

## Artist Creates Custom Livestock Portraits

Susan Dexter of New Castle, Penn., creates custom art commissions of livestock. She's had a lifelong love for creating. "When I was in second grade, the margins of my school papers were filled with pencil drawings of horses," says Dexter. "My mom was an artist, so we always had art supplies. In high school, I chose the Commercial Art program at the Lawrence County Vocational-Technical School. My instructor was an excellent pastel artist, and pastels clicked for me. Maybe because chalk pastels can be both painting and drawing, or because they're pure pigment pressed into a stick, and the colors are vibrant."

After graduation, Dexter continued pursuing her creative passions with an in-house ad position with Fisher's Big Wheel, a regional discount department store. In the mid-1980s, she focused again on personal projects, specifically pet and livestock portraits.

Dexter found her creativity in an unconventional setting—livestock shows. "I got my first horse, a Raffles-bred Arabian gelding named Max, and got permission to set up a display of my paintings at horse shows. Then I'd paint while the show went on. Max was a great model!" She painted Arabs "on spec" and took commissions on people's horses and dogs. "I have painted all species, all breeds, all ages—everything from a parakeet to a beef bull. I just painted a pet snake!"

She's since exhibited at the Ellwood City Festival Juried Art Show, the Hoyt Institute of Fine Arts, Trumbull Art Gallery, the Nissen Gallery, the Buhl Day Art Show, and the Butler's Area Artists Annual. "I also designed and painted the 'Agri-Cultural' rooster for Flock to the Fairgrounds, a public art project of the Canfield Fair and the Mahoning County Historical Society," she says.

Around 2000, she attended her first Canfield Fair and discovered its art submission program. She participated by



Dexter paints portraits on commission of kids, pets and farm livestock.

entering her pastels in the Pro Art 2D and the Plein Air Painting Competition and then by joining other artists to demonstrate art in the gazebo behind the Fine Arts Building. "I painted all 6 days of the fair. I'd wander, taking photos for inspiration, and Plein Air-painted 4-H hogs, the pony ring, Highland Cattle, giant pumpkins and a 4-H Quarter Horse named Junior. This year, I learned that Junior is still alive, and his owners have his Plein Air framed."

Dexter continues to offer paintings on commission. "My pricing is simple—for an 11 by 14, one subject is \$45, whether it's your baby, dog, sheep or pony. I want the price to be low enough that a kid can afford a painting of their pony." She typically works from photos and asks for deposits with the order. The art is shipped unframed and packed between layers of protective heavy-duty cardboard and padding that is almost impossible to bend.

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One of the tools of Richter's trade is a handmade hay wagon he built from an old boat trailer and some skids he secured from a local hardware store.

## Homemade Hay Wagon Helps His Horseradish Business Grow

Dale Richter (91) of Glen Dale, W.Va., has spent his sunset years growing and selling horseradish. "I got into the horseradish business 12 to 15 years ago when I met an older gentleman who made it," Richter says. "He didn't have a place to plant much, so he planted it in his yard, processed it, and took jars around to sell in neighboring towns."

Richter started his own patch soon after, initially giving away most of the product. Since then, he's expanded the patch and his business, experimenting with various flavors and adding mustard, beets, and extra hot peppers. "This past season, I made and sold 192 8-oz. jelly jars across the tri-state area of West Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania, and people are asking me about it everywhere I go," he says. "I have business cards I pass out and wear my 'Dale's Horseradish' hat when it's in season."

One of the tools of Richter's trade is a handmade hay wagon he built from an old boat trailer and some skids he secured from a local hardware store. "I use the wagon to move my homemade mulch to the horseradish patch," he says. He included a tailgate to make gathering and transporting mulch easier. "Construction took several days, about 2 hrs. a day. Out-of-pocket expenses were only a box of screws, along with some hard work. My advice is to use whatever supplies are available; with your

imagination, a lot of things can be made using skids."

