

# **Live Show Quality Guidelines:**

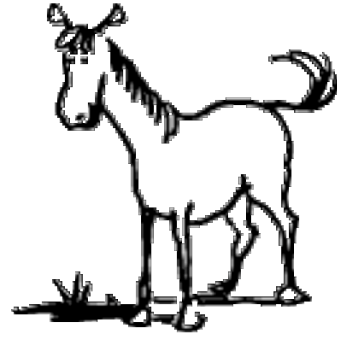
*A Handy Reference for  
Identifying Authentic Competitive  
Workmanship in  
Customs and Artist Resins*

A Free Publication

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## Introduction

The primary mode of competition in our community is the live show, where models are exhibited in an up-close, personal inspection and compared against its fellows on the table to make the placings. In order to compete successfully at a live show, models are expected to be what is called “Live Show Quality” (or “LSQ”) and I’m sure you’ve come across this term when perusing sales lists or online advertisements.



However, while LSQ should be an assurance of a required standard, no such standard exists in consensus. Indeed, the past few years has seen such a boom in the participation of model horse showing, that the resultant confusion about what constitutes LSQ has become prevalent and destructive. In fact, the term is so grossly misused today, that many showers, particularly new showers, are inadvertently purchasing or creating work that falls short of the unspoken competitive standard and not finding the success they desire.

In an effort to alleviate the problem, this guideline has been compiled to identify and define all the points of LSQ for evaluation of a model during the creative process and before a purchasing decision. Furthermore, these points are based on this essential definition of LSQ:

*Realism-based workmanship so skilled and thorough that close personal inspection by those expert in superior realistic workmanship are pressed to find fault in the creative or technical aspects of the piece.*

Nonetheless, these definitions are wholly my own opinion, yet have served me well in both the creation and judging of successful model horses for over fifteen years. So whether you agree with them or not, these definitions do serve a relevant and useful purpose that may help you reach your goals and sharpen your insights. Also, these points are divided into two categories, The Essentials and The Optionals. The former are those points that are mandatory whereas the latter are those points that are open to debate and will depend on your own personal decisions. Furthermore, this guideline is intended to apply only to Customs or finished Artist Resins, and is not intended to apply to Original Finish or China models. It is encouraged that those heavily involved in these types of models compile LSQ guidelines tailored to such interests. And, finally, it must be mentioned that, at present, our community tolerates some contradictory standards, which have been noted for you to consider. Nevertheless, since this guideline is based on my opinion, my own perspectives are emphasized.

# The Essentials

The common denominator of The Essentials is realism, because fundamentally, realism is the principal element of LSQ. Without a doubt, the more realistic the model, the more potentially LSQ it is. Topics presented are, as follows:



- Anatomy
  - Sculpting
  - Details
  - Prepwork
  - Custom Corrections
  - Finishwork
  - Presence
  - LSQ Myths
  - Reserved Rights
  - A Healthier Philosophy
- **Anatomy:** Anatomy is the physiological structures of the equine, based on biology, evolution and genetics that define the genus *Equus*. Therefore, a model should be as anatomically truthful as possible to be LSQ (also referred to as “realism”, “viability” or partially as the “ABCs”, meaning anatomy-biomechanics-conformation). Anatomy includes all the physical structures authentic to a real horse, as follows:
    - Truthful characteristics of the skeleton, musculature and flesh
    - Factual biomechanics and physics
    - Symmetry of the body, particularly with bilateral pairs
    - Credible proportions
    - Believable treatment of hair and horn
    - Correct rendition of veins, moles, wrinkles and other such details
    - Faithfulness towards equine behavior and personality
    - Accurate secondary sex characteristics (gender differences)
    - Reliable age characteristics
    - Any other facet of sculpture that would convey a realistic depiction of the living animalIn short, if a real horse has it, so should the model, as accurately as possible. Undeniably, there is no model horse that can be truly LSQ if the sculpture itself isn’t as realistic as possible, even if all other points are superior. Nevertheless, realism is a difficult property to describe or teach since it depends wholly upon the perception of one’s “eye” and depth of one’s understanding, which is developed over time with diligent research, analysis, observation and artistic exercises. Consequently, if one isn’t aware of equine anatomy well enough to identify accuracy, it’s recommended that independent research or seeking the advice of learned participants be initiated. And beware, some pieces can be deceptively convincing, yet still be significantly flawed, so it’s good policy to objectively scrutinize each potential purchase.  
**Remember: Factual anatomy is the foundation of LSQ.**
  - **Sculpting:** Sculpted areas should duplicate the look of what they’re representing as convincingly as possible, such as flesh, horn, hair, bone, sinew, etc. However, some artistic leeway can be afforded to hair since it’s so

