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EQUESTRIAN LIVING

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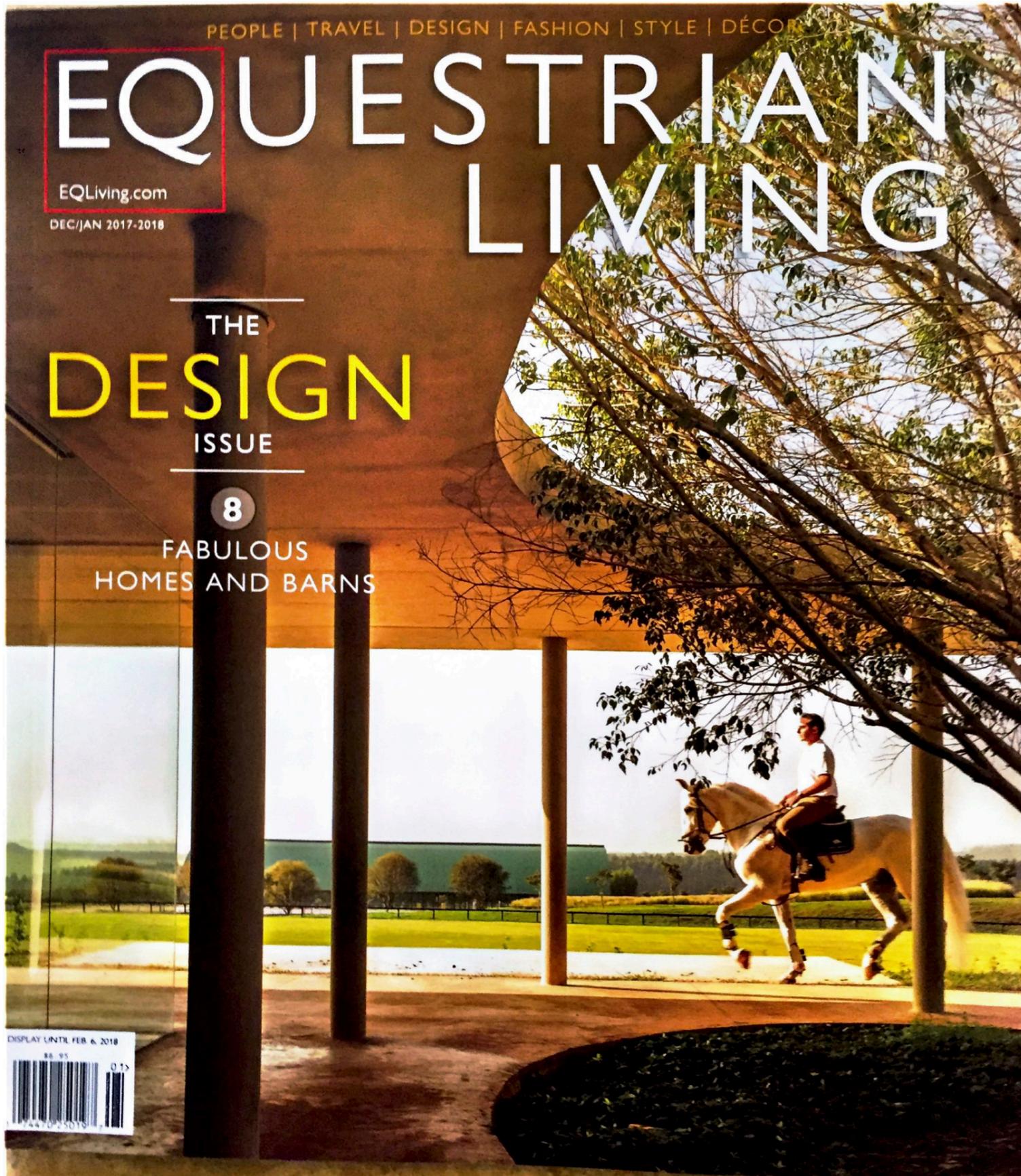
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THE
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8

FABULOUS
HOMES AND BARNs

DISPLAY UNTIL FEB 6, 2018



BY CADY VOYER

CREATIVE AND EQUESTRIAN



Opposite: The Ronald C. Waranch Equestrian Center at SCAD.
Left: SCAD team coach Ashley Henry.
Below: The SCAD IHSA three-time national champions with coaches Ashley Henry and Abbie Gibson.

The Savannah College of Art and Design is the only art and design university in the U.S. that offers an equestrian program.

NESTLED ON THE SAVANNAH RIVER on the South Carolina border is Savannah, Georgia's oldest city. Beneath the canopy of live oaks and Spanish moss, the pedestrian-friendly town is rich with history and charm. Eclectic architecture, horse-drawn carriages on cobblestone streets, bustling shops, and grassy park squares pepper the coastal city. The environment provides a picturesque backdrop to inspire students who attend Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD). Founded in 1978, SCAD is the only art and design university in the U.S. that offers an equestrian program. The two areas of study blend and benefit each other.

