



Day's End

by Mona Majorowicz

Belgian Beauties

I recently attended the Albert City Thresherman's event. The final event of the day was a draft horse agility contest. There were around a dozen teams of horses and mules participating that evening. While I was watching the various teams competing, I kept turning around and taking a few snapshots of these two as they waited for their turn. I loved the way they interacted with each other. The sun was setting and creating all sorts of dramatic shadowing. I was enthralled. Eventually I quit watching the competition altogether and just focused on them. After several rolls of film I realized that they were the next painting, for which I had spent the entire day looking.

These horses, in reality, were dark red in color. I liked the actual red tone coloring, but I thought it was in the best interest of

the painting to make them more blonde. The lighter gold coloring offered greater contrast with the shadow areas of rust and purple.

Another change I made was to add some mane. Though they had full manes, they were not visible at this angle. Their forelocks had been clipped short, as is common in working drafts. I could not help myself. The artist in me needed to see some golden hair fluttering in the breeze.

An Experiment in Details

My experience with oil pastels thus far has led me to believe that they are not a detail medium. In fact, it is one of the things I really like about them. They force me to loosen up a bit. So for this piece, which is all about the details, I took it as a challenge to see just how much fine detail I could pull out of these quarter inch thick crayons. The harness is somewhat more intricate than I have done before. Failure is always on my mind. Viewing this as a learning exercise

helped me to move forward.

Surprisingly, it was quite easy to create the effects of the leather strips for the fly harness. After I put in the under painting of the horse's body, I drew in the lines for the straps. First black; then periwinkle; followed by gray and finally a terracotta coloring to add earthiness.

The Mystery and Magic

It has always been a bit of a mystery to me how my paintings come together. I just sort of scribble in color and move it around for awhile. I think about highlights and shadow areas and put in lighter and darker values. But the technique itself is really quite random. It seems odd to say it, but it happens almost without any focused thought. I keep laying in color until I stop to really **look** at it. I just hint at certain details, by suggesting them with line or color. Then I step back and from a few feet away, a completed image has formed.



Finishing Touches

Once again, when reaching that point of wondering what to do with the background, I paused. The horses just pop off the whiteness of the unpainted board. The light and shadows that are already there, make them look quite dimensional. I knew that as soon as I added the background, whatever it would be, the dimensional look I had thus far would be greatly diminished.

After some thought, I chose to go with something simple. I put in a blue sky that lightens almost to white at the horizon, as well as some grassy shadows on the ground. This added depth and seemed to push the horses back out toward the viewer. Also, I went in and added a buttery yellow color to the lightest portions of the horses. They were a little too peachy in color. This did not become apparent until after I put in the background, as did the fact that I got a little carried away with my use of purple. Apparently there *is* such a thing as too much purple. Who knew?

Days End was completed in a short amount of time. It is often hard to know when to stop working on a painting. I think it could be possible to continue tweaking a painting forever. There is comfort in just continuing to work on an image. It allows me to feel creative and productive. Although this true in a way, it is also sometimes a fact that nothing more is being accomplished. I believe it was Picasso who said that he never really finished a

painting. He would just sort of give up on it.

Parting Thoughts

We recently have had many storms pass through, which has left our farm soggy and battered. After the latest, I was out walking the pasture, looking for downed branches and shingles. While doing this, my horse followed me about, taking nibbles of grass every few feet. I was rushing around trying to get done as quickly as possible. There were more chores to be done than there were hours left in the day.

Chicory patiently followed me, as always the courteous gentleman. Whenever I would stop for even just a moment, he would softly nuzzle my back or arm. After a few of these gentle persuasions I finally got the hint and took a break. I just stood there in the misting rain, leaning against his warm body and watching the flood waters flow through the low spot of the pasture. I let myself get absorbed in the pleasantness of it all. It is a wonderful feeling to let the quiet and stillness get inside.

It was with this feeling of peace that I worked on my latest painting, *Days End*. I wanted the horses to convey their harmony and contentment with each other and their surroundings. When working on my art, I draw upon my relationships with my animals.

It is often said that you should paint what you know. Which I do. But more so than that, I paint what I feel.

Mona Majorowicz is a professional working artist.

She and her husband, Mike, own and operate Wild Faces Gallery in Rolfe, Iowa. If you would

like to view her artistic journaling, see work in progress, view photos, or

order a print of "Days End" or one of many horse images available, please visit her website, at www.wildfacesgallery.com