open to artistic interpretation, although sculpted hair should always be convincingly and skillfully rendered. Furthermore, sculpting should be consistent in skill, texture and style; harmony and uniformity are essential. Inappropriate bumps, lumps or other incongruities are undesirable, and indeed, the artist shouldn't have "dropped the ball" with any aspect of sculpting or appear to have fudged areas or "winged it". And for Customs, it's paramount that altered areas be consistent in style, skill and texture to the untouched original plastic areas and so smoothly executed that it's indistinguishable where the original ends and customization begins. Truly, a good customizer is a good mimic, and the more minimal the custom, the more important is mimicry. And, finally, the overall piece must be skillfully designed to avoid any awkwardness or oddness that would "stop the eye" and inhibit a credible and beautiful duplication of a real horse. So, in short, all sculptural work should appear confident, skilled and deliberate, as though the artist meant every step.

***Remember: LSQ sculpting or customizing must always be a realistic and artistic asset to the overall piece, never a liability.***

- **Details:** The "devil is in the details" and they do count for LSQ, absolutely. Details include ligaments, tendons, veins, nerves, capillaries, whisker bumps/moles, chestnuts, ergots, wrinkles, eyelashes, shoes, clenches or any other aspect of a real horse the artist saw fit to instill in the sculpture. Overall, the details should be truthful, precise, skillful, convincing and reveal the artist's powers of keen observation. Details can be poorly done however, and often are, such as the following:
  - Shoe jobs that are incorrect, such as those that exhibit unawareness of the farrier arts, glue-on shoes of the wrong size and shape or those that are not flush with the bottom of the hoof
  - Nails located on the wrong parts of the hoof wall, being at the quarters rather than towards the toe
  - Veins, capillaries or nerves that do not follow the anatomical blueprint or don't appear fleshy
  - Wrinkles that are hard looking and contrived rather than appearing fleshy and soft
  - Whisker bumps located on the wrong areas of the face
  - Chestnuts of the wrong texture or located in the wrong position



***Remember: If a real horse has specific details, so must the LSQ model.***

- **Prepwork:** Prepwork is the initial treatment of the model to provide the "canvas" for painting, and should be meticulous and thoughtful. All surface imperfections caused by the molding process or the initial stages of sculpting should be removed so as to appear they never existed in the first place. However, evaluating prepwork can often be based on a gradient, meaning that your own levels of tolerance can be a factor. Nevertheless, it's a good

rule of thumb that the better the prepwork, the more LSQ the model, and so should lack these issues, as follows:

- Mold flashing: These are raised or depressed rims or edges that outline areas of the body where the mold pieces met to cast the piece.
- Seals: On plastic Customs, this is the manufacturer identification stamp, often found on the inner thigh or groin. However, on Artist Resins, all identifying information, such as signatures, dates, titles, numbering, etc., should remain intact.
- Pinholes: Small pits the size of a pinhead, or smaller, often caused by a molding process that lacks adequate use of a vacuum chamber.
- Divots: Like pinholes, but larger, sometimes up to the size of a pea.
- Pits: Like divots, but larger.
- Bubbles: Air bubbles that have only partially erupted from the surface, and can be small or rather large.
- Gouges, Scratches or Scrapes: Areas that suffered careless sculpting or damage from the casting or cleaning process.
- Sandpaper marks: Little scratches where inappropriate rough sandpaper was used for prepping.
- Pilling: Small bits of material in places of detail or complexity (usually manes and tails), that aren't consistent to the surrounding areas. They are either caused by careless sculpting that neglected to smooth them out or by problematic casting that compromised the mold.
- Pock marks: Areas that bear a patterned bubbled texture, often caused by problems during the casting process or primer that rippled because of faulty application.
- Mismatched seams: When different mold parts do not meet evenly along their seams, one side of the sculpture will be collapsed inwards or protrude upwards along the seam. Also, when different mold parts "slip" past each other, causing asymmetries, often most obvious in the face. And the more askew the mold seam, the worse the problems.
- Channels: A strip of the surface that lies deeper than the surrounding area, sometimes following a mold seam. Not to be confused with intended fleshy qualities.
- Ripples: Sometimes an artist will hurriedly coat the original in gesso, which leaves grooves, ridges or ripples on the surface that are reproduced when cast. Not to be confused with intended fleshy or coat qualities.
- Razor Swirls: Sometimes the casting medium behaves strangely, leaving razor thin, swirling grooves randomly over the model.
- Missing parts: Sometimes areas do not cast properly and end up missing on the cast, such as ear tips, hoof parts, mane/tail tendril ends, nostril rims, etc. They need to be recreated so as to be unseen, sturdy and match the original intent.
- Tear-outs: When a mold is damaged internally, an accidental fill at the site of the damage will occur in the castings. These tears usually happen in



complicated, tight areas of the sculpture and when cast, often manifest themselves as uncharacteristic pools or blocks of resin.

