Painting the Pura Raza Española

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CHAPTER 1. ARTIST'S STATEMENT

This series of equine portraits celebrates the Pura Raza Española horse breed and its Moorish origins. In the year of 711AD the Moors invaded Spain bringing with them Arabian and Berber horses and a culture rich in ornamentation. As a result of crossbreeding the gracile Moorish horses with the robust Spanish workhorses, the most influential military and haute école horses infiltrated the equine world. The Pura Raza Española’s powerful physique and docile disposition proved itself irreplaceable on and off the battlefield. Today, the Pura Raza Española is renowned for improving contemporary breeds including the American stock horses.

With this information in mind concerning this peaceful collaboration between warring nations, I was inspired to create a series of equine portraits that exposed these concepts. In light of September 11 and current international events, many Americans have felt an unfavorable shadow on the Middle East. As a reaction against xenophobia, I have created a series of paintings that embodies history’s stereotypical warhorse or destrier tranquilly interacting with Moorish influenced decoration. This series alludes to the nonviolent association between the Pura Raza Española’s portraiture with Moorish inspired ornamentation. This relationship has reference to the diplomatic collaboration of Western and Eastern ideologies. The paintings serve as both peaceful metaphor and also to honor the Moors’ equine crossbreeding contributions in the West.
CHAPTER 2. INFLUENCES

To better understand my exhibition and graduate work, one must consider my sources. My first semester as a graduate student when I studied in Mysore, India, I was inspired to research non-Western art and ornamentation. Mesmerized by the religious and secular symbolism included in Indian decoration, I began to research on how non-Western ornamentation artistically affected the West. The Moors’ invasion of Spain provided an example of such an artistic collision. To make this research richer, I chose to explore the work of artists who had experimented with ornamentation such as Joyce Kozloff, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, and Rembrandt van Rijn. Having experimented with designs inspired by these artists and non-Western art, I needed to insert myself into the picture. More investigation concerning my personal icon, the horse, led me to discover photographer Robert Vavra and painter Rosa Bonheur whose works embody the equine spirit. In this chapter I will explain in detail how each of these artists and experiences have affected the development of this series.

The Decorative India

The beginning of my art historical and archeological education in southern India marked the most artistic influence of my graduate studies. Overwhelmed by the architectural and textile ornamentation I saw daily, I plunged into a whole new palette of possibilities. India, an environment of diverse religions and cultures featured a variety of artistic styles that captivated me. Decoration depicting various animals was present at many of the temples. These temples’ high relief sculptures intertwined horses, elephants, and other animals with
various modes of ornamentation. The horses and elephants’ embellished trappings consisted of strands of balls and intertwining frills that are present in the body of my ouvrage. The design for my exhibition deals with uniting the gallery’s walls and paintings as the Hindu temples’ did with their decorative animals and ornamentation.

Another aspect of Indian ornamentation that impressed me was the treatment of space. The sculptural ornamentation of the temples and mosques as well as the designs embossed on Indian textiles influenced my compositions in terms of ambiguous space. Not only do the textiles and architecture link their ornamentation to their structures but they also embody the concept of *horror vacui* that reinforces this idea of ambiguous space. In my series of paintings I have used this idea by uniting the background with the foreground in terms of ornamentation. In previous paintings I used *sfumato* to create ambiguous space; however, via ornamentation I can achieve the same qualities of ambiguous space by employing *horror vacui*.

Aside from space and ornamentation, India’s natural and textile environments influenced my color palette. The hues of the foliage present in India’s environment demonstrates a natural palette and is evident in my paintings. Another example of rich

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1 Figures 1 and 2, Sculptures demonstrating beaded trappings and frilly ornamentation

2 This is a Latin term defined as “Fear of open spaces.” Artists use this word to describe when a work of art lacks negative space.

3 Figure 3, Women standing in front of a temple that utilizes the concept of *horror vacui*

4 This is an Italian term first used to describe Leonardo da Vinci’s hazy and smoky methods of portraying light and shadow.

5 Figure 4, Blossoms and Leaves swept into a corner of a temple.
color was evident in the textiles worn by the Indian women. These saris and scarves exhibited dazzling colors stereotyped as flamboyant in the West. I returned from India with the memory of these vibrant colors instilled in my memory. Green, red, gold, and violet serve as foundation colors in the compositions of my exhibition.

**Designing Spaces with Joyce Kozloff**

Inspired by the decorative arts of India, I continued researching non-Western ornamentation. I concentrated my studies on how Middle Eastern decoration infiltrated the West. Joyce Kozloff’s public works exhibit Islamic-oriented designs. Geometry, interlace, *horror vacui* and interlocking forms formulate her compositions. In her *Plaza Las Fuentes*, Kozloff’s wall exhibits the above-mentioned elements of Islamic ornamentation and recalls architectural embellishment present in the Islamic mosque. A mosque’s *quibla* wall is traditionally used to enforce religious meditation. *Kufic*, an Islamic form of writing, is abstracted and intermingled with arabesques and interlace to enforce the patron’s concentration. Inspired by Kozloff’s intermingling of Middle Eastern decoration within a Western environment, I needed to know if the artist embraced the Islamic ideologies implied by her ornamentation.

During a phone interview with the artist, I discovered that although Kozloff’s compositions reflected the aesthetics of Islamic ornamentation, her designs did not incorporate any of Islam’s ideas. She used ornamentation as an analytical method solely to give pleasure to her audience. After our phone conversation,

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6 Refer to Figure 3

7 Figure 5, Joyce Kozloff, *Plaza Las Fuentes*, Pasadena, 1990

8 Phone Interview July 15, 1999
I realized I could embrace the stylistic traits of Middle Eastern ornamentation without taking any religious connotations into my own artwork. In my series of paintings the ornamentation is referential, in general, to the Middle East but is also used as a method to unite the background and foreground by means of ambiguous space.

*Plaza Las Fuentes* not only exhibits the above-mentioned elements of Islamic ornamentation, but also integrates large representational flora amongst the decoration in its composition. This use of representational figures intermingled with non-objective ornamentation served as a model for my compositions. While Kozloff uses flowers amongst Islamic inspired decoration, horse portraiture mingles with non-Western inspired ornamentation throughout my compositions.

