

RED MEANS *Beauty*

St. Petersburg International Cup 2015

by Monika Luft, translation by: Joanna Krawczyk ■ photos by Ewa Imielska-Hebda

Red was the color of awards presented during the St. Petersburg International Cup 2015 – a show which took place on the 22nd-23rd of May as part of the 17th Hipposhere equine fair in St. Petersburg, on the grounds of the enormous Expoforum, located near the Pulkovo Airport. Red also dominated in the ads and catalogue. The Russian word “krasny” means red, but it also has a second meaning: “beautiful”, which suits the situation very well when we are talking about the show’s host city, which was

also celebrating its 312th anniversary of existence. The history of St. Petersburg dates back to 1703 when tsar Peter the Great, after gaining access to the Baltic Sea, founded here, where the Neva falls into the sea, a harbor and the Peter and Paul Fortress, under which St. Petersburg began to flourish and was soon named the Venice of the North. The city’s coat of arms has two crossed anchors – a sea and river anchor – symbols of its geostrategic significance. Today’s St. Petersburg is first of all a cultural capital of Russia.

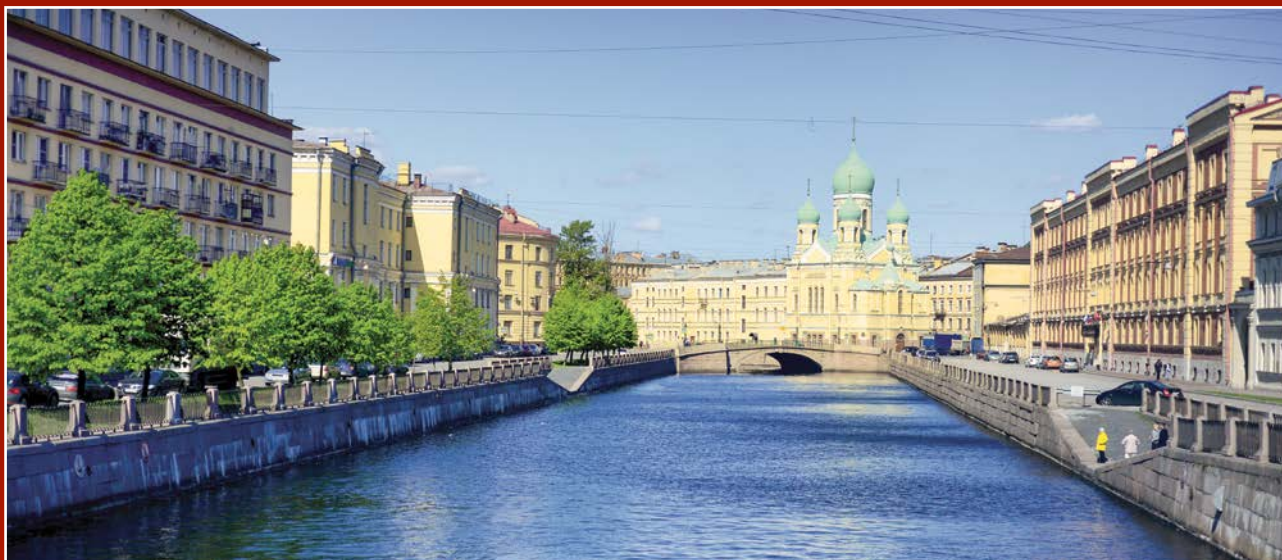




Hundreds of museums, with the worldwide famous State Hermitage Museum, hundreds of theaters and concert halls, where plays are performed every day, numerous historic monuments, palaces, charming nooks, greenery, parks and the city's flagship structures, bridges – in an incredible number of 396 – as well as the Nevsky Prospect, the main artery of the city, where life pulsates till late in the night. All of this has made Petersburg one of the most wonderful urban complexes of the world. It can't be denied that the beauty of the Arabian horse matches these surroundings perfectly. The

participants of the event were lucky with the weather – St. Petersburg is known for just 60 sunny days per year. Two of them decided to lighten up that May weekend.

