

Susan Sommer-Luarca's Biography

Growing up on a horse ranch I was exposed to many horses of different conformations, dispositions and colors. As professional horse breeders my parents had daily conversations and I would listen intently about the details of conformation both good and bad and how to breed for the best possible outcome. I am also a horse owner and breeder as well as an enthusiast for horse sports. Being constantly surrounded by these majestic animals and inspired by their beauty and personalities I strive to capture them in my art.

My parents supported my love for art wholeheartedly. When I couldn't be outside with the horses, I was inside trying to capture them on paper. I was focused from the beginning on getting their form as true to the individual as possible. I trained myself with a lot of encouragement and constructive criticism from my loving parents. My childhood room was decorated with three posters. One of the posters featured the skeletal bone structure of a horse, one with the musculature, and another of the aging horse, teeth changes, bone changes, and other traits as well. My father gave the posters to me as a way to help me understand where the shadows fall on the body. My parents gave me all the materials I ever wanted, from paper and paint to an easel and a drawing table. They would challenge me to draw certain horses or objects around the farm, and would only give praise when it was really, really great.

Spanning my entire career, I have gone in many different directions with my art. In the beginning, I took on many projects just to keep the cash flowing. I found that my attention to detail and correctness while growing up helped me with any project I wanted or needed to pursue. I enjoy creating many styles, subjects, and mediums. I have explored many genres of art that did not focus on horses such as Animalia, humans, realism, abstract, giant murals, in both painting and sculpture; however, my focus has evolved and come full circle right back to horses. The constant challenge and thrill is finding new ways to portray these animals that stay true to form yet have the composition and color to complement and enhance the walls of any interior design.

Susan Sommer-Luarca grew up on a ranch in southwest Missouri. A self-taught artist, she was drawing and painting the many horses on the farm with great attention to detail at a very young age. Susan has now been painting fine works of art for more than thirty years, capturing humankind, wildlife, all things equine, and the world around us for all to enjoy.

Susan was chosen for the very rare and distinguished honor to be an Official Olympic Artist for the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. Susan was honored again as Official USA Olympic Artist for the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver. Being chosen to be an "Official Olympic Artist," Susan follows in the footsteps of other internationally known artist including Andy Warhol, Leroy Neiman, Peter Max, Michael Delacroix, Pierre Matisse and very few other artists who have had this honor.

Susan has been chosen to paint at all three Triple Crown horse races, including the Breeders Cup World Championships and the Travers at the famed and historic Saratoga racetrack in New York. Susan was the first artist to be chosen to paint at all of these events in a single season and has been honored recently as the Official Triple Crown artist. Susan is the Official Artist for Jockey Victor Espinoza and is the commemorative artist for American Pharaoh during his bid for the Triple Crown. Susan has also been

the Official Artist of many Kentucky Derby and Preakness winners, including California Chrome, I'll Have Another, and Big Brown.

Susan has been commissioned to create sculptures of renowned subjects such as Seattle Slew and his jockey Jean Cruget, and just recently completed a commissioned life-sized bronze of a national champion Arabian horse. Susan's sculptures capture human and animal life from table-top sized pieces to life-sized and beyond. Susan is one of the world's most renowned equine artists, but she also excels in a varied subject matter in any number of different mediums and styles has been recognized throughout the art world from her abstracts to realism, fine art paintings, and sculptures.

Susan was invited to paint at Super Bowl XLII in 2008 by the NFL. She completed two paintings LIVE of the competing quarterbacks Eli Manning and Tom Brady, and those paintings were unveiled on FOX "Super Bowl Sunday" to millions of television viewers worldwide. In addition, NASA invited Susan to paint LIVE to commemorate the last space shuttle launch of Discovery, at Cape Canaveral, She is the only artist in history to have this honor. Susan also joins the late Thomas Kincaid as the only two artists in history to be invited to paint the famed Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree LIVE in New York City.

In 2003, Susan was commissioned to create Official Paintings for the P.G.A. Nationwide Tour. She was the first woman chosen for this distinguished honor. Susan was honored again when she was chosen in 2004. Both paintings were inducted into the Sports Hall of Fame in Susan's Home state of Missouri.

Susan received the prestigious Ellis Island Medal of Honor in New York City May 7, 2011. She joined medal recipients; Legendary Entertainer Jerry Lewis, Actress Doris Roberts (Everyone Loves Raymond), Actor John O'Hurley (Seinfeld), Legendary NFL Coach Don Shula, & FDNY Commissioner & 9-11 Hero Salvatore Cassano. Past Ellis Island Medal of Honor recipients include six Presidents of the United States, Nobel Prize winners, athletes, leaders of industry and others whose work has made a lasting impact on humanity. They are awarded annually to outstanding American citizens, from all walks of life, who have distinguished themselves through their significant contributions to this country. The Ellis Island Medal of Honor ranks among the nation's most prestigious awards. The U.S. Senate and House of Representatives have officially recognized the Ellis Island Medals of Honor, and each year the recipients are listed in the Congressional Record.

Susan's work has been seen and aired by many of the national media outlets including NBC, ABC, CBS, FOX, ESPN, New York Times, LA Times, LIFE and People Magazine just to name a few. Susan and Sheryl Crow performed LIVE together on stage during a special performance in 2013. Susan's unique ability to perform her art LIVE for high profile events is much sought after.

Early in Susan's career, she was an artist for Bass Pro Shops headquarters in Springfield, MO. She then traveled extensively for Bass Pro, creating giant works of art across the country during their corporate nationwide expansion. In 2006, Susan started her own wildlife conservation and preservation foundation, "Susan Sommer-Luarca for Habitat". Susan is committed to her vision of garnering awareness to the preservation of wildlife and its natural habitat.

Susan served as a board member, national spokesperson, and helps raise funds for the Alzheimer's Association. Susan began the first "Memories in the Making" painting therapy for Alzheimer's patients in southwest Missouri. Her mother was stricken with early-onset Alzheimer's. Thanks to the program, this therapy is now benefiting many patients yearning to express themselves.

Susan is the Official artist of the Cattle Baron's Ball, and in addition, provides painting therapy for children suffering with the disease by creating an original art piece with them and their families each year. Her tremendous efforts benefit the largest fund raising event for the American Cancer Society. Susan and her husband have lost several family members and friends to cancer, including their parents, so this cause is also very near to her heart.