



ARAB HORSE COUTURE

عرب اورس کتول



Suzanne

when RESULTS matter...

EQUINE PHOTOGRAPHY BY

Suzanne

continuously
CREATING
lasting
IMPRESSIONS
key tools for
MARKETING
and timeless
TREASURES

Equine photographer, Suzanne Sturgill has many artistic talents. Her passion for Arabian horses is seen in her photographic work. Her love of antiquities and desert textiles is expressed in her handmade tack. Many beloved Arabians are reflected in Suzanne's artistry around the globe.

Meet this iconic photographer and multimedia artist on the following pages.

*The Sequel RCA modeling a
Desert Warrior Halter set*

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When was your first introduction to the Arabian horse and what attributes of the breed were most captivating to you?

My very first introduction to Arabian horses was during the National Horse Show at Madison Square Garden in New York City. It was a huge prestigious Hunter/Jumper Show along with a Five-Gaited Saddlebred show, which was always so exciting! I grew up in the horse country of New Jersey showing my own horses of various breeds and disciplines in breed shows and 4-H shows. What a privilege it was as a kid to go to the city and experience this grand show once a year.

Every year, the National Horse Show sold raffle tickets to win a beautiful grey Arabian horse. I saved my money to buy as many raffle tickets as possible but never to win this beautiful white, fiery, horse straight out of a fairytale book. Much different from the horses we had at home.

As a junior 4-H member, I joined the horse judging team to learn to judge a variety of breeds of horses. Of the many farms, two stand out in my memory. One was a Morgan Farm, and the other, an Arabian Farm-Desiderio, LTD in Chester, New Jersey. It was my first up-close and personal look at Arabian horses.

Arabians didn't enter my life again until my family sold the farm and we moved to a house in Painted Post, New York. My Morgan horse was moved with us. My mother found a nearby Arabian farm to board my horse.

I adapted to my new life in western New York by spending every day after school at the Arabian farm, with my horse, Hillwood Apple Jack, aka Jackie. When I wasn't riding my horse for miles up on the logging trails, I was hanging out at the farm learning about Arabians, and falling in love with the breed. I read the Arabian Horse World Magazines; loving the photos of horses that showed a little different flare and attitude. Even then I noticed details. I recall a stunning, beautiful two year old stud colt arriving to the barn for training. He had never been handled or been around other horses. This colt desperately needed to learn all his basics, but gently. He was genuinely scared. Another stallion screamed at him as we entered the barn and the colt literally went down to his knees! The



The ethereal and ever commanding presence of an Arabian stallion. PICTURED: Third World

trainer agreed to let me start him along gently to earn trust and teach him his basics. He was absolutely beautiful with a big dark liquid eye, tippy ears, wide forehead and jowl scooping down to a petite muzzle with the perfect star and snip. He was mahogany bay with a silver tail and four medium sized perfect socks. Just gorgeous!

This is where I began to gain insight to the Arabian mindset and personality. He was scared, but he was still bold enough to be curious. He was a stud colt, but he was very kind and honest. I like honest horses. Jackie was very honest. You knew what his opinion was. He would do anything for me, but sometimes he put his foot down. It was usually for good reason. Long story short, when I handed this colt off to the trainer, he strutted and bounced on the end of a loose lead, tail over his back, with a sexy confidence. I truly believe Arabians must be treated with respect. Most demand it. I have seen trainers come from different breeds who have had to change the way they communicate with an Arabian horse. Understanding how the Arabian horse learns and understands and reacts, is key to my success in photographing them in their most glorious moments.

I am truly grateful for that time at that Arabian farm, doing these things. As a teenager dealing with a major life change, it became the stepping stone towards what eventually became my career.

Please tell us what compelled you to begin photographing Arabian horses and why this is your passion.



I began photographing horses after I had gotten laid off a job in 1988. Getting laid off happened to be the best thing that could have happened to me! I picked up my camera, loaded up my newborn son in a baby carrier and we visited local farms and asked to photograph their horses. Next thing I know I am asked to photograph schooling shows, then rated shows for Hunter/Jumper and Dressage. I was then photographing Quarter Horse shows and other breeds as well. But I really wanted to photograph Arabians like in the magazines I studied all those years ago.

