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Chronicler of the horse:

Julie Testwuide

By EVE MARX

Julie Testwuide was born in Iowa and educated in Wisconsin. At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, she met and married her college sweetheart. A horse lover since childhood (“Oh, we couldn’t afford a horse when I was a kid,” she said), as a teen she worked at a neighborhood barn in exchange for riding her first horse, a quarter horse called Finnegan. In graduate school, she focused on photography, her academic

mentor counseling her to drop her fine art ambitions (“You’ll never get a job, he said,” she said). Her professional attitude and vast talent quickly landed her corporate work taking pictures for AT&T, Avon, Chase, Chemical Bank, Manufacturers Hanover, Dunn & Bradstreet, General Foods, Miller Brewing Company, Philip Morris, Simon & Schuster, and St. Martin’s Press. Her commercial photography work has appeared in The New York Times, the

New York Post, the Daily News and Runner’s World.

Even as a busy working wife and mother, Ms. Testwuide nurtured her artistic side. In 1995, she began using alternative processes to create images that resembled painting. In the darkroom she experimented with sepia, infrared film and paint on a variety of media to create her masterpieces. Capturing a scene on camera, she augmented it with pastels and encaustic wax. A 20-year personal project she

embarked on called “American Porch Life” has now burgeoned to more than 1,000 images of porches Ms. Testwuide has taken all over the country.

“Some are black-and-white; some are color,” Ms. Testwuide said. “They are pictures of porches of beautiful homes; ugly homes; pristine porches nobody ever sits on; porches with old couches and refrigerators piled on them.” She laughed, remembering how

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her kids used to get annoyed when she would suddenly pull over to snap a picture of someone's porch. "One time I was taking a picture and a man came out and mooned me. I have that picture hanging in a hallway in my house," she said, laughing. For that work, she is currently looking for a publisher.

Ms. Testwuide has lived in Westchester for 33 years. "First we were in Cortlandt Manor and then Yorktown and finally Bedford," she said over coffee at Tazza in Katonah. Despite her long years in rough and rowdy New York, she retains that sense of Midwestern cordiality. While shooting for corporations, she spent a lot of time on airplanes. Eventually her children began to complain. She gave up the corporate work to focus on her painterly photographic work and created a studio at home to do more of her own location work. "I used my kids as models. They began taking their own pictures and exhibited with me." The work was shown in a gallery in Atlanta. Her images of the Adirondacks, the Berkshires, florals, animals, wildlife, the French countryside and other European scenes have



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Artwork by Julie Testwuide displayed in a local home. Previous page, "Arabian Leap."

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been snatched up as art for hotels. The New York Times praised her work, comparing it to the paintings of Pissarro and Monet.

Around the time her offspring were about to leave the nest, Ms. Testwuide, who had been riding all along, decided it was time to live on a horse farm and own a horse. This precipitated her purchase of Beaver Dam Farm in Bedford. By then she had grown fond of the horse breed known as Icelandic. A trip to the Vermont Icelandic Horse Farm resulted in her acquisition of a pair of them, which, for the most part, she cares for by herself. "I have some help with the mucking and feeding, especially when I travel," said Ms. Testwuide. It wasn't long before she began photographing her horses, which launched her latest passion, equestrian photography.

Last year Ms. Testwuide traveled to Santa Fe to photograph horses at the same ranch where the original "True Grit" and "The Lone Ranger" were filmed.

"We were in a group," she said. "We spent a couple of days on the ranch and then we were taken to an old adobe barn where we spent a week photographing



Julie Testwuide with her photo, "Arabian Leap."

horses all day." She recently traveled to France, where she photographed horses on a beach located somewhere a couple hours from Toulouse. Those images are dramatic and romantic. "The light was incredible," said Ms. Testwuide, "and the shape of the horses." This spring she is planning a trip to the Outer Banks of North Carolina to photograph wild horses, and in August she will be photographing Icelandic horses in their natural habitat.

"I do miss those old darkroom days," said Ms. Testwuide, although she

is now a fan of the digital camera. "Darkrooms were such peaceful places." Even when she was working pre-digitally, Ms. Testwuide never used automatic settings and had highly developed technical skills. She said she was the master of heavy-duty lighting.

The portraiture and dynamic horse images Ms. Testwuide is currently focusing on reflect her passion for equines.

"Horses are all-encompassing," she said. In collaboration with Katonah Art & Frame, Ms. Testwuide's latest works are printed in very

large format and framed in reclaimed frames whose wood is from a salvaged barn. Some of the works can be seen and purchased now at Katonah Art & Frame. She recently exhibited in Katonah at Uovo Moderno to benefit the BRLA and to celebrate the Year of the Horse. New images will be hung on the walls of The Meetinghouse restaurant this summer and, starting June 30, Ms. Testwuide's work will be part of a five-artist exhibit at the Lake Placid Center of the Arts.

For more information about Ms. Testwuide's work, visit juliearts.com.