

A horse is considered to be 'straight up in the bridle' after

"Straight up in the Bridle"

graduating from the two rein stage. Ideally he

be slightly elevated at the poll, with his

being vertical. He should respond

the slightest signal

the reins and be able

controlled at any

and during any man

A true bridle hor

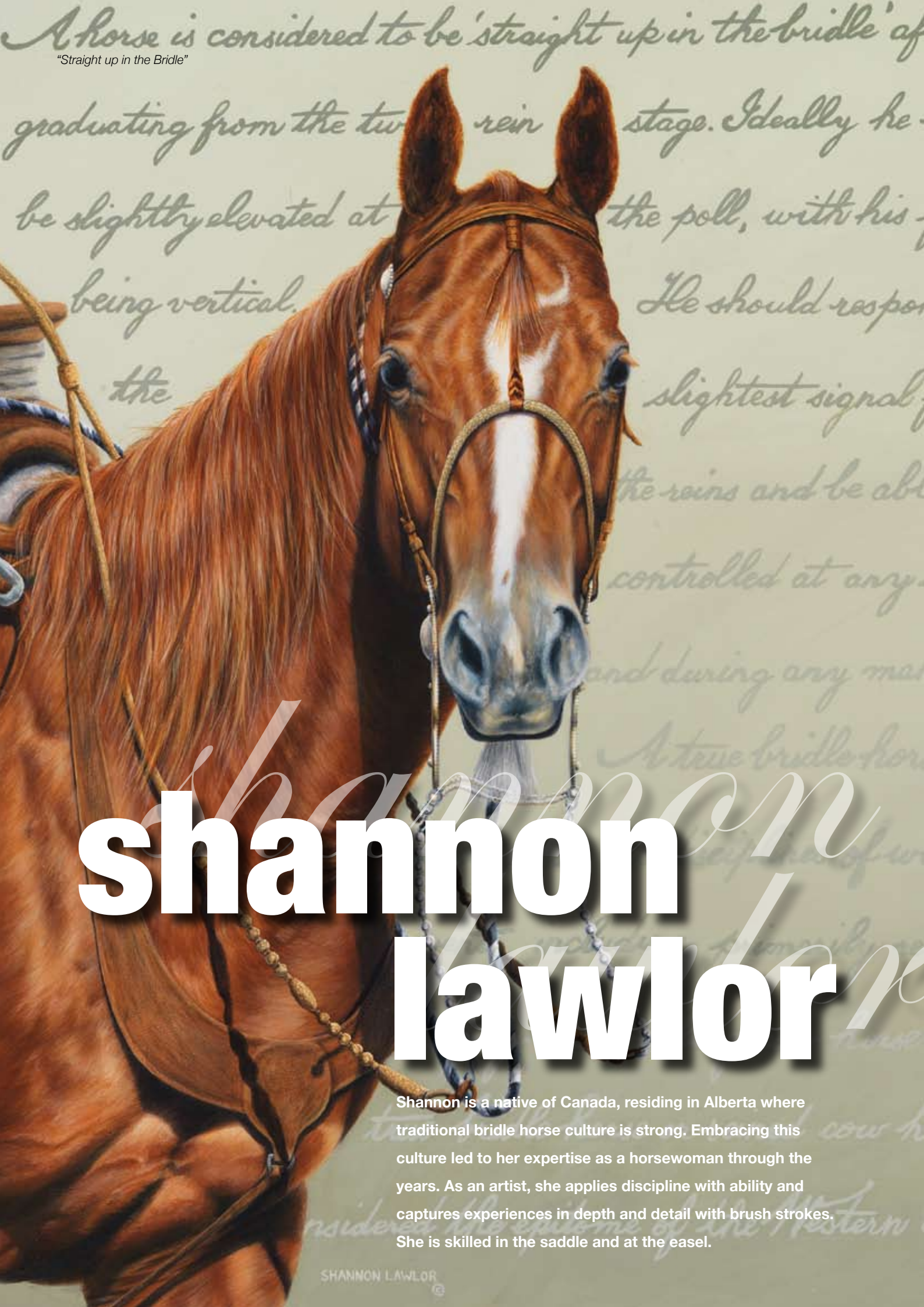
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primarily

now

cow h

considered the epitome of the Western



shannon lawlor

Shannon is a native of Canada, residing in Alberta where traditional bridle horse culture is strong. Embracing this culture led to her expertise as a horsewoman through the years. As an artist, she applies discipline with ability and captures experiences in depth and detail with brush strokes. She is skilled in the saddle and at the easel.