The Arabian has wonderful graceful lines. The bone structure of their face, the flare of the nostrils, the flowing manes, the curves of their neck and the flag of their tail... they are an artist's dream.

I'm a bit of a rebel, so another huge draw to photographing Arabians is the nonconformist style of photography that was acceptable. Other horse breeds often had a rigid way of presenting the horses for photos. It was almost unheard of to try new poses in those days. Arabian horse owners and lovers recognize beauty, and they usually appreciate art in many forms. They were open to images of any style, as long as the beauty of the horse came through. This fit my style, capturing correct form and function in an artistic way.



Your photography is stunning. Please tell us where you draw your inspiration from.

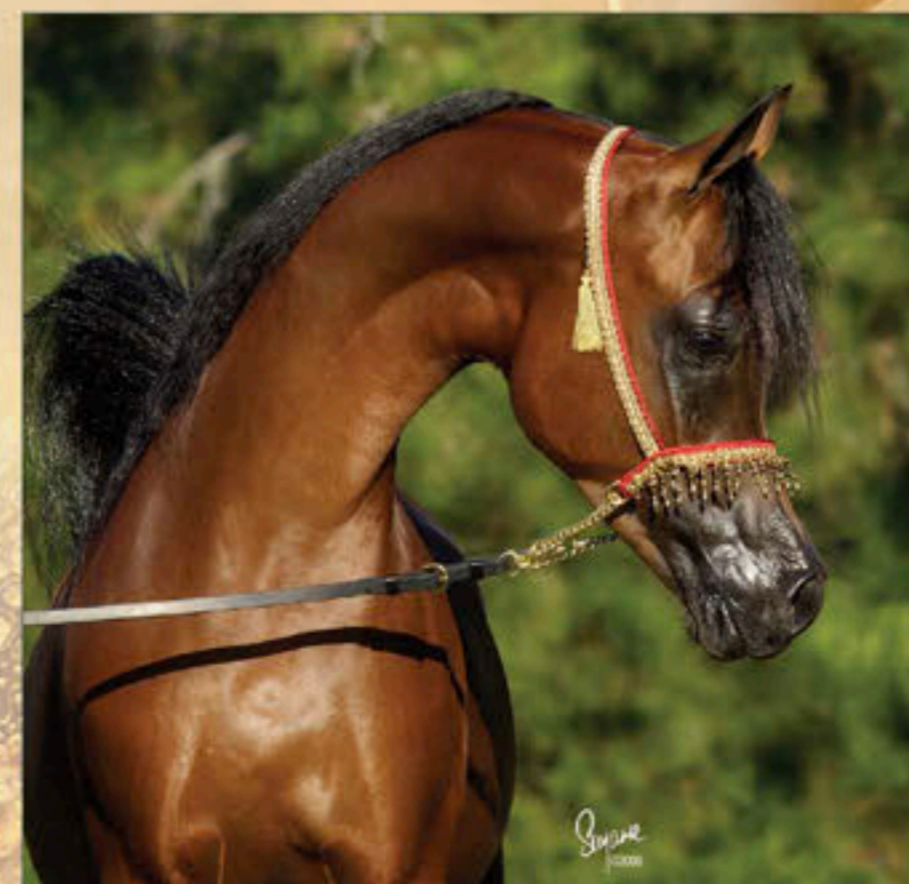
I just love horses! I have always been a horse crazy kid. Horses are great teachers too. Then there are some who can tune into you so well, and be your guide to life. I had one of those for twenty-nine years. When I was eleven years old, my mother and I purchased a Morgan mare in foal together with money I earned from selling my dairy goat kids. The foal was to be mine and the mare my mother's. A colt was soon born and at one month old we brought him and his mother home. He wasn't touched at all since he was born. I earned his trust by just simply sitting in the stall with him and waiting for him to come to me. We were bonded for life. We grew up together, and while I thought I was training him, he was teaching/training me. I know he knew my thoughts. He seemed to empathize with my frustrations or hurts. He would give me a hug with his face and neck when I needed it. Then he would do something funny to make me laugh. He was the kind of horse that looked you in the eye and listened to try to figure you out, like a great dog does. He cared very little to please anyone else but me. I could write a whole book on my BFF, Jackie, and our twenty-nine years of experiences, adventures and learning about life. Jackie was my muse, my inspiration, my angel, my best friend, my guide through some tough times, and through great times. I believe Jackie still inspires and drives me to do my best and always strive to capture the wonderful spirit I know is in each and every horse, if for only a moment in time.