- Imprinted remnants: Sometimes accidental artifacts are left on the model, which can get reproduced when cast. Such things include fingerprints, pet hair, dollops of unintended clay or other foreign matter.
- Primer flaws: Primer should be appropriate for the material and be applied smoothly and evenly. Primer flaws include drips, ripples, bubbles, pock marking, wrinkling or anything other than what is smooth and even.
- Reinforcement wires: These are often used for resin casting in the legs or hair tendrils and sometimes protrude through the resin surface. If they are not filled over, they can leave an inconsistent patch of smoothness, surrounded by a thin ridge where it meets the resin.
- Sprue: A channel through which resin flowed to fill the mold during the casting process. Left intact, they appear as resin sticks or branches radiating from the casting and are usually removed in rough cleaning (those castings that are not rough cleaned are called “raw castings”). The most common sprue is on the belly, and is usually seen as a coin sized circular area, if removed in rough cleaning. But a sprue can be used in additional areas, and be particularly deceptive on manes or tails with complex tendril design, so take care to know the original intent of these areas before prepping.
- Cracks: Cracks are partial breaks and can occur around areas of fill or those that are particularly delicate or vulnerable, often around pressure points or areas of load stress. Those that are repaired should be done so as to be unseen, sturdy and match the original intent.
- Breaks: Breaks are when a piece of the model becomes detached from the rest of the body. Those that are repaired should be done so as to be unseen, sturdy and match the original intent.
- Lifting: Lifting occurs when the fill material releases its hold on the model’s surface and raises up, either just a little bit or a lot, sometimes in large chunks. This can occur with improper preparation of the model’s surface or improper care or storage. Lifting requires repair by an experienced person skilled in such matters, and those that are repaired should be done so as to be unseen, sturdy and match the original intent.
- Bloating: If a plastic model is allowed to get hot, the plastic will soften and the air inside can expand, causing it to bloat up. Can be directly linked to lifting.
- Style: Each artist has a unique sculptural technique so it’s essential to be aware of it to determine what was intended and what was an “oops”. On Artist Resins and minimal Customs, it’s important to remain faithful to that technique because inconsistent surfaces created by thoughtless prepping are undesirable. Remember, good prepwork is invisible, melting into the style and technique of the sculpting. Consequently, it’s good policy to choose pieces that are compatible with your own creative techniques and



collecting sensibilities, rather than changing it to suit your own, particularly on Artist Resins. Much of an artist's methodology is closely entwined with the interpretative accuracy and quality of the final product, so alteration of that tends to diminish the piece, often dramatically. In any case, artistic technique can include such things, as follows:

- The surface texture characteristic of an artist's interpretation. For example, some models have a rougher surface whereas others are mirror-smooth.
- The sculpting approach typical of an artist's methods. For instance, some artists have a "slashier" or "blobbier" sculpting approach while others have a more blended style.
- The degree to which the artist interprets clinical biology into sculpture. For example, some interpretations are sharply delineated or "skinned" looking while others are softer and more naturalistic.
- The level of observation infused into the artistic intent. To illustrate, some artists infuse a high degree of precise detail into their work while others choose a more generalized, almost impressionistic, interpretation.
- Judgment Calls: There comes a time where careless sculpting technique or interpretation will require a judgment call on your part to let it remain untouched or be corrected. Granted, the issue isn't a pressing one with plastic Customs, but can become a real ethical question when regarding Artist Resins. Nonetheless, it's very important to not confuse carelessness with artistic style because you risk an injustice if you do.

