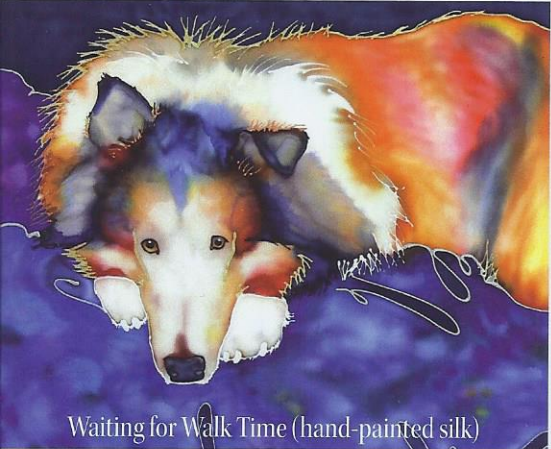




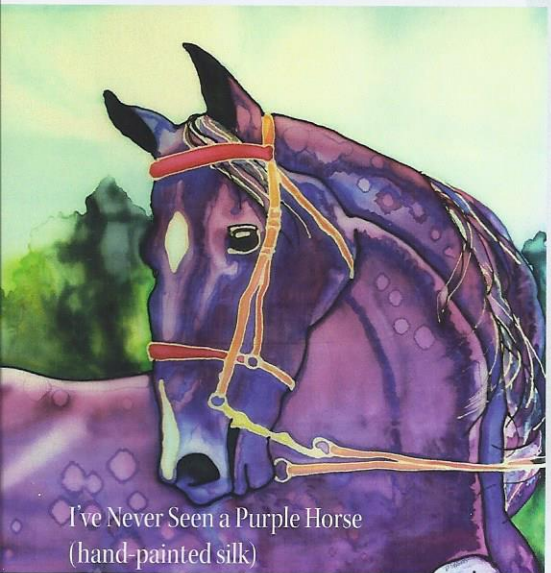
Horse of Another Colour (hand-painted silk)



The Transients: Snow geese (hand-painted silk)



Waiting for Walk Time (hand-painted silk)



I've Never Seen a Purple Horse (hand-painted silk)

Deborah ONE PASSION

Story by Brooke Madley



Deborah Strong

Imagine a brilliant shimmering silk painting of your favourite animal, or having its likeness captured forever by an intricate coloured pencil drawing. Deborah Strong, whose award winning art with its exquisite colours, does exactly that and more.

Deborah grew up in the Fraser Valley of southwestern B.C. on a small farm where there was always a variety of animals: cattle, horses, chickens, ducks, dogs, and cats. She was fortunate to live beside a massive undeveloped land reserve that she was able to wander through at will. Animals were her friends and the land reserve was her playground. Deborah said, "My art reflects my relationship with animals and love of nature, and my subjects range from companion animals, dogs, horses and cats, to

elusive wild creatures in their natural habitats." Deborah still lives in the Fraser Valley. She has a home based art studio where she creates and teaches art full time.

When asked why she chose her method of art, she explained that she loved to draw, and now works in two media: lifelike coloured pencil and vibrant hand-painted silk. Her pencil drawing involves using tiny pencil strokes to bring life to a finely-detailed piece of art. It is a slow, intricate process, and the results are award winning images. The drawing element is also crucial to her hand-painted silk pieces. She starts with a simplified drawing on a piece of silk, and then applies dyes by brush stroke. "The way the dyes flow through silk is mesmerizing and the intensity of colour can be thrilling!" said Deborah. She goes on to say that working in two diverse media brings balance to her work and allows her to express herself in contrasting ways.

Deborah was always keen on art, and determined to make her living as an artist. She had a career in graphic design but eventually left this job to create art full time. She says it was hard work, but never looked back. Deborah has a Fine Arts Diploma from the University of the Fraser Valley. She was awarded Associate Signature Status with the Federation of Canadian Artists in 2013 so she carries the initials AFCA after her name. A believer in lifelong learning, she is always participating in workshops and classes that further enhance her knowledge and skills. She says a highlight was participation in a week long Master Artist's Seminar with iconic wildlife painter Robert Bateman.

