



Artist producing Musical Ride series

By RICHARD DE CANDOLE

Equine artist Joan Larson of Creekside Studio in Coombs has embarked upon the most ambitious project of her 30-year career – a series of 25 pastel paintings celebrating the RCMP Musical Ride.

And she plans to have the series completed in time for the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

“A couple of years ago my husband Paul was talking to the manager of an RCMP souvenir store and he discovered there has not been a comprehensive body of fine art paintings about the Musical Ride,” said Joan.

She spent a week last year taking photos at the Musical Ride training facility in Ottawa and has already completed the first five paintings. The



Painting No. 2 in her Musical Ride series

plan is to keep the series of originals together as a single body of work for display in exhibitions across Canada.

Joan's love of horses and art is an enduring one. She had to leave behind her first pony at the age of 10 when her family moved from the rural farming community of Sexsmith, AB

to Victoria.

Throughout her teen years she was encouraged to pursue her interests in horses and art. Studies at the Banff School of Fine Art, Camosun College and UVIC finally prompted her to enroll at the renowned Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California. She spent the next 10 years in California, studying and then owning and operating a gallery and framing business there.

Returning to Canada in 1986 she continued to build upon her valuable experiences in California by specializing in equine artworks and portraits. In the fall of 1988 she rented a booth at the international show jumping competition at Spruce Meadows outside of Calgary. She was overwhelmed by the reception that her work received.

“I came in as an unknown artist and left with enough commissions to keep me going for a year,” remembered Joan. This fall marks her 20th year at Spruce Meadows. “It's the one show we go to every year.”

In 1997 Joan and her family purchased an acreage in Coombs and opened Creekside Studio. Her husband Paul S. Smith took charge of the marketing and distribution allowing Joan to concentrate on her painting.

Since opening the studio,



Joan Larson with husband Paul Smith

Joan has also been pursuing an interest in landscape painting with a particular passion for the rugged west coast scenery.

Over the years Joan has been invited to numerous exhibitions including shows in Shanghai and New York. Later this month she travels to England to mount an exhibition at the Look Gallery in Helmsley, Yorkshire.

Her work also came to the attention of Sono Nis Press. Book cover illustrations were followed by an invitation to illustrate a children's book entitled “Yetsa's Sweater.” Since its release date in September of 2006 “Yetsa's Sweater” has been nominated for four

awards.

Joan is an Associate Member of the Federation of Canadian Artist, holds Premiere Pastelist designation from the Pastel Society of Canada and is one of only four members in Canada of the acclaimed American Academy of Equine Artists.

Joan also teaches two “pastel” sessions a year at the Old School House Arts Centre in Qualicum Beach. A show by Joan in November at TOSH will provide a preview of her Musical Ride artworks.

Creekside Studio is located at 1471 Winchester Rd. Call 752-0395 or visit www.joan-larson.com

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