

NICHOLA EDDERY

AN ART DEVOTED TO THE THOROUGHBRED RACEHORSE

By Theo Woodham-Smith

THE ARTIST NICHOLA EDDERY (BORN 1982) IS AN EQUESTRIAN PRINCESS BORN INTO A HORSE RACING DYNASTY. GENERATIONS OF HER FAMILY HAVE BEEN 'RACING ROYALS', MANY WERE CHAMPION JOCKEYS, OTHERS WERE TRAINERS OR BLOODSTOCK AGENTS. THE NAMES OF MERCER, WRAGG AND HER LATE FATHER PAT EDDERY ARE IMMORTAL IN RACING HISTORY AND STILL RESONATE WITH ENTHUSIASTS TODAY.

© Nichola Eddery



Pat Eddery was an eleven-times champion jockey, with fourteen classic wins and her mother Carolyn was a champion amateur jockey. She represented England in New Zealand at the age of 17. Carolyn was born a Mercer, her great-grandfather Harry Wragg was a champion jockey and trainer. Harry had three children; all three inherited the love and the talent for all things equine. Geoffrey became a famous trainer, Peter a bloodstock agent, while Susan married jockey Manny Mercer, and his brother Joe became yet another champion.

No surprise to find that Nichola has been immersed in the world of thoroughbred racehorses, riders and trainers all her life. But since early childhood there was always an equally compelling love for art.

She tells the story of her beginnings as an artist: *'When I was little at home, Dad collected beautiful paintings and I spent hours looking at a portrait of Grundy, one of his most famous horses. I admired every brush stroke. We all had our portraits painted as children. I would have been about eight or nine, and my mother remembers that I was fascinated by the whole painting process. When the time came to leave school and choose what to do, the ideal would have been horses and art, but I knew I had to study art seriously, and took the route of formal classical training.'*

'I signed up for the Charles H Cecil Studios in Florence, founded by an American artist and academic in 1991, to teach artists how to work from life, not photography.'

'The school had a year's waiting list, so I used the 'gap year' to travel and 'ride out' racehorses, with spare time for painting. Later came a chance to study at the Studio Escalier in Paris, working from life in the mornings and copying Old Masters in the Louvre in the afternoons.'

Nichola followed this figurative path from choice. She reveres the past, rather than rejecting it. She had a clear vision of where she wanted her work to go, but was equally aware of how difficult it is to bring new insight to a genre in which so many great artists have excelled. She says: *'My vision is evolving as I learn.'*

Since 2001 Nichola has been studying and perfecting traditional techniques guided by teachers in Italy, France and America. In 2015 she was sponsored to take five months producing transcriptions of Old Masters' works. In preparing for her 2016 exhibition

'The Thoroughbred Racehorse', at The Osborne Studio Gallery, London's leading dealer in Equestrian art, she made a pilgrimage to the British Museum in London, concentrating on horsemen from the west frieze of the Parthenon. Her paintings in the show were influenced by the ancient Greeks, but also Da Vinci, Gericault, Stubbs, Degas and Munnings.

2016 was a good year for Nichola Eddery. Her portrait of Frankel, the Wonder Horse, entitled **'Legends'** was exhibited at the new National Horseracing Museum in Newmarket. Racehorse owner Peter Merchant recommended her to fulfil the legacy of another artist, Michael Jeffrey, who died before completing the painting, commissioned by the leading trainer and owner Sir Henry Cecil who died at

Another challenge was to create a loving tribute to her father, Pat Eddery, by painting him, aged 23, on Grundy, **'superstar horse'** she describes as **'one of the best whoever raced.'** He gave Pat his first Derby win and King George and Elizabeth Stakes in 1975.

Following the success of her 2016 exhibition (described by experts as 'superb') inspired both by Greek perspective and Old Masters, her work is now evolving in another direction. *'I am in love with Degas,' she says, 'and he in turn was influenced by Delacroix. Degas was a genius in so many ways, especially innovative composition. And to me it is important that he captured something special about how horses react and behave. I feel that when you see a Degas you really get a lot more out of it if you are*




about the same time.

Nichola re-created his concept, homage to George Stubbs' 'Gimcrack on Newmarket Heath'. The original Stubbs' painting sold at Christies for £22M (\$35M) in 2011. Peter Merchant, well known and respected in the racing world, who commissioned Eddery, knew immediately that he had chosen the right artist. *'I remember the first day Nichola went up to Newmarket and she rang me all excited to say that purely by chance she'd found herself standing in exactly the same spot as when Stubbs painted his masterpiece.'*

someone who is around racehorses all the time.'

She chooses subjects from her 'equine surroundings' in Newmarket: the National Stud, gallops, and the Rowley Mile racecourse.

Important collectors of Nichola Eddery's equestrian art include Royal princes HRH Prince Faisal bin Salman Abdulaziz al Saud, HRH Prince Khaled bin Sultan al Saud, HRH Mohamed bin Khalifa Al Thani and Cristina Patino y Barbon, Duchess of Durcal. 



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