***Remember: If a real horse doesn't have it, neither should the LSQ model, yet keep in mind artistic interpretation and style.***

- **Custom Corrections:** Customized plastic models often entail additional work to correct sculptural or molding problems to make the finished product more realistic. However, much of this depends on the choice of the initial plastic model slated for customization since many molds are inherently more realistic than others. A good rule of thumb is that the more realistic the original plastic, the less corrective work is required during customization. If you are unsure which models are good initial picks, seek advice from those knowledgeable about such matters first. Nevertheless, plastics typically need attention in these areas, as follows:



- The sculptural fixing of body parts that have been distorted or damaged during the casting/molding process, such as curvaceous long bones of the legs (often referred to as "spaghetti legs"), misshapen ears, faces, hooves, joints or other asymmetries and distortions caused by the mass molding and production processes.
- The sculptural correction of anatomy or conformation in areas where the original plastic is lacking, to include veining, capillaries, nerves, whisker bumps/moles, wrinkles, chestnuts and other such details. But please note

that some artists are largely unaware of anatomy and may either chose inherently unrealistic plastic models or their own corrections lack realism. And even though these models may be new and exciting, charismatic or pretty, it's good policy to be well informed about anatomy before making a purchase.

- Restoration of compromised details, such as resculpting areas that have been filled for the casting process or resculpting details that have suffered erasure. For example, resculpting of the groin, frogs, soles, ears, inside nostrils, the groove between the jar bars or the depression between the lateral cartilages of the foot or restoring veining, capillaries, nerves, whisker bumps/moles, wrinkles, chestnuts, etc.

***Remember: A LSQ Custom should first entail the remaking of the plastic into a realistic equine.***

- **Finishwork:** Applied finishes should exhibit genetic realism, mastery of the media, skillful interpretation of life and artistic eye-appeal. Finishwork should also never be cursory or rendered in a flat, dull, hurried manner, but show attention to detail, painstaking workmanship, use of a rich and varied palette, absolute precision and practiced technique. The pigments should also be expertly blended and with as smooth a finish as the media will allow. And, above all, the finishwork should compliment the sculpture, and be not a liability. However, LSQ finishwork is rare since much of it exhibits some common problems, as follows:



- Finishwork that does not follow colors, effects or patterns based on genetic facts or genuine circumstances. Truly, it's undesirable that such things be "made up" rather than being consistent to reference photos or authentic data. For example, the "Randomly Floating Cumulous Cloud Effect" of an imaginary pinto pattern or the contrived "Polka Dot" dapple grey. However, it must be mentioned that nature does enjoy throwing oddities at us, which can often be found in specific breeds, bloodlines or regions. For that reason, studying realistic coloration is very important for creating or purchasing each new model. And without a doubt, it's good policy to provide photographic documentation and historical data for finishwork that depicts a very rare or odd type of realistic coloration.
- Areas left unpainted, often in intricate areas, such as manes, tails or inside mouths.
- Painted in a flat, boring, lifeless manner and lacking the necessary shading, highlight and tonal use of pigment.
- Drips, ridges, lumps, bumps, blobs, scratches, wrinkles, fingerprints, pet hair or other inconsistencies or foreign material embedded in the pigment that would mar a harmonious, methodical finish.
- Bald areas in the paint where the artist neglected to layer on enough pigment for an opaque finish, often seen on appaloosa patterns (in both the spots or white areas) or pinto patterns (in the white areas).

- Sloppy and unconvincing mapping, sometimes with grey pigment regardless of the body color.
- Forgotten items, such as chestnuts or the insides of ears accidentally left as the body color.
- Basecoats that are textured too far away from the natural texture of a living horse, to include overly bumpy or pebbly surfaces.
- White markings with bald patches because the artist did not layer on enough white pigment to create an even, opaque finish.
- White markings with drips, wrinkles, ridges or blobs.
- Sloppy borders between the coat color and markings, the mane and the crest, the tail and the dock or the coronet and the hoof.
- Disharmonious or uncomplimentary use of multiple media on a mixed media piece.
- Eyes with a possessed or staring appearance because of unskilled shading.
- Features of the eye, such as the pupil, iris, sclera (eye white) and tear duct, painted incorrectly.
- Detail areas, such as faces, eyes, veins, chestnuts, horseshoes, etc., painted in a sloppy, imprecise manner.
- Highlighting on veins, wrinkles or eyebrows that is not directly and neatly on top of them, but veering off and onto the body.
- Shoes painted grey or white, rather than silver. However, black hoof polish often obscures the clenches and shoe, and so they will not appear as shiny silver as they would on a pale natural or pale clear polished hoof (unless the groom silver-painted or cleaned the shoe features on a black hoof to intentionally make these details stand out).
- Pinked areas on white markings that are not shaded and do not appear fleshy. However, keep in mind that some grooming techniques use cornstarch as a whitener (especially on leg markings) that may occlude flesh tones.
- Patterns or markings that do not mimic the lay of hair growth patterns.
- Hooves given a cursory treatment with one flat color or simply two hastily applied colors, and lack the attentive shading and detail that duplicates the look of real horn. But keep show grooming techniques in mind, such as sanded and polished hooves. And remember that different hoof shading is required for the specific situation a model horse is designed to portray; since each horse's individual situation dictates how his hooves are colored, the same applies to models.
- Heels, soles and frogs painted only a monotone dark color (or only the hoof color) and lacking independent shading and detail to duplicate the characteristics of these features.
- Detail areas painted in a hurried fashion, such as inside ears painted only one color.
- Paintjobs that do not recognize that not all things in life are attractive when translated into pigment. For example, thinly haired areas (such as eyes,