The show was organized under the supervision of Irina Stigler and Igor Bochkarev, was ranked by ECAHO as C-International and was truly international indeed, as eight countries brought their horses there. The most numerous representation were, naturally, horses from Russia – 16. At second place was Poland with 7 participants. Also represented was Italy, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, Qatar

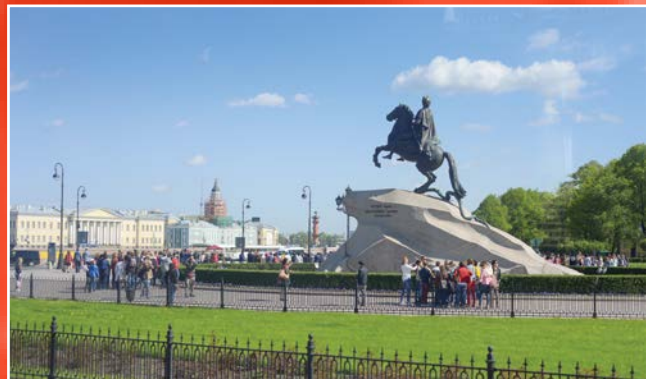


and UAE. The main patron of the show – present in St. Petersburg – was H.E. Sheikh Abdullah Bin Mohammed Al Thani from Al Zobair Stud (Sharjah, UAE); but there were also sponsors from other Arabic countries (Dubai Stud, Al Shagab Stud, Al Muawd Stud, Al Sayed Stud, Al Shabania, Albidayer Stud, Sawary Farm, Al Thumama Stud, Al Khalediah Stud and Al Baydaa Farm). All those that had their representatives at the show were honored during the final ceremony, held specially in their honor – they received works by Moscow artist Nadięda Mostyaeva – Member of Association of Russian Painters and Member of International Federation of Art. Her paintings are exhibited in Russian galleries. Sheikh Abdullah Bin Mohammed Al Thani was gifted with the portrait of his favorite mare Palestra – the born in Michałow in 1986 daughter of Penitent and Patera by Bandos. The classic Polish beauty was one of the founding mares of his Al Zobair Stud in 2002. We also write about Palestra in a further part of this coverage.

Additional, symbolic prizes – bottles of Russian vodka – were handed to trainers and presenters as a thank you from the organizers for their involvement and long journey. Russian handlers were offered a bottle of champagne. It has to be said that the horses had to cover a long distance from their maternal studs in order to perform on the arena in Petersburg. The show was judged by: Mohamed Machmoum (Morocco), Joanne Lowe (UK) and Christine Jamar-Demeersseman (Belgium). Acting as announcer, with his usual charm, was Scott Benjamin (Canada). The elegant ring master was Alan Preston from Australia. The show could also count with two expert DC members: Jackie Vandyke (GB) and Dr. Gianpaolo Teobaldelli (Italy); Ewa Imielska-Hebda (Poland) was the photographer of the show.

First we saw the fillies and mares. The yearling fillies class was won by the performing with number 1 Polish Cracovia (El Omari – Cyrilyca/Empres), bred and owned by Kurozwęki

Stud (89,66) before the Italian Alba (ZT Shakfantasy – Alija by Besson/Besson Carol), bred and owned by Soc. Agr. Arabian Inspiration (88,83). Yearling horses usually don't move very well indoors and especially after a long journey, however the chestnut Cracovia managed to receive quite high marks for this trait: 18-19-19,5. It was not until the senior horses appeared on the arena that we saw some genuine movement. Among the juniors the exception to the rule was the year old SS Coronado Al Jamaal (Cavalli – SS Tadmor/Ajman Moniscione), bred by Stigler Stud and owned by Jamal Kabok (Jordan), who proved that he isn't intimidated by the indoors. To the joy of the public, always eager for such moments, he trotted gracefully for 19-19-19,5. But let's get back to the mares. The Brazilian-bred chestnut daughter of Thee Apprentice and Hanna Morab by El Nabila B, Helky Morab, currently part of Sheikh Abdullah Bin Mohammed Al Thani's collection, won the class of 2 year old fillies with a score of 91,38. Highly assessed for her type and head and neck, she achieved a large advantage over the second filly, Nabilah Al Shagab (Farhoud Al Shagab – Olivia Rose JCA/Brando Bey JCA), bred and owned by Al Shagab Stud (89,83). In turn both 3 year old fillies that found themselves in the finals came from Poland: Cyraneczka (Kabsztad – Cetra/Eldon), bred by Kurozwęki Stud and owned by Idris Hassan, and Perdžia (Kabsztad – Perga/Emigrant), bred by Michałow Stud and owned by Waldemar Bąk. The former was evaluated a bit higher than her rival (90,66 : 90,5). But the public could see how Polish horses really move in the 4-6 year old mare class during the performance of Enerina (Ekstern – Energida/Werbum), bred and owned by Czeple Arabians. The mare presented an unconstrained movement with a suspension phase (19-19,5-19,5) which gave her a final result of 91,33 and second place, behind the extremely feminine, subtle Pelmira (Esparto – Pelgrima/Emigrant) with a sophisticated head, bred by Białka Stud and owned by Mateusz Jaworski (91,66),





Reserve Champion from the recent show in Travagliato (Italy). She was shown to victory by Luca Oberti.

