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BEYOND THE SADDLE PODCAST
EPISODE 29

Beyond the Saddle Podcast

Episode 29: Fine Artist, Educator and Illustrator, Joanne Y. Pierce

Transcript

[Podcast intro music plays]

[Podcast Intro] Hey Folks! This podcast goes beyond the saddle as we explore professional careers across the equine industry. I'm your host, Katie Clinebell. Let's tack up and head out!

[Host, Katie Clinebell, reads guest introduction and biography] Joanne Y. Pierce is a world renowned Fine Artist, Illustrator, Teacher, and Entrepreneur. Since she was a small child, Joanne has ridden, dreamed about, and drawn horses, which has always been her favorite subject. With a degree in Art Education, Joanne has worked as an art teacher in private and public institutions throughout Long Island. In 2019, Joanne and her son/manager Tom created a free art lesson digital series called Pierce the HeArt Lessons. Their mission is to fill the creative and therapeutic void that so many human beings are experiencing today with Joanne's talents, passions, and life experiences. As the pandemic hit in 2020, Joanne went into overdrive to provide free weekly Pierce the HeArt Lessons live from her home studio to help bring more creativity, peace, and fun to the world. One of the greatest pleasures in Joanne's life is to donate her time and art for the promotion of Alzheimer's research and care, horsemanship, equine rescue, and therapeutic riding programs.

[Katie] Joanne, thank you so much for joining the podcast today. We are all very excited to hear your journey as an artist and as a horse lover. So thanks for coming on and sharing with us.

[Joanne] Hi Katie, I'm very happy to be here.

[Katie] Before the interview I asked you to prepare two truths and one lie so that I can maybe guess which one is the lie. So go ahead and read them, and we will see how good I am. OK?

[Joanne] I am a man minimalist. I worked on Wall Street. I do not like going to the movies.

[Katie] What? I'm gonna say your lie is the movies.

[Joanne] No.

[Katie] You don't like going to the movies!?

[Joanne] No, um I have mysophobia, which is hypersensitivity to sound. So, it's fun my poor children because they learn to eat potato chips without touching the sides of the bag. But it kind of started when I was in high school. I couldn't take the sound of popcorn when we went to the movies and my friends are like 'Joanne, what are you talking about?' I'm like, 'I can't you hear that the popcorn is so loud?' and now they understand it more in the brain how it works in the brain. And so there's a name for it now, and I've met people since then who have had worse cases than I have had.

[Katie] Oh my goodness.

[Joanne] I will go to the movies but I wear ear plugs and I can still hear the movie just fine.

[Katie] Well there you go. OK! Well the more you know right? So if the movies wasn't it: that wasn't the lie, then that means it's either the minimalist or the Wall Street thing which ones the lie?

[Joanne] The lie is I am not a minimalist.

[Katie] You're not a minimalist. OK.

[Joanne] I have way too many collections. My first collection started when I was very little and, of course, Breyer horses.

[Katie] Oh of course!

[Joanne] But I love all antique things and my apartments usually look like a store.

[Katie] She likes her things! So does that mean you worked on Wall Street?

[Joanne] I did! I did in the 1980s.

[Katie] How cool.

[Joanne] Yeah, it surprises people. So I had been substitute teaching when I got out of college. There were no jobs and a friend of mine's Dad worked for Bear Stearns. And I wanted to have you know, good income, get out of my own and he got me an interview and I started working at Bear Stearns. I learned a lot. It was very good experience to learn about finance and it really helped my art career before my son grew up and became a financial planner. And now I have lots of help. But after about three years I remember a colleague saying to me, 'Joanne, this is Wall Street, not Sesame Street.' So I thought it's time to go back to teaching in my art.

[Katie] What a fun chapter, though! I feel like everybody has to have that one fun obscure thing, and for you, it's really amazing 'cause everyone knows Wall Street and has these ideals about it. So how cool is that?

[Joanne] It really was very cool and it was a wild time so I have lots of stories that entertain my family and friends and they're like, 'is that true?' And I am like, 'yes.'

[Katie] Wall Street in the 80s. Oh my. Well, I'd love to talk more about what you do today, so let's start there. Can you tell us what your job is?

[Joanne] I am a fine artist and Illustrator and also educator.

[Katie] So many things. What exactly does that mean? What's that look like for you?

[Joanne] Well, affine artist is when you reach a certain level as an artist and have kind of begun to master your craft. You're professional. You make money from your work so you can kind of get that title. As an illustrator I illustrated a children's book that my sister had written that was very well received. We were a finalist for the Ben Franklin Award for Best New Voice with that book is called Mint's Christmas Message an. As an educator, I had gotten a degree in art education K through 12 when I was going to school because my parents wanted me to be employable. When I graduated and it really was great advice and something I've really loved doing all these years.

