

# TUCKERED OUT

## In The Dark Heart of Winter My Thoughts Turn To Spring

I have just staggered back into the house after spending my obligatory 20 or so minutes doing my morning barn chores. At the moment, it is bitterly cold and my fingers are still stinging, despite wearing my best thermal gloves.

I rather hurry through my chores lately and make a beeline for the house just as soon as I have pitched the last of the morning hay to my horse. Chicory barely gets a squeeze of his nose and pat before I leave him staring after me, hay sticking out from between his lips wondering what my rush is.

It is perhaps logical that this is the time of year that I do paintings filled with warmth and sunshine. Tropical birds and fishes are favorites to paint, as are equine pastorals.

*Tuckered Out* is one of those paintings completed when blustery winter winds still swirled. My model for this painting was photographed at the Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary many years ago. The photo has been lying in my to-do pile forever and so it seemed the perfect choice with which to embrace the idea of spring, even though in actuality it's several months away.

### What is Cutecritteradoraphobia?

I suffer from a condition known as Cutecritteradoraphobia, which is fear of overly cute baby animals in my art.

Yeah okay, I made that up. But it does exist in the deep recesses of my fevered imagination and in reality, as an actual aversion of mine.

As with all phobias, the best way to figure out how to deal with a debilitating disorder is to try and find the root cause of it.

Hmmm ... let's see. I can't blame my schooling because I've had no formal art training.

I can't blame actual baby animals because I *love* baby animals.

And no, it's not because overly adorable baby animal art doesn't sell. The fact is, it does and does so quite well.

So after much pondering and reflection I have decided to blame my mother. (I know ... how original of me, huh?) But hear me out. She is a painter and during my early artistic endeavors she pretty well drilled it into me that painting overly



cute, doe-eyed baby animals is at the very bottom of the artistic pool.

In an artistic family, her saying, "Cutesy is not art!" rings in my head much the same way as phrases like, "Eat your vegetables," and "Don't run with scissors." Those early art lessons taught me that an adorable little Appaloosa foal touching noses with say ... a baby kitten, is to art what a prepackaged snack cake is to fine dining. As a result, the number of baby animals I have committed to art is countable on one hand.

Now, the truth be told, baby animal art does not have to cross all the way over into crying clowns and sad-eyed puppy territory. There is plenty of quality baby animal artwork out there. One doesn't necessarily have to stick a butterfly on its nose (or butt) when painting a baby horse.

But for me, this is all murky territory. How does one take ... say, a rather plain-looking foal like the one I used for my reference photo, and create a believable piece of art that won't give you a sugar high from viewing it? Most foals are plenty cute all on their own, but the temptation to make their eyes just that little bit larger or their whiskers and eyelashes just a little bit longer, is a compulsion which can be hard to override.

### Embracing the Idea of Baby Animal Art

In the end, being ever the intrepid art adventurer, I decided to tackle this foal painting and chose to look at it as a journey toward baby animal art enlightenment. It was an interesting trip filled with much soul searching and profuse

apologizing on my blog for breaking the "no baby animal rule" while creating it. My readers, however, turned out to be quite a supportive group on my road to recovery, as they have no such issues regarding painting animals.

As I said, my model was rather plain so I refined his head just a little and added a pink nose and white socks. I gave him a sunny patch in the grass and managed to not plunk a butterfly on his nose (or butt.) On the whole, I think it turned out to be a successful little painting of a cute foal that still qualifies as art.

The floodgates are now open. What shall I do next? Baby rabbits? Oh wait, I already did them. Shall I do puppies ... kittens ... a cute little skunk in flowers?

Um ... perhaps it's best I take it slow. Maybe I'll go paint a flock of flamingos next or an aged old farm horse. It never goes well to push oneself too fast on these sorts of things.

I think I'll just take it one day, or rather ... one painting, at a time.

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Please visit her website, at [www.wildfacesgallery.com](http://www.wildfacesgallery.com) to see more of her work.