The Russian representatives had a chance to qualify for the finals mostly when the rivals from abroad were not present. It cannot go unnoticed that the Russian horses are less-experienced than the ones from European training stables. This takes some parts of the points away needed to successfully compete with them. Russian breeders still have different approach in breeding, with preference to more solid, fundamental horses which often are tested on the racetrack. Their European rivals usually have show pedigrees, whereas the Russian horses mainly have racing blood flowing in their veins. In the 7-9 year old mares classes there were no foreign contestants. Victorious – awarded later as Best Russian Horse of the Show – was Edit Piaf (Pobeditel – Emka/Manas) bred by Igor Bochkarev and owned by SV Arabians (89,66) before Amrita (415 Toreador – 1011 Agara), bred and owned by Equiline Stud (Lada Konsul). Let's recall that Toreador (b. 1995) is a half-brother of Trepet (by Parusnik), the winner of the Derby and numerous prestigious stakes (Guineas, Topol Stake, Great All Russia Stakes). Toreador himself also had a successful track career and at the same time he did not lack beauty as the son of 1990 European Champion Stallion (Lier, Belgium) Drug. The 10 year old and above mare class was won by Donna Diva (Ekstern – La Diva/Warandes Plakat), bred by Sifaco Benelux and owned by Al Muawd Stud (90,33). Behind her placed the Tersk-bred Niksa (Karat – Nahodka/Drug), owned by SV Arabians (Russia). We must add that the present in her pedigree stallion Drug is 1990 & 1991 European Race Horse of the Year, winner of the Russian Derby, Coupe D'Europe (Evry) and Al Nayan International (Kempton Park, England).

After the mares came time for the stallions. The winner of the yearling colts class was the afore mentioned SS Coronado Al Jamal. This full of charm chestnut, with a beautifully dished head, won over the judges and not only his class (with a score of 92,16), but was later named Junior Champion Stallion and Best in Show. Second placed a Russian horse with a

world renowned name – Ekstern (317 Kanion – Evberia), bred and owned by Equiline Stud. But for now his score (86,33) shows that he won't be following in the footsteps of his famous, undefeated namesake. Among the 2 year old colts there were only Russian contestants. The grandson of WH Justice, Arni (589 Nizami – Ariel/Aja Shakakhan), bred and owned by Siver Stud (S. Ermolov) bested Gilgamesh (Gnev – Granitnaia), bred and owned by O. Balashova. Among the 4-6 year old stallions the Polish Zimarc (QR Marc – Zeksterna/Ekstern), bred by Czeple Arabians and owned by Reza Alhadadi ran away from his rivals with a huge point advantage over them. The graceful mover, with a score of 90,5, had no trouble to win over 27 Moris Bejart Tersk (HK Marcello – Borodina/Pilgrim), bred by Tersk Stud and owned by I. Kicul. In the next class, the 7-9 year old stallions, again a foreign guest gave no chances to a local, though born outside of Russia, rival. It was the Canadian-bred Extremme RSA (True Colors – Bahiyaa/Imperial Saturn), owned by Igar Taboru from Israel. He won, with a score of 91,33, before Leran AA (Laheeb – Latifah AA/Al Maraam), bred by Ariela Arabians (Israel), owned by VV. Minaev. In the final class, stallions aged 10 years old and above, a graduate of Janów Podlaski, the Polish Perseusz (Laheeb – Pepesza/Euakliptus), owned by Przemysław Sawicki, gave a true show of how an Arabian horse can move. In the hands of Marek Demczuk he won his class (91,16, including 19,5-20,19,5 for movement) and the Best Movement award. Behind him placed Gnev (Nagan – Gusarka/Karavan), bred by Oros Stud and owned by O. Lihickaja.

In the finals the "fun" started all over again, meaning that every horse that qualified for the finals had a shot at the gold medal. The podium was taken mostly by horses from abroad. Among the seven Polish contestants as many as six claimed medals: Cyraneczka and Perdzia received the silver and bronze in the junior mares category. They were bested by Helky Morab, who took the gold. Pelmira and Enerina were honored with gold and bronze and were separated by the silver Donna Diva. Zimarc and Perseusz were awarded with the gold and bronze in the senior stallions. Extreme RSA became silver champion in the same category. Only the junior stallions championship allowed Russian horses to stand atop the podium – Arni and Ekstern gave their owners the silver and bronze. The gold was taken by Coronado Al Jamal.

