

KEVIN HODGE: Artist

September 2022

Story and photos by Michael Barrett

Last month, I met with Kevin at his home, located north of Ocala. I knew Kevin prior to this meeting, although I didn't know much about him as an artist except for the many paintings of his he has around his home.

His work intrigued me and I wanted to do some digging to see how he got started, what his creative process is, as well as what his commercial artwork is all about.



We sat down for a chat in his living room on a Sunday afternoon, a light drizzle starting outside. I asked him about how he got started, beginning with how long he had been painting. "I started as a teenager, and then was able to study as an adult, alternating art with music and solo piano. I started piano as a very young child, five years old and then studied as an adult". His response to who are some of his favorite artists was, "All of them! I love the Dutch Golden Age, especially Rembrandt. French artists, especially from the Romantic and Impressionist Period for painting and musical works. I lived in Provence for a year so I'm a fan of anything French. And for horse paintings, always George Stubbs!". Horse portraits are, after all, a lot of Kevin's focus.



I then had Kevin show me his studio, some of his creative space, as I was anxious to start making some photographs of an artist at work. From his modest workspace at right, Kevin has all he needs to create.



I asked Kevin what his process is, how he gets started. "I will always sketch it out, or a very simple watercolor. Then, I will always do a black and white oil painting first; there is always a painting underneath the one you see". This surprised me, I've of course heard of artists starting with maybe a pencil sketch or something like that, but the fact that he starts with a painting *underneath* the true painting is impressive to me.



I wanted to get a shot of him "at work" so he began doing some work to a painting he had been currently working on. I told him, "Start painting like you normally do". So, he started, and he began grinning. I thought at first that maybe he was a little nervous or uncomfortable with me watching him and I told him "It's okay to look serious, like you're concentrating on your painting". To which he replied, "I always smile while I paint, and the closer I am to completing it the more excited I get". That's when I

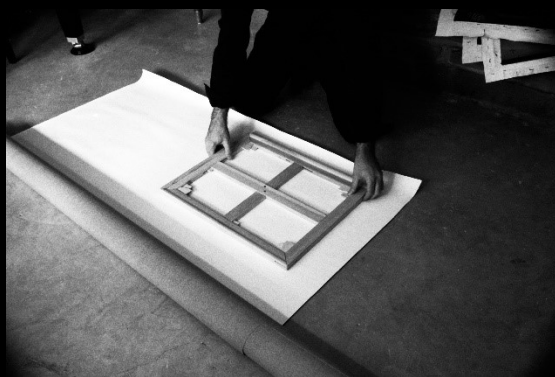


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really began to understand who Kevin is; a nice, talented, genuinely happy person who is happiest when doing what he enjoys and being himself whilst doing it.



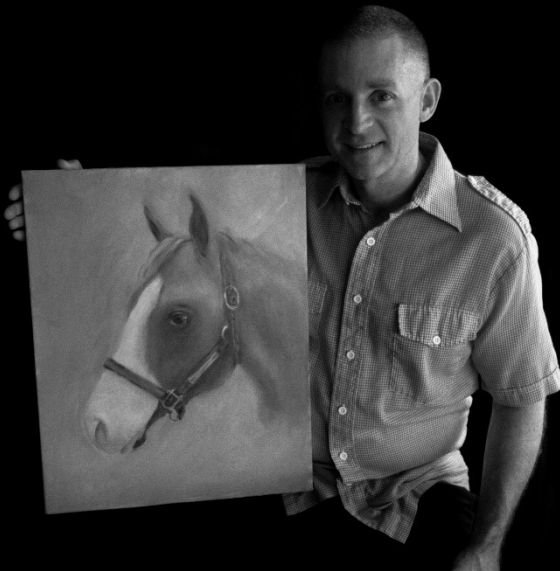
Part of Kevin's process also includes making a lot of his own materials. According to Kevin, "The process of building out my frames and stretching my canvas is absolutely part of the process".





Something that is always of interest to me is what inspires an artist, any creative person. I've found that for some it's tangible, for others it's innate, something they can't really put their finger on but more of a feeling they get. They may not ever fully understand how to define it. For Kevin, it changes, along with his focus. "It could be someone or a place I visit, and the focus will change. Like for instance, I was

talking to my sister in her garden, and there's a gorgeous trellis of grapes. I was eating them and reminiscing that it was time to pick grapes again. Fall is here, and I couldn't believe it had been that time of year already when I was inspired and used THOSE grapes to build a still life around for a painting".



Asking him if he has any preferred subjects to focus on Kevin said, "Generally I like portraits. People and animals. Still life paintings always fascinate me". This makes sense, since portraits are a big part of Kevin's work. Recently he's focused a lot on equestrian portraits.

Creative people never stop being creative and are typically creative in more than one outlet. As alluded to a bit at the beginning of the story, Kevin also spends a lot of his time on music.





He enjoys playing classical pieces on the piano, as well as creating electronic in his music studio. “I’m working a lot on my electronic music, that is a huge part of my work right now”.

What’s next for Kevin? According to him, “Next stop, plein air. I am looking forward to enjoying the cooler weather of the fall and painting outside. It’s a step outside the box, literally!”

Lastly, I asked Kevin what his art means to him, “It’s my movie and TV. Sometimes dinner”. This sums him up well. Kevin is an incredibly talented artist, an all-around great guy, and he has a personality that exudes his sense of humor and is someone I’m happy to call my friend.



**If you would like to hire Kevin, he can be reached
on Instagram @equestrian.portrait
on the web www.EquestrianPortrait.com**

PHOTOS FROM THIS STORY CAN BE FOUND AT WWW.FORMLEVELPHOTO.COM