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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

A Traditional Portrait Painter in the Modern Age

In an age of digital media and relentless online self-documentation, Joanne Mehl pursued a diametrically opposed goal: to paint a single indelible image that most perfectly expresses a subject's personality. This pursuit has resulted in an unlikely artistic and business success story, and offers a glimpse into why a Renaissance tradition still thrives in a 21st century world.

Joanne Mehl is an accomplished, working artist specializing in:

- Commissioned portraiture of loved ones
- Equestrian subjects

Her commissioned oil or gouache portraits now range from \$1,000 to \$10,000; and a record price for one of her equestrian works was reached in 2013, when the State of Kentucky purchased "Keeneland Classics" for their Governor's mansion.

Joanne's Story:

Joanne Mehl bootstrapped a successful artistic career in traditional media while many compatriots followed either a digital or academic route. Now, with a widespread DIY and maker movement in the news, that seems prescient. But in truth, all she did was follow her passion for 30 years.

Raised in modest circumstances in Southern California by emigrant German parents, Joanne Mehl was admitted to the well-regarded Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, where she graduated in 1983 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honors in Illustration.

Joanne recalls, "I thank the Art Center for preparing me well, as well as my mother's love and inspiration. She was a stubborn dreamer who overcame great difficulties."

After teaching college a bit, and a brief stint doing commercial advertising for San Francisco ad agencies, Joanne decided to forgo both conventional routes and become a portraitist. A field that seemed laughably passé to many at the time.

"I started doing portrait work professionally because I loved it and was exceptionally well prepared for it," Joanne explains, "Maybe it's encoded in our DNA, this fascination with faces, especially the faces of those that we love. I love painting beautiful faces. I love painting interesting and flawed faces. Our lives are written on our faces. The beautiful, fresh-faced young woman whose life is ahead of her, full of possibility. The innocence of childhood. The relationship between mother and child, between child and beloved pet. I love painting them all. Because life is about love and loving, and those that we love."

After some initial success, a sudden divorce in the 1990's derailed her emotionally and financially. When it was over, Joanne struggled to rebuild her life in the Pacific Northwest.

Joanne remembers, "That was a hard time. It's easy to lose faith in yourself and your judgment when that happens. And the financial pressure to be successful was cranked up at the same time, thank god for the friends and clients that stuck by me!"

Then times got better, with both commissioned portraits and equestrian works finding wider appreciation. In 1999, a high profile, 50-foot mural commission for the Devonwood Equestrian Centre in Sherwood, Oregon made a regional splash. Then one of the nation's premier sporting art galleries, Cross Gate of Lexington, Kentucky began carrying and promoting her work. All the while, private collectors have commissioned over 100 portraits of families, kids, pets, horses and more.

Says Joanne, "I love to explore the subtleties of relationships with pure color and texture. I often spend 6 to 10 weeks on a painting, just refining and refining. The final result is impressionistic, but it sure isn't easy to get there."

In the last 20 years, while the web exploded and even Presidents began taking selfies, Joanne Mehl has painted a steady stream of commissioned portraits. In this age of ubiquitous digital photography and online photo sharing, why has she succeeded?

"I love photos and treasure them, but they're mementos. My goal as an artist is to distill and express the personality of a loved one, to create a singular image that truly honors them. That's the difference between a memento and a family heirloom."

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