muzzles and groin) painted in an “unfinished” manner, using only the body color, and lacking sufficient dark shadings to visually “set them back” into the body color, or the pink tone in a marking that is overly pronounced and intense.

- Use of pigment inconsistent to the tone of the living subject, such as too orange/too yellow/too red pinked markings, neon turquoise blue eyes or black chestnuts.
- The typical “20 minute airbrush job” that is flat, uninspired and hurried, using perhaps only 1-3 colors.
- An airbrush finish that is grainy or having areas of “wash” where the pigment was allowed to pool too thickly.
- Airbrush dapples with a bald spot in the middle (“life savers”) and/or “spider legs” radiating from it, caused by an airbrush that randomly spit out pigment at too high a pressure.

***Remember: LSQ Finishwork should always be technically skillful, complementary, meticulous, realistic and attractive.***

- **Presence:** A model should have soul, that charisma and *anima* that speaks and breathes. It should also emulate real equine nature and behavior so it’s a convincing replica of the living animal. This doesn’t mean extreme or wild expressions, but simply that the model should communicate an individual soul.

***Remember: A LSQ model should be a thoughtful and authentic depiction of a living personality.***

- **LSQ Myths:** Wading in the LSQ pool can be a dangerous one because of all the confusion. As a result, there are plenty of false beliefs floating around that need sinking, such as the following:
  - Beware! Not all live show champions are LSQ and, in fact, many are not.
  - There’s little correlation between a model’s price and LSQ status because plenty of expensive models are absolutely not LSQ while plenty of inexpensive models definitely are LSQ.
  - Advertising a model as LSQ does not make it so. If a model is advertised as LSQ, positively do not take that claim at face value. Research who did the piece and when, ask about care or repairs done to it, ask about return policies and if there was a show record, ask how it placed, and under what judges and when. If in doubt, seek advice from knowledgeable people experienced in such matters.
  - Similarly, if a model is advertised as “NAN Qualified”, “Multi NAN Qualified” or having won NAN cards, absolutely do not interpret these claims as a guarantee of LSQ. Frankly, there are many NAN qualified models that are definitely not LSQ, so beware.
  - Although many artists claim to create LSQ work, again, absolutely do not take this claim at face value. Honestly, there’s little correlation between an



artist's claims, guarantees, popularity or bravado and LSQ work. Do your research and evaluate each piece on its own terms and never assume work to be LSQ simply because there was a "guarantee" or because "so and so" created it.

- Popular molds are not necessarily LSQ. Be very careful when getting excited over popular or new pieces because it is possible that most people can be fooled most of the time. Use your own judgment, trust your instincts and seek outside advice if warranted.
- Newer works are not necessarily more LSQ than older works. Granted, while skills can grow over time, LSQ is a standard independent of artistic development.
- The belief that a LSQ piece has to "catch one's eye" or be "pretty" or "flashy" to be successful in the showing is a chronic and detrimental sentiment, often typical of poor judging or misguided artistic philosophies. The truth is that The Essentials are a fixed standard, independent of heartstrings and personal taste, and consistent to all models, whether "plain and quiet", "loud and flashy", "eye-catching or charismatic" or "pretty and fancy", and anything else in between. A responsible judge won't be duped by what is commonly referred to as "Pretty Horse Syndrome", those models that are certainly eye-catching and alluring, but sorely lacking the steadfast traits of LSQ. Absolutely, a reliable judge, artist or collector will be moved by LSQ alone and not by superficial qualities that lack substance.
- You will often hear people boast about the effort that went into a model's creation, implying that it must be superior and, therefore, LSQ. But the truth is that while it does take a lot of time and effort to create a LSQ model, it can take that same amount of energy to create a model that isn't LSQ. Frankly, the only thing that matters is if the model is actually LSQ, not the degree of effort it took to create it, so be careful.
- Similarly, a Custom doesn't require a certain degree of alteration to be more LSQ. Now while some mistakenly believe that a more altered Custom is automatically more LSQ, the truth is that LSQ status hinges entirely on the quality of the workmanship and not the degree of alteration. And misinformation abounds over what exactly qualifies a Custom as a this-or-that type, so here's a good rule of thumb, as follows:
  - Drastic: If an experienced person cannot recognize the original mold(s) because the entire original has been changed. In short: The entire original is altered.
  - Extreme: So much of the original mold(s) is redone than an experienced person can only recognize some parts. In short: Most of the original is altered.
  - Moderate: An experienced person can still recognize the original mold(s), but there have been significant alterations. In short: Some of the original is altered.



