

By LOIS H. FEINSTEIN
Photography SUSAN ARMITAGE

ammie Lundeen's artistic inspirations travel at gallop speed. The Loveland sculptor admits she is never at a loss for ideas, only the time to complete them all.

World-renowned for her bronze animal creations, especially those of horses, Lundeen acknowledges that for her, conception is the most exciting part of the sculpting process. "I get an energy about it that is almost overwhelming," she explains. "Sometimes I have to stop myself from abandoning a work in progress when an idea for a new piece hits."

Lundeen's horse sculptures somehow transcend their static medium. Her subjects are caught in the process of doing something, whether it's a mare encouraging her foal to take those first steps or two draft horses rubbing heads to ease an itch. When she sees

Cammie Lundeen is world-renowned for her bronze animal sculptures, especially those of horses. She likes to capture her subjects in the act of doing something.



W



Horses have been part of Lundeen's life since her Iowa girlhood. She's now working with reining horses, teaching them intricate moves at high speeds.

something that strikes an emotional chord, the sculptor tries to remember it and evoke that same emotion in the piece. She works from photos, videos and memories.

In her large, bright studio just off Loveland's downtown Fourth Avenue, there are pieces in all stages of completion. A small clay horse's head sits on a work table, while large finished pieces line

the walls of the studio. The dental drill-like buzz from the metal chasing room provides background noise, and the soft smell of melted wax permeates the room. Every phase of the sculpting process, other than the actual pouring of the bronze, is accomplished on the premises.

After settling on an idea for a new piece, Lundeen literally takes a lump of clay and begins to mold and shape it

into a miniature version of the finished sculpture. This initial stage is critical — she takes the time to make sure that the hairs of the mane lie correctly and that the musculature of the animal is well defined, but not exaggerated.

Using sculpting tools and her hands in equal measure, Lundeen transforms the clay from a lifeless block into a model that looks ready to walk, canter or trot off the pedestal. However, the road to being cast in bronze comprises many steps.

Lundeen uses the centuries-old "lost wax" method to progress from model to finished sculpture. Once the clay model is detailed to her satisfaction, a rubbery mold is applied over it and left to harden. Then melted wax is poured into the mold, creating a wax replica of the original model. When the wax has hardened, a ceramic or plaster shell is molded to its outer side. This is the shell into which the molten bronze will be poured after the wax has been melted out. The pouring of the bronze is the only step not done in her studio; there are a number of foundries in Loveland that handle that step.

Since many of Lundeen's sculptures are life-size, the bronze pouring is often done in pieces. After the bronze has been poured and hardened, the pieces come back to the studio for "metal chasing," which involves welding, smoothing any seams and restoring any details that may have been lost during the welding process.

Once the piece is assembled, Lundeen oversees the coloring or "patina" of the sculpture. During her 22 years of sculpting, she has assembled a palette of different colors and effects, using a variety of chemical processes to achieve the desired look. When the sculpture is complete, it is packed and shipped to one of the many galleries showcasing her work or to a specific client if it is a commissioned piece. The entire process takes from 12 to 14 weeks.

Lundeen's life-size horse sculptures, generally too large for the typical art lover, have been commissioned by private collectors and institutions throughout the United States. Her work can also be found as far away as Finland, Venezuela and England, and her smaller bronzes are featured in galleries in Beaver Creek, Colo.; Scottsdale, Ariz.; Jackson Hole, Wyo.; Carmel, Calif.; and Harbor Springs, Mich.

Lundeen's sculptures have received many awards and honors, including



This appealing bronze of a mare and foal demonstrates Lundeen's talent with bronze. She and her husband, George Lundeen, are part of the Lundeen family sculpting dynasty.

those from the Pen and Brush Annual Sculpture Exhibition and the Society of Animal Artists.

Horses and art have been an integral part of Lundeen's life from her Iowa girlhood through her summer job driving draft horses on Mackinac Island (where autos are prohibited) to her current passion for working with reining horses. She proudly shows a DVD of herself riding one of her horses, Done It in the Dirt, during a recent Denver horse show reining competition.

Reining involves teaching the horse intricate moves at relatively high speeds. The process seems to be a metaphor for Lundeen's own artistic methodology — creating exquisitely detailed bronzes as quickly as the ideas spring into her head, but always with an eye to perfecting the finished sculpture.

Lundeen discovered her passion for tactile art forms while majoring in special education at the University of Iowa. "I squeezed every art class I could into my schedule," she recalls. "I liked

painting and pastels, but when I took my first pottery class, I was hooked. I'm definitely a three-dimensional thinker."

Yielding to her enthusiasm, she packed up and moved to Loveland, enticed by the city's reputation as a gathering place for sculptors. Finding work in sculptor Mark Lundeen's studio (no relation at the time), she learned every step of the sculpting process and studied the work of the many artists who used the studio's facilities. Soon she was creating and selling her own sculptures — her early success enabled her to establish her own studio in Loveland.

While working for Mark, she became good friends with his brother, sculptor George Lundeen. The friendship blossomed into a romance, and, through marriage, she became part of the Lundeen sculpting dynasty, which also includes sister-in-law Bets Lundeen and cousin Ann LaRose.

"We're like the Flying Wallendas, only we sculpt instead of working on the trapeze," jokes Lundeen.

Although George Lundeen's work focuses on people, not animals, the two share a love of the art form and exchange ideas about their work. "I learned a lot about sculpting from George, and still today I rely on him to provide an expert eye and guidance," says Lundeen. The two have separate but neighboring studios so that they can easily communicate while maintaining individual work spaces.

The two sculptors live on a 20-acre spread near the Big Thompson River, where, in addition to a daughter and two sons, they provide a home for cats, dogs, chickens, goats, eight horses, a miniature donkey and some cows. "George teases me about having my own petting zoo," laughs Lundeen. "But I am the favorite aunt when it comes time to visit."

With that remark, the sculptor, mother and horsewoman turns and faces an untouched lump of clay, preparing to bring it to life as yet another work of art.