



If you Build it...they will jump

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IF YOU BUILD IT THEY WILL..... **JUMP**

Before we take a look at the obstacles that modern show jumping is challenged with, let us quickly reflect back on the origins of the 'jump' itself. Many years ago in Europe, and England specifically, vast amounts of property were divided by stone walls that would stretch for many kilometers before there would be a gate or break in the line. Thus, when foxhunters could not afford the time it would have taken to go around these immovable objects, they simply jumped over them. Fast forward a few centuries, and we now have a highly evolved sport based around jumping obstacles. We will look at the continuing evolution of jumps in recent history from the perspective of safety, style, material and design.

Hunter jumps are often described as 'natural' and 'ramped', which require a rounded jump from the horse to show what it can do when it's challenged with a solid, full obstacle in its path. For many hunter rings this remains the standard for the style in which the designer builds their tracks, but even the Hunter rings are seeing a very sharp shift towards individuality with the recent resurgence of derbies and Hunter Prix.

With the handy element being ever so important in the final scoring of these popular classes, the course designers are challenging the riders and their mounts with new creative ways to show a natural looking element but with airier and uncommon aspects to it. Long gone are the stereotypical ground line, painted box, gate and pole style of jumps that dominated the hunter rings during the early 2000's. We now see depth with theme, gates that usually belong on the jumper side of things, and obstacles that make you think these horses are indeed jumping across a neighbour's field in pursuit of a furry creature. This evolution of hunter design now even comes with themes and will only get better as course designer let their creative juices flow!

It is easy to notice the evolution of jumps in the hunter rings and, unless you have not visited a Grand Prix arena in the past decade, you have surely witnessed the almost 'story-telling' themes that now capture your eye as soon as you step foot inside the arena. Long gone are the days of 4"x4" jump standard with a stencil cut out of a Microsoft clip art design painted in white and one colour, and copied 12 times to make a combination! Repeated a few times, and that is what every Grand Prix ring looked like 15 years ago. Throw in a plank or two and *shazam!*, you were a creative genius!

Now in present day, tune into any horse show around the world offered on livestream online, and you will see how every jump will tell a story, sell a product or mimic some the grandest wonders of the world. The budget alone for just the jumping obstacles for the recent Olympic Games in London in 2012 was £6 million!

These new light-weight, computer numerical control (CNC) laser cut jumps are made out of innovative materials that continue to evolve, as the designs are becoming bigger and more impressive to the point that aluminum is now often used as a building material. The evolution of material is needed