

Images of equestrian elegance



Photo of an Arabia horse by Nasr Marei.



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By **Mariam Hamdy / Special to Daily News Egypt** **May 13, 2010, 2:22 pm**

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This week, the American University in Cairo Press released a new photography book titled "The Arabian Horse of Egypt." Featuring works by Nasr Marei and a heartfelt introduction by Her Royal Highness Princess Alia Bint Al Hussein, the book is both visually and intellectually stimulating.

Those who aren't acquainted with Arabian horse breeding probably don't know who Marei is. Those who are would enthusiastically tell you that he is one of the most celebrated Arabian horse competition judges and breeders in the world, currently in charge of his late father's Al-Badeia Ranch — the oldest stud farm in the region since 1935.

Marei has been dabbling with photography since his youth. His work has since been elevated from amateur shots to more mature landscapes, portraits and naturally, pictures of his horses. And it was his large body of equestrian photography that inspired him to make this book.

The photographs in the book serve two basic purposes: to inform and entertain. The former is accomplished through several beautiful images of various horses in an attempt to explain to the reader the life and essence of this animal. The latter is what makes the book truly worth buying.

The photographs are unique. The compelling subject matter helps: the Egyptian Arabian horse is one of the most beautiful and elegant creatures in the world. The aesthetic qualities of the animal itself are breathtaking — so much so that one could not help but stare at them when Marei, kindly enough, paraded some of his most prized horses at the book's launch last Saturday. They are truly unparalleled by anything else I've ever seen; their royalty is unmatched.

With great compositions, exquisite lighting and ethereal angles, the photographs are a visual treat. The fact that the horses are predominantly pictured running is a deliberate choice by the photographer: "The Arabian horse is a beautiful creature as far as showing its charisma, presence and agility through its movement," Marei told Daily News Egypt.

"To present the Arabian horse in independent movement, without the interference of a rider, a trainer or a handler is the best way to exhibit its biomechanics," he added.

Yet what makes these photos special beyond any other equestrian imagery is the closeness — both physical and emotional — of the photographer to his subjects. Marei was adamant to present his horses "as living sculptures; they are art, but they are living, breathing, moving art. Nothing about them is cold or inanimate," he explained.

That desire to show the heart and soul of his beloved creatures sheds a light on the relationship he has with them: They are his lifelong friends and companions. It's through that close bond that he can anticipate their movements and direction, providing us with shots that border on the ethereal.

It's rare to meet a man in love with what he does, particularly if it has been a lifelong passion solidified into a career or a livelihood. It's particularly uncommon for such a man to be articulate enough to explain to the world the essence and soul of his passion. Marei has not only proven to be an eloquent spokesman and writer about his horses, but also endowed with a refined sense of composition, light and form that allows him to skillfully present them.

If we're fortunate enough, the author/photographer will grace us with yet another book in the near future — a follow up to this

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excellent introduction to this creature's world. The "Arabian Horse of Egypt" is truly a collector's item and a must-read for horse fans and photography aficionados alike.



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Mike Robinson to Mariam Hamdy

Mariam, impressed by your reviews. Please contact me as I have a review proposal for you. Apologies for contacting you this way but I could not find any other way or even a contact page on this site. Mike Robinson, Editor, Voyager Publications, Devon, England. voyager.publications@yahoo.co.uk

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