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"Julianna, you have to stop drawing horses for the other children. You're very good at it, but they have to learn to draw for themselves."

This was the voice of Mrs. Rae, my kindergarten teacher and I was five years old. She was not scolding me. Mrs. Rae and I both knew that I could draw horses better than my classmates. The problem was each time we painted or made drawings in class, two or three other five year-olds lined up at the easel where I worked asking me to draw a horse for them on the sheets of paper they held and I would. Mrs. Rae wanted me to realize that everyone needs to create their own.

I drew horses because I loved them. In junior high, I cleaned stalls and tack in exchange for riding lessons. I rode three times a week, for three years and I couldn't have been happier, unless I had owned a horse of my own.

In high school, horses became less important, taking a backspace in my personal history. After that, marriage, motherhood, nursing school, divorce, and a second marriage kept them in my distant past. I didn't think about horses at all, not until recently.

A few years ago, I moved into a home with a view of the Portland Mounted Police Horse paddock. I watch them wander about the paddock and interact with one another while I drink coffee in the mornings. They look content with their lives.

I started making paintings of them.

It occurs to me that none of these horses runs free. They are Urban Horses. They live in a circumscribed area. They work for a living, patrolling the streets of Portland. They have a job to do, and responsibilities. Kind of like me. They are rare and unfamiliar in the city, somewhat out of place.

Images of horses have been made since before humans had written language and throughout the history of art. It is not easy to present them in a fresh way. The artist's struggle is no different from that of anyone else, however. Neither is it easy to make a life full of meaning and beauty as we fulfill our daily obligations. Like all of the other children, we have to learn to create our own.

Julianna will donate 25% of her sales tonight to Disability Rights Oregon.