

Year Of The Hound Exhibition



PIEDMONT FOXHOUNDS • REV. MICHAEL TANG

Rev. Michael Tang had a suggestion for the American Academy of Equine Art: an art show to “put the AAEA on the map” by cultivating a collection that would be the first of its kind, representing each of Virginia’s 25 hunts through painting.

Booth Malone, AAEA president, liked the idea, and after a year of hard work the show, entitled “The Year Of The Hound,” will make its grand opening on May 26-27 at the Museum of Hounds and Hunting North America’s headquarters in the Morven Park Mansion in Leesburg, Virginia.

Since it’s not an official academy show, artists had the freedom to depict hounds and hunt scenes without requiring a horse to be included. Malone selected nine AAEA artists and assigned them each four or five Virginia hunts. Most artists arranged to travel, some-

times across the country, to visit the hunts in person, meet their members, and take photos from which to work.

Joanne Mehl was born and raised on the West Coast, but the Portland, Oregon, resident spent two weeks last fall immersed in Virginia hunt country for this project.

“Booth Malone is a really easy-going guy,” Mehl said. “He put me in touch with a friend of his who put me up for two weeks while I visited the Warrenton Hunt, the Orange County Hunt, the Blue Ridge Hunt, the Loudoun Fairfax Hunt and the Old Dominion Hounds. I contacted the hunts ahead of time and made arrangements to come see them. It was definitely a challenge to shoot them. It’s early mornings and long drives, and you’re battling the elements sometimes. A lot of the action takes place in

Features 25 Virginia Hunts



LIFTING FOG • JOANNE MEHL

the woods or under cover, so it can be a matter of kismet whether or not you get good shots.”

Tang, a respected equine artist and professor at Loyola Marymount University (California), and Malone chose to spotlight Virginia hunts because of the sport’s history, steeped in the state’s hills and valleys.

“Virginia is such a great center of horsemen and horses,” Malone said. “There were a lot of moving parts in this: the huntsmen, the masters, the artists. It took a lot of coordination, but everybody cooperated. We had a great response from the hunts, and we had a lot of good professional artists who delivered. It was challenging with the weather and canceled hunts. People had to adapt, but I think we got it done. I think the artists got their competitive juices flowing. They knew the caliber of the artists, and everybody likes to be the lead hound,

so I think they put their best foot forward.”

Mehl hadn’t had much experience with foxhunting, but she learned quickly.

“All the hunts were very gracious and helpful,” she said. “Most of them found somebody to drive me around and help me as well as we could get positioned so I could get some photos. I really fell in love with the country. If I could live there I would definitely want to be part of a hunt. [Hunting] combines trail riding and going really fast with a bunch of dogs. What more could you want?”

“Lifting Fog” is a 16" x 23" oil on panel by Mehl.

“Piedmont Foxhounds” is a 21.5" x 25" watercolor on paper by Tang.

The show will run every weekend through June 25. For more information visit The Museum of Hounds and Hunting North America Inc. at mhbna.org.