What is the most challenging aspect of photographing Arabian horses?

I have to capture the beauty, the essence and the correct conformation with breed type, because 95% of my work is for marketing purposes. That is a lot to put in one image. Oh yes, and a wow factor to make people stop and notice.

"To explain my work to someone outside the horse industry, I compare my work to a Hollywood photographer who is hired to create an IMAGE for an upcoming star."

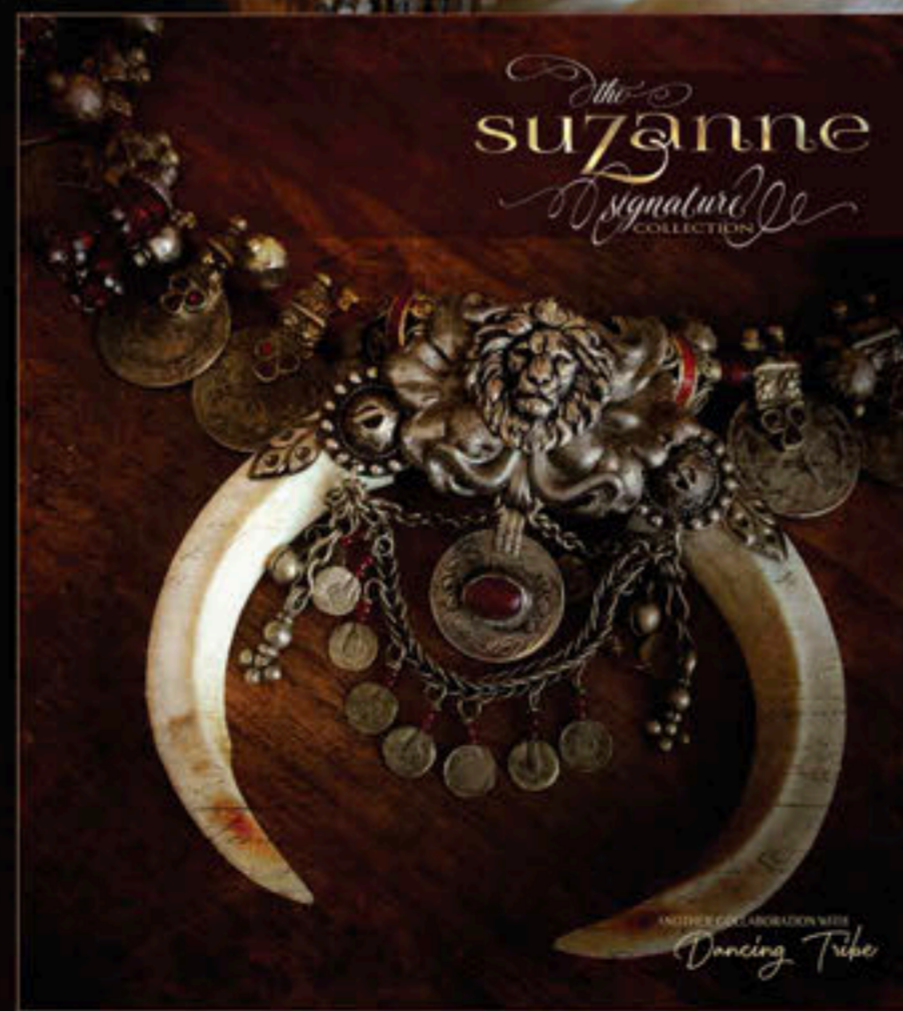
That is my job, especially for the stallions. Creating an image and being consistent in that "image" is important for the branding and marketing. Not only branding for the stallion, but the entire farm and breeding or training program. I commend Roxann Hart for not allowing anyone to photograph QR Marc except myself, many years ago. Obviously, we weren't hiding anything, but less than superior photos after a knock out photo, could hurt the marketing campaign we had set in motion. It was a lot of pressure to keep trying to get even better images than his last photo shoot, and then continue to top the last shoot over and over. John Rannenbergh and I decided to let QR Marc run the show, and he never let us down.



