

ARTIST RACHAEL McCAMPBELL

INSPIRATION

HORSE

BOUND TO NOTHING BY ELIZABETH WILLIAMS



"Feral Horses I"

From the earliest cave paintings on the walls of Lascaux, to the depictions of Greek and Roman mythology, to the more modern works of Frederick Remington and Deborah Butterfield, the horse has inspired artists of every age. For centuries, the inherent beauty and nobility of the horse, born of its strong and supple lines, its grace and power, have been irresistible to painters.

In the small rural hamlet of Leiper's Fork, Tennessee, in the hills outside Nashville, artist Rachael McCampbell is following in that grand tradition. Rachael is a Tennessee farm girl whose talents as an artist have taken her to Italy, London, New York, and Los Angeles, but whose heart has remained firmly rooted in Tennessee's soil. Rachael lived in Los Angeles for twenty-three years and when her son (and only child) was in high school, she began to prepare mentally for her return home.

For years she had been painting abstracted nudes and wildlife (mainly birds), but suddenly was drawn to paint horses; not soft, still portraits of horses, but large canvases filled with running horses, hooves overlapping and dirt flying. If artists paint their subconscious desires, it could be said that McCampbell was heading back home. "I found that through painting running horses, I could access that wilder part of myself that had been asleep. A new phase of my life was about to begin and I was racing toward it."

She first exhibited this series of horses in Santa Monica, California in the fall of 2006. The viewer stood in the gallery surrounded by

large-scale paintings of horses and felt the energy of them running. "People said they could hear the thundering of hooves and feel the ground shaking. Good, I thought, "They get it!" Besides the action of her subject matter, there is motion in her brushstrokes. McCampbell takes an emotive approach to her work, layering paint, removing it, then, adding it back again until she feels satisfied with the outcome. "I like to draw with charcoal on top of the painted image, rediscovering the line drawings that inspired me to begin with." Her canvases are highly textured with paint that is sometimes mixed with actual soil, "to add an earthiness to it." She splashes and drips paint, then fine tunes her imagery to pull out details that are important to her. "I like mixing abstraction with realism; it gives the eye a place to wander on the canvas, then rest, then move again. I also like juxtaposing movement with stillness. Allegorical tales have always interested me. I enjoy painting horses that tell a story. I like to leave it up to the viewer to interpret what that story is."

Surrounded by protected land and wildlife, her studio in Leiper's Fork offers a sanctuary for her work. "Other than the occasional plunk of a walnut on the tin roof, or the call of geese overhead, it's pretty quiet out around here." When McCampbell needs to take a break from painting, she sits by her year-round creek in the back. Friends on horseback sometimes ride right into her yard for a visit. "Living amidst what I paint is important to me."

Horses have always been a part of her life. McCampbell grew up



"Bound to Nothing II"

“I FOUND THAT THROUGH PAINTING RUNNING HORSES, I COULD ACCESS THAT WILDER PART OF MYSELF THAT HAD BEEN ASLEEP. A NEW PHASE OF MY LIFE WAS ABOUT TO BEGIN AND I WAS RACING TOWARD IT.”

with a horse that was quite stubborn. “She was barn sour and ran me under low hanging branches every chance she could. But when I would arrive to see her, and she’d run across the field like a golden retriever to greet me, all was forgiven.” Even though Rachael doesn’t currently own a horse, she enjoys trail riding with friends. “There is nothing like being on a horse, being an extension of that power and grace. Horses are tuned into our unspoken needs and desires in a unique way; they are remarkable teachers.”

McC Campbell’s horse paintings have appeared in shows across the country from California to New York, to the “Romance of the Horse” exhibit at the Tennessee State Museum in 2010. She has been selected to be the official Iroquois Steeplechase artist in Nashville,



Tennessee in 2012. “I am truly honored to be a part of this long tradition. I love painting horses in action and the athletic racing horses are awe-inspiring. I enjoy the anticipation everyone senses just before a race; it’s exhilarating. To watch the horses run at full speed with the jockey’s billowing silks jumping the hedges, well, it’s amazing! I have been blessed to be a part of the local equine world here: from trail-riding, to photographing fox hunts, to polo matches, to dressage and hunter/jumper competitions to the Steeplechase races, there is a great deal to inspire an artist.”

For more information about Rachael McC Campbell:
www.rachaelmcccampbell.com





Opposite page, top right: "Primal Memory"
Opposite page, bottom: "As Above, So Below"

First row left: "Blue Pony"
First row right: "From Bitter Searching of the Heart"
Second row: "The Place from Which We Start"
Below: Rachael McCampbell painting "Deafening Abandon"

LEARN MORE ABOUT RACHAEL MCCAMPBELL AT WWW.RACHAELMCCAMPBELL.COM



Photo by Ron Manville

"I enjoy working in series, that is, coming up with an idea for a body of paintings and exploring that concept until I feel that I have learned something new about the subject matter and myself."

"I am intrigued by motion and stillness alike and paint horses running and birds flying, as well as in repose. I paint figures too, usually from live models. Often the paintings I make, for example of the abstracted horses, are allegorical and tell a story. I like to let the viewers interpret each story for themselves."

~ Rachael McCampbell