Gold Photo,
by Cécile Marleix
(Thala Photographie)
France

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Shanghai E.A. Paris 2013 Open Photo Contest

A new concept of using social media

Paris 2013. The Senior Stallion World Championships. Defending the title of Reserve Champion, claimed in the junior category in 2011, is the snowy white Spanish stallion Shanghai E.A. (bred and owned by Equus Arabians) – this time as a 5 year old, now in the senior category. When he appears on the arena, crowds of photographers, both in the VIP sector, as well as on the tribunes, gather in order to get the best shot... The reason for this is not only the popularity of the stallion, who is cheered on by a huge number of fans, but also a photo contest, announced prior to the championships, which included valuable prizes.

The concept stirs emotions

The contest, advertised by newsletters sent before the show and leaflets handed out among the public in Paris, caused great emotions even during the championship. The idea is a bold one – the best photo would be chosen democratically by Facebook users. Interactivity is the first and main rule of social media. Therefore each of the photographers counted on the support of their friends and their friends' friends. Especially since there was reason to fight for: the first prize was 1,500 euro and a breeding to Shanghai E.A., whose first crops' get are already successful on international arenas; the second was 1,000 euro; the third – 500 euro. A photo contest, whose sole hero is one horse, photographed during only one event, was a completely new concept. The prizes were also not symbolic, as is usually the custom in social media. This game was a serious one.

Albert Sorroca (Equus Arabians), the stallion's breeder and owner, explains: *I think that this kind of promotion is an idea which allows to directly share the beauty of the Arabian horse with people all over the world. It also makes you feel part of a community that possesses a mutual passion. The risk and adversities that you must overcome are also a part of this puzzle. But most of all, when you are creating a project, you have to have a vision in your head. You have to know what dream you are pursuing. So we start with a dream, which is followed by work. Work that has to be done in order to fulfill that dream. That is the key to every creative activity. And later you throw a dice and face the quirks of fate...*

Photographers present in Paris had two weeks to choose their contest photo. Almost 50 entries were sent. Equus Arabians disclosed the right to select the photographs which would appear in the finals. 25 of them were selected: both portraits and full shots, showing the horse striking a pose or in movement. Each photographer could

Top Ten Photo,
by Sylwia Iłenda, Poland

Bronze Photo,
by Zacarya Aznag, Belgium

enter one photo, so 25 people were selected to compete against each other – from France, Spain, Belgium, Holland, Great Britain, Poland, Austria, USA, Israel, Italy, Germany and the Czech Republic. For the needs of the contest, carried out by the polskiearaby.com portal, a special application was created. A team of webmasters supervised the contest, making sure that its rules were respected. One person could vote once per day, so the contest's participants, if they wanted to win, had to gain more and more new supporters' votes. The voters could award their favorite photos from 1 to 5 points.

A dramatic fight to the last minute

The voting began on January 3rd. From that moment on the interest in the contest grew rapidly with each day. The first day had 604 voters. The last, on January 22nd – 4,562 people! Almost twice as much as the day before (2,740 voters). The final phase of the battle for first place kept the finalists and fans on the edge of their seats. Nobody expected such a dramatic race, whose outcome

became known only when the clock stopped the countdown. An extremely even fight for the top spot took place between two French female photographers. In the final hour before midnight the lead was once taken by photo number 102 (by Cécile Marleix), once by photo number 113 (by Marion Tubiana). There were moments when the difference between them was... 1 point! Right before midnight the leading Marion was outdone by Cécile, who won with an advantage of 304 points. In total Cécile's photo amassed 34,365 points, while Marion's 34,061 points. Third placed photo number 103 (15,062 points) by Zacarya Aznag from Belgium. Right after the end of the contest both top rivals, abiding by fair play rules, congratulated one another on the success, which were a result of hard work.

Cécile Marleix (Thala Photographie), the winner of the contest, says: *Shanghai is an extreme Arabian horse! For me the challenge was not only to show his exceptional beauty but also to try to show why he is so special.*

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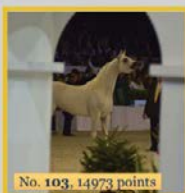
I spent very pleasant & intense moments with him since his first year, following him at shows as far as Saudi Arabia, but also at stud and in transport in very intimate moments.

Shanghai is not only an amazing horse because of his beauty, she adds, *but also because of his personality. I will always remember him as a quiet and sweet little boy. This is why I chose this sweet picture of him in Paris, not in extreme stand up, but only his natural beauty and sweet eyes. For me Shanghai is a real classic horse, not too tall, not too heavy, just very „Arabian", a trait that's the most important in my opinion. Since the beginning Shanghai has always been better than better, and so „chic". I wish that I shall have the opportunity to follow him for a long time!*

Albert Sorroca (Equus Arabians, Spain) with Princess Laetitia d'Arenberg (Estancia Las Rosas, Uruguay), Paolo Capecci (Italy) and Shanghai E.A., Paris 2013

photo: Krzysztof Dużyński

Tactics and alliances are what counts in social media

The contest was a game with real prizes, but apart from the popularity of Shanghai E.A. it also showed the extremely clear principles of the ways that social media behave. Those photographers, which did not engage themselves in the active promoting of their works, stood no chance at making it into the Top Ten, lest speaking of the podium. And the position among the leading photos was determined not only by the number of friends and their friends, but also by the adopted tactic – formed alliances, the method of appealing to fans, the ability to acquire new supporters.

Albert Sorroca concludes: *I believe that people will soon discover even newer ideas for communication. And those ideas will be completely different that the ones we have today. Being a part of these new ideas, contributing to them, is a fantastic adventure.*

archive photo

Cécile Marleix

You can see all the contest photos on
polskiearaby.com

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