Shannon's style is intense and dramatic. Her images portray the working stock horse and pay tribute to working horsemen following traditions influenced by early Mexican vaqueros in California. She helps preserve true western culture and celebrates the lifestyle of buckaroos in the Great Basin region, north into Canada. Shannon presents Western Heritage Defined.

artist biography

A native of western Canada, Shannon currently resides in the province of Alberta where the traditional bridle horse culture is strong. Her formative years embraced this refined culture which led to her expertise as an acknowledged horsewoman. Always aspiring to be an artist, she developed the discipline and ability to capture infinite moments of real life ranching experiences in her paintings, working with acrylics, oil and graphite. Her hands are skilled both in the saddle and at the easel.

Greatly influenced by veteran horsemen, knowledgeable in the old California stock horse traditions, Shannon's passion for horses and art developed into a quest to combine anatomical accuracy with historical authenticity in her exquisitely rendered paintings. Her study of reality and subject matter lends itself to the structure, depth and detail seen in her pieces.

Western fine art collectors consider Shannon to be a premier bridle horse illustrator. Her commitment to historical accuracy, her first-hand knowledge of the working stock horse and gear along with her continued dedication to honing her artistic techniques result in Shannon's growing recognition in the fine art community.

Shannon's images portray the working stock horse and pay tribute to authentic working horsemen who follow the old traditions influenced by the early Mexican vaqueros in California. Her images help preserve the true western culture and celebrate today's lifestyle of buckaroos in the Great Basin region and north into Canada. Her style is intense and dramatic. Shannon presents western heritage defined.

personal note from shannon

Every concept I paint is my own chosen subject matter. I personally photograph all of my reference shots. Many hours are invested in researching and gathering my reference material because historical authenticity and anatomical accuracy are my highest priorities. Every painting I do begins long before I pick up a pencil or brush.

recent awards

Peoples Choice Award - Cholo. 2008 Phippen Museum Wild Horse Exhibition, Prescott, AZ

People's Choice Award - Bits of Knowledge 2008 Art of the West Art Show & Sale, Kamloops, BC

Acrylic Award Winner - Wind in My Reins. 2008 Phippen Museum Western Art Show, Prescott, AZ

1st Place - Cholo - 2007/2008 Ex Arte Equinus Int'l Equine Art Competition Art Horse Magazine Beaumont, TX

Best of Show - Cholo - 2007 Phippen Museum Western Art Show, Prescott, AZ

Silver Sponsor Award - Artist of Choice 2007 Art of the American West Show & Sale Norco, CA

People's Choice Honorable Mention - Wind In My Reins. 2007 Art of the West Show & Sale, Kamloops, BC

Juror's Choice Honorable Mention - Wind In My Reins. 2007 Art of the West Show & Sale, Kamloops, BC

Best of Show - Color of the Sun's Reflection. 2006 Draft Horse Classic Art Show, Grass Valley, CA

Best of Show & President's Choice - The Best of The Remuda. 2005 Wild West Art Show, St. Paul, OR

"Burnt River"



the creative process...

The painting begins with the idea itself, then the task of gathering good reference material, field travel, photographs, actual objects such as tack or silverwork and discussions with vari-

ous working horsemen, historians – all lead to documenting the facts long before the actual drawing and painting process begins.

After all research material has been digested, I choose specific photographs to use as my reference for the painting. Hundreds of photos

may have been gathered of just one horse, which I narrow down to a select few key poses. The chosen photos are enlarged to 8 x 10 size making it easier for on going review while I'm painting at the easel.

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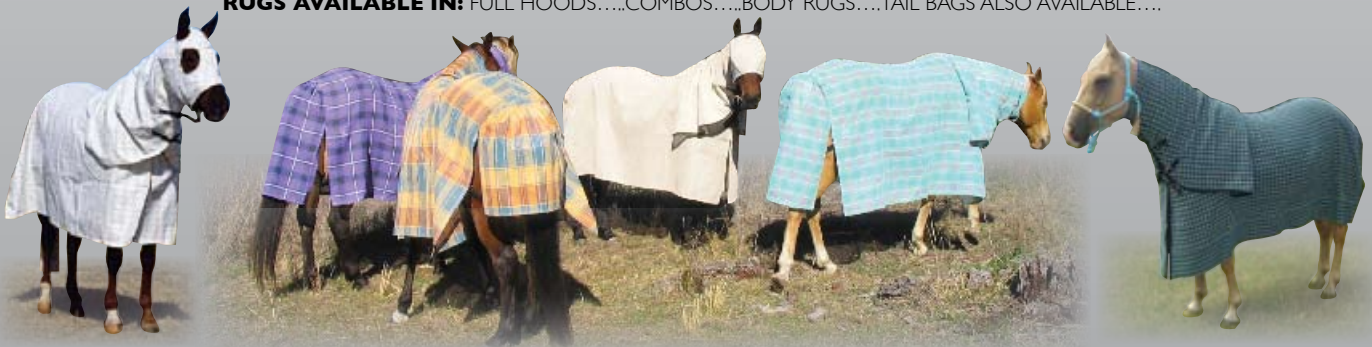
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"King of Diamonds"

the drawing...

