Portraits of the Horse

Photographs by Lindsay Robertson

It's one thing to photograph horses in their environment, whether that is in the wild, in the pasture, barn, or at the show grounds. It is quite another to photograph horses in a studio, and while you really can't bring a horse to the studio, you do what Lindsay Robertson did—you bring the studio to the horse.

The Scottish photographer is well known for his landscapes, having established successful galleries in Glasgow and Edinburgh. For over 25 years, many of his images have been used in international advertising campaigns and specialty calendars. His talent was recognized is 2005 when he was invited to The Hermitage artist's retreat in Englewood, Florida, the U.S.'s only "by invitation" artist retreat. Lindsay was the first photographer to be offered a residency there.

It was during this residency that his work came to the attention of the George Eastman House in Rochester, New York—the world-renowned Museum of Photography.

Lindsay was then given the opportunity to personally bring the Eastman's House collection of Ansel Adams photographs to Scotland. It would be the largest exhibition of Adams' photographs to be shown in the UK and would make Robertson the only UK photographer allowed to exhibit his landscapes alongside the iconic landscapes of the Ansel Adams collection.

Returning from a trip photographing the landscapes around the West Coast of America, he started preparing himself to commence work on a project conceived some years earlier—studio photography of the horse. He wanted to create images of horses unlike anything ever seen before, and on a grand scale.

"The challenge I set myself was to capture the stature and majesty of these amazing animals."

"Murphy"

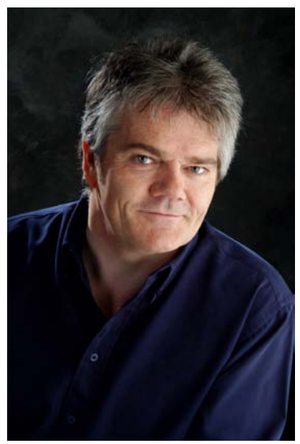
Thus began the task of creating a portable studio that could be driven to where the horses were. No one had ever attempted something like this before so everything had to be conceived from a blank canvas, so to speak.

Lindsay's complex mobile studio involved a huge 700 sq. ft. stage and an enormous 3,000 sq. ft. backdrop of painted muslin cloth that was so large it had to be sewn together in the parking lot of a railway station. He spent a month painting it with mops and sponges and developed a system of large poles to raise it into place. He tows the studio behind his transit van to horse shows and private stables.

This project known as The Equine Series began to generate commissions from horse owners as well as creating limited edition prints to sell. He has plans to bring this mobile studio to the U.S. and Australia, but until then, the public here in the U.S. will have a chance to see The Equine Series exhibit during the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day at the Kentucky Horse Park, April 25–28, 2013.

For three years now, Lindsay has taken his studio to the horses and the results have been nothing short of amazing. With the ability to control the lighting, angles and overall environment, Lindsay has created images of the horse unlike any seen before. Said Lindsay, "Horses are majestic animals with a kind of aura and I wanted to capture the statuesque nature of them." Asked about the difficulty of getting horses to stand in a studio he commented, "The horses are surprisingly well-behaved and the owners obviously helped to get them in the right place."

Spending so much time photographing these powerful animals has had an effect on Lindsay. "This project has overwhelmed me and I so enjoy capturing these truly magnificent animals. When my clients see the resulting images, they are all so thankful—and it humbles me because I just can't believe I have taken the images. To be able to give such a work of art to someone who loves his or her horse is a completely different feeling of satisfaction than I would get from my landscape photography. I think it is far more fulfilling and personal because it is a living creature. I am now hooked on horses."



Lindsay Robertson

"The studio space provides the ideal stage to isolate the horse from its usual environment."

"Symmetry"

"Picasso"

"I so enjoy capturing these truly magnificent animals and when my clients see the resulting images, they are all so thankful—and it humbles me because I just can't believe I have taken the images."

"Showtyme"

"Ed"

"Jenny and Ed"

"Mooney"

"That element of isolation creates the power for a commanding portrait—a singular statuesque image of the horse."

"Blue"

"Hobo and Friend"

"To be able to give such a work of art to someone who loves his or her horse is a completely different feeling of satisfaction than I would get from my landscape photography."

"Prima"

"Images where the scale of the surroundings is sympathetic to the animals' size and presence compel the viewer into the captivating aura, energy and beauty which these glorious animals possess and transmit."

"Old Glory"

"I think it is far more fulfilling and personal because it is a living creature— I am now hooked on horses."

"I want to provide the opportunity for each individual horse to project its dominance, and display its character and spirit within a solitary space."
"Champagne"