

HORSE MANIA *RETURNS*

*Popular public art exhibition
makes its third appearance*

By Robin Roenker | Photos by Rick Samuels

Horse Mania is back! And, just as it did in 2000 and 2010, the beloved public art exhibition will bring a stampede of colorful horses to Lexington, adding a welcomed breath of whimsy and artistic inspiration to downtown street corners this spring, summer, and fall.

While COVID-19 delayed the latest Horse Mania — it was originally tentatively scheduled for 2020, to keep with the once-per-decade schedule — the 2022 exhibit timing has nonetheless turned out to be perfect.

The fan-favorite exhibit offers an ideal way for LexArts, the event's organizer, to celebrate its 50th anniversary (see sidebar). Plus, the horses will stand as a perfect greeting card for visitors in town this fall for the 2022 Breeders' Cup at Keeneland. Keeneland and Maker's Mark are co-sponsors of the 2022 exhibit.



*With sketch in hand
artist Priscilla Fallon
greeted her horse and
visualizes how the com-
pleted work might look.*





The Horse Mania horses were delivered to Godolphin at Jonabell Farm in late winter, where participating artists picked them up.

“We couldn’t be more thrilled to provide a 2022 edition of Horse Mania, which coincides with the 50th anniversary of LexArts,” said Ame Sweetall, LexArts president and CEO. “For 50 years, we’ve been providing arts activities, engagement, support, and services for all of our artistic sectors across Lexington. And Horse Mania is just a really great symbolic display of all of the wonderful things that art does for our community.”

Inspired equines

More than 400 Horse Mania horse designs — some bold and playful, some historic in nature, others more emotionally charged — were submitted for consideration by over 200 area artists earlier this year.

Representatives from various horse sponsor organizations, among them agencies like Equus Standardbred Station, Red Mile,

and JRA Architects, then chose their favorite designs from among the entries, resulting in a herd of roughly 70 Horse Mania horses anticipated to grace downtown sidewalks beginning in April.

Dozens of additional full-size horses and smaller foals will also be created as part of an exhibit offshoot called “Horse Play” meant to engage young artists. These horses — created by students at all public and private schools in Fayette County — will also be part of the broader public exhibit. In all, nearly 200 horses will be on display around Lexington.

The chosen Horse Mania artists come from an array of backgrounds and sensibilities, and their varying aesthetics and approaches are part of what make the exhibit so exciting for visitors. Truly no two horses in the event will be alike — and the fun, as with past exhibits, will be the opportunity to enjoy a leisurely stroll through downtown exploring what makes each one unique.

“The 2000 and 2010 installations were wildly popular, and we eagerly await this year’s installation,” said Mary Quinn Ramer, president of VisitLex. “These intriguing pieces of public art will create a sense of community and celebrate our signature industry while bringing delight to visitors and locals alike.”

Selected horse designs include “Golden Gait” and “Sweet Cerulean” by acclaimed local artist Wylie Caudill, whose public murals have graced businesses like Crank & Boom and The Grove.

Both of Caudill’s designs are botanically inspired: Golden Gait envisions a horse covered in ornate golden tobacco leaves, while Sweet Cerulean will be covered in bold, deep blue roses.



Nathan Zamarron, community arts director at LexArts, helped load a Horse Mania horse onto a Sallee van to be delivered to a participating artist.



Maury Sparrow, LexArt's communication director, said the response from artists to the Horse Mania announcement was overwhelming.

“I’m super excited. I love public art,” said Caudill, who will be painting both of his horses in an empty room of his home — since his usual studio space won’t easily accommodate them. “This will be my first time painting on fiberglass on such a large scale. I usually just paint on walls or canvas, so this will be brand new.”

Artist Priscilla Roberts Fallon — who previously participated in both the 2000 and 2010 Horse Mania exhibits — plans to create a 2022 horse inspired by famous works of late Kentucky artist Henry Lawrence Faulkner. Titled “Henry Faulkner’s NightMARE,” the horse will blend well-known motifs from Faulkner’s paintings.

“It will be a collage of bits and pieces of his paintings, which people will recognize,” explained Fallon.

For her “American Horse” design, Fleming County artist Gretchen Bainum, a former elementary art teacher, plans to depict dozens of faces. Many of the faces will honor first responders, at the request of the horse’s sponsor, CHI St. Joseph Hospital Foundation.