**Caravaggio's Chiaroscuro and Rembrandt's Use of Spiritual Tenebrism**

Since I discovered Joyce Kozloff's interpretation of Islamic ornamentation, I have researched artists who were known for their representational depictions. One such artist who influenced my paintings' development is Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio. Caravaggio's usage of *trompe l'oeil*,

9 This is a French term defined as "Fool the eye." *tromper*: to fool; *l'oeil*: the eye. Artistically, this term is used to describe an ultra-realistic painting style.

exhibits naturalism that defined how Baroque paintings portrayed their subject matter. Caravaggio's realistic modeling of his subjects by means of *chiaroscuro*,

10 This is an Italian term when broken up means (Chiaro) light and (Scuro) dark. Artistically this term is used when a composition exhibits both these traits in the form of highlighting and shading.

directly influenced how I have rendered my horses. His complementarity color scheme and use of *chiaroscuro* allowed his subjects to glow as in the *Conversion of Paul*.

11 Figure 6, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Conversion of Paul*, Cerasi Chapel, Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome, Italy, c. 1601
The complementary colors and strong *chiaroscuro* are just two of Caravaggio’s trademarks I exhibit within my equine subject matter.

Not only did the *Conversion of St. Paul* use *chiaroscuro* but he also used *tenebrism*\(^\text{12}\) that reduced the need for background elements. Aside from the ornamentation, I utilize this concept of stage-like lighting and eliminate unnecessary background elements. Whereas Caravaggio used raking light from a source such as a window,\(^\text{13}\) the treatment of light in my compositions are inspired by Rembrandt van Rijn whose light source seems to radiate from within his portraiture. The light source in my compositions symbolizes the idea that Spain was enlightened by myriad contributions made by the Moors.

**The Moors Contribution to the Pura Raza Española**

The exploration of the non-Western decoration infiltrating Western design led me to further investigate the ornamental contributions of the Moors throughout their occupation of Spain. During 711AD, the Moors invaded southern Spain and continued to conquer the Iberian Peninsula. I discovered that not only did the Moors introduce non-Western ideas, science, and decoration to the people of Iberia, but they also presented new breeds of horses to the peninsula.

The Arabian and the Barb were the gracile desert horses indigenous to North Africa and the Middle East. After these breeds were crossbred with the local Spanish workhorse,

\(^{12}\) This word in the art world describes a stage-like lighting. It is derived from the Italian words *tènebre* that means darkness and *tenebroso* that means dark or gloomy.

\(^{13}\) Figure 7, Ibid, *Calling of St. Matthew*, Contarelli Chapel, San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, Italy, c. 1597-1601. This painting exhibits raking light originating from an implied tavern window.
significant military and *haute école*\(^{14}\) horses penetrated the world of horses. The Pura Raza Españolas sometimes called the Andalucians among other names, proved to be incomparable mounts for most of Europe. Treasured through the centuries, the art world honored the Pura Raza Española by means of triumphal equestrian sculptures and paintings. The Pura Raza Española is the featured breed in my exhibition.

One cannot deny the many modern contributions the Islamic peoples offered to the West; however, the Moors’ occupation of the Iberian Peninsula is traditionally seen as negative by the Spaniards. My exhibition pays homage to a positive collaboration between the West and the Middle East inspired by the Moors’ improvement of the Iberian strain of horses. Incorporating non-Western ornamentation with the Pura Raza Española portraiture symbolizes an example of a peaceful union between sometimes conflicting cultures.

**Robert Vavra and Rosa Bonheur’s Vision of the Horse**

Considering the Pura Raza Española’s muddled genetic history, I researched Renaissance and Baroque artists who used equine subject matter. Artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Andrea del Verroccio, Peter Paul Rubens, and Théodore Géricault, all came to mind; however, they portrayed the horse merely as the triumphal mount, secondary to the riders or the events exhibited within their compositions. These artists depicted the horse by means of painting or sculpture; however, their pieces do not capture the soul or spirit of the horse.

To capture the spirit of the horse, I looked to more contemporary artists for inspiration. Robert Vavra, a photographer whose love for stallions compelled him to photograph the Pura Raza Españolas, was my primary inspiration. While many equine

\(^{14}\) French term meaning “High School.” This term is used to signify the practice and edification of the upper-most level of cavalry maneuvers.
photographers take generic pictures of pretty horses, Robert Vavra's stop-action photography embodies the horse's unbridled spirit. His photograph from his book *Equus* shows a stallion snorting and tossing his mane about. The inky black background complements the horse's natural coat color and defines the white mane as it hangs in mid-air. Like a Baroque painting, the horse is caught in mid-gesture, causing the photograph to be slightly blurred. Vavra uses this blurred technique to reinforce the concept of momentariness. Unlike the staged portraits of his predecessors, Vavra depicts the horse in mid-gesture, which evokes the nature of his subject matter.

Robert Vavra's ability to capture the horse in mid-gesture influenced the way I have represented the horse in my series of portraits. My horses do not appear stagnant like Renaissance portraits but are frozen in mid-action. Each hair is not perfectly placed, and the horses' colorations are not representational. In my pieces, I also chose to exploit the non-traditional coat colors exhibited outside the Pura Raza Española's breed description. Unlike Vavra who chooses not to photograph non-traditional coat colors, such as pinto, chestnut, and leopard markings, I chose to retaliate against this coat discrimination by means of utilizing a spectrum of color. Vavra's photographs of the horse in mid-gesture are his contribution to naturalism, whereas my palette disregards any intolerance caused by human induced standards and exploits the breed's natural colors.