"The art and design focus at SCAD is a perfect complement to equestrian studies because classic horsemanship is an art," said Kelly Theisen, associate chair of equestrian studies. "The horse is the canvas. The horse is our design; it is living, breathing art."

Theisen said that guiding horses through a course of jumps or the movements of a dressage test is comparable to the work of students pursuing performing arts. Just as dancers practice daily to perfect their form and craft, so must riders train and push themselves to become better horsemen.

SCAD is also home to a championship-winning equestrian team led by coach Ashley Henry. The team competes in the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association (IHSA) and has won the IHSA National

Championships for three consecutive years. They train at SCAD's state-of-the-art, 100-acre Robert C. Waranch Equestrian Center.

"To stay at the top, you have to have that desire to be there," Henry said about her outlook for the year. "You have to have that passion. We see the other riders, we see the other teams. They are working as hard as we are, so we have to work harder. The second that we let our guard down, and we stop shooting for that shining star, is the moment that it can slip away. Big hopes, big dreams are the plan."

Just as the SCAD equestrian team has big hopes and plans, so do the equestrian-studies students. The program offers classes in equestrian facility and show-jumping-course design. Much like





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SCAD PHOTO



SCAD PHOTOS



Left to right: SCAD Equestrian Center; SCAD Museum of Art; Poetter Hall; inside the SCAD barn. **Below:** A student working at the collaborative learning center.

class teaches students to consider everything from efficient layout to materials, location, soil, footing, and more.

SCAD's Collaborative Learning Center (CLC) offers opportunities for students from various majors to work on specific projects with real business applications. In 2016, Theisen supervised a CLC team of students on a product-development project for high-end equestrian retailer, Equis Boutique. Cesar Hirsch, Equis Boutique's chief operating officer, was referred to SCAD by his friend Eric Straus, a SCAD professor emeritus and fellow FEI steward.

Theisen put together a diverse team to work on the top-secret Equis Boutique design project. Included on the project team were students from equestrian studies, graphic design, fashion design, industrial design, and accessories design.

"We had people from China, Venezuela, and different parts of the world—both undergrads and graduate students," Hirsch said. "They worked together as a team, and it was so beautiful. I went there every month, and we communicated weekly."

The SCAD team designed a product which, after slight tweaking, is now in the manufacturing stage. "The Equis



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Boutique project allowed students to gain real-life business experience with an actual company," Theisen said.

S CAD students often combine their horse-loving roots with course projects. M.G. Taylor is a fourth-year student who has been an equestrian competitor in the U.S. and Europe. She majors in industrial design, minors in equestrian studies, and plans to go on to graduate school for biomedical engineering with the hope of designing prosthetics for athletes. Taylor said that the SCAD equestrian program is beneficial for both

her projects in design and her outlook on life.

As a project for her industrial design course, Taylor strove to design English riding stirrups that were an improvement on the typical heavy, bulky design, and to create them in a polycarbonate material. She also wanted to add the benefit of foot placement at a 45-degree angle to increase heel depth and to position the toe slightly outward to improve equitation. Access to SCAD's Waranch Equestrian Center helped her develop her project.

"I got to go and see how it worked on the horses," Taylor said. "I took my foam prototypes to test how they would hang from the saddle."

She attributed her commitment to her design projects to basic tenets she learned as an equestrian. Working with horses helped her consider what factors need to go into designing products that best fulfill the consumer's needs. At SCAD, the sensibilities of the equestrian pair perfectly with the creative.

"There's a lot to be said for spending time with animals when school is stressful," Taylor said. "To be out there in nature with the horses – that does so much for the soul." **EQ +** PAGE 113

For SCAD graduate and former equestrian team member **JULIE FERRIS**, horses are inspiration.

BY **GLENYE OAKFORD**

Horses have been a lifelong inspiration for Julie Ferris, but it wasn't until she went to the Savannah College of Art and Design in Savannah that she finally was able to bring her equestrian life and her artistic ambitions together. That fusion is now sustaining Ferris both personally and in her career as a visual artist.

Ferris, who started riding at about age five, brings a lot of cumulative horse-related knowledge to her canvas. But her competition experience began at SCAD, where she joined the university's national championship-winning equestrian team and once won an award herself for having the best combined grade point average and horse show points.



SCAD PHOTOS

"I see a lot of parallels between my art and my riding life," Ferris said. "The horse is my muse, my focus, my passion. I have gratitude for them and what they've done for us. They'll never know I did paintings of them or that people have loved these paintings of them. I love just capturing them as they are and thinking of the history and everything we've accomplished over the years because we've had horses as partners. They were such a vital part of society for hundreds of years. I want to portray them in the light that they deserve, and I hope that even people who have never had contact with a horse will somehow know them through my paintings."

—Excerpted courtesy of *US Equestrian's Equestrian Weekly newsletter.*
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