the middle of the whirlwind of life.

Flight will finally be unveiled at the Iroquois Steeplechase Committee Luncheon of the Iroquois on Monday, March 26. It will be auctioned off at the Jockey Club Party on the eve of the Iroquois, Friday evening, May 11. The next day, Saturday, May 12, out at Percy Warner Park, more than 25,000 spectators will gather for the 71st Annual Iroquois Steeplechase. ✓

For more information about Rachael McCampbell go to www.rachaelmccampbell.com or call the Iroquois Steeplechase Office: 615-591-2991. *Flight* will also be on view at the opening reception of McCampbell's upcoming equine show at Belle Meade Plantation on Thursday, May 3, from 5:30 to 7:30, free and open to the public.



***Flight*: A work in progress**

So Rachael McCampbell folded her tent and left L.A. for Leiper's Fork, Tennessee. In time, it proved to be the best life move she could have made.

She kept a studio in L.A. for a while, as a safety tether to her past, but as life in Middle Tennessee proved to be the right fit, McCampbell eventually cleared the studio and shut it down. She really was finally 'home.'

Her passion for place, for this environment—the color, order, and sensibility of the land—is at the core of her work these days. And, in much the same way, those horses of her childhood are often to be found there, too.

Her training as an artist, her commitment to the preservation of the rural landscape, and her lifelong passion for horses; all of this combined made Rachael McCampbell the perfect choice for this year's Featured Artist of the Iroquois Steeplechase. Her offering, *Flight*, the official painting this year, does not disappoint.



Flight