Robert Vavra's realistic portrayal of the Pura Raza Española is comparable to the works of Rosa Bonheur, another artist who has greatly influenced my exhibition. Vavra's

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15 Figure 8, Robert Vavra, photograph from the book *Equus*

16 Horses that do not fit the Pura Raza Española breed description (pertaining to color) will not be considered Pura Raza Española. On the other hand, these horses may be registered as Pura Raza Luisitano, which is virtually the same Iberian Saddle Horse breed, but indigenous to Portugal.
photographs of charging herds compositionally recall Bonheur’s *Horse Fair*; however, symbolically the two are dissimilar. Unable to participate in life drawing classes, a women’s artistic education during the 19th century was limited to the depiction of tableaux *vivants,* landscapes, and animal portraiture. Rosa Bonheur’s paintings *Horse Fair* and *Le Labourage Nivernais: Le Sombrage* are a reaction against this male dominated system.

Bonheur’s *Horse Fair* illustrates a herd of horses driven against their will by men. The male captors attempt to pacify the herd, and the horses respond in an unruly manner. The horses’ ears are pinned; they are rearing, and pushing against the bit, manners that signify negative behavioral traits. Behaviors such as these are present when a horse is upset. In her painting *Le Labourage Nivernais: Le Sombrage,* Bonheur portrays cattle as beasts of burden. Whipped and harnessed by men to do their work, Bonheur exhibits the cattle’s domestication. A feminist interpretation would infer that the cattle (like women) should do what a man beckons. The artist’s animal subject matter exploited how a male dominated system limited the role of women in the arts. Rosa Bonheur’s paintings such as the *Horse Fair* and *Le Labourage Nivernais: Le Sombrage* are a reaction against this male-dominated system.

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17 Figure 9, Robert Vavra, photograph from Vavra’s book *Equus*

18 French term meaning “Life painting” or still-life

19 Figure 10 Rosa Bonheur, *Horse Fair,* oil on canvas, c.1853-1855 and *Le Labourage Nivernais: Le Sombrage,* oil on canvas, c. 1849
Attaching this personification to animal portraiture is a concept that has influenced my exhibition. My equine subject matter refers to the Iberian people’s peaceful collaboration with the Moors to improve the Iberian strain of horse breeds. Like Bonheur, I have utilized animal portraiture to convey my views through subtle symbolism.
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

I approach my compositions in a meticulous manner. The following chapter will describe the artistic approach exercised in this creative component. My artistic process shall be discussed in terms of previous works that influenced my creative component, artistic experimentation, thumbnails, materials utilized, and an explanation of the technique.

Previous Works and Experimentation

Having experimented largely in abstraction during my undergraduate years, I rediscovered how to draw the human form anatomically in graduate school. I believe that in order to abstract something, one must learn the fundamentals of drawing representationally. By means of improving my elementary techniques, I recreated abstract works. I revisited my abstract methods of design, but I felt creatively stagnant while working with this style. I retired this form of abstraction and began to produce mixed media pieces that exhibited ornamentation influenced by the decorative arts of the Middle East and the East. These pieces combined historical elements I had learned from classes, personal research, and photographic elements from my trip to India.

The new pieces allowed me to free myself of any ossifying methods I may have utilized in previous abstractions. This new liberty allowed me to create more spontaneously and experiment with techniques I would not have considered before. Spontaneity permitted

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14 Figure 11, Tribute, pastel on paper, Spring 1999, this is a style that I dubbed geometricizing in my undergraduate years.

15 Figure 12, Eviction, graphite on illustration board, Fall 2000

16 Figure 13, Troika, oil on chipboard, Spring 2001, donated to the College of Veterinary Medicine, Iowa State University
me to stretch the boundaries of printmaking by moving away from traditional framing methods. The outcome of this experimentation is the grid-like path, in the form of tiles, that provides a link between each of the equine paintings.\(^\text{17}\)

Each of these tiles explores the process of automatism associated with the production of ornamentation. Whereas previously I only slightly altered elements from historical ornamentation, creating my own unique ornamentation was now possible. By copying the masters for the purpose of developing my own creative style, I followed an artistic method that Chinese artists have embraced for centuries.

I. *Qiyun shengdong*: ‘Spirit Harmony—Life’s Motion’ (Arthur Waley); ‘animation through spirit and consonance’ (Alexander Soper)

II. *Gufa yonghi*: ‘bone-means use brush’ (Waley); ‘structural method in the use of the brush’ (Soper)

III. *Yingwu xiangxing*: ‘fidelity to the object in portraying forms’ (Soper)

IV. *Suilei facai*: ‘conformity to kind in applying colors’ (Soper)

V. *Jinying weizhi*: ‘proper planning in placing [of elements]’ (Soper)

VI. *Chuanyi muxie*: ‘that by copying, the ancient models should be perpetuated’ (Sakanishi)\(^\text{18}\)

Following these guidelines, I practiced expanding on the ornamentation that my predecessors had developed. By means of distancing myself from these predecessors, I created unique ornamentation that is symbolic of its historical roots. This ornamentation is present in the tiles that help frame my thesis work.

Concerning these tiles, I further developed a method of adhering rice paper to wood by means of polyurethane. This lightweight rice paper when brushed with polyurethane became transparent. The paper’s transparency allowed for the wood grain to be visible

\(^{17}\) Figure 14, *Perseverance*, monotype, relief, and ImagOn© print on rice paper adhered to plywood, Fall 2002

through the paper while maintaining the integrity of the design. Due to multiple applications of polyurethane, air bubbles became trapped within the polymer but sanding and steel wool reversed any of these adverse effects. Since the polyurethane was such an effective sealant, I could actually use steel wool directly on top of the adhered rice paper. This process eliminated unwanted reflective qualities. This experimentation with polyurethane is one of the important techniques I have explored in my graduate education.

I have also concentrated efforts on experimenting with polyurethane as a sealant for oil painting. I use particleboard for the support of my equine oil and pastel paintings. Since I am always concerned with my paintings’ archival elements, I began to research a more successful and cost-effective sealant for this wood support. In previous works, I used the water-based Liquitex Gloss Varnish to seal my support; however, due to the absorbent nature of particleboard, the individual fibers drastically warped when touched by water. I began to examine the properties of water-based sealants and asked myself questions concerning my support. If I wanted to seal out water and other harmful elements, why would I use a sealant that is water based? With this question in mind, I began to research oil-based sealants.