And so came to an end the first show under the name of St. Petersburg International Cup. Although this was not the first gathering of Arabian horses in the city of tsar Peter the Great, but this time there was a new breath of air with the European quality of the contestants from abroad and the organizational splendor of the show. The hosts offered the guests not only "bed and breakfast", but also a cultural and educational installment, together with the touring of the State Hermitage Museum. With no doubt all of the participants of this event will eagerly return to Petersburg, with horses or without them. □



photo: Monika Luft



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photo: Monika Luft



photo: Monika Luft



GOLD CHAMPION FILLIES



Helky Morab

Thee Apprentice | Hanna Morab

B: Benedito Morato Do Amaral, Brasil

O: H.E. Sheikh Abdullah Bin Mohammed Al Thani - Al Zobair Stud - Sharjah, UAE



SILVER CHAMPION FILLIES

Cyraneczka

Kabsztad | Cetra

B: Idris Hassan, Poland - O: SK Kurozweki Stud, Poland



BRONZE CHAMPION FILLIES

Perdzia

Emigrant | Perga

B: Michalow Stud, Poland - O: Waldemar Bak, Poland

GOLD CHAMPION COLTS



SS Coronado Al Jamal

Cavalli | SS Tadmor

B: Stigler Stud, Italy - O: Jamal Kahok, Jordan



SILVER CHAMPION COLTS

Arni

589 Nizami | Ariel

B&O: Siver Stud, S. Ermolov, Russia



BRONZE CHAMPION COLTS

Ekstern

317 Kanion | Evbeia

B&O: Equiline Stud, Russia

GOLD CHAMPION MARES



Pelmira

Esparto | Pelgrima

B: Bialka Stud, Poland - O: Mateusz Jaworski, Poland



SILVER CHAMPION MARES

Donna Diva

Ekstern | La Diva

B: Sifaco Benelux SA, BE - O: Al Muawd Stud, SA



BRONZE CHAMPION MARES

Enerina

Ekstern | Energida

B&O: Stanislaw Slawinski - Czeple Arabians, Poland

GOLD CHAMPION STALLIONS



Zimarc

QR Marc | Zeksterna

B: Stanislaw Slawinski – Czeple Arabians, Poland - O: Reza Alhadadi, Poland



**SILVER CHAMPION
STALLIONS**

Extremme RSA

True Colors | Bahiyaa

B: Hebert Jacqueline, Canada - O: Igal Tabori, Israel



**BRONZE CHAMPION
STALLIONS**

Perseusz

Laheeb | Pepesza

B: Janow Podlaski Stud, Poland
O: Przemyslaw Sawicki, Poland

BEST RUSSIAN BRED

Edit Piaf

Pobeditel | Emka

B: I. Bochkarev, Russia

O: SV Arabians, Russia



BEST IN SHOW

SS Coronado Al Jamal

Cavalli | SS Tadmor

B: Stigler Stud, Italy

O: Jamal Kahok, Jordan



BEST MOVEMENT

Perseusz

Laheeb | Pepesza

B: Janow Podlaski Stud, Poland

O: Przemyslaw Sawicki, Poland



Special St. Petersburg Award Palestra

Penitent x Patera by Bandos
1986, grey mare, bred by Michałów State Stud, Poland

by Michael Van den Elsken, Scott Benjamin ■ photos by Ewa Imielska-Hebda, Irina Filsinger, Erwin Escher, Glenn Jacobs, Michael Van den Elsken