- Minor (or “Simple”): One mold is used, which is still recognizable to an experienced person, but only small alterations have been made. In short: Only a little bit of the original is altered.
- Repaint (or “Simple”): One mold is used and has only been repainted. However, it should have all molding remnants and distortions removed and perhaps some minor alterations for realism. In short: The original has been repainted, with alterations only to improve realism, leaving the initial intent of the original mold intact.
- Haired: When the original sculpted mane and tail removed and replaced with hair.

**Remember: *LSQ is LSQ, despite any claims to fame.***

- **Reserved Rights:** It’s important to understand and accept that certain artists reserve specific legal artistic rights that protect their creative endeavors, whether finished or as blank bodies (either blank Resins or blank Customs). Such rights are usually based on the intellectual property laws of Copyright Law and the Visual Artists Rights Act (or “VARA”). These reserved rights need to be researched and taken into account on a per artist basis before making any purchase, for any reason. You certainly do not want to get “stuck” with a model you’re inevitably unhappy with, but unable to change. So only work on models or patronage artists that are aligned to your own sensibilities and goals in order to have a happier experience.



**Remember: *Choose LSQ pieces based on artistic parameters you can accommodate.***

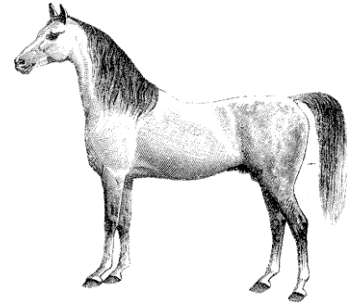
- **A Healthier Philosophy:** It must be said that the state of our judging practices is chaos. Unfortunately, at this time, there is little consensus on judging standards or expectations, meaning that each judge uses a random and individual set of requirements with little, or no, accountability to any governing body. Until this situation changes, live showing can be unpredictable, even with an LSQ model. Therefore, I recommend only purchasing models you love 100%, rather than desperately trying to find models that will win because, otherwise, you may find your experience to be continually frustrating and stressful. Honestly, even if your beloved model never wins, you’ll still enjoy it, which is the whole point, isn’t it?

**Remember: *LSQ is no guarantee of live show success, so be sure you love your models for what they are, not what they’ll do for you in the ring.***

# The Optionals

The common denominator of The Optionals is individual taste, perspectives and goals and therefore, necessitates more latitude than The Essentials. Topics presented are, as follows:

- Conformation and Type
  - Artistic Style vs Caricature
  - Hairing
- **Conformation and Type:** I recommend individual research of this subject, with an objective and skeptical mind. And while it has been argued that a successful LSQ model must be a good representation of its intended breed or type, that is an ambiguous expectation at best and, therefore, should be considered optional. Why? Well, for six primary reasons, as follows:



- Conformation and type are not necessarily tenants of realism since plenty of living horses have poor conformation or type, yet are still characterized by equine anatomy. They may be flawed, but are still “realistic”. And when we judge model horses, we are judging realism made by the work of human hands, and not nature. And so, predictably, there are plenty of models with ideal conformation and type that are flawed anatomically (i.e. not realistic). And remember, conformation and type are the lengths, angles and characteristics instituted by humans that supposedly qualify an animal as “superior” or “inferior” for human use or enjoyment, whereas anatomy qualifies the animal as part of the genus *Equus* for survival, which vastly predates domestication by humans. This doesn’t mean the model can be off-type or pathological, but that conformation and type must be regarded in balance with equine evolution, physiology and the history of domestication by humans.
- Yes, there is a basis of functional conformation that protects against pathologies that cause pain and injury to the animal. But most conformation and type dogma is theory at best and marketing gimmickry and propaganda at worst. Both are also notoriously prone to frivolous fashion, bias, misinformation and exaggeration, much to the detriment of the living animal. The truth is that plenty of “poorly conformed” or “ugly” horses perform beautifully and stay sound whereas plenty of “ideal” specimens perform poorly or are chronically lame. And there’s nothing “ugly” or “inferior” about a happy, useful horse.
- By which standard of conformation and type are we supposed to evaluate a model? Are we stuck with only those current representatives deemed “ideal” right now or may we also include those phenotypes found throughout the breed’s history? Of note, this speaks directly to the

