



"Breeders' Cup Paddock," the artwork for Breeders' Cup 2022







# Inspiring Surroundings

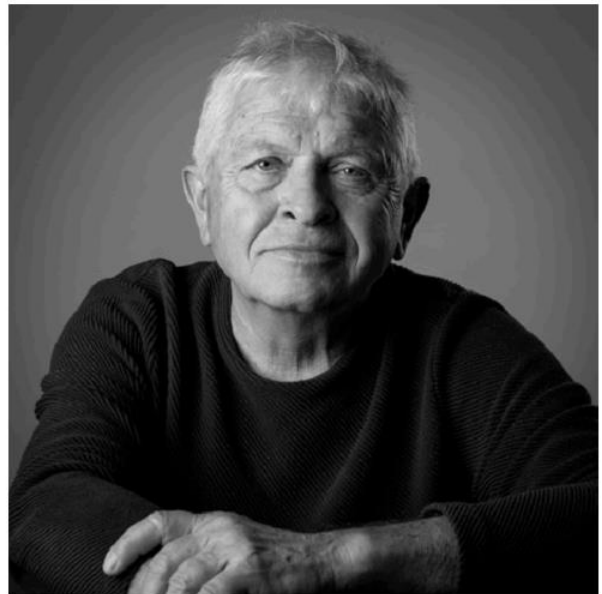
Breeders' Cup artist **Andre Pater** finds his muse in horse country

By MARIAH KLINE

Photography by Bill Roughen and Mary Rezny

A phenom in sporting art, Andre Pater has made a name for himself with a style that skillfully conveys motion and highlights the natural beauty of his subjects. This fall, he has been tasked with painting the official artwork for the Breeders' Cup, an honor in which he takes great pride.

Pater was born in Wrocław, Poland, and grew up in the city of Kraków. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków where he earned a degree in architecture, which undoubtedly contributed to his eye for composition and attention to detail. He painted in his free time while working for an architecture firm but eventually followed his passion and committed to art full-time. After living in New York and Dallas, he landed in Kentucky in 1988 after one fateful drive.



"I was going to Lexington to see a potential client," he explains. "I made a wrong U-turn on I-75 onto Paris Pike going away from town. It was a Saturday in late October or early November and it was beautiful – the leaves and the horses. I thought it was like heaven."

He has lived in Lexington ever since, surrounded by horses, cows and lush greenery that all continually inspire him. The artist has loved horses his entire life, and while living in Texas, he became acquainted ►



"Breeders' Cup-Gulfstream Park" oil on canvas, 34x48

with polo for the first time via a local club. He was immediately fascinated by the connection between the horse and the rider, noting how they were almost like one body and observing the speed and movement of it all. But living in horse country – constantly exposed to the beauty of the animals and the wonders of racing – took his work to the next level.

One of Pater's notable collections was a series of 12 pastels of winning jockeys commissioned by Keeneland. The paintings caught the attention of legendary sportswoman Penny Chenery, who once shared with the artist just how impactful his work could be.

"She used to lunch at Keeneland and she once told me, 'You changed my perception of jockeys,'" he recalls. "She said jockeys seemed like gloves – you change them today then you change them tomorrow. They're simply a guide for the horse to win. But because of my depiction of them and [showing] this human side that I pulled out, it changed her mind."

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Andre Pater

Becoming more acquainted with equestrian culture has opened Pater's eyes to the other forms of art in the world of racing.

"Before, I never really had an idea of what breeding was," he says. "Being here, being on a farm and having contacts with breeders, I realized that it's an art. It's very delicate and very difficult. It's unpredictable. You have to have luck and intuition. You cannot learn from books how to do it."

Books cannot necessarily teach you how to create great works of art either, but in Pater's case, they can serve as a kind of portable gallery for one's work. In 2019, the coffee table book "A Matter of Light, the Art of Andre Pater" was released by Fincastle Publishing. Pater, his wife Kasia, and a group of collaborators and friends worked on the book for three years before it came to fruition.

"We handled it from beginning to end," he says of the book. "I learned a lot and I discovered myself again. I had to go deeper into the work that I did. ... It's really like a family album. You flip through the pages and remember the paintings you did and that moment in history and in your personal life."

In the 2020 Next Generation Indie Book Awards, "A Matter of Light" was a finalist in the Coffee Table Book category and a finalist for Best Overall Design







Top: "Foxwoods-Racing Stable No.3" pastel on board, 36x24

Bottom: "Justify" oil on board, 22x17

(Non-Fiction). The release of the book coincided with a retrospective of Pater's work at the Headley-Whitney Museum in Lexington. It also coincided with the artist's 66th birthday.

"It was like Route 66 – my American journey," he laughs.

The next step in this journey is creating the artwork for the 39th running of the Breeders' Cup to be displayed on programs, tickets and more. This is Pater's third time working with Breeders' Cup – he previously created the official poster in 1999 when it was held at Gulfstream Park and in 2004 at Lone Star Park – but this time around is the most significant for him as it is happening in the city he has grown to love so much.

"I was living in Dallas when I watched the first Breeders' Cup and I was absolutely amazed," he reflects. "Since they've started to host it at Keeneland, it is really very important to me. I'm extremely proud and excited."

The subject of this year's art is the iconic enormous sycamore in the Keeneland paddock, an emblem of the racetrack and the natural beauty of the Bluegrass. Though Pater initially had plans to portray a horse or a jockey, the tree is a welcome challenge for someone who loves his job as much as he does.

"It's fun to do what I do," Pater maintains. "I don't think I'll ever retire."

Observing Pater's work, you don't just see a horse or a jockey. You see anticipation and concentration. You see a slight lift in a jockey's shoulders as they approach the starting gate, preparing for what comes next. You see the depth behind a horse's eyes as they wander through a field. It's evident that in his last 34 years as a Kentuckian, Pater has absorbed the magnificence around him and found a way to portray it on canvas.

"I've never lived as long in any place in my life, including Poland," he says. "This is my place. This is my home – Kentucky." ♦