That was quite the experience, and I am very proud of those images. For those of you who may not know the story, QR Marc sold for four million dollars as a result of careful and thoughtful marketing, creating quite a stir in the industry worldwide. He was not for sale as a two year colt. The sale goes down in Arabian history as the largest sale price to a single owner.

LEFT: SIMPLY ELEGANCE HALTERS by Suzanne
TOP INSERT: Marajj - BOTTOM INSERT: Hariry Al Shaqab
RIGHT: Arktik - RIGHT INSET: QR Marc

THE NOBLE
"DESERT
WARRIOR"
HALTER SETS



TOP LEFT: Na'mous Al Shahania LEFT INSET: Bellagio RCA
RIGHT: Beijing BHF - RIGHT INSET: Stival

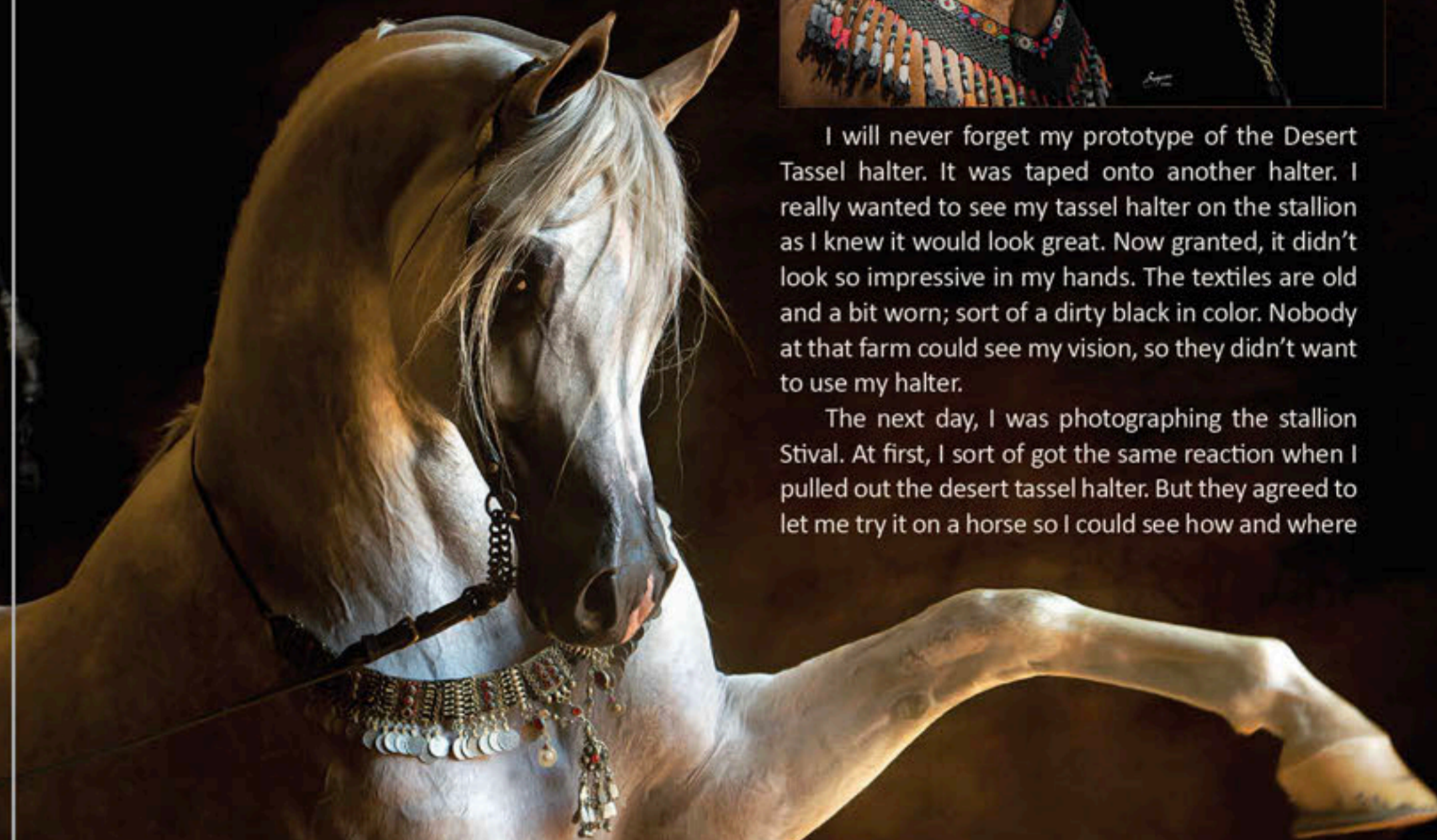
Our Desert Warrior Halter sets are truly one of a kind treasures. Please tell us what inspired your halter collections.