Preliminary sketches are key components in my painting process. I will compose a number of thumbnails at the easel. Concepts requiring landscape and scenery require more time and effort than portraits. Always focusing on the anatomical accuracy of the subjects, I may often spend days detailing these preliminary sketches. This is time well spent on my part, ensuring everything retains its proper proportion to the rest of the drawing. Any errors and corrections are worked out at this point and then a final preliminary sketch is done which must meet my total satisfaction before I will start the painting process.

the preparation...

I paint on 1/4" untempered hardboard called masonite. By purchasing large boards and cutting them myself, I retain control over the board size and quantity on hand. Boards are cut to correct sizes, then I begin preparing the surface. I use #80 grit sandpaper to roughen up the smooth side of the masonite, then remove any dirt or grit by using a clean, damp cloth. Keeping the board clean is of utmost importance during the preparation stage. Next comes the acrylic primer applied to the

boards with an airbrush. By diluting the gesso with water (75% gesso/25% water) it allows the gesso to flow properly and evenly through my airbrush. Each board receives 6 to 8 layers of gesso and must dry thoroughly between each application. Sanding is also repeated between each coat of gesso with #120 sandpaper. This evens out the surface, ensuring all flecks, bumps and any imperfections are eliminated during the prep stages. (I also apply coats of gesso to the backside of the masonite to eliminate any chance of warping.) After the final coat of gesso is applied to the front surface of boards, I do a final sanding using #280 or #400 sandpaper with water to ensure the surface of boards are absolutely smooth.

the painting...

My choice of paint is a medium viscosity acrylic and I use Chromacolor brand paint. My palette is limited to only 5 colours - Magenta Deep, Cadmium Yellow Deep, Phthaloocyanine Blue, Paynes Grey, Titanium White. From these colours I can mix every other color I will ever need. Going back to the preliminary sketch, I will now transfer the sketch by using tracing paper to the prepped board in conjunction with a homemade chalk transfer paper. This allows me to see through the paper, knowing where



"Only on Sun Days"

to place the transfer in relation to the board and any background painting I may have already done on the prepped board. This also allows me to keep the drawing handy to use again when needed.

Once my subject matter has been transferred onto the board, I begin to block in the darkest darks and the lightest light colours using the Chromacolor paint, thinned with water to retain a smooth surface. I prefer to add many layers of thinned down paint as opposed to straight-out-of-the-jar thick hard looking paint. By using many layers, a life like appearance and realism can be achieved.

I tend to begin by laying in detail strokes to the painting, less important areas first, working up to the most important areas such as a horse's eye for example. A play on colours is used throughout my paintings – cooler colours where less important, in the distance or shaded areas. And I use the warmer, kinder colours in key areas to draw in and capture the viewer's attention.

summary...

There are many techniques involved with my actual painting process – too many to list and share. Many techniques took me years to learn and practice. Today these many painting techniques come natural to me, almost like breathing. But I am always learning and thinking outside the box when it comes to composing a layout. The creative process and painting itself are two of my greatest joys and two very satisfying aspects of my life.

Years ago I sought counsel in my quest for knowledge of good horsemanship and quickly realized that my desire and determination to learn the ways of the world's great horsemen was of great benefit to me.

I have done my time of hard labor, the necessary work of learning everything I possibly could about my chosen subject matter. I have brought horses into the world and have had the

unfortunate experience of having to take them out. I've raised them, bred them, trained them, held them at birth and held them as they took their last breath. I have loved horses with a passion ever since I can remember.

I have put countless first rides on colts - the thought of which still exhilarates and moves me to this day. I have experienced complete and utter peace with them. I've been enveloped with satisfaction knowing my time with them was well spent, that THEY accomplished something, learned something that will last them until the end. We've both finished a ride feeling a little bit better about ourselves and what we just accomplished. Yes, I've felt their sweat and seen their tears at the very moment they pass. The soreness and weariness from riding so many colts made me lose track of numbers and at times I felt I could not bear to see another. I know how they feel, look, smell and react. I also know how they think, which in turn has been one of my greatest personal joys and allows me to feel like I truly understand the horse.

But most of all I feel blessed to have been in their lives, and their contribution to my life is unequalled. The opportunities I have been offered because of my association with horses on many levels, keeps me grateful for the experience. I have met wonderful people and formed lasting friendships through my association with horses. I am thankful for the time and effort I invested in learning as much as possible about my subject matter before pursuing a career as an artist. I have seen horses in almost every possible situation they find themselves in today. Some situations I was a willing participant, some I quietly observed. But I was there. If I haven't done it, I've seen it done. When asked if I know my subject matter, saying "you bet" with conviction holds no guilt with me.

shannon lawlor

More of Shannon's beautiful work can be seen at www.shannonlawlor.com



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