

Mary Sand

Bucks County, Pennsylvania

Type of artist: Sculptor and painter - Website: www.marysand.com

Born to European immigrants, Mary Sand spent much of her childhood in Darmstadt, Germany where she learned to ride and found artistic inspiration in their life-size equestrian statues. Upon returning to the states, Mary continued her passion for riding, but swapped her passion for art for a career in satellite communications – only to eventually return to art. Today, she is a full-time sculptor and has her own private barn. Among a long list of accomplishments is her creation of the Hickstead statue at Spruce Meadows. Mary attributes much of her success to her good friend Ursula von der Leyen. Ursula has greatly impacted Mary's riding and Mary says that without her encouragement, she would have never have begun to create the sculptures she is known for today.



Mary and her horse, Ami, at her home.

Photo by Thomas Sand



Mary's studio – a work of art itself!

Photo by Mary Sand

What is the greatest challenge about creating sculptures?

Usually it's the timeline – especially for commissioned work. The customer usually wants the sculpture for a specific event. Each new sculpture is so different and requires time to put together reference material, take measurements, study the reference photographs and create the model in clay. Whenever possible, I work with the horse in front of me when the sculpture is nearly completed and this makes a big difference in refining the characteristics of the horse.

What's the best advice you've ever been given?

To go for it! Shortly after picking up that first bag of water-based clay, a friend of mine was taking a pottery class at the Palo Alto Cultural Center and encouraged me to take the class. The instructor, Norma Lyon, had experience with creating bronze sculpture, so I called and asked if I could attend the class, but instead of working on pottery, I would bring a horse head that I was working on and pick her brain while the others in class were working on pottery. Norma introduced me to plastiline, an oil based clay, talked to me about the bronze casting process and started me on my way.

What are you currently working on?

It's an exciting time. I'm now working on three commissions. Sabrina Hellman, owner of Woodstock, commissioned me to create a sculpture of "Woody" jumping over a fence with trainer Hope Glynn on board, to serve as the Performance Hunters trophy for the USEF with two more editions being cast for her family. The second commission is for Victoria Klein of Portola Valley, California. Her horse Griffin is an eventer and is extremely athletic, muscular and expressive. He's also very affectionate, but we decided on a sculpture concept to reflect his athleticism, with him launching off of his hind legs. From Canada, Marisia Campbell's husband commissioned me, as a gift for Marisia, to create a sculpture of her dressage horse Welte. From the beginning, Marisia didn't want him performing a dressage movement, instead she wanted to capture his relaxed, calm nature so he is standing in a relaxed manner, with his right hind resting. This will create a beautiful and soft image of her horse in bronze.



Mary's statue honoring Hickstead (1996 – 2011). This photo was taken at Spruce Meadows Master's Tournament, following his tribute.

Photo by Ashley Rohmer