Traditionally used for varnishing untreated wood surfaces, I explored the properties of oil-based polyurethane. Since oil repels water, I ascertained that polyurethane may be the solution for sealing my support. I rolled the polyurethane onto my particleboard and discovered that the individual fibers that negatively reacted with the water-based sealant did not warp with the polyurethane. The polyurethane served as a water resistant polymer that had little or no negative effects on my support.
Thumbnails

In this section I shall display thumbnail sketches associated with the fabrication of this exhibition. Although many of the designs may not have been utilized in this exhibition, they are vital to my creative process. The artistic development of this exhibition documented in the following pages.
**Process: Materials and Techniques**

In this segment I will expand upon what materials I have used to fabricate the paintings and the techniques utilized in my equine images. In the previous section concerning experimentation, I discussed the production of the tiles that form the grid linking the gallery walls to my paintings. Since I have already discussed its materials, this information will be excluded from this section. However, the means of manufacturing shall be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Primarily I will discuss the methods I used to prepare the plywood tiles. Originally I intended to use birch for this project, but due to my limited budget I had to resort to a cheaper wood. Having previously experimented with polyurethane on plywood, I found that I disliked the plywood’s bold yellow tone. In order to solve this issue, I applied a birch color stain to give the plywood a color with warmer qualities. After staining the wood, I applied two layers of polyurethane, sanding between layers. After the tiles were stained, lacquered, and sanded, I was ready to apply the prints.

I used multiple printmaking processes for the variations of prints. We will first discuss the printmaking process used in the tiles. ImagOn© is a fairly new printmaking technique used to transfer a variety of media to a printmaking plate. According to Praga Industries Co. Ltd., a printmaking company who specializes in ImagOn©:

> The Intaglio-type [ImagOn©] represents a new family of printmaking techniques developed by Professor Keith Howard from the Rochester Institute of Technology that allows a great variety of image making possibilities. Intaglio-type techniques utilize a new non-toxic photo-imaging dry film technology from the DuPont Company called ImagOn© in conjunction with conventional etching presses and traditional etching inks. ImagOn© film can be used for all photo-generated imagery from high quality halftones to
computer-generated images, even simple photocopies, to achieve the highest quality photo-intaglio print. Painting and drawing techniques can also be achieved by working with drafting Mylar. A large range of subtle ink and gouache washes can also easily be transformed into print. The use of this new ImagOn© dry film technology represents a departure from traditional intaglio plate making, and offers the printmaker unparalleled image-making capability without compromising health, safety or the environment.\textsuperscript{19}

In addition to Praga Industries’ description, ImagOn© is a practical printmaking process based on exposure to ultraviolet light. However, explanation of proper plate preparation is in order.

To start off, I needed to adhere the ImagOn© to the sintra plate. The first step of adhesion was to cut a piece of ImagOn© that was roughly the same size as the plate. Using a piece of masking tape, I detached the protective plastic coating from the backside of the ImagOn©. Sequentially, I sprayed the sintra with water that behaved as a catalyst to the adhesive on the backside of the ImagOn©. After placing the ImagOn© upon the sintra, I cleared the plate of all water and ran the plate through a press that laminated the ImagOn© to the sintra. After lamination, I removed excess ImagOn© from the sides of the plate and hardened the plate by means of a hair dryer. When this was accomplished the plate was ready for light exposure.

A permanent marker drawing on acetate served as a negative comparable to the celluloid negatives used in ordinary photographic processes.\textsuperscript{20} After I placed the negative on top of the ImagOn© plate, I put it into a professional exposure unit designed for contemporary printmaking processes. For further adhesion, I subjected the plate to a vacuum for about fourteen seconds. Next, in order to engrave the image onto the ImagOn©, I

\textsuperscript{19} http://www.praga.com
\textsuperscript{20} Figure 15, Permanent marker design on acetate
exposed the plate for roughly thirty light units. This exposure leaves a ghost image of my acetate drawing on the ImagOn©. For etching purposes, I had to remove another plastic layer from the top of the ImagOn© and bathe it in a sodium carbonate mixture. While the plate was immersed in the solution, I softly wiped the plate with a sponge to help remove the unexposed areas of ImagOn©. Once enough of the unexposed ImagOn© had been removed, I lightly dried the plate with a paper towel and finished drying it with the hair dryer. In order to secure the image to the plate, I exposed the plate to fourteen units of vacuum. Finally, the ImagOn© plate was ready for ink application.²¹

In order to obtain the glowing yellow hue, I mixed a process yellow and magenta together in about a 1:4 ratio. This produced a vibrant orange-yellow color that I used for the first run of this two run development. Following this run, I mixed process violet, magenta, and yellow to formulate a burgundy color that I then used to ink my ImagOn© plate.²² Spraying the first run with water, I again ran the print through the press that gave me the result of the first set of images.²³ To execute the red tiles, an additional run utilizing relief printing was needed.²⁴ By inking a sheet of floral wallpaper and running it, with the rice paper, through the press between the first and the second runs, I created these prints. I adhered the two versions of the prints to the plywood tiles with polyurethane, and after two coats I used sand paper and steel wool on them.

²¹ Figure 16, ImagOn© plate ready for inking
²² Ratio = 2:1:1
²³ Figure 17, Perseverance, detail of yellow tiles, monotype and ImagOn© on rice paper adhered to plywood.
²⁴ Figure 18, Perseverance, detail of red tiles, monotype and ImagOn© on rice paper adhered to plywood.
Now I will discuss the production of the bulk of my creative component. The paintings that embody my creative component are rich with mixed media experimentation. Altering the support, by means of carving and sanding, applying modeling paste, and adding other non-traditional and found materials, permitted me to elaborate on the surfaces’ natural attributes. Pushing the boundaries of the support exploits the natural properties of the wood, and creates a unique look for traditionally painted surfaces. Mixed media in the form of rubber and fabric bumpers, feathers, raffia, and modeling paste act as the low relief elements of the compositions. In addition to the oil paint that serves as the preliminary layer of the paintings, I have also applied layers of oil bar and oil pastel. This variation in line and texture adds to the already diversified surface quality and also helps unify the 2-D and 3-D elements.

