



Mouse Cooper sketching

A passion for *movement* and light

David 'Mouse' Cooper has spent a lifetime trying to capture light and motion in his paintings, soon to feature in a solo show in Newmarket. Rob Pilsworth reports





Safely Over



Autumn silks

ONE of the most beautiful sights in Suffolk must be the pre-parade ring at the July Course in Newmarket, on a fine summer afternoon. The horses walk, stripped of tack, waiting for their turn on the 'big stage'. The sunlight filters down between the leaves of the trees overhead, dappling the shining skin of these supreme athletes, as they are led around prior to being saddled. Often, sitting unnoticed in a corner, blending into the surroundings is Newmarket painter David 'Mouse' Cooper, sketch book on his knee, quietly drawing.

David, or 'Mouse' as he was known, was brought up immersed in racing. His father worked in Newmarket as a rider and stable hand, and David developed a passion for drawing and painting horses at an early age. Frustrated by the lack of solid career progression in racing, his parents moved to London to run a butchers shop in the East End. David left school in London with little more than a handful of O-levels and a Grade A art A-level, but he showed such outstanding talent and promise that a scholarship to Goldsmiths, University of London, beckoned. Sadly, the family's financial circumstances

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meant he was unable to take it up, and he left school to enter a lifelong association with the horse and horseracing. David became an apprentice jockey with Bill Marshall in 1975, followed by spells with Harry Thomson Jones, David Elsworth and Stuart Williams, where he eventually became head lad. He had a few rides as a jockey, but as is so common, the loss of the weight-for-age allowance, the absence of a big break, and simply age led to a dwindling supply of race rides. For a while he left racing to work in Selfridge's to be closer to his ageing parents in London, but like many others, he couldn't resist the lure of the racehorse for long.

David returned to Newmarket, where he worked at the Rossdales Equine Hospital as an animal care technician. He also had a second try at an art education, obtaining his City and Guilds Certificate in art at West Suffolk College. In 2005 he was offered a place to read fine arts and illustration as a full-time student at Cambridge Anglia Ruskin University. He graduated in 2007 with a BA honours degree, and followed this with a stage 1 teaching certificate. He now divides his time between painting and teaching twice weekly art classes for stable staff and others at The Racing Centre (part-sponsored by Godolphin, HH Sheikh Mohammed al Maktoum's racing organisation), plus occasional workshops at Tindalls art shop in Newmarket.

David holds passionate and strong views on art. "I believe everyone can paint and draw, and I get great pleasure from bringing this out of people in the classes. My main passion is to convey movement in animals, particularly the horse. I think that it's possible to convey movement in a painting far more effectively than in a photograph.

"I've always had an enquiring mind into the ▶



Evening stables

way that horses move. My time at the equine hospital taught me a lot about anatomy, and the biomechanics of movement, how the horse gets itself into motion. When a horse ‘jumps-off’ from the stalls at the start of a race, it goes from stationary to around 35 mph in a few strides. That’s the equivalent of getting a jumbo jet airborne off the runway – it involves huge forces. It’s capturing this power, this movement, and the play of light on the horses’ skin, that has formed the basis of my efforts in painting ever since.”

David’s work is in the collections of Newmarket solicitor Jeremy Richardson, Captain Tim Bulwer-Long, trainer Ed Dunlop, and Lady Leicester of Holkham, an avid collector. He has also held three solo exhibitions in Brancaster and Thornham in Norfolk. He was very pleased to be asked to contribute paintings to the Injured Jockey Fund Racing Welfare calendar for 2016,



Turning in

providing paintings for the cover, and the months of March, July and September. He has also recently provided a painting of horses in a historical setting, unloading from railway carriages at Ascot racecourse station, which will be used as a Christmas card for the same charity.

David is grateful for the support he has received from the racing fraternity, especially the management of Fakenham Racecourse, who have allowed him to show his work to a wider Norfolk audience, and to Mark Edmondson, chief executive of Edmondson Hall solicitors, which is a strong supporter of local artists. Mark has asked David to stage a solo exhibition of his work, titled *Movement and Light*, in Newmarket this September. David hopes it will bring together paintings in many different styles, and showcase his abilities to paint in a wide variety of genres, as he doesn’t want to be known just as a painter of horses. ♦



Waiting in the Wings

Movement and Light two weeks from September 24, weekdays only, 8.30am-5.30pm at Edmondson Hall, 25 Exeter Rd, Newmarket, CB8 8AR. www.edmondsonhall.com

(ample parking opposite at The Guineas public car park).

Further details of ‘Mouse’ Cooper’s paintings can be found at www.mousecooper.com

Sales from the exhibition will generate a 10% donation to the Injured Jockeys Fund and Racing Welfare.