

Katie Upton

Show Ponies

By ERIN J. SMITH / CASA

DRAWING ON A LIFE LONG OBSESSION WITH HORSES, artist Katie Upton has transformed her passion into a successful art career.

“If you love horses, if you’ve spent your whole life around them, you can’t help but be seduced by them,” she said.

Upton fell in love with horses as a little girl while trying to keep up with her older brothers, who had horses of their own. She became obsessed and was given her first pony at age five. She currently has three horses: Boo, Luke, and Chico.

Upton has lived in Santa Barbara her entire life and draws inspiration from her family. “I was an artist from day one,” she said. “I grew up in a family that valued drawing. We used it to communicate and translate ideas.” She learned early on

from her father, who was a mechanical engineer, that every idea starts as a drawing before it can be translated into something. Upton went on to earn an MFA in Fine Arts from UCSB.

Her work has been represented in several galleries throughout the United States, but over time Upton has



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Photo by Sarah Benner



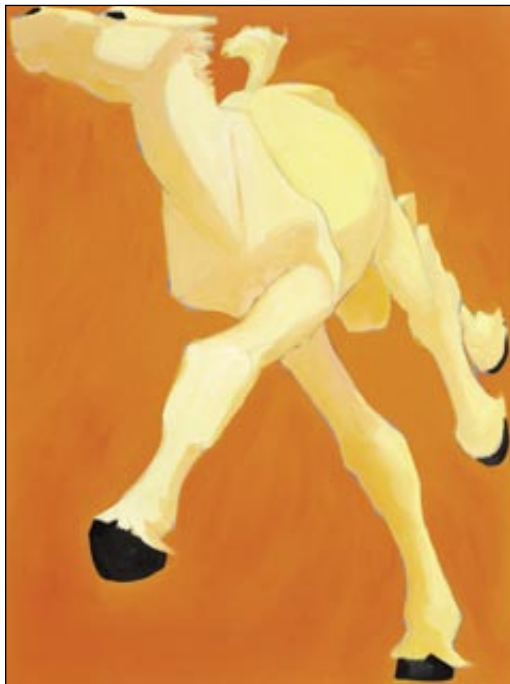
Draft Horse # 25 (2008) by Katie Upton

become more independent, showing work by appointment out of her studio and through her website. “So much of horse art is really traditional: horses are always in a pasture, a stable, or at a race,” said Upton. “I want to overcome the sentimentality and paint the horse as a form, so that it becomes iconic.”

She often works on commission, creating paintings based on people’s horses. While she often refers to photographs for details like a horse’s individual markings, Upton paints freely from memory and imagination in order to capture the personality and character of a horse. “Horses are bigger than life. They’re scary, giant, strong, magnificent creatures. A 14-inch canvas just doesn’t cut it,” said Upton, whose paintings are life-size or bigger. “If my work intimidates someone, if they have to back up to look at it, I know I’m on the right track.”

Upton is currently on the Board of Directors for Hearts Adaptive Riding Center. Each year, Hearts Adaptive nominates a ‘horse of the year’ for their Horse Heroes program, and Upton donates a painting as a fundraiser for the annual auction and hoe down.

Katie Upton’s studio is open by appointment. For more information, call 682-1710 or visit www.katieupton.com.



Foal # 19 (2008) by Katie Upton