

SCULPTURE ARTIST

Tammy Bality



"Fiery"



"Spring Foal Crop"



"The Spin at Liberty"

Limited edition cast glass version of a private commission of Country Boy Berry stallion, made originally in bronze, 125% of lifesize. Bality got to know the horse and his owner well; discovered the horse "smiles" when he performs.

AT HOME IN Nature's Realm

By Corinne Joy Brown

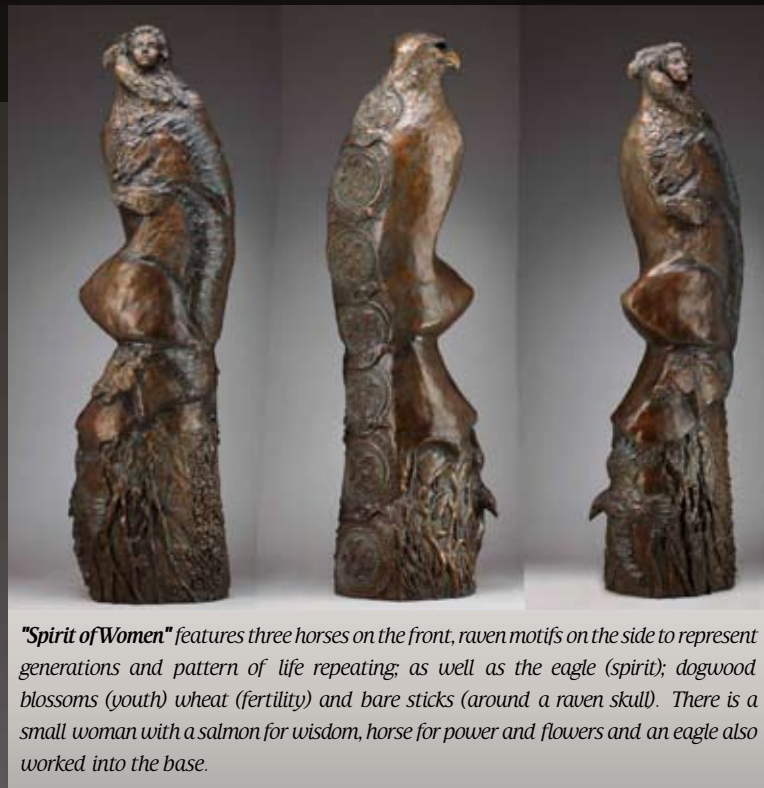
She lives in a world of wonder; a place where birds of prey perch unbidden on her bare arm and horses at liberty freely seek her companionship. A master falconer, a horsewoman, and a person totally at peace with the animal world, Tammy Bality brings her awareness and appreciation for furry and feathered friends into her exceptional art, preserving for all time the grace of the creatures she sculpts.

"With my sculptures," said Bality, "I try to portray what I experience when I'm around animals. They bring so much joy to my life."

At home in Loveland, Colorado, Bality, a fifth generation native, spends between



"Spirit of Women"



"Spirit of Women" features three horses on the front, raven motifs on the side to represent generations and pattern of life repeating; as well as the eagle (spirit); dogwood blossoms (youth) wheat (fertility) and bare sticks (around a raven skull). There is a small woman with a salmon for wisdom, horse for power and flowers and an eagle also worked into the base.

30-40 hours a week sculpting while balancing a job, running a home, and caring for all her own menagerie. These include a Harris hawk, a Quarterhorse, a Tennessee walker, Tonto, an aging pony, and a rescued Italian greyhound named Bonnie. This past summer, she fostered a rescued kestrel, a small raptor, who, after being let back into the wild, decide to come "home" and is a frequent visitor. In addition to all that responsibility, Bality is also a competition horsewoman, showing in ranch horse versatility, a Western sport that requires perfect trust and coordination between horse and rider.

The artist competes because she loves it and like all her riding experiences, learns from it. While she rides she's studying the horse and all his movements. It's that learned intimacy with form and movement that translates into her memorable bronzes of horses at rest or at play. From salon size to life size, her accuracy is astonishing. Bality is more than adept at building the first maquette in clay, prior to casting. These days, she's also tackling the challenging assemblage of the cast pieces into the final sculpture as well as the seam welding and finishing in. She and her husband Arpi, who knows a lot about welding, are both learning the technical art of the foundry so that that the final piece will be exactly the way she envisioned it.

