

A True Cowgirl Artist

A horse crazy girl follows her passion for art.

03-06-2008

If a picture does indeed say a thousand words, then the images created by artist Ruth Deoudes say a great deal about her love of horses and the western lifestyle. The blonde Deoudes, who looks much like a stereotypical outdoorsy cowgirl, gains inspiration from the scenes she encounters every day on and around her small ranch in Salinas, Calif. A look at Deoudes' website (www.cowgirlartist.com) reveals a gallery of black and white graphite drawings of kids and kind Quarter horses, cows and cowboys, mares and foals. A few of her prints are hand-colored in faint earthy hues of blues and browns.

Like all artists, Ruth Deoudes has a creative process. She takes photographs of real life images that intrigue her and then combines elements of these various scenes into an original work of art. For example, a dutiful dog from one snapshot is paired with a pensive young buckaroo from another. The result is a memorable portrait of a young cowpoke with his four-legged barn buddy.

Commissioned portraits are also popular. Using photographs of the subject, Deoudes is able to capture not just physical traits, but emotional ones as well. Such details take time. Her commissioned work requires a waiting period of 6 months to a year.

Deoudes' artistic talent was revealed at an early age. Like most horse crazy girls, she drew horses and ponies relentlessly.

"I rode in Pony Club as a kid," she explains, describing a horsey education that included a youth spent on the north coast of the state. "But I always loved drawing. I was an art major at San Diego State University, but I took a job in banking in the 'real world' first. And meanwhile I drew part-time."

Her first print was "Tools of the Trade," a still-life of cowboy gear that included a pair of well-worn boots and a lariat. That was in 1992, and since then Deoudes has traveled the horse expo circuit selling her prints. She also derives business through her website, advertising and first-hand referrals.

"I've spent the last 17 years doing trade shows," she says, "and for the last dozen years I've been a full-time artist. I draw a couple of hours a day, working out of my art room at home."

"Home" these days means sharing space with several horses, dogs and assorted other animals (including a goat). Her husband is an avid team roper.

"My best piece of advice for aspiring artists is to never let a lack of space stop you. I'll hear some artists say that they're just waiting to have a studio and then they'll really get down to work. But you don't need a studio," Deoudes states. "If you have the passion to be an artist—to draw—find some place, some little quiet corner of a room, even if it's just half of a tabletop, and start creating."

Read on to learn about another equine artist.