Making and selling horseradish is a multi-step process. "With the help of a very good friend, we plant, dig, replant the tops, clean, and grind. I finally invested in a tractor and backhoe to make the harvesting less manual work," he says. "I start with regular horseradish, grinding it in one of my several blenders, adding vinegar and salt for regular, nothing more. For the extra hot, I add peppers for a little kick, beets and mustard. I keep several of each variety on hand when I'm out selling and replenish my supply as needed. This upcoming season, I plan to offer small samples to my customers."

With over a decade of experience with horseradish, Richter feels equipped to pass along some of his wisdom. "Plant it and give it plenty of time to grow. Don't rush it, and you'll have a better product. And don't dig in the summer as a hard frost seems to give a crisper root." But perhaps his most important advice is related to processing. "Have plenty of ventilation when you clean and grind the root. Even then, you might need a mask."

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## Teenager Tackles Farm Projects

With no easy way to hang the new cattle brush inside the family dairy barn, Clayton Wingert devised a mobile fix. When the hydraulic pump kept failing on a tractor needed for silage harvest, the high school senior took on that challenge, too.

"Hanging the cattle brush inside would have put it in the way of our skid steer loader," explains Wingert. "Putting it outside required it to be movable."

An ideal concrete base was sitting in the weeds. When a new concrete floor was poured in the barn, it was used as a scouring pad.

"My dad had the pad poured to use for smoothing the surface of the new floor," says Wingert. "We pulled it across the new floor to knock down high points to save on the skid loader bucket later."

Wingert used a section of tongue salvaged from an old planter for an upright. Three pieces of angle iron from a bale elevator were welded together to form a triangle, with the legs welded to the uprights and the base of the triangle bolted to the concrete block. A second triangle mounted vertically to the front of the upright served to brace the upright on either side with its legs while the angle iron



Clayton Wingert and his cattle brush.

base was bolted to the concrete. The upright was further supported by a steel rod welded to the base of the first angle-iron triangle and the upright just past its midpoint.

Wingert fashioned brackets to hold the brush base to the upright by welding pieces of steel to the base to make it slightly wider

than the upright. He drilled holes in the steel and pieces of angle iron on the back side of the upright. He bolted the enlarged base and angle iron together, like large U-bolts, to clamp the base to the upright.

"I cut the hinge end from a large door hinge strap to serve as an adjustable stop," says Wingert. "It had holes I could use with a set bolt."

He welded one end of the hinge to the brush base with the strap extending downward on the upright. Wingert fabricated a sleeve bracket from a short length of steel to fit over the strap, drilling a hole in it and threading it for a short bolt. Once the bracket was welded to the upright, the bolt through it and the hinge strap helped hold the brush base in place.

When in use, the combination of base and supports ensures it doesn't move.

When Wingert needs to move the brush, he simply hooks on to the concrete base and pulls it where needed.

"The cows really enjoy the brush and haven't knocked it over yet," says Wingert.

The cattle brush has now been in use for nearly a year.

More recently, the high schooler tackled another job. "The hydraulic pump on one of our tractors kept blowing O-rings," he says. "We had to keep pulling plugs out of the

pump and putting another O-ring in, but then it would blow too."

After watching a few YouTube videos on the subject and visiting with a local mechanic, Wingert took on the job. He had a new ring kit with Teflon seals for the O-rings and a few tools. The biggest challenge was finishing the job at night.

"I had to pull the fuel tank off and disconnect the oil lines," recalls Wingert. "I removed the four bolts that held the pump to the frame, disconnected the shaft that drives the pump and lifted the pump out. I didn't see anything wrong, so I put it back together with the new kit, and we had no more problems."

Wingert's mother proudly posted about the effort on the family dairy's Facebook page. "Implement dealers, this is one kid you'll want to watch in the years to come. He did all this with few tools, little light, and outside in the dirt. Just imagine what he could do in a million-dollar shop with every tool imaginable. He got us running just in time to chop one more cutting for the season."

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