

# JOHN EATON

## *Of Nature (Par Nature)*

By Robert Bernier

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TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH BY DOROTA KOZINSKA

Of all the animals tamed by man, the horse remains the most enigmatic. At once powerful and fragile, awesome and frightening, wild and loyal, the horse has been man's inestimable companion. It is therefore not surprising that this mighty beast has become an emblematic figure and a symbol of our civilization. It is also not surprising that in painting the figure of the horse has been at the forefront alongside other very popular secular themes such as landscapes, still lives and portraits.

John Eaton, an Ontarian whose work is well known in Quebec – he has been exhibiting his art there for well over 30 years – has made the horse his preferred subject matter. Although many other themes are of great interest to this painter, Eaton is among the artists still active today who have made of the horse an intriguing and fascinating contemporary icon.

Eaton favours highly poetic and metaphorical spaces. It is unthinkable for this artist to treat his subject in a realistic manner. Herein lies one of the most important steps in John Eaton's approach to art; the union of a drawing and a composition of the utmost caliber placed in the purest artistic and plastic environment. This method negates reality and thrusts the viewer into a symbolic and poetic whirlwind. In fact, whether it be horses, human figures, or landscapes, Eaton's paintings are always very physical in their treatment, flirting with expressionistic techniques, creating a volatile and unpredictable environment. Furthermore, the fact that the artist works with harmonizing tertiary colours, which he accentuates with pure tones, gives his works a troubled air, a sense of agitation. This chromatic choice certainly causes the viewer to become detached from physical reality, as these



colours tend to annihilate all cues to the natural world so that the viewer cannot confuse these with the realm of the painting and the world in which he or she resides.

Can Eaton be considered an ecological painter? No, even if nature is omnipresent in his work. John Eaton's art is more an ode to fantasy, a powerful plea in favor of spiritual life, the power of emotion, and paradoxically, contemplation. In the turbulent seas where gesture and matter meet, Eaton creates tranquil and calm isles that give a meaning to movement. Overall, Eaton's oeuvre is much more spiritual than it seems at first glance. Every one of his canvases deserves time and attention, as this is the only way to seize what is intangible.

*Percheron with Paeonia, mixed media, 60x48"*