I applied paint to the background with vast, gestural strokes using a large fan brush. For the horse’s face, I used a fat horsehair brush with a scumbling technique. To create the mane, I utilized small and large sized fan brushes in an alla fresca manner. All in all I use the alla prima method of painting as opposed to multiple layers of thin washes.

The painting titled Sevilla contains the fewest mixed media elements, since I excluded all surface materials such as found materials and other collage. The composition relies on the chipboard’s natural surface qualities consisting of the irregular and overlapping diagonal pattern the wood maintains. This modified parquet-like pattern provides an interesting background for Sevilla’s imagery. The only other mixed media component is the

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25 *Alla fresca* is a term that means that the painter applies a base of wet paint and then more wet paint after the first layer dries.

26 *Alla prima* is in reference to one application of paint rather than many layers of translucent glazes. Usually faster artists use this painting application.
oil pastels added to the support’s surface. The variation of paint and pastel marks give the painting a unique feeling of gesture.

The spectrum of color in this painting is the least varied of my creative component. Concentrating on an analogous color scheme, I push lights and the darks by use of yellow ochre for the highlights and dioxazine purple in the shadows. Burnt siena, alizarin crimson, and light red maintain the intermediary colors. To create the stage-like lighting effects in the horses’ mane and facial features I mixed white, yellow ochre, and cerulean blue together for an unobtrusive cream color.

The painting titled Cádiz II is more exploratory in terms of mixed media. In addition to oil paint, oil pastel, and the chipboard’s surface, I have used sandable plaster to create a brick-like surface in the background. Due to the foreground’s innate nature to exist as the center of attention, I wanted to draw more attention to the Moorish inspired Spanish ornamentation. Because I have added additional texture to the background, the viewer’s attention moves throughout the composition, rather than remaining on the equine subject matter. In addition to the oil paint on the surface, I added oil pastels to help with the chiaroscuro and applied polyurethane to select areas of background ornamentation.

The application of paint and pastel in this painting varies a bit from the other paintings. To create the equine imagery in Cádiz II, I used a fast gestural style of paint application with a size 000 round brush and I overlaid the pastels. This type of paint application adds to the textural elements of the sandable plaster and chipboard. The combination of textures and the trompe l’oeil style of painting makes this composition rich in texture and composition.
The palette of Cádiz II relies on a complementary color scheme of greens and reds. In addition to these colors I used yellow ochre for the highlights; dioxazine purple and lamp black were mixed to formulate the shadow areas. For highlights created by tenebrism, I used white pastels that are gently rubbed into the surface to create the soft, glowing quality of horse’s facial features. Additionally, black pastels help reduce the amount of glare in the shadow areas.

The third pastel painting in my ouvrage titled Cádiz I demonstrates the most diverse use of mixed media to this point in my artistic process. This six-foot by three-foot vertical triptych uses a variety of different mixed media such as various sizes and shapes of rubber bumpers, feathers, carved chipboard, and sandable plaster. In addition to these materials, the presence of the parquet-like chipboard is more prevalent due to the deep grooves of the wood. Furthermore, the texture of the gesso as opposed to regular exterior house primer gives this surface a unique tactile quality.

Aside from the use of yellow ochre, this painting strays from the warm colors such as burnt sienna, alizarin crimson, and light red, and moves into a cooler palette. Dioxazine purple, cerulean blue, and rose hue give the background an atmospheric quality. The horse in the foreground is described as a grey, with ochre highlights and a shimmering silvery-blue mane. The regalia that adorn the horse’s head also reflect the colors used in the background.

Asturias: Celedonio Álvarez González, the fourth painting in my creative component, is a polyptych derived from my explorations in Sevilla. Influenced by Sevilla’s simple

27 Yellow ochre is the only color that is consistently used in my creative component. This color is used to give the creative component a sense of overall unity.

28 Here I am using colors that I have witnessed during a sunset in the real city of Cádiz. I will discuss this more in Chapter 4.
drawing and painting applications, I looked for an interesting way to execute my composition by means of mixed media. Ornamentation drilled and carved into the chipboard, felt bumpers, and foam crosses are some of the many materials adhered to the support. I used polyurethane and exterior house primer to fasten the materials to the ten-foot by four-foot surface of the painting. This combination of polyurethane and primer provides a watertight area and is an incredible adhesive.

The hues that I utilized in Asturias: Celedonio Álvarez González rely on the complementary color scheme of reds and greens.\(^{29}\) Once again yellow ochre was used for the highlights and dioxazine purple was used in the shadow areas. For this painting I recalled the pastel techniques I utilized in Cádiz I. I used various sizes of fan brushes to create the horses’ heads and pastels are once again overlaid in a gestural manner in order to give the composition a sense of dimension. These oil pastels complement the properties of the chiaroscuro obtained by the oil paint.

The final pastel painting in my creative component is Jerez de la Frontera. This mural sized polyptych consists of four panels that combined, make up a six foot by 11 foot piece. It is in this painting that I wanted to combine all the exploratory concepts that I utilized in the previous paintings. Rather than experiment with mixed media, I wanted to exploit my drawing and painting skills.

The painting and drawing techniques utilized in this mural are a conglomeration of the techniques exploited in the previous paintings. Due to the large scale of one of the horse heads, the under painting’s brushstrokes exposed; however for the smaller equine

\(^{29}\) For example, light red, burnt siena, and alizarin crimson are utilized for the red color palette whereas sap green and dark green hues formulate the green color scheme.
representation a more contained style was necessary. This style is similar to the style utilized in Cádiz I-- the contained marks are less gestural and more focused.