[Katie] Yeah, well, I can definitely tell. Just in the few moments we've been talking. Just in a few moments we've been talking about how passionate you are about art and about horses, which we're going to talk more about here in a minute, but tell us more about your company, which is Pierce the HeArt Lessons, right? Tell us more about that.

[Joanne] Yes. In 2019 my son and I founded Pierce the HeArt Lessons. We decided to do art lessons online, and we had a successful kickstarter and we had shot a pilot in Manhattan. Unfortunately the pandemic hit right after that. So we then concentrated our efforts on doing free art classes online throughout throughout the summer.

[Katie] Very cool. Now these classes when you're teaching people to draw like what's your typical subject matter?

[Joanne] Well, my favorite, of course, is the horse. Or that's when I usually like to start with. It's a very complicated subject, but I like to simplify it for people. That was the pilot episode we had done was just a head and neck of a horse. What we did this summer in the live lessons and recorded lessons were beginner lessons that people could just do with a pencil and paper because people were stuck at home.

[Katie] Right? So they couldn't get to the store to buy fancy by, so use what you have.

[Joanne] I didn't want people to feel like they had to buy anything or go to the store. I had a lot of people coming to me asking what can I do with my children during this time. So I saw a big need for that when we were locked down.

[Katie] Would you say like what's the average age of your students? Is it mostly kiddos? Is it the whole range of ages?

[Joanne] Mostly range from 7 to adult. Younger than seven they're not ready for instruction.

[Katie] Well I probably don't have the artistic ability of even a 7 year old. [laughter] But maybe you can teach me.

[Joanne] Well that that's really been my mission throughout my life. We start out very simply with very simple geometric shapes and build confidence. So a lot of people say to me I can't draw a straight line and I say I can't either. That's why I have a ruler. Not many of us can draw a straight line, but it's not necessary to learn to draw.

[Katie] Sure that makes sense. OK, I feel better already. Can you walk us through what is a typical day for you?

[Joanne] So typical day is really very similar to a job. I work about 8 hour's usually work about 8 - 9 hours straight. If I'm really on a roll with a piece before I know it I've worked 16 hours, but I like to, ideally, work from 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon on. And in the mornings take care of business. If I'm teaching a class then that's the time I use to research what I'm going to do in my lesson and then draw around 3:00 o'clock on.

[Katie] Gotcha, so that afternoon/evening is your inspiration time.

[Joanne] Dinner at midnight, yeah.

[Katie] It counts as long as you eat within the day, right?

[Joanne] But it is very much, people think art is something hits you inspirationally, but as you become a professional artist, you can work everyday like you would a job. There's nothing really mystical about it. You have to just get to work.

[Katie] Sure. Very disciplined.

[Joanne] Yes, you have to be very well organized and very well disciplined. It helps to have a studio outside the home. So you can't get distracted by laundry or other tasks 'cause it's very easy to procrastinate.

[Katie] I bet! Well, that's a good myth or misconception that you just busted. Do you have another common misconception that people have about what it means to be a fine artist? And can we bust it?

[Joanne] Yes. You can make a living at your work. You don't have to be dead to make money. I was fortunate to meet some artists who were very successful in the 80s in Manhattan and I got to see you can make a living at this. And the steps to take to do that.

[Katie] Which for you is the lessons, but also selling pieces or commissions? Or, I mean, what does that cash flow kind of look like for you?

[Joanne] If one is to pursue fine art as a sole income, you have to be very creative how you market your work. It's great if you have somebody who can market for you and if you can't, the days are gone where you got into a gallery. When I was young, if a Gallery took you on, you were set, but now you have to be much more creative and think of many different ways to show your work and sell it. The Internet has been a great thing for that.

[Katie] Definitely, your message reaches many more people. Right? Lots of eyeballs on your work, and what you do, but also that's challenging, too. It comes with its own set of challenges.

[Joanne] When I was teaching the lessons online, I had to train myself to see people's work on the screen instead of in person during the pandemic that was that was challenging.

[Katie] I bet so, oh my goodness! Wow! What was your journey? So like education through to today what led you to where we are now with Pierce the HeArt Lessons?

[Joanne] Well I never remember a time I did not draw. I was always doing art and my first drawing I remember vividly I was six years old and it was a horse. I loved horses forever and I brought it to school and that was the beginning of that. I had wonderful teachers throughout public school years. I attended SUNY New Paltz and majored in art education. After that, I taught and developed my art. Took some time off to raise a family and then returned to the art in the teaching when my children were older. And then this past year we began Pierce the HeArt Lessons online. My son and daughter were telling me all about the world online and my son put my work on Instagram (first to Facebook and then Instagram) and suddenly I'm hearing from people all over the world. More people have seen my work than would ever see it if I were in a Gallery in Manhattan. It still blows my mind to this day.

