

Meagan Kieffer

Artist Statement

As an artist, it has become my passion to capture the grace and natural poise of an animal in nature. The attraction is twofold: I am drawn to formal aspects of working figuratively -- bone structure, muscle tones, folds of skin or fat -- but it's the act itself, *the physical process* of making, that inspires me most. Clay allows me to work spontaneously and confidently as I develop specific proportions. Immediate, simple movements then allow the figure to slowly reveal itself. I relish this act; the pushing of the clay is quick, manipulative, and gestural.

My work often involves images of the horse. This is a response to my past as well as the past of the horse. I was brought up on a ranch in South Dakota where horses were a part of everyday life. As an adult away from the ranch, my love and admiration for this animal began to grow by the mere absence of it from my life. That, coupled with a vintage stack of "Small Farmers Journal" acquired in a trade, deepened my desire to learn about the history of the horse itself. Human fascination with the horse goes back over 5000 years through many cultures. Oftentimes portrayals are concerned with the idea of the supernatural, or superhuman energy. However the horse is represented, I find its history and existence in the actual world more intriguing.

Recently, a "new" method of horse training, using the non-verbal language of the horse to establish a mutual relationship, has gained popularity. This method, however, is not new. Farmers, ranchers, and loggers have been communicating this way for hundreds of years, establishing not only trust and confidence, but companionship as well. It is this relationship that I'm interested in -- the farmer in the field with his team, the direct, physical contact to the earth itself. More importantly, it is the horse sharing in the tasks of daily life. Mechanization is slowly erasing this aspect of history, leaving only the romanticized, often stylized version of the horse we see throughout art history. Through my work, I hope to document the working horse that has contributed so much to man's humanity and progress.