underlying contradiction in model horse showing that plagues it, specifically the clash between “historical” judging and “now” judging. Historical judging (which I favor) acknowledges all possible representatives within a gene pool, throughout history, whether or not they’re favored by modern times or standards. In short, historical judging evaluates the gene pool only, and all the possibilities that can occur in it. For example, historical desert Arabians can compete equally against modern showring Arabians; old foundation Quarter Horses can compete equally against modern halter Quarter Horses. Even chestnut Friesians can compete equally against black Friesians (given the show provides documentation) since it’s genetically possible to produce a chestnut Friesian even though the registry disfavors the color in the breed. In contrast, “now” judging (which I disfavor) only acknowledges current, modern representatives of any given gene pool, strictly according to current registry dogma. This type of judging is most like showing a real horse today, only recognizing current forms and presentation of the breed and shutting out much of what was, and is still, possible. For example, in its extreme form, such judges favor those models in the textbook modern halter pose, with grooming, coloration and phenotypes currently fashionable and fault all others, regardless of LSQ. So it’s important to understand from which perspective you wish to focus your showstring, and to carefully choose which judges you show under, otherwise your perfectly LSQ model may not show well through no fault of its own.

- Can it be said that there is only one conformational and type standard for each breed? Hardly. In fact, most breeds can be typified as having several acceptable variations, historical and present, due to bloodlines, uses or tradition.
- Conformation and type are too open to interpretation or differing taste. Indeed, everyone seems to have a different idea about what is “ideal” type or structure for any given discipline, bloodline or breed, so, which is correct?
- The concept of “breed” or “pure bloodline”, as we know it today, is a rather contemporary western notion adamantly perpetuated by registries and the industries they support, and can rely heavily on mythologies, misinformation and rhetoric. Originally, horses were bred for a specific use, with rather open gene pools, shaping their bodies for narrowly focused disciplines. In fact, the original application of “type” was to discern between a riding horse, a racehorse, a carriage horse, a warhorse, a workhorse, etc. Also, “type” could apply to a region or culture a kind of horse could be found. In other words, horses were classified and bred according to their job or regional isolation, not according to their bloodlines (with some historic exceptions) or rigid points of breediness. However, when the idea of “purebred” became ingrained in a status-hungry modern culture, gene pools were sealed with “closed” registry books, which meant



that these closed populations now had to operate outside of their original uses while also exalting specific and rigid points of type to set them apart from all the other newly established “purebreds” to compete in the horse market, which still has unfortunate consequences today. We all know what happens when people try to “one up” each other for status, money and power. Indeed, the conceit can be so extreme that you can hear people refer to non-purebreds as mutts, mongrels or other derogatory terms. And also consider that much of modern conformation and type dogma is based on westernized ideals of “perfection” and so is actually a form of snobbery towards non-western cultures, breeds, types or colors. Indeed, the disdain for feral, wild or non-western phenotypes or colors is rampant and overt, despite the inherent natural hardiness and usefulness of such animals, typically more so than the “ideal” westernized ones!

***Remember: A good rule of thumb is to know the basics of functional conformation for an LSQ piece, and regard everything else with a hefty grain of salt.***

- **Artistic Style vs Caricature:** This is another source of contradiction in model horse showing, and one that may never find resolution (but should it?). And because it relies entirely on your own tastes, it’s an optional quality to consider. Truly, we are indeed an activity based on creativity, which naturally involves a level of individual expression and unique vision. In fact, many participants find great delight in the variety of interpretations of the realistic equine form, and one could say it’s one of our strengths as a community. But it also speaks to the paradox between a desire for “clinical” realism and an appreciation for individual artistic style, even to the extreme of an enduring proclivity for caricature. But let’s be honest, there’s no getting around a level of artistic style in any type of creative product, no matter how technically realistic it may be. We are humans and not DNA. However, it can be said that some artists are more successful at finding a balance between style and technical realism and it’s these artists that tend to dominate the showing. Nevertheless, those pieces that are heavily stylized can find success too, so there is some leeway in what our activity demands. So, boiled down, it’s important to understand what your tastes are, and what to expect when you purchase models aligned to them.



