

Jacqueline Rieder Hud: *Horses of a Different Color*

By Gerrit Henry

Animals have long played a visible role in Western art, but seldom have animals of the equine variety played the central role in European or American art that they do in the body of work offered us by Jacqueline Rieder Hud. Rieder Hud has had a fixation on, even a fusion with, horses from the proverbial Day One: "When I was a child," she remembers, "I always had dreams about horses, and often experienced myself living in the richness of the corral floor itself."

Her first horse did not actually come - for whatever woefully belated reason - until she was in her late thirties. Her painting - heretofore "scary" and "primeval" - "started to become about physical realities with horses. It was a real breakthrough in my own depth psychology."

For Rieder Hud had been working with Jungian therapists and attending Jungian workshops for some time, seeking and receiving precious material for her personal and artistic growth from the unconscious. "The goal is to bring Jung's famous 'shadow side' of the personality into some kind of pattern, bring it to consciousness, and move on to the next level." Jung dubbed the process "individuation." "The process is creative in itself," Rieder Hud observes. "If you add on to it the further part of being a painter, it gets pretty rich."

And Rieder Hud is, despite other passions, a painter, equally as excited to expound on her latest equine friend on the ranch in Montana -- a pure-bred Egyptian-Arabian, this time out, "the hottest of all hot horses" -- as she is to reveal her artistic process. For one thing, on that latter, she likes to keep two canvases going at once, as a way of balancing her inner/outer selves in each. "It's very chaotic in the beginning," she says. "I get a special moment from a photo I've taken from horseback, or a line, or a gesture, and start to see something in that. I use acrylic polymer to tighten up the composition around that, incorporating torn shreds of Rives paper with writing on them, burying them in the medium. Then I loosen it up again to recapture the original image. Then I'll go back into the polymer and paint further with *caran d'ache* crayon." *Spirit Hand Reaching*, from 2001, is an excellent example of Rieder Hud's layering paint with words, the words anchoring image into ground. It gives the viewer the opportunity to read her thought process in the midst of much painterly activity.

No wonder, after that, that Rieder Hud's most achieved paintings are something like postcards from the unconscious, the "shadow side" brought dizzyingly to bear, in near Abstract-Expressionist furor, on things seen further in sometimes blazing light. "Where," Rieder Hud wonders, "do I end and other spirits begin? There's always a road, and the horse and the rider are experiencing the travail of the earth together. My mission is to remind people that we're all coexistent with other spirits." As are we, the viewers, with Jacqueline Rieder Hud in her painting, a good, surprisingly secure, soundly mellifluous place to be.

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