

Running with Horses

The Portfolio of Marc Jaffe of South Salem

Written by Richard W. Stevenson

The Westchester County Times

January, 2005

A man who runs with horses is a rare bird indeed, but a guy who takes pictures as he runs with horses is probably unique.

Marc Jaffe of South Salem does just that, and when his pictures are printed on large-scale vases they make a painterly and riveting impact. "It all happens in the camera," said Jaffe, meaning that there are no postproduction tricks involved in what he does. He creates images where, as he said, "something is still and something else is whipping," resulting in photographs that look like Impressionist paintings.

He uses film, he is deep into digital photography and he has long been devoted to the arts and mysteries of light painting, the fiber optic technique from the last years of the 20th century that still has its adherents.

Whatever the project, Jaffe craves instant gratification so he generally processes his work right away to see how it went. "It's either right or I go back and do it again," he said.

As a kid, said Jaffe, "I grew up around art, my dad is a photographers, sculptor and a painter. Seems to be in the genes. I am happiest when I can use all the different skills I have developed; Web guy, technician, fine art photographer, designer and consultants." In his 44 years Jaffe has been an editor for an extreme sports video company, owned and run a commercial photography studio, owned a full service custom photo lab, been an airbrush illustrator, a retouch artist and darkroom technician.

In addition to his life as an artist, Jaffe is currently a Web site designer and a Mac/PC technician proficient in the fine points of "all electronic devices related to computing, networking, photography and handheld devices."

This business of being equally able with both sides of his brain – the mechanical as well as the artistic – began early for Marc Jaffe, as a boy growing up in Vermont's ski belt. "I built a robot when I was six," said Jaffe. "I installed a tape recorder in its head so when I got the timing right I could talk to it and it talked back." Later, when he was 13, Jaffe took his dirt bike apart and put it back together again, just to see if he could.

After high school Jaffe went to the Museum School of Fine Art in Boston, absorbing the basics of drawing and design. This stint was followed by some time well spent on the west coast, at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. He took courses that would help him get a job in advertising. After school he worked as a freelance past-up artist working as he said, "wherever I could get a gig." As he made a living as a commercial artist, as a photographer, a video editor, and a Web site designer, Jaffe's life as an artist also evolved. A major epiphany happened when he found light painting, which led to years of experimentation and success – commercially, artistically and technically.

Light painting gives the photographer the same control over intensity and style that a brush and pigments give an artist, explained Jaffe. "It gives very fine control to the quality and color of light," he said. "One area might have a soft almost dreamy quality

while there might be a hot streak of color in another. Over all there is a mood created by using this technique that's unparalleled."

As an artist whose medium is photography, Marc Jaffe has created two interesting bodies of work – a series of landscapes he calls "Moving Trees" and his equine efforts, which [his girlfriend named] "Horse Play." "I'm actually driving when I shoot," said Jaffe of his "Moving Trees" series of Landscapes, many of which feature tress. His ultimate goal is always to create a photograph that looks like a painting. "If it doesn't look like a painting I haven't succeeded," he said.

To get the horse pictures Jaffe gets up close to the horses – within a foot or two – and these are the animals that are in many cases skittish thoroughbreds. "Running toward the horse I'm actually playing chicken with the horse," he said. Many of his photographs show horses running with all four feet of the ground, a photographic feat once considered impossible and rare even today. He achieves this, said Jaffe, because he keeps the horses moving as he deploys his camera.

His works have been shown at the Gramercy Square Art Show, Northern Westchester Center for the Arts [twice at "The Horse Show", twice at the Robert F Kennedy benefit for the Hudson River, Reflected Light. Marc was one of 100 hand picked photographers from around the country. Marc has also participated in the Armonk Outdoor Art Show, The Greenwich Art to the Avenue and the SONO arts Festival in Norwalk CT.]. Allen Reingold is curator of the Northern Westchester Center for the Arts and a long time admirer of Jaffe's work and techniques; he's been familiar with the artist's output since he exhibited landscapes at the center some years ago.

"I thought the images of horses were so powerful," said Reingold in a 2003 interview in the Bedford Pound Ridge Record Review. "If you have ever seen him work he is courageous. He just gets in there and look at the result. It's amazing. I love to watch him work."

Reingold is an illustrator as well as a curator and he and Marc Jaffe co-conspired to create one of the most instantly recognizable corporate logos of recent years, the Tri-Star Pegasus. Reingold is the creator of the Pegasus that emerges onscreen from the clouds. On the other hand, he said, "I couldn't have done that job without Marc shooting horses for me. He was instrumental in creating that logo."

Jaffe's multifarious life recently got even busier when he became a father. His long time girlfriend Ellen Barth adopted a Russian orphan whose name is Karina Skye and they are rearing the child together. "I'm the dad," said Jaffe proudly.

As an artist, Jaffe is moving toward more abstraction in his works, continuing to use his camera to capture mood and color and feeling. His dream is to travel the country and the world photographing horses in his own stand-alone style.

On a more immediate note you can see current examples of Marc Jaffe's work at Carol Kurth's Gallery in Bedford NY and Perk's Coffee House in Katonah, NY. Prices range from \$1495 - \$1895, with a 24 by 50-inch canvas costing \$1700. For more information call 914-715-6969 or visit Marc's Web site at www.marcjaffe.com.