

# Tyrel Johnson

Storytelling lies at the heart of all of Tyrel Johnson's artwork, which often explores the dramatic and emotion-rich interaction between people and animals, as well as themes of overcoming adversity that feel especially timely now. One of his pieces specifically titled "Undivided Love" made with bronze and walnut, expresses the deep connection between a horse and a girl. The sculpture's backstory began with a friend of Johnson's who launched a horse therapy foundation following her loving bond with a lone horse in a field she came across while driving to work, bonded with and who eventually became her own.



## Where do you find inspiration for your subjects?

Being a sculptor was a childhood dream, an obsession in young adulthood, and now a reality for which I am extremely grateful. I get inspiration everywhere. Often inspiration comes from people. I love people in general and want to appeal to their softer side. The timing of inspiration, as you can imagine, is most often when I am nowhere near clay.

## What is your favorite back story on a piece you have done?

I would have to say that "Undivided Love" is the most touching back story. Undivided Love was originally created as a smaller one-of-a-kind sculpture for my friend's charity. She had told me the story behind her horse therapy foundation, Angel Horses. I wanted to surprise her with something meaningful to her. One day while heading home from work, she saw a lone horse in a field, so she stopped to greet it. This turned into a daily ritual that continued for a couple of years until the horse's owner found out. The owner was moved by the bond they shared and gave the horse to her. He is the horse that she started her charity with. I wanted to create the division that was once the fence between them in a unique way. The design that followed is profound, elegant, and meaningful.

It wasn't long before I decided to make a larger version. By some form of fate, it has its own unique and beautifully fitting story. I went to my local horse barn to look for the perfect horse. I found a horse that stood out to me due to something in his eyes and contacted the owner to ask permission to sculpt him, Lucca, from life. I met his owner and her mother for our first session. Her mother pulled me aside to express her excitement. She proceeded to tell me that her daughter, a senior in college, had only just reunited with her horse the week prior after a battle with cancer. She had been confined to her mother's home to avoid infection for most of a year. Her mother told me that my phone call the week prior had made her daughter extremely excited. To me, it seems it was not by coincidence that I chose Lucca. A few days after the first session I called Marissa, Luca's owner, to ask if she'd pose for the sculpture as well. I am grateful for the chance to work with Marissa and Lucca, and feel so glad to have brightened her life temporarily with my trade.

## Can you explain your technique for sculpting? How do you marry different mediums such as stone and wood?

Growing up in and working at my family's bronze foundry taught me a wide variety of skills that I use. We sculpted and cast many bronze monuments as well as cast small sculpture for a great deal of artists including the art of my father and siblings. I trained in all phases of custom carpentry after we shut the foundry down. The skills passed on to me are a unique combination that allows me to tackle anything that I or a client can dream up. As a kindergarten student once said, "Art is seeing your thoughts." Skill is usually the only limitation we have in representing those thoughts. I'm very fortunate to have had the privilege of being immersed in highly skilled trades. That which I lack, I study.

<https://tyreljohnsonfineart.com>

