

Ana Batista about her work

During our visit, Ana is training with the torrinha, which is kind of a “bike-bull”: it is a barrow with horns and a neck made of cork or leather in which the farpas are being placed. The torrinha is used for simulating an offensive bull. The horses have to be able to react with calmness on the unexpected simulations with the torrinha before they get in contact with a living training-bull for the first time.

In the arena every attack with real bulls follows exact rules and a strict code of honour. It is always the bull which starts to attack before horsemen and horse may react. The approach and the encounter of horse and bull have to happen face to face. Horse and horseman will react with a spectacular manoeuvre in the last moment.

The confrontation with the bull is very exhausting for the horses. A horseman often needs four horses for one bull. Which horse is needed in which part of the Corrida and has to fight against which bull depends on its skills, rapidity and experience.

“My horses are my great passion, an enormous love. I usually say that they are my family, my children, they are the children I don’t have, because we have to devote to them all the time in the world.”

“We have to live with them, to know them very well, and to know constantly how they are: if they have a fever, if they are sick. We also have to understand them when we are looking after them, riding and training them, so that when we enter the arena we can become “as one”.”

”There are always some that I prefer. There are always some that we like more than others, but it is always important to have a great and mutual empathy, so that in the arena things can work. We must feel very good with them, so that we can become “as one”. For, when we enter the arena, we cannot remember that we are riding them, we must focus on the bull and how it will fight us. And that is very important... to feel good... because sometimes there are horses that can even be very good but we do not feel that empathy... and sometimes there are others who are not that good, but we can be better connected to them ... and that passes on to the public.

“My job is a wonderful job, I wouldn’t change it for anything, but if I had a daughter, I would tell her “Be careful! Try to choose another job”, I wouldn’t stop her, but I would advise her to choose another profession, because this is a very difficult one, we have to give up a lot. Our time is dedicated only to our career, you have to live for it and to have a great passion, so that we can endure what we live in every bullfight, in every practice. Every day we must have a great spirit of sacrifice.”