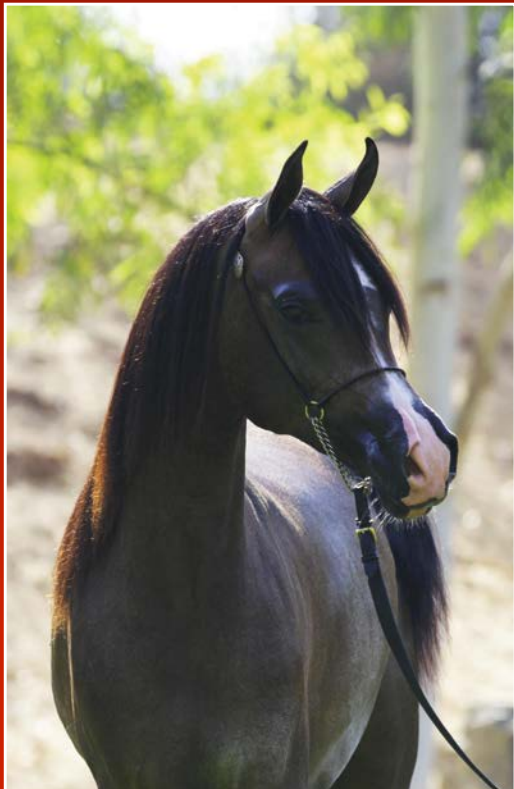
When Sheikh Abdullah started up his wonderful farm, Al Zobair Stud, in early 2002, he selected a small group of elite mares as the foundation. Amongst these were the beautiful Maliha Bouznika (by Imperial Mashbar), Khameela (by PVA Kariim), MM Jareefa (by Imperial Madheen) and the great PALESTRA. Later that same year to the great satisfaction of Sheikh

Abdullah, both Maliha Bouznika & PALESTRA brought home the Filly and Mare championship titles, respectively, for Al Zobair at the Sharjah Arabian Horse Festival. PALESTRA went on to win several more important titles in the Arabian Gulf (GCC) for Al Zobair, including Champion Mare honours at the Ajman Arabian Horse Show and the Jordanian National Championships, as well as the Reserve National Championship at the Middle East

Palestra & H.E. Sheikh Abdullah 2003.
Photo by Erwin Escher



Mayada Al Zobair.
Photo by Michael Van den Elsken



H.E. Sheikh Abdullah
and Palestra in Sharjah.
Photo by Irina Filsinger



3 Daughters of Palestra.
Photo by Michael
Van den Elsken



Shoola Al Zobair. Photo by Glenn Jacobs

Championships in 2003.

What was most impressive about these wins for PALESTRA was that she was 17 & 18 years of age at the time. Born in 1986 at Michalow State Stud in Poland, PALESTRA was unquestionably one of the very best daughters of European & Polish National Champion Stallion PENITENT ever bred in Poland. PALESTRA was the most important modern member of the dam line of Rodania in Poland, a mare line founded at Crabbet Park in 1881, and later introduced to Tersk Stud in 1935 through the purchase of her great-great-great-grandaughter RISSALMA. Bred at Tersk to the legendary NASEEM, RISSALMA produced NATURALISTKA, whose daughter PIENOCZKA would become a foundation mare for Michalow Stud in the 1950's. Bred to another Russian legend at Michalow, the Tersk-bred NABOR, PIENOCZKA produced PLANETA, dam of the important COMET son POHANIEC – sire of the highly influential PROBAT. PLANETA was also the granddam of twice World Reserve Champion Mare PIKIETA, and most importantly, great-granddam to the incomparable PALESTRA.

While winning in the show ring with PALESTRA brought great satisfaction to Sheikh Abdullah, he was most interested in breeding world-class quality Arabians

from all his prize mares with the Al Zobair suffix. Early in the new millennium the infrastructure for Arabian horse breeding in the UAE was still developing, so the decision was made to send the Al Zobair mares to Qatar to be bred. All the mares returned in foal with the exception of PALESTRA. PALESTRA continued to be a breeding challenge for the next four years through 2006 with frozen semen from MONOGRAMM and fresh semen from KHIDAR, neither settling in foal nor producing any embryos.

In October 2006, Michael Van den Elsen joined Al Zobair Stud and shared with Sheikh Abdullah the great disappointment of not having had any foals from PALESTRA. In November 2006, Michael travelled to the USA to undertake breeding courses at Colorado State University in the United States, where he met Dr. Elaine Carnevale. She highly recommended trying oocyte transfer with PALESTRA at her advanced age of 21. After discussing the matter with Sheikh Abdullah, he was happy to give anything a try, in the hopes of having at least one foal out of PALESTRA.

PALESTRA left Sharjah for CSU in March of 2007, where oocyte transfer proved to be a great success. She produced two embryos that year - one by Gazal Al Shaqab and another by his son Marwan Al Shaqab, both of which successfully settled in recipient mares. Both recipients were exported to the United Arab Emirates later that year, and both produced two beautiful grey fillies in 2008 at Al Zobair Stud: Shoola Al Zobair (by Gazal Al Shaqab) foaled on 24th February and Tamriya Al Zobair (by Marwan Al Shaqab) on 2nd June 2008. Everyone at Al Zobair was thrilled with the result! After five long years, PALESTRA had finally given Sheikh Abdullah a foal, with two gorgeous fillies to extend her influence at Al Zobair.