Throughout this chapter I have described in depth my creative process in terms of methodology. Each component has been discussed in terms of artistic development, but further explanations are needed in order to discuss my subject matter. In the next chapter I will discuss in detail the symbolism and iconography associated with my creative component’s compositions.
CHAPTER 4. EXPLANATION AND ANALYSIS OF DISTINCTIVE WORKS

This section of my thesis will further discuss my creative component in terms of visual imagery, iconographic symbolism, and other compositional elements. Each painting represents the Moorish contribution to the Pura Raza Española breed of horses. Since the Moors occupied Iberia for over seven hundred years, the crossbreeding of Arabian and Berber horses was inevitable. In the first section, I will discuss research topics concerning the Moorish influence on the Pura Raza Española and its relationship to my paintings.

After this foundation is covered, I will discuss distinctive works. Each painting is reminiscent of cities I traveled for research purposes. The cities I have chosen to represent my paintings have links to the Moorish occupation and each interprets this inhabitation by means of ornamentation or other cultural links. The compositions Sevilla, Cádiz I, Cádiz II, Asturias: Celedonio Álvarez González, and Jerez de la Frontera will be analytically analyzed utilizing pictorial references and details.

Moorish Influence on the Pura Raza Española

There are many arguments concerning the genetic lineage of the Pura Raza Española. Most equine historians agree that during 700 years of occupation, crossbreeding between the Arabian and Berber horses occurred with the native Iberian stock; however, the Spaniards’ opinions are greatly different. Possibly fueled by their discrimination against the Moors, the Spanish people deny any relationship between the Moorish horses and the Iberian horses. Though the debate continues, neither view has been proven so far. I assume that after 700

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32 From my personal experience in Spain, the term moro means Moor. This term in the common spoken language can have derogatory connotation.
years of settlement, crossbreeding between the two breeds was bound to happen. Since my paintings are based entirely on the Moorish contributions to Spanish horse breeding, I will explore the time-line of equine art and show the correlation between the Moorish horses and Pura Raza Española.

To see the changes in genetic structure, we must look at artistic creations associated with prehistory such as the equine images from the cave paintings in Altamira. If we look at these prehistoric horses, we notice the robust body structure with concave heads. I pay homage to this prehistoric Iberian predecessor in my painting Asturias: Celedonio Álvarez González since many cave paintings are located in this region.

The Greek colonists and Romans who occupied Iberia left an artistic account of contemporary equine portraiture. A Greek-Iberian vase found near present day Granada is an excellent example of the art left by Greek colonists. The horse depicted here contrasts immensely from the cave paintings in Altamira. This horse is not robust or heavy in any manner and his face is slightly dish-like or convex. Also, the horse’s legs are long and thin, his head is dainty, and his neck is thinner than the cave paintings at Altamira. This horse looks like an early example of the crossbreeding between a prehistoric Arabian and the archaic Iberian strain. Since there were Greek merchants present in Spain after the era of Alexander the Great, I can only assume that the Greek horses were brought along. Another example of the small-headed and thin-legged horses is found in a Hispano-Roman mosaic mural displaying a chariot race. Due to their physical characteristics, these horses

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33 Figure 19, Altamira cave painting depicting the concave nosed, robust prehistoric breed of horse.

34 Figure 20, Greek-Iberian vase found in the Iberian necropolis near Granada.

35 Figure 21, Mosaic mural found in Barcelona, Spain
demonstrate qualities of the Arabian horse. Since Arabian horses are known for their speed, it is probable that the Romans may have imported these horses for chariot races.

However, the most important influence on the Pura Raza Española was the introduction of the Berber during the Moorish invasion. Banners of Alfonso VII exhibit horses with thick necks, heavy sloping shoulders, and robust hindquarters.36 These attributes, though highly stylized in these banners, are derived from the Berber and are comparable to the appearance of the Pura Raza Española today.37 Another example of this more robust horse is in a manuscript depicting an Iberian individual encountering a Muslim.38 They are perched on top of horses that have shorter legs, heavy body frames, and thicker heads, like Berbers.39

In my painting Cádiz II, I pay homage to the Berber’s influence in the Pura Raza Española.40 The horse on the left is a contemporary Berber-looking animal acknowledging my interpretation of the Pura Raza Española that existed during the Moorish occupation. I wanted to show the Pura Raza Española with a smaller head, attributed to the Arabian breed, but also exhibit the thick neck and wide shoulders that is more typical of the Berber.

36 Figure 22, Banner of Alfonso VII displaying a contemporary version of the Pura Raza Española.
37 Figure 23, Modern Pura Raza Española.
38 Figure 24, Illustration of Cantigas
39 Figure 25, Modern Berber.
40 Figure 26, Cádiz II, 2-D Mixed Media, Spring 2003
Considering these Moorish influences on the Pura Raza Española, I would now like to discuss the different regions I visited during my research trip to Spain. Each of these southern regions was heavily influenced by the Moors in terms of design and ornamentation as well as with the crossbreeding of Berber and Arabian horses. Each of the paintings in my creative component is named after some of these regions or cities.

The equine portrait entitled Sevilla, is reminiscent of the southern city with the same name. Spaniards produced ornamentation that decorates the metropolis’ public buildings and parks, and the Moorish influences are undeniable. Sevillans are also well known for their ceramic tile making; these tiles also exhibit Moorish influences. Examples of this tile production are present in the Plaza de España, the site for the 1992 World’s Fair celebrating the 500-year anniversary of Columbus’ transatlantic discoveries. The Plaza is an eclectic conglomeration of neoclassical architecture and Moorish inspired decoration. This public display of Middle Eastern influenced ornamentation demonstrates the city’s unconscious will to embrace Moorish contributions in terms of ornamentation.

Inspired by the creation of Moorish-inspired ornamentation with a Spanish flair, I painted the triptych, Sevilla, which incorporates this ornamentation with Spain’s equine gem, the Pura Raza Española. The location of Sevilla is in the southern state of Andalucia where

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41 Figure 27, Sevilla, oil paint and oil pastel on chipboard, Spring 2003

42 Figure 28, These photographs represent decoration in a obscure public park in Sevilla. Located under some benches, this ornamentation obviously has its influences from Moorish decoration.