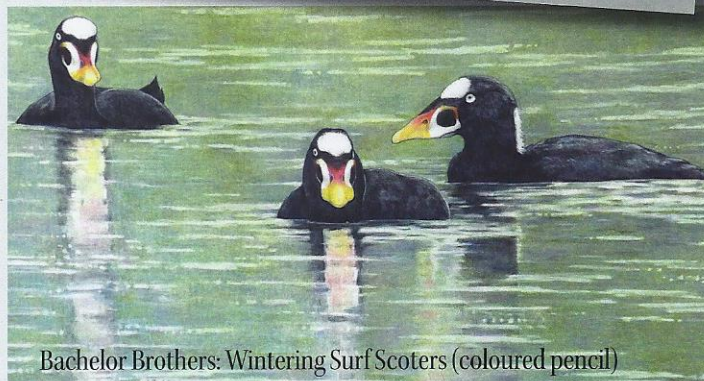
Deborah has always been an artist from the first time she held a pencil. She earned an art award when she graduated from high school and some art scholarships after that. She has won awards at juried exhibitions, and believes that art has been a major influence in how she lives her life. Her family never fully understood her passion, but accepts that it is her path. In 2012, Deborah's drawing, "Solitary Steller's Jay", won First Prize at the Coloured Pencil Society of Canada's National Exhibition in Ottawa. She has travelled and observed the works of many artists, and says that any painting that evokes strong feelings is one that sticks in her memory. Of her own creations, she says each one is like her child, they are all important. However, the most special is a coloured pencil portrait of her horse, Duke, who was precious to her.

I asked Deborah how her artist's life has changed overtime; and this is how she explained it to me: "The transition into a full-time practice was challenging and meant I had to learn a lot about the business of being an artist." Deborah found that many of the skills she had acquired over the years were valuable in the transition – picture framing, graphic design and bookkeeping. She noted, "I never worked so hard as I did to build a viable 'job' for

Strong TWO STYLES



Solitary Steller's Jay (coloured pencil)



Bachelor Brothers: Wintering Surf Scoters (coloured pencil)

myself as an artist. As part of that transition, I began teaching art – both coloured pencil and silk painting – and instruction is now an important part of my practice.” Deborah added, “I find that I enjoy sharing what I know with others, particularly when they have an “ah-ha” moment of discovery or when they realize they are capable of doing something they didn’t think they could.” Teaching art also helps with Deborah’s own artwork, she noted, “I have also found teaching helpful because it causes me to analyze my own art-making process. Silk painting is not a common medium and I have students come from all over to learn about it.”

Deborah identifies with a wide range of art and artists. As long as the creator invested his/her heart into the work and is expressing a unique point of view, she appreciates it. She stresses that her subject matter is always animals.

Right now, she has a growing interest in how birds arrange themselves into flock formations and the patterns that result – whether it’s when they’re in flight or when they’re foraging. This is apparent in some of her recent silk paintings, such as “The Transients: Snow Geese”.

Although her more recent focus has been on birds, horses will always hold a special place in her heart. She said, “I also enjoy depicting horses in unusual colours, such as my silk painting ‘Horse of Another Colour’.” She continued, “I think the intense emotions I feel for horses are expressed through vibrant colour, often shades of purple or blue, and this is a theme that’s been consistent throughout the time I’ve been working with silk, nearly three decades now!”

“My art is always inspired by real-life situations,” said Deborah. She carries her camera and tries to record the subject and place for future reference. She believes strongly that she must compose her art from her own experience, emotion and memory of the moment when she captured the subject on film. Every piece of art she makes has her own story behind it. She makes exception to this when doing portraits of a companion animal that may have already died, or lives too far away. Then she must rely on the photos and commentary of the owners in order to capture the subject’s personality in her

portrayals.

When asked what she likes about her work, and what others like about it, Deborah explained that her work expresses her deep connection with the animal world and she strives to make it clear to the viewer. Often the vibrant colours, the personality of the subject, and in the drawings, the attention to detail, are all things that people say they like.

Deborah’s dream is to set up a second “satellite” art studio in the Gulf Islands. “I’m living my dream of working full-time as an artist. My goal is to keep that going, grow my art business, and hopefully build my Gulf Island studio. In my perfect world, there would be a list of buyers waiting for my next creation.”

If readers are interested in purchasing or finding out more about Deborah Strong’s artwork they can visit her website: www.catmousedesigns.com, Facebook page: www.facebook.com/deborahstrongart or blog: strongartart.blogspot.ca

She is a regular at the Mane Event in Chilliwack every October, and also attends various art festivals such as the Filberg Festival in Comox, B.C. Check out her website for upcoming shows and events where her artwork will be featured. Her work is often on display at the Federation Art Gallery on Granville Island, Vancouver.



Archie (coloured pencil)



My Horse Duke (coloured pencil)



Kramer (coloured pencil)