“The hospital asked about incorporating first responders, and I am thrilled to do that,” Bainum said. The original concept of the face collage stems from a sketch of interlocking faces that Bainum’s late father had drawn — so adapting it for



Artist John “Bo” Batts works the welder on his entry, the “Bourbon Bay Horse,” made with recycled bourbon barrel rings.

Horse Mania felt like a way to honor both him and recent heroes of the COVID-19 pandemic, she said.

“There will be all different emotions, ages, and backgrounds represented,” Bainum said. “We’re all human, and we all have a full range of sadness and joy.”

In a unique departure from the typical acrylic-paint-on-fiberglass approach most Horse Mania artists will be taking, artists Mike Cooper and Donna Eads will incorporate an array of textured needlepoint designs in their horse, “NEIGHdlepoint.”

In fact, Cooper and Eads plan to engage the skills of needlepoint artists throughout the South to create several hundred needlepoint squares showcasing the jockey silks of Kentucky Derby winners, Toyota Blue Grass Stakes and Breeders’ Cup winners, and iconic Kentucky farms.

The design idea came to Cooper when he saw similar 3D needlepoint works in New York’s Bergdorf Goodman department store by French artist Frédérique Morrel. Cooper has since been in touch with Morrel to glean tips about how best to tackle affixing the squares on the Horse Mania horse. And, he plans to create a private Facebook group for the hundreds of needlepoint artists who will contribute squares for the horse, allowing them to share their prog-

50 YEARS OF LEXARTS

Founded in 1972, LexArts provides grant funding and other support to help integrate arts into the broader community. Its popular events include LexArts HOP, exhibitions at the LexArts Gallery, and frequent, citywide public arts projects.

In celebration of the agency’s 50th anniversary in 2022, LexArts is planning an Anniversary Gala, tentatively scheduled for August.

Find out more at lexarts.org.

ress and get to know one another.

“I think this will probably be one of the largest needlepoint projects ever completed in the United States,” said Cooper, who took up needlepoint as a hobby decades ago. “I think it’s going to be a really fun opportunity to connect with other needlepointers.”

Celebrating Kentucky

Following two difficult years of the pandemic, when outlets for art were frequently shuttered, the “current craving for the arts is at a high point,” said Sweetall.

In fact, when LexArts announced plans for this year’s Horse Mania event, calls to design and sponsor horses began flooding in immediately.

“As soon as we made the announcement about hosting Horse Mania, the calls from artists and sponsors came in,” said Maury

Sparrow, LexArts communications director. “The level of interest has really been a wonderful surprise for us.”

This year — unlike in past events — thanks to funding from the Lexington-based Kloiber Foundation, horses will be provided to both public and private schools for painting, free of charge.

This year’s event will also include four horses sponsored by Breeders’ Cup and the Breeders’ Cup Festival that will celebrate Lexington’s Sis-



Priscilla Fallon’s sketch for her entry, “NightMARE,” is inspired by the works of the late artist Henry Faulkner. Right, artists Mike Cooper and Donna Eads are incorporating an array of textured needlepoint designs into their horse, “NEIGHdlepoint.”

EXPLORING HORSE MANIA

Horse Mania horses are expected to be on display April through November. Download the new LexArts app (currently in development) for a complete map of horse locations — plus a day-by-day calendar of arts events happening around Lexington.

ter Cities. These four horses will be created by artists flown in from Newmarket, England; County Kildare, Ireland; Deauville, France; and Skinhidaka, Japan.

Additionally, Independence Bank is sponsoring three horses whose auction proceeds will support rebuilding efforts in the tornado-ravaged communities of Madisonville, Bowling Green, and Mayfield.

In addition to these various avenues of goodwill, Horse Mania provides a perfect opportunity to pause to celebrate all things horse-related and all things Kentucky.

“The return of Horse Mania puts an exclamation point on a year in which we have so much to celebrate here in Central Kentucky,” Keeneland President and CEO Shannon Arvin said. “We are thrilled to be a co-presenting sponsor with our partners at Maker’s Mark, and we look forward to sharing these beautiful works of art with fans from across the globe attending the Breeders’ Cup World Championships at Keeneland.”

Keeneland will auction the horses in December with proceeds to benefit local arts initiatives. **KM**



John Batts hand forges each bourbon barrel ring to hold to the shape of the horse’s body.