As an equine photographer my first priority is to capture the beauty of the horse for my client, so I became involved with what my subjects were wearing and began making suggestions to the halter makers.



I will never forget my prototype of the Desert Tassel halter. It was taped onto another halter. I really wanted to see my tassel halter on the stallion as I knew it would look great. Now granted, it didn't look so impressive in my hands. The textiles are old and a bit worn; sort of a dirty black in color. Nobody at that farm could see my vision, so they didn't want to use my halter.

The next day, I was photographing the stallion Stival. At first, I sort of got the same reaction when I pulled out the desert tassel halter. But they agreed to let me try it on a horse so I could see how and where



the tassels fell on the face and get a view of my vision. I don't have a horse at home to try ideas on. Cookie, my assistant and I walked the horse up to the office window of the barn with the tassel halter on and jaws dropped! WOW, was the response! So guess who got to wear the first "DESERT TASSEL" halter? Thank you Mike Wilson and Stival! That halter and that photo shoot are what really opened the first door to the Suzanne Signature Collections.

I have always been a lover of old ways. Traditions, the quality of old crafts, and antiques speak to me. My inspiration is drawn from the old paintings and drawings of the desert horse and a lifelong love of vintage styles, artisan crafts, recycled materials and ethnic accents. Then I began collecting antique, or vintage textiles, ethnic beads, tribal tassels, pendants and so much more from countries such as Turkey, Pakistan, India, Africa and Uzbekistan to make my own style of halters to use for photo shoots.

"The Desert Tassel halters are magical! As soon as you place the halter on, it's like you and the horse get instantly transported in time to the Arabian deserts of yesteryear."

THE ROYAL "AL SHAMA" HALTER SETS

Al Shama means "a mark of beauty". These sets are produced usually only once a year with the help of my partner, Dancing Tribe, on the other side of the world. Together we combine our treasures collected from around the globe and work together via Messenger to design these magnificent sets. The breast pieces on these sets usually consist of a truly unique textile of re-purposed vintage silk with hand beading from India or a rare old velvet from Paris. One of my favorite components many of the "Al Shama" sets feature is the antique intricate metallic bullion tassels and luxurious antique French silk fringes; combined with semi-precious stones, gold guiled Turkman metal components or vintage brass.



LEFT: Hariry Al Shaqab - LEFT INSET: Prince Michael MPE
RIGHT: Alixir - RIGHT INSET: Imperial Kismetah



"The ultimate goal of my halters is simply to accentuate and not compete with my subjects."





AHC magazine understands there is a new inspiration and muse in your life. Please tell us about her and how she is changing your life.

After growing up with a horse who was my best friend for 29 years, who was my inspiration, confidant and guide through the first half of my life, I couldn't imagine ever having another horse. After all, there would never be another Jackie.

For ten plus years after Jackie passed, I could get my necessary horse fix on the job. But one day I met this mare and became infatuated with her. I see a lot of beautiful horses in my work but something just struck me. Dorian Aurelia by Dakar El Jamaal was just my kind of mare. She represented my ideal Arabian type. For years I daydreamed about a foal from her. Two years went by and I had just photographed Fadi Al Shaqab and was totally infatuated with him as well. He was the TYPE that I love, besides being a stallion with a kind and gentle nature.

It was a couple months after that when I saw my favorite mare again when it hit me like a rock!

The perfect match for that foal I dreamed about was Aurelia and Fadi Al Shaqab. It was an impassioned, intuitive gut instinct I could not ignore. David Conner and Miller Pinson were leasing Aurelia and agreed to purchase the mare and we were to be partners on the foal. Everything fell into place perfectly. Now the practical side of me had to back up my gut instinct with a little research on the pedigrees. I wasn't disappointed at all. Both individuals had extraordinary pedigrees! Both sides oozed with the "type" I loved. Aurelia had a history as an easy breeder, and a great mommy. That was important to me as well. It couldn't have been more perfect.

