

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Metaphors for Men, Beasts and Birds

Santu Mofokeng, Jitka Hanzlová and Jean Pagliuso in this week's On Photography
By William Meyers



April 18, 2015

Horses have been important subjects for artists since the first caveman took a bit of charcoal to doodle on the walls. Jitka Hanzlová's medium-format color photographs consider these animals with a similar, almost primitive, attention. Ms. Hanzlová (b. 1958, Czechoslovakia) begins with nine exploratory images, each of which shows only a small part of a horse. The first, for instance, has just one ear in the foreground; that ear is white, and there is snow falling between it and a forest of leafless trees. The second is a close-up of the point where the horse's body meets its rear legs. The third is part of a horse, but it is hard to tell which. The next concentrates on the lashes of one eye. It is not until the 10th print that we see a whole animal.

The dapple-gray horse in the 10th image is photographed from in front; it and its shadow take up only the middle third of the print, with sand filling the foreground and a pale blue sky above, so there is room for its presence to be felt. The horse's handsome bearing put me in mind of the Houyhnhnms that Gulliver regards as so noble and so intelligent in the last book of his travels.

Among the concluding eight images is a sculptural study of a horse's neck, and another of a mane. A chestnut horse rears up vertically, a palomino bucks all four hooves off the ground, and a herd romps together. In another image, a horse rolls in snow.