[Katie] It's very cool. Well, that's how we found each other. We had commented on one of your things on Instagram and your team kind of reached out to me and started this great relationship. So it really is like the power of social media and just finding the right people that want to connect with you even in the equine industry, which people sometimes don't think of as being super tech savvy, but really we are

in it's growing so much and you know everybody loves to engage with what they love and for me it's horses and for you it's horses, and look at that!

[Joanne] Yes, oh gosh. I think back to when I just knew the group of people at my barn and maybe a few people I met at shows, it's nothing like it is now. It's fantastic and the educational part is my favorite I can learn so much because I professional riding lessons until I was 40, so I've been trying to learn as much as I possibly can since then. And I just I just I just love the Internet, just love it.

[Katie] You go girl I love that. Well, let's talk a little bit more about the equine industry and what you do for your craft and the advice you have to give. So what is one thing that you wish you had known when you first started out?

[Joanne] I wish I had known not to be intimidated by the receptionists at gallery's. I was very intimidated by them. One example is I was 26 or 27 years old (and I had a good body of work by that time) and I went to a Gallery and the woman said to me, 'Come back when you're 50.' And I wish I listened to her and I should not have. So I wish I had known not to be intimidated.

[Katie] That's great advice, and that's something that probably people who are starting out don't hear very often because it is intimidating, so she's here to tell you. Don't be intimidated. Walk through the door.

[Joanne] Yes, what's great about the Internet is you have a whole world now where you don't have to be a slave to an industry. I do recommend trying to go into group shows an getting a solo show but just have confidence. If they say these are the days we look at slides, do it. Get your work out there, as soon as you can, get your work out there.

[Katie] Perfect! Great advice. Along those lines: do you have advice for anyone looking to pursue a career similar to yours?

[Joanne] Create what you love. I love horses. I can draw or paint horses all day long, all night long. You want to have a subject that you love because you're going to be spending a lot of time with it. So do what you love. Do a lot of work. And get it out there to as many people you can to look at it.

[Katie] Perfect! And also what's not to love about drawing horses and painting them? I love that.

[Joanne] Yes!

[Katie] I know that you do a lot to give back to the equine industry and the organizations in the foundations that you are passionate about. So two fold question: how do you give back? What does that look like? And why is that such a big part of what you do?

[Joanne] We have given back by donating original pieces to organizations: lift me up programs, Horse Rescue and they have auctioned them off and then that money is donated to their program. And I love to do that because I'm not in a position now (maybe someday) of immense wealth where I can rescue all the horses in the whole world?

[Katie] [laughter] Sure!

[Joanne] So that is my way that I can help horses and people.

[Katie] I love it. And everyone can relate to that because we've all been to maybe your therapeutic riding center has an auction, and I've seen some of the most beautiful art at places like that because of kind souls like you - kind and talented souls - like you who are willing to donate to those places. And you know some of my favorite homes that I've been in, you know, people that I look up to and I ask about the art that's on their wall, I kid you not, so many times it come out of an auction like that where it went to a good cause.

[Joanne] Oh, that's so good to hear! That's so good to hear.

[Katie] It's beautiful and it gives back. I love it! Giving back to the horses and the people of the industry. That's perfect.

[Joanne] I think it's very important in life, and it's part of my mission, we have to do that: we're supposed to do that. When you do something for somebody else, you feel better.

[Katie] Absolutely, especially when that can revolve around a horse too.

[Joanne] Oh yes, they need us. Oh my gosh, we need them and we learn a lot from them. I've learned so much from horses. They are the most magnificent animal.

[Katie] Aren't they? We might be biased.

[Joanne] I think it's in the blood because we found out going through my grandfather's home after he passed that my great grandfather had trained horses for Macy's.

[Katie] Wow!

[Joanne] He drove teams of horses for delivery wagons, and I'm like that's where it comes from! Like, okay, that's where I get it! It was just in my blood from when I was tiny.

[Katie] Absolutely, and it doesn't go away! You been bitten by the bug? You're keeping it.

[Joanne] Yes, it definitely doesn't go away, and some of my family and friends had never seen it. Because in high school I was more involved in art in high school and college I was more involved in the art, and when my son turned 7 he one day said to me, 'Mommy, I want to ride a horse.' I was out that door in a second with him to find a barn nearby. And people are like, 'where did this come from?' Like, 'oh it's my, you know, I'm getting back to myself and we found a barn nearby and he started taking lessons. And that's when I said for my 40th birthday I'm taking lessons.

[Katie] I love that! That is just full circle that's so beautiful. Well, let's talk more about the horses you have had in your life. So tell us about the horses that you interact with now or the horses that you take lessons on. I want to hear about him.