After enjoying a mild winter holiday in the peaceful setting of Michael Byatt Arabians in Texas, PALESTRA returned to CSU to be bred to MONOGRAMM, with whom she had crossed very successfully in Poland, having produced Pride of Poland high-seller PALESTYNA in 1994 and All Nations Cup Champion, Polish National Champion/ Best in Show & World Reserve Champion PALMIRA in 1995. Unfortunately, PALESTRA's success with MONOGRAMM was never to be repeated, as she failed to give any embryos in 2008 & 2009. The decision was made to change stallions in 2010, when she was bred successfully to champion sire BESSON CAROL. The recipient mare carrying this embryo was shipped to Sharjah, where she foaled PALESTRA's final foal - MAYADA AL ZOBAIR on 27th February 2011.

Wherever PALESTRA went, she quickly became a favourite with the staff and all those who cared for her. This was especially true at CSU, where PALESTRA was afforded the rare privilege to remain at the university even after the breeding season was finished. It was at CSU that PALESTRA received world-class care through March of



Tamriya Al Zobair. Photo by Michael Van den Elsken

2013, while suffering from ever-worsening laminitis issues and chronic foot abscesses. After recovering from serious colic surgery in late 2012, Sheikh Abdullah and Michael began to seriously consider how to best care for 26-year-old PALESTRA in the United States, hopefully finding a place for her to retire in peace and comfort. Despite the fact that travel would be difficult at best for the aged PALESTRA, Sheikh Abdullah made the decision to give PALESTRA the best retirement possible by sending her to live at Al Jassimya Farm in Santa Ynez, California, under the care of his son-in-law H.E. Sheikh Jassim Bin Khalifa Al Thani.

Both the veterinary experts at CSU and the Al Zobair shipping partner were consulted to determine how best to facilitate Sheikh Abdullah's wishes for PALESTRA. The shipping partner suggested making a two-day travel from Colorado to California, allowing for a rest period for PALESTRA on the way. Along with her personal grooms, a qualified vet accompanied PALESTRA on the long journey for the necessary pain medication, as did a travelling companion in the form of a pony to keep her company along the way. When the cost quotation for this transport as well as the concern from the CSU vets about PALESTRA's ability to sustain the journey was received, Michael was initially hesitant to forward the quote to Sheikh Abdullah. Never hesitating for even a second, Sheikh Abdullah responded with a passionate and sincere "please go ahead", determined to give PALESTRA the best quality of life possible, even if it only meant one relaxing

day on the grassy fields of Southern California...

PALESTRA arrived at Al Jassimya Farm on 12th March 2013, a bit fatigued but with a bright spark in her eye, happy to be at her new home. Just one month later, Michael & his girlfriend were in Las Vegas to see the home-bred World Champion NAJDAH AL ZOBAIR compete at the Arabian Breeders World Cup. They travelled after the show with Bart Van Buggenhout, stud manager at Al Jassimya, to finally see PALESTRA again. They were very happy to discover that at Al Jassimya, PALESTRA was incredibly happy and content, living like a queen in an open stall with a paddock overlooking the Santa Ynez Valley. Later in August of 2013, Sheikh Abdullah himself made the visit to Al Jassimya to see PALESTRA in a very heartfelt reunion, bonding with each other as if they had never missed a day apart...

While everyone hoped that PALESTRA would live as long and as happily as possible in retirement, no expected that she would thrive for almost two years after arriving in California. PALESTRA finally left this earth on 23rd of January 2015, just shy of her 29th birthday. She blessed the Arabian horse world with eight incredible daughters, including four international champions bred by Michalow – PALMIRA, PROGNOZA, PALESTYNA & PALISADA, and the three miracle daughters bred by Al Zobair: SHOOLA, TAMRIYA & MAYADA. It is through these final gifts of PALESTRA that Sheikh Abdullah hopes to continue her legacy for the generations to come. Her grace, her beauty and her incredible spirit will never be forgotten. She was a once-in-a-lifetime horse, a true "queen" of Al Zobair, who was given nothing but the greatest love and respect by Sheikh Abdullah. For this, all of us who have known and loved PALESTRA are eternally grateful to Sheikh Abdullah for his kindness, his stewardship and his generosity. □



St. Petersburg Cup. Sh. Abdullah receiving the painting
Photo by Ewa Imielska-Hebda