

# ARTS

## Rosen finds inspiration in animals, nature

**Who:** Jane Rosen

**What:** New and Selected Works show

**When:** Show hangs through Dec. 31

**Where:** JH Muse Gallery

**Web:** [www.janerosen.com](http://www.janerosen.com), [www.jhmuse.com](http://www.jhmuse.com)

By Katy Niner

A red-tailed hawk circled overhead. New to California wilderness, Jane Rosen heard the bird's clarion call: Tell my story.

Now, she listens to the animals roaming her ranch south of San Francisco: two tame ravens that follow her around, hungry for dog biscuits; Negrita, the feisty Arabian mare, who poses for her drawings; chipmunks who slink into her studio to eat sunflower seeds; the three long-horned steers who parked themselves in front of her Subaru.

"She truly is the voice of nature," said Tayloe Piggott, owner of JH Muse Gallery, where a survey of Rosen's nature works – narrated in many mediums – now live through Dec. 31.

Growing up in New York City, Rosen weighed becoming an artist, veterinarian or psychologist. Now, her art blends all three. "I think the work sits between science, art and spirituality," she said.

At New York University, she studied under Chuck Close and Sol LeWitt and immersed herself in the art world. She bought a downtown loft in now-SoHo. She and her friends "were working in the footsteps of de Kooning and Pollock," she said. It was an exciting era for artists.

Even then, though, she felt pulled by nature. A gallery opening appealed less to her than a night spent studying a pine cone. Shells, plants and flea-



Jane Rosen "truly is the voice of nature," said Tayloe Piggott, owner of JH Muse Gallery. *Dark Amber*, seen here, is part of the gallery's exhibit of Rosen's works.

market animal sculptures littered her loft. She spent most of her time on her fire escape.

While her friends mulled minimalism, Rosen sculpted horse heads, equine essences.

In 1990, Rosen spent six months in northern California and felt compelled to stay "where nature is wildly larger than culture."

"There was something so deep and abiding in the knowledge that this was something I needed to do," she said.

Trading art for a horse ranch

tenancy, she became bicoastal. She taught at the University of California Berkeley, UC Davis, Stanford University and, in New York, the School of Visual Arts and Bard College. A beloved teacher, she receives daily e-mails of gratitude.

Two days before the Twin Towers fell, she finally fully uprooted west.

"Inadvertently, my art taught me what the world needed from me," she said.

Rosen approaches animals as teachers. "They personify our own

states," she said. "I really feel like the key to understanding our own better nature is through being in the presence of nature."

Transcending trends, her art captures profound moments in nature. "If the art you make can allow someone to feel that feeling one derives from being on a mountain or in the woods, it could function as an icon of nature," she said.

Hers is a classical yet contemporary aesthetic, aware of ancient Egyptian art; Renaissance – her drawings channel Leonardo da Vinci; and Asian art – Katsushika Hokusai and *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*. She recently discovered kinship with Rosa Bonheur, a trailblazing female wildlife artist from the 19th century. Her *Rosa Bonheur* drawing hangs at JH Muse Gallery, a presence that unconsciously parallels the National Museum of Wildlife Art's current Collection Spotlight on "Rosa Bonheur and the European Tradition."

Rosen moves boldly, gracefully between drawing, sculpture and printmaking. She recycled limestone and wood long before it was fashionable, and invented her own marble mix. Her hand transforms glass into rough yet translucent forms.

The JH Muse show conveys the intensity of Rosen's relationship with nature, a connection Piggott feels will resonate deeply with Jackson collectors. In the presence of Rosen's art, Piggott feels the watchful hawk, standing guard on a fence post, a riverbank. "We are being watched," Piggott said. "These creatures are so aware of our presence." And now, with Rosen's art instilling consciousness, we too are aware of them.