[Joanne] Well, when I was in, I think it was junior high, I had friends who had horses, I grew up in an area with small yards, but surrounding us were large. And, I sadly drove my parents insane because I couldn't understand why I couldn't have a horse on a 75 by 100 foot property. And so my first, my first 2 great experiences were one my good friend Lisa had a horse and she said to me I will give you riding lessons for a dollar an hour. She was so sweet. So I took lessons from her at her house nearby, and we used to be able to trail ride all around where I lived before it was developed. And that was my favorite, favorite time. At that time also, my mother would take me in a friend to a park that had trail riding. It

was over an hour away. My mother would drive once. My friend Gary's father would drive once and we do these wonderful trail rides along the beach on the South Shore of Long Island. That was wonderful. Absolutely wonderful. So he and I still talk about it to this day we just had had the greatest time.

[Joanne] Then my next favorite horses were the lesson horses. I saw an article when I first started taking lessons about praising lesson horses and I had two that I love so much: Arlo and Henry. And they were so patient and taught me how to ride. They were just Saints. Loved them, loved them, loved them, and I made portraits of them like OK, they're not expensive \$1,000,000 commissions but they deserve portraits, too. They were definitely the coolest.

[Katie] Well, it sounds like (like so many of us) horses are a theme throughout your life. They never really go away. They find their way back in. So I'm happy for you that they are finding their way back again.

[Joanne] Thanks. Yeah, it's one of the only places I feel at home when I walk into a barn and I smell that smell: 'I'm happy.'

[Katie] I feel ya. I love that smell. I love that feeling. We owe so much to them.

[Joanne] We do, and we joke about I don't own horses right now because I would never be at my easel. Because of the time they take. I just never left the barn. Tom and my daughter and I have joked about OK, but let's see if we put an easel in the barn....

[Katie] [laughter] There you go! just turn one of the stalls into, like your little studio. Actually, that would be pretty cool.

[Joanne] That would be awesome.

[Katie] They're gonna have to force feed you though. Because I can see you would never want to come in to eat or sleep or...

[Joanne] They're kind of used to that already. They kind of just bring me food in my art studio. When they were small, I was debating whether I wanted to buy a horse property when the kids were small so my instructor (who was awesome: he was from Ireland originally and he was great) started me from the bottom up like I didn't just learn to ride; I learned horsemanship. They called me the oldest barn rat at the barn, because I was like one of the kids. They're like, 'this is lady who's here all the time,' but he recommended that I take over some barn work for a woman who is having back surgery to see if I really want to have a horse property to see what was involved with taking care of a six stall barn. My two children were young and they have vivid memories of me going (they were in the car waiting and me going) 'One more thing. One more thing, and then the water, one more thing.' And they're like, 'oh gosh, can we go home yet?!'

[Katie] It's always one more thing. It's never ending, right? That's OK, we love all the things. We have to otherwise we will drive ourselves crazy.

[Joanne] Really it has to be a labor of love like in anything in life, you just have to love it and have it be in your blood.

[Katie] For sure! Well Joanne, it has been just absolutely lovely chatting with you and getting to know your love for horses and for art. I'm sure that people are inspired by this and might want to check you out and connect with you, so what is the best way that they can do that?

[Joanne] So the best way is on all social media @joanneyperce. Also, at Pierce the HeArt Lessons and Pierce the HeArt Lessons on YouTube. There will be more Pierce the HeArt Lessons to come on Stream Horse TV. Lastly, if anyone is interested in commissions they can email me at mail@jyfineart.com.

[Katie] Perfect, I'll be sure to include these so people can find them as well, so you guys can check it out and connect with Joanne or book a Commission with her, which would be way super fun or just tune into her YouTube and learn how to draw for yourself, which would be really, really entertaining for me. I'm sure. I absolutely love it. Joanne, you are a delight. What's the last thing you want to leave our listeners with? The number one takeaway from this interview or a quote that you love, just to give us some food for thought.

[Joanne] Thanks so much your delight as well. I'd really like to leave people with the thought escape into your art, and that is especially important now during this tumultuous time or at any time in your life, if you have challenges. And I encourage people to just start. And to share their art with me on social media.

[Podcast music outro music plays]

[Podcast outro] Thanks for riding along! Know someone that would be great to interview? Have questions you'd like answered on the podcast? Send me an email at beyondthesaddlepodcast@gmail.com or join the conversation on social media. You can connect with us and learn more about the Beyond the Saddle Podcast by following us on Facebook and Instagram at @beyondthesaddlepodcast. Find more episodes anywhere that you get your podcasts such as Apple Podcasts, Spotify, iHeartRadio, and more! Beyond the Saddle is a production of the Equine Podcast Network, and entity of Equine Network, LLC.

[Music stops]

[Katie continues] Hey listeners! We want to know more about you. Check out the show notes of this episode to take a quick listener survey.