43 Figure 29, Plaza de España’s neoclassical design and ornamentation located within its the colonnade.
the Pura Raza Española, more commonly known as the Andalucian, flourished. The southern states were the first to be exposed to Moorish occupancy and the first to see the desert-bred Arabian and Berber horses. After seven hundred years of occupancy, the inevitable crossbreeding of the Pura Raza Española and the Moorish horses occurred. Sevilla represents this peaceful collaboration between these two cultures. The background of Sevilla is adorned with decorative spheres and triangular connecting designs that are referential to the Moors and their geometric abstractions. The predominant subject matter that overwhelms the picture plane is the colossal Pura Raza Española. This giant equine portrait represents the Iberian peoples and more specifically the individuals inhabiting Andalucia. The horse is represented in an academic matter utilizing trompe l’oeil, tenebrism, and chiaroscuro. This is also symbolic of the Western tradition associated with European nations such as Spain. The stallion’s eye is looking into the stage-like lighting as if enlightened. This also pays homage to the other Moors’ contributions to the Spanish society such as new forms of alcohol, science, and technology.

_Cádiz I and Cádiz II_

The paintings Cádiz II and I celebrate the equine-loving port city on the coast of the Atlantic. Only miles from Gibraltar, the city of Cádiz is located in the southernmost part of Andalucia. Like Sevilla, Cádiz has a long history of horse breeding and horse festivals. The Moorish influences are undeniable, especially when I discovered the triumphal equine

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44 Figure 30, Map of Spain describing the location of Sevilla.

45 Inspired by the photography of Robert Vavra, I used many of his photographs as resources for my actual paintings. Other sources for this painting came from my personal photographic collection.

46 Figure 31, Map of Spain describing the location of Cádiz.
sculpture of an Arabian horse in the center of this cosmopolitan city.\textsuperscript{47} Aside from the richness in horse breeding, I was particularly interested in the change in colors from inland and coastal Spain. Whereas throughout the Spanish mainland the color scheme is dusted with monochromatic browns with a hint of green, the coast of Spain is saturated in pinks, blues, and purples.\textsuperscript{48} I have taken this coastal palette and applied it to Cádiz I.\textsuperscript{49}

Cádiz I is a composition that describes the mount of a vaquero symbolic of southern Spain.\textsuperscript{50} The Pura Raza Española is adorned with a feather plume and exquisitely decorated tack. The cascading ornamentation above the portrait is reminiscent of the doorways in some of the Islamic Mosques I visited in Spain, and my painting’s ornamentation reiterates the Moorish ornamental contributions to Spain. These elements of Moorish influence combined with the Pura Raza Española makes a pictorial reference to the collaborations between the Moorish and Spanish cultures.

In the composition, Cádiz II, I took a different approach has been taken.\textsuperscript{51} Inspired by human-made fortifications present along the city’s eastern coastline,\textsuperscript{52} I have incorporated a

\textsuperscript{47} Figure 32, Photograph of Triumphal Sculpture concerning the Arabian horse.

\textsuperscript{48} Figure 33, Photograph depicting a sunset on the Atlantic coast in Cádiz.

\textsuperscript{49} Figure 34, Cádiz I, 2-D Mixed Media, Spring 2003

\textsuperscript{50} The term vaquero is a Spanish term for their version of a cowboy. Traditionally this term is usually used in reference to the mounted portion of bullfighting. According to Funk and Wagnall’s \textit{New Encyclopedia}, “The Moors from North Africa who overran Andalusia in AD 711 changed bullfighting significantly from the brutish, formless spectacle practiced by the Visigoths to a ritualistic occasion observed in connection with feast days, on which the conquering Moors, mounted on highly trained horses, confronted and killed the bulls.” The term doma vaquera is actually a reference to the art of cattle driving that is the fundamental training necessary for the mounted portion of bullfighting.

\textsuperscript{51} Figure 26, Cádiz II, 2-D Mixed Media, Spring 2003, also inspired by some of the compositional elements in Robert Vavra’s book \textit{Equus}. I also referenced my personal photographic collection to gain a more indepth look at the horses anatomy.

\textsuperscript{52} Figure 35, Photograph of fortification made of cement blocks found on the eastern coast of Cádiz.
stylized version of this blockade into my background ornamentation. This blockade is referential to the concept of the Iberian people’s attempt to keep the Moors out of their country. However, the two horses that dominate the polyptych’s picture plane challenge this concept. The horse on the left symbolizes the Moorish Berber and the horse on the right represents the Pura Raza Española. The Berber, depicted in a \( \frac{3}{4} \) portrait, stares at the Iberian horse as if recalling the past when the Moorish horse influenced the Spanish breed. Both horses are represented in a peaceful manner with ears at attention and soft eyes and facial expression. This represents the tranquil contributions each culture had on the Pura Raza Española.

**Asturias: Celedonio Álvarez González**

Perhaps the most interesting painting, symbolically speaking, is the mixed media piece titled *Asturias: Celedonio Álvarez González*.\(^{53}\) The region of Asturias is one of the northern regions of Spain that successfully defended itself from the Moorish occupation due to the natural fortification formed by the Cantabrian Mountains.\(^{54}\) I included this painting to show the difference between Moorish influenced and non-influenced breeds of horses. English speakers dub the native horse that roams freely in the Cantabrian Mountains the Asturian.\(^{55}\) These horses, unaltered by crossbreeding, are surefooted steeds that are no larger than a pony. Favorite mounts of the Romans; these horses are usually black in color and have bushy manes, tails, and fetlocks. I depict these Asturian horses intermingling with the

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\(^{53}\) Figure 36, *Asturias: Celedonio Álvarez González*, 2-D Mixed Media, Summer 2003

\(^{54}\) Figure 37, Photograph of *Picos de Europa*, a national park in the Cantabrian Mountains that are also called *Cordillera Cantábrica* and map of Spain that highlights the region of Asturias.

