

ARIANA ALL-AMERICAN

PRODUCED AND STYLED BY DANIEL CAPPELLO

PHOTOGRAPHED BY JULIE SKARRATT

JUST AS YOU CAN spot a ballerina from a mile away by her impeccable posture, so can you tell an equestrian by her surefootedness. I'm still not quite sure if it's because a certain kind of person is inherently attracted to horses, or whether it's the horse who makes the man (or woman), but I do know when I'm in the presence of someone who loves and rides horses: there is the reassuring ease, the understated self-possession, the determined resolve, the nobility of spirit. And when you're in the presence of Ariana Rockefeller, who has loved horses since childhood and has grown into a bona fide competitor in the world of amateur adult jumping, not only do you sense these virtues—you feel ennobled yourself.

I am with Ariana at the stables of Grand Central Farm in North Salem, New York, which is owned by Old Salem Farm and operated as a show stable by her trainers Heather Hays and Alex Hamer, co-owners of the business Buxton Farm LLC. Here, Ariana houses the two horses she rides professionally, Stuart and Leo. Stuart, a 12-year-old Irish Sport Horse who competes with her as a show-jumper, has gorgeous chestnut coloring and a macho flair. He's noticeably heartened when Ariana steps into the stalls, and begins to strut and kick for a bit. I get the sense he's showing me who's boss—or he might just be showing off a bit. "I know, I know," Ariana says, caressing his face, "You're not used to these clothes." I've asked her to put jodhpurs aside for the day, and she's wearing a marvelously embroidered tulle dress from Valentino's Fall 2016 runway collection, as part of a series of fashion portraits I've somehow convinced her to do for this story. It's almost as if Stuart understands there's going to be a photo shoot: just like that, he falls into place and takes direction. You can tell that this is a true partnership in which each understands the other.

The story of Ariana and Stuart is very much a metaphor for everything in Ariana's life. It's a story about great instinct and good character, and also a story of patience and perseverance. She knew the moment she met him back in January 2015 that

he was the horse for her. "With horses and their riders, there has to be good chemistry, like in any good relationship," Ariana says. "You have to feel that chemistry and know that this is going to be the right partnership, or at least something that you want to pursue." With Stuart, she explains, it was a match from the start—"in the way he moved, the way we found the distance to the jump together, and just the comfort that I had on his back." But only a few months after she purchased him, Stuart tore a ligament along with bone from his right hind leg. Some might have urged her, especially since this was so early in their relationship, to put him out to pasture, literally, but Ariana felt a deep sense of commitment to him. A year of physical training later, including an underwater treadmill, and Ariana and Stuart were back in action. For Ariana, equestrian sport has taught her the importance of setting goals for oneself and pacing oneself; if injury creeps its way into those expectations, be it for athlete or horse, then the other has to adjust. This is also, it becomes clear to me—as I follow her up at the farm and back in the city over the course of several months—the kind of respect Ariana affords to anyone who crosses paths with her in life.

Spending time with her, you almost forget her last name. Raised in Cambridge, Massachusetts, she grew up to graduate from Columbia with a degree in international politics. She worked for a time at the United Nations before transitioning to a fashion house and then launching her own namesake fashion label. She is married to Matthew Bucklin, a native of Maine, where the two originally met as children and continue to vacation. They share a down-to-earth, easygoing style that is more Maine comfort, less New York frenzy. When not training

Opposite page: At Ladurée SoHo for a breakfast meeting, Ariana is pictured in Ralph Lauren Collection's Fairisle V-neck vest, silk Marocaine shirt, cashmere Fairisle skirt, and wool plaid tie, with suede Manolo Blahnik heels and a collection of personal bracelets and jewelry, including a Longines watch from the brand's Equestrian Collection.





This page: On the grounds of Grand Central Farm, Ariana is a natural beauty in a long-sleeve cashmere turtleneck from Ralph Lauren Collection, Tory Burch's Lucitano skirt, and Stuart Weitzman's Lowland boots in Loden suede. She holds the Sellier clutch in persimmon ostrich from the Ariana Rockefeller Handbag Collection, launching this fall. Opposite page: At the stable doors in a silk cotton shirt, silk tie, 170s wool suiting pant, and suede shoes, all by Ralph Lauren Collection.



This page: Ariana, wearing the Patchwork Harness gown by Adeam and Karina Brez earrings, gets ready to saddle up in the indoor riding arena at Grand Central Farm. Opposite page: Preparing her horse Stuart in the stables, Ariana is stunning in an embroidered tulle dress by Valentino, Jimmy Choo strap shoes, and Karina Brez earrings.





This spread: Ariana, used to making strides with her horses at Grand Central Farm in North Salem, New York, takes a moment for a fashionable stride in Valentino's long embroidered tulle dress and patent slippers with Karina Brez earrings. All beauty styling: Jenny Smith, NARS Lead Makeup Stylist (makeup), and Mario Mele of Oscar Blandi Salon, New York (hair).

and riding upstate or in Wellington, Florida, she goes to work on the Ariana Rockefeller fashion brand, a ready-to-wear collection of classic, easy-to-wear styles in timeless silhouettes. Designed and manufactured in Manhattan's Garment District, the dresses and separates are Ariana's concept of accessible luxury and timeless American chic: foundational pieces for the modern woman. She is also hard at work for the debut this fall of her eponymous handbag collection, also made in New York and inspired by her love of equestrianism (picture classic shapes with brass hardware from a horse's bridle here, stitching from a horse saddle there).

Whenever her sister, Camilla, comes up in conversation, Ariana speaks proudly about Camilla's career as an archeologist. Whenever her grandfather calls, there's a sweet affection in her voice (then, looking up at the Chuck Close portrait of him hanging in her living room, you realize he just happens to be David Rockefeller, the oldest living member and patriarch of her storied American family). She sits on the board of the David Rockefeller Fund, which focuses on arts education and criminal justice reform. She is passionate about all things equine and is involved with the Humane Society. And she remains committed to her family legacy of supporting the arts and culture in New York by giving of her time and efforts on behalf of MoMA, the New York Botanical Garden, and American Ballet Theatre.

She is levelheaded yet commanding, even with taxi drivers who would send most New Yorkers into a rage, as I witness firsthand as we're battling a sea of traffic to get downtown one day. What's the secret to her uncanny ability to live both personally and professionally with such measured control? "The horses have given me such a focus and self-confidence," she tells me. "It's an intense sport—you really have to organize your time very efficiently. So it's made me an incredibly efficient person—in how I do my business, in how I structure my life, and how I take care of my health. You have to be in shape and you have to be mentally present. It's a great way to structure my lifestyle. It's my inspiration and my grounding for my life." As far as grounding in life goes, Ariana's, from this perspective at least, is rock solid. —Daniel Cappello



Opposite page: In the fields of Grand Central Farm with her horse Stuart, Ariana wears Ralph Lauren Collection's herringbone wool jacketing double-breasted dress, cashmere turtleneck, and boots. This page: As a chairwoman for a gala evening at American Ballet Theatre, one of the cultural institutions she supports, Ariana wears a pink double-face satin seamed strapless gown by Katie Ermilio, clutch by Edie Parker, her own diamond earrings, and Verdura's diamond Leaf and Flower bracelet, made in 1954 for Mrs. Vincent (Brooke) Astor. Makeup for this portrait by Nicole Bryl.