After Aurelia checked in foal, I told my husband we were having a baby. He was a bit surprised but



not upset. His question was "so what's your plan?" My answer, "well that all depends on the foal." Again he asks, "No, really, what is your plan? You have to have a plan!" Again I answered the same. It wasn't a satisfactory answer to him, but he accepted it, and he was kind of excited too.

May 5, 2018, on the dawn of the Kentucky Derby, a healthy, long legged, beautiful filly arrived. The guys contacted me through Face Time once she was up on her feet. She was a pretty bay with what looked like an angel's wing on her forehead. She was born a friendly, in your face, "kissy smoocher girl". Our first choice name could not have been more perfect! Angels Envee, taken from a very fine Kentucky Rye and Bourbon.

Three weeks later, I flew to Delaware to see her for the first time. She was super sweet, curious, and bold. I spent time just hanging out in the stall with her. Just like I did with Jackie when he was a foal and let him come to me. Angel was not timid at all. At this one moment, she was looking straight into my face when suddenly I saw Jackie in her eyes! I burst into tears and then ran out of the stall to try to absorb what I just saw. I sat on a bale of hay and continued to cry. Wow, I never in my wildest dreams anticipated that! I have had very strong intuitions throughout my life and I have learned to listen to them. Could it really be him? Was this why my intuition and instincts insisted that I breed this mare to this stallion?

Angel and I had some wonderful bonding time during that visit. She didn't care for being touched at

first, but she would touch you. By the time I left she was begging to be touched all over, even rubbing her ears, under her belly, all over her face and legs and of course a butt scratch. She learned my voice and was excited when I came in the barn to visit her. I hated to go home without her.

Angel's second visit from mom at 4 or 5 months old, introduced her to modeling custom halters and breast pieces that I made for her. She had no problem with them. Pretty amazing for a baby! She's learned that when I come to visit it's dress-up time. And like Jackie, whatever mom wants to do is usually fine with her. They tell me when I'm there, she's a different horse.

"She's given me a new confidence in who I am as a woman in the second half of my life. She's my new Angel."

As a yearling, we went to our first show. I even showed her in one class. I haven't shown a horse in 40 years and never have I shown an Arabian! I was very nervous, but the minute I took her lead to go in the gate, all my fears disappeared...and we won our class! She showed like a champ! Angel has been encouraging me to step out of my comfort zones in so many aspects of my life.



In the first half of my life, Jackie guided me through shy adolescence into becoming a strong confident young woman. Many difficult challenges along the way were met with a strength and wisdom that Jackie helped teach me over the years.



LEFT: Angels Envee modeling several halter styles and accessories.
CENTER: Angels Envee and Suzanne
RIGHT: Kate and Angels Envee
"Touched by an Angel" images.

"Angel seems to be helping me embrace this new chapter. She is my inspiration and now the FACE for my Suzanne Signature Collection halters."



I'm finding the second half of life has its own challenges. Our bodies are changing, our lives have changed, and our children have moved on. Many of our priorities have also changed. It's time to reset our life's goals and priorities, move forward with a new confidence...



This is the inspiration behind the "Touched by an Angel" images I created in 2019 while she was just a yearling. I wasn't sure how I was going to bring this vision to life, but again, everything fell into place like it was meant to be. I was in awe as it happened before my eyes and camera. From seven year old Kate, who was our little floating Angel to Angels Envee playing her part so perfectly. At one point, we had Kate hanging too high for Angel to reach her, she walked in and reached for Kate's hand and then she looks at me like, "I'm trying, ma, but I can't reach her." We never coaxed Angel with treats to reach for Kate's hand.



She just seemed to know what she was supposed to do. We lowered Kate a little and Angel walked right back in to this little girl hanging from the rafters with a white flowing dress and wings, she reached up to her hand and the touch was absolutely perfect! She then looked at me again as if to say, "how's that? Was that good?" YESSSS!!! Perfect!!! WOW! We were all just amazed at how this vision I wanted to share with the world, came to life so perfectly.

View this moving movie
"Touched by an Angel - Behind the Scenes"

at <https://vimeo.com/427136399>

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