At present her work is cast by two well known foundries in Colorado, Madd Casting in Berthoud, and Art Casting in Loveland, located in one of the great centers of bronze work in the West. Her finishes or patinas, are varied. Some reflect the actual coloring of the animal. Others are achieved with chemicals that color the bronze in unusual ways. In the beautiful circular sculpture, "Spring Foal Crop," the patina reflects the growth

of spring, plus colors from the earth. Bality works with a professional patineur who helps her achieve the precise color and finish she wants.

Bronze isn't the only medium in which she's adept. Bality maybe one of the few artists in the country to create sculpture in cast glass, a technical feat executed by a casting master in Oregon.

"I took some workshops in glass art" explained the artist, "but the casting process is very complex, especially the cooling process. I know what my limitations are. Yet, it's important to me that I try every medium in its entirety myself. I know now I'd rather sculpt than produce."

At first glance, the fanciful horses and birds made of glass, (lead crystal to be exact) seem to glow from within, adding the fiery element of light to their elegant forms. These pieces, birds and horses, are in a category all their own, comparable in some ways with the French glass creations by the legendary French producer Lalique. Heavy, solid and durable, they are infused with spirit, glowing vessels for the power of light.

Tammy Bality is hard not to notice. She is striking and tall, a woman of grace and strength. Her connection to nature might be due in part to the fact that she was raised on a farm in northern Colorado. "I was an only child," said Tammy. "My father passed away when I was two and since my mother worked full time, I was raised by my grandmother who encouraged me to spend all the time I wanted with the animals on the farm—dogs, cats, cattle, and horses."

One might say she was weaned on their trust. She's carried that feeling into her adult life and, knowing she wanted to be an artist since her youth, made it her life's goal to tell the animal's stories to others. Not just what they are, but how they relate to each other.

"I try to portray what I experience when I'm around animals. They bring so much joy to my life."

Although the artist's equine subjects in either bronze or clay (fired at home in her own kiln and then raku fired with combustible materials) she is gifted in other subject matter as well. One of Bality's most memorable stands more than life-size, 8' high and 4' wide. Titled "Spirit of Women," it's a bronze sculpture of a woman turning into a bird, a metaphorical statement that speaks about transcendence, about women wanting to soar. From every angle the piece speaks boldly, a daring and poetic solution to a profound idea.

Most recently Bality collaborated with another outstanding sculptress in Dallas, Texas, Angela Mia de la Vega, whose strength is figures. Together they envisioned a piece, "Race of the Wild," a boy running with a wolf, where each would be the spirit of the other. The results were brought together only after separate castings, and the connection is spectacular. A second edition in the same vein is in the works—a young girl and fox, again with both artists developing the idea verbally and starting to work from there. The vision is of the pair stepping over a branch and looking backward, a pivotal moment in their spiritual and physical growth.

Select galleries in the United States carry Bality's work. They include Vail Fine Art Gallery in Vail, CO, Chisholm Gallery in Millbrook, NY, Xanadu Gallery in Scottsdale, AZ, SR Brennen in Santa Fe, NM, Betsy Swartz Fine Art in Bozeman MT, Beartooth Gallery, Red Lodge, MT, and Sprits in the Wind in Golden, Colorado. Her impressive list of awards and invitations to juried shows across the country starting in 2001 is enviable and she continues to receive critical acclaim on her growing body of work.

Ideas come to Bality faster than she can produce them. "Being an artist has its advantages," she said, "especially the joy of having people actually buy your work because they love it. But then there's the problem of not being able to sleep at two in the morning because you're creating in your head."

Bality works at home and has transformed their residence into a multi-layered studio. "Because I work in so many mediums, I work all over the house. I do the clay work in the basement or outside, because it's the messiest." For life size figures, those are done in our shop next to the tractor.

In case anyone is curious, her company name, Spotted Pony Studio, is an homage to her first horse, an Appaloosa, whom she bought as a three-year old stallion when she barely knew how to ride. Together they learned what was expected from the other and she enjoyed a long and fruitful relationship with a memorable horse.

What could be a more fitting tribute than to dedicate one's art to the most important horse in your life? Just ask Tammy Bality—the answer is obvious.



"Fire and Ice"



Bality with her Redtail Hawk



Bality sculpting on location in Kentucky