

HBL



Artist Marie Sand with one of her magnificent horse paintings. The painting is named Anger.
Photo: Richard Nordgren

The Woman Who Can Speak with Horses

“When you spend time with horses, you develop your sensitive side,” says artist Marie Sand. For her, horses mean security, but they are also one of her favourite motifs.

Marie Sand was eight years old the first time she sat on a horseback. She was terrified and fell off as soon as the horse turned around. Despite that, she stubbornly returned to the stable each week.

“I was scared, and my parents tried to make me understand that I didn’t have to go horseback riding. But I insisted.”

“The horse helped me to feel alive.”

When Marie Sand realised that she is a sensitive person and that the horses seemingly intuitively understand that, the fear disappeared.

“It is, of course, selfish of me to think that the horses understand me and that I therefore feel good being around them. But I always feel safe with them.”

“For me, horses are synonymous with freedom.”

Do you feel more secure with horses than with humans?

“No, not any longer. When I was young, I learned to accept who I was and that I’m a highly sensitive person.”

Not intrusive

According to Marie Sand, the relationship and the unspoken communication between human and horse is always on horse’s terms.

“The horse is close to us humans, but you can never steal its attention away. The horse is wild in its nature. And if you study a herd, you will notice that horses play different roles in the herd.”

“You can never force yourself onto a horse. It’s like you Finns – you don’t force yourself onto others, instead you’d rather keep your distance, and I’m very comfortable with that.” Sand says and breaks out in a contagious laughter.

Marie Sand is married to the French ambassador in Helsinki and has lived in Finland for two years. She has her studio in the private quarters of the residence. Drawings of horses decorate the walls, and on the floor there is a painting waiting to be framed.

The interest in drawing and painting came early, but Marie Sand only realised the importance that horses held for her far later. She knew she had a creative zone inside her, but when she fell sick with lymphoma at 25, she found her survival zone.

“When you are very sick, you enter a phase of belief in survival. Throughout it all, I was sure I would survive the cancer, and I would argue that the drive for survival is as strong as the drive for creating.”

The lust for painting returned when she fell ill. The favourite motif is horses, but Marie Sand has also painted nature studies and cityscapes.

Talking about her favourite artists, Marie Sand mentions names such as Vincent van Gogh, Vermeer, Helene Schjerfbeck, and Maria Wiik. That they are all from northern countries is not a coincidence.

“The light in the north is fantastic. People often complain that Finland is so dark in the winter, but the light by the sea on a November morning is incredibly beautiful.”

The horse is the model

Apart from painting, Marie Sand works with helping other artistically minded people to make use of their sensitive side.

This Saturday, she guides the participants in the art project *A Horse in the Living Room*. The main roles are played by the horses Santtu and Mimi, who are modelling for the participants. They get to practice drawing the horses but are simultaneously instructed to use the sensitive half of their brain for the artistic process.

Swedish Speaking National Daily Newspaper in Finland (50,000 – 100,000 prints/day), May 3, 2019

“In order for you to understand the horse and for the horse to understand you, you must leave your analytical side behind and descend into your sensitive side,” Sand explains.

“The experience is almost the same as during a morning walk. You enter your body and get in contact with your emotions.”

The happening *A Horse in the Living Room* has been arranged twice before in Helsinki, and it has also been a success in Rome and Paris.

Annika Hällsten, 029 080 1331, annika.hallsten@ksfmedia.fi

Profile

Marie Sand

- Family: Married to Serge Tomasi, the French ambassador in Finland. The couple has lived in Helsinki for two years.
- Career: Artist, has studied art in Washington and Paris. Has also worked for World Wildlife Fund (WWF).
- Currently: The event *A Horse in the Living Room* that is arranged in Pannuhalli at the Cable Factory, Saturday May 4, 14:00-26:30. The participants get to practice drawing a live horse, guided by Marie Sand. If you are interested, you can sign up for the event on the website mariesand.com.
- Has an exhibition running at Galleri Skarpans in Mariehamn, opening May 29.
- Artists I like: van Gogh, Vermeer, and Helene Schjerfbeck.