

BEV PETTIT

Fine Art Equine Photography





My love affair with horses began as a young girl growing up around small farming communities in Minnesota.

My fondest memories are of spending summer days with my first horse, Mr Schatz, a small spunky bay quarter horse gelding. Those were the days! Often I would pack a lunch and Schatzie and I would wander the green, tree-filled bluffs surrounding the large dairy farms, with no particular plan and not a care in the world. Schatzie and I were dear friends. We needed little more than each other for company.

Far too soon, those glorious summers came to an end when I went off to university. After graduating with a degree in art and art education, I set out to “discover” the world. I travelled extensively, living and working in far-off places such as Hong Kong and London. In Hong Kong I worked for a large American investment bank for six years. Living in Hong Kong allowed me the opportunity to explore the nearby countries of Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore, Thailand, India, Malaysia and parts of China. At the time (the early 1990s), travel to some of these countries was difficult as governments were just beginning to accept foreign visitors within their borders. I carried a film camera





as I travelled the vast countryside and explored the alluring back alleys of the cities while documenting the lives of the people. During holidays (we were fortunate to be given a lot of time off), I would grab my camera, board a train or plane and take on freelance work for international magazines, book publishers or the Hong Kong tourism industry.

After Hong Kong I moved to London, where I continued to work for the same bank for another three years. Suddenly, after a decade of living abroad, I became more and more homesick for rural life in America. This is the longest I had gone without horses to brush, hug or ride. All the glory of international travel and the excitement of seeing new places was an opportunity not to be missed, but I needed horses in my life. I sought out places where horses lived. I even flew to Argentina to spend time on a private estancia where I rode with Guarani gauchos. But it just wasn't the same as having my own horses to bond with. That cinched it. On my return to England I decided I needed to start planning my return to my roots. I just had to have wide-open spaces and horses in my life again.

Upon returning to the United States in 1999, my husband and I bought ranch land surrounded by millions of acres of varying geographic landscape in northern Arizona. We built a home, barn, corrals and a workshop on the land, and began living here full time within three years of returning to America. We have five riding horses that we enjoy riding on the many miles of remote trails right outside our back door. Now, finally settled, I decided to combine my love of art and photography with my love for horses and begin the career I have always dreamed of – photographing horses.

My artistic inspiration most often comes from within. I shoot in RAW format so that I can retain as much recorded information as possible before bringing the pictures into Adobe Light Room. LR is where I organise my photographs and do any initial editing. From here, I open the image in Adobe Photoshop CS for further treatment, utilising Nik Software when I'm looking for a certain effect. I like working with layers in Photoshop so that I am able to go back and fine-tune an adjustment at a later date if need be.



Apart from fine-art photography, I enjoy my work as a commissioned photographer for private individuals and commercial ranches. I also design and create advertising for breeding and stallion sales in national magazines. My art education background has also been a big part of my life. I taught photography classes at a community college in California and am currently teaching online digital photography classes. I am honoured to be the official photographer for the annual Haflinger Inspection in Oregon in July. In October I will be teaching a hands-on workshop at a large ranch in the mountains of northern Arizona with horses, cattle and authentic cowboys as our models. I have been invited to participate in the prestigious Dry Creek Arts Fellowship annual "Trappings of the American West" art show beginning in November in historical Prescott, Arizona.

As photographers, I feel we should all do more "experiencing" before shooting. We should slow down, take our time

and absorb our subjects fully before even picking up a camera. Worry less about the rules of photography. Don't think that if you simply buy the latest and greatest gear, you will get better pictures. Let go of the camera. Embrace your creativity. Convey your passion. Photograph what you know and own it! Don't strive to be better than others, strive to be different from others. Take at least one picture a day and never give up. Keep learning. Photography is a rewarding life-long journey.

As of yet, I have not had the opportunity to visit South Africa. However, I am hoping to visit one day. I would love to experience the beauty of rural South Africa as well as photograph South African horses in their natural surroundings. A safari trip (currently in the research and planning stages) has been on the family bucket list for a long, long time.

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