\(^{55}\) Figure 38, Photograph of the Asturian horses roaming freely in the Cantabrian Mountains
ornamentation including many crosses, which is the Christian symbol of the Asturian flag, amongst Moorish-inspired ornamentation. In the foreground a large portrait of an Arabian looks past a Pura Raza Española who is rearing slightly. Both horses gaze at an Asturian horse that jokingly flares his lips back at the Arabian and Pura Raza Española. The Asturian horse lacks all the conformation traits passed down by the Arabian horse that further emphasizes northern Spain’s lack of Moorish influences.56

**Jerez de la Frontera**

The final piece in my creative component reflects the center of Spain’s equestrian world.57 The city Jerez de la Frontera houses the Real Escuela Andaluza del Arte Equestre that is equivalent to the world-renowned riding schools in Austria, England, and France.58 Not only does this city train some of these most skilled equestrian artisans in doma clásica, but they also envelop some of the premier Pura Raza Española breeding farms. Also located in the city is an ancient Moorish mosque and castle that marks the Moorish influence in this city. In my painting Jerez de la Frontera, I wanted to pay tribute to the city’s contributions to the equestrian world.59 This six-foot by eleven-foot painting depicts the haute école dressage maneuvers such as collection and an extended trot. These maneuvers refer to the Real Escuela Andaluza del Arte Equestre. Each horse in this composition is Pura Raza

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56 The Celts occupied the upper half of Spain and Portugal before the Romans presence during the second Punic War in c. 208-205 BC. (Cantarino, Vincente. Civilización y Cultura de España. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: 1995.)

57 Figure 39, Map of Spain displaying the location of Jerez de la Frontera

58 Real Equestre Andaluza del Arte Equestre literally means the Royal Equestrian Riding School that trains riders how to execute haute école maneuvers in the art of doma clásica (classical dressage).

59 Figure 40, Jerez de la Frontera, 2-D Mixed Media, Summer 2003
Española, the symbol of Spain in my paintings. I also incorporate Moorish-inspired ornamentation with a Spanish flair. This use of ornamentation is reminiscent of the Moorish mosque I visited and a poster I saw at the tourist office in Jerez that celebrated the Pura Raza Española. This poster integrated Moorish inspired decorations similar to the way I incorporate the background of my compositions with ornamentation. All in all, this painting is a conglomeration of all the techniques and research I had executed in the preceding pieces.
At the beginning of my graduate education, I desperately needed to redefine my position in the Academy of Art. Unwilling to return to previous artistic compositions of my undergraduate years, I used my graduate studies to facilitate mental and creative exploration. Unfortunately, my research concerning non-Western ornamentation was disjointed and I completely ignored my undergraduate research and personal icon, the horse. It was not until I came to terms with my previous artistic expressions that I could develop as an artist. Finally, during my last two semesters, I was able to align all the exploratory building blocks to formulate this creative component.

My creative component is an accumulation of exploration, experiences, and reflections of two and half years of graduate study. It is a pictorial reference that depicts the evolution of the above-mentioned qualifiers. No experience is forgotten; instead these elements are embedded in my compositions like layers of paint on canvas.

By researching artists such as Joyce Kozloff, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, Rembrandt van Rijn, Robert Vavra, and Rosa Bonheur, I was inspired to work beyond the boundaries of traditional horse portraiture. Since I rediscovered my personal icon, relearned representational drawing, experimented with mixed media, and researched non-Western ornamentation and equestrian art, I was able to create a cohesive and inspiring creative component. Not only does my work suggest a peaceful collaboration of two cultures, but it also is a reflection of my self-discovery as an artist.
Figures 1 and 2: Sculptures demonstrating beaded trappings and frilly ornamentation.
Figure 3 Women in front of building filled with the horror vacui aesthetic
Figure 4 Blossoms and Leaves color swatch
Figure 5 *Plaza Las Fuentes*, Joyce Kozloff, Pasadena, 1990
Figure 6 *Conversion of St. Paul*, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, Rome, Italy, c. 1601
Figure 7  *Calling of St. Matthew*, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, Rome, Italy, c. 1597-1601
Figure 8 Image from Robert Vavra’s *Equus*
Figure 9 Image from Robert Vavra's book *Equus*
Figure 10 Horse Fair (above), c. 1853-1855, and Le Labourage Nivernais: Le Sombrage (below), c. 1849, by Rosa Bonheur
Figure 11  *Tribute*, Pastel painting, Spring 1999
Figure 12 *Eviction*, graphite on illustration board, Fall 2000
Figure 13 *Troika*, oil on chipboard, Spring 2001, College of Veterinary Medicine, Iowa State University
Figure 14 Perseverance, 2-D Mixed Media, Fall 2002
Figure 15 Permanent marker design on acetate
Figure 16 ImagOn© plate
Figure 17 Perseverance, detail
Figure 18 *Perseverance*, detail
Figure 19 Altamira cave painting
Figure 20 Greek-Iberian vase found in an Iberian necropolis near Granada
Figure 21 Mozaic found near Barcelona, Spain
Figure 22  Banners of Alfonso VII
Figure 23 Portrait of a Modern Pura Raza Española from Loch’s book *The Noble Horse of Europe*
Figure 24 Illustration of Cantigas
Figure 25 Statuesque head of a Berber stallion from Loch’s *The Noble Horse of Europe*
Figure 27 *Sevilla*, 2-D Mixed Media, Spring 2003
Figure 28 Tile designs from park benches in Sevilla
Figure 29 Decorative elements from the Plaza de España
Figure 30 Map of the location of Sevilla, Spain
Figure 31 Map of the location of Cádiz, Spain
Figure 32 Equestrian sculpture in Cádiz, Spain
Figure 33  Sunrise on the coast of Cádiz
Figure 34 Cádiz I, 2-D Mixed Media, Spring 2003
Figure 35 Fortification on eastern coast of Cádiz
Figure 37 *Picos de Europa* and Map of Spain highlighting the area of Asturias
Figure 38 Photograph of Asturian Horses in the Cantabrian Mountains from Sylvia Loch's *The Royal Horse of Europe*
Figure 39  Map with location of Jerez de la Frontera, Spain
APPENDIX B. SELECTED WORKS

Sevilla, 2-D Mixed Media, Spring 2003
Cádiz I, 2-D Mixed Media, Spring 2003
Asturias: Celedonio Alvarez Gonzalez, 2-D Mixed Media, Summer 2003
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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