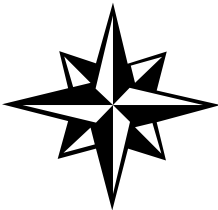
**Remember: An LSQ piece typically has a reasonable balance between artistic style and clinical realism, rather than relying on artistic style alone.**

- **Hairing:** Hairing was commonplace in the past, but is now quite rare, making it more of an option than a necessity. Nevertheless, a quality hair job still has the same high standards now as it did in the past. For starters, the hair must be of high quality material, such as ramie or viscose, and be of

realistic tones, texture and appearance. It must also be applied with skill to best mimic the look and lay of real hair and be trimmed and groomed to duplicate the look of real manes, tails or feathers. It must also be styled to be consistent to the representative specifics or the movement depicted by the model. Issues that would compromise a LSQ hair job would be, as follows:

- An excess of glue along the crest or dock
- Glue that has yellowed or discolored
- Glue infused throughout the hair
- If rooted, if the slot along the crest is too wide
- If the hair is dirty, matted or discolored
- Puffy, uncombed and knotted hair
- Hair the wrong tone for the coat color
- Hair improperly trimmed, groomed or styled
- If the hair at the dock forms a sloppy border or is improperly trimmed straight across, rather than forming a crescent, protruding towards the tailbone
- If the hairing is too sparse as to show bald patches
- If the hairing is too profuse and excessive
- If the end of the tailbone unnaturally protrudes through the hair
- If styling mousse or gel can be seen on the body surface of the model

***Remember: LSQ hairing must be precise, neat and realistically done with quality materials.***



### **Closing Thoughts**

Despite confusion and differing opinions, LSQ is certainly a tangible and discernable quality. But it takes time and experience to create or identify LSQ, so study, practice, ask questions and observe to hone your eye. And it's always a good idea to attend many shows and study the work of others up close, and compare them against each other and to your own sensibilities. Undeniably, it's very important to study truly great work in person to build a mental library of goals and insights. And if in doubt, always seek advice from knowledgeable, experienced people. Also, try to purchase models you're able to inspect in person first or are able to return for a full refund.

Absolutely, the ability to objectively identify LSQ is the single most important skill to learn, as an artist, judge and collector, and the most potent ingredient for enjoying model horse showing.

## Recommended Resources

- Realistic Equine Sculpture Society (RESS)  
[www.ress.org](http://www.ress.org)
- RESS Technique Booklet 1 [www.ress.org](http://www.ress.org)
- RESS Technique Booklet 2 [www.ress.org](http://www.ress.org)
- The Boat (RESS newsletter) [www.ress.org](http://www.ress.org)
- North American Model Horse Shows Association (NAMHSA)  
[www.namhsa.org](http://www.namhsa.org)
- Wire to Whinny Workshop [www.lafnbear.com](http://www.lafnbear.com)
- Color Formulas and Techniques for the Model Horse Artist  
[www.riorondo.com](http://www.riorondo.com)
- Customizing the Model Horse [www.riorondo.com](http://www.riorondo.com)
- Trade Secrets III [www.boshevo.com](http://www.boshevo.com)
- Fallen Leaves (online community)  
<http://alienstudios.org/post/index.php>
- Model Horse Blab (online community) [www.modelhorseblab.com](http://www.modelhorseblab.com)
- Mid-Atlantic Regional Horse Show (workshops available)  
[www.allforfunhorses.com/MAR/](http://www.allforfunhorses.com/MAR/)
- Breyerfest (workshops available) [www.breyerhorses.com/index.php](http://www.breyerhorses.com/index.php)
- Model Horse Jubilee (workshops available)  
[www.stonehorses.com/shows/jubilee2005.htm](http://www.stonehorses.com/shows/jubilee2005.htm)
- Equine Studies Institute [www.equinestudies.org](http://www.equinestudies.org)
- Model Horse Reference (online resource)  
[www.mhref.com/index.html](http://www.mhref.com/index.html)
- Current Reference list from Sarah Minkiewicz-Breunig  
[www.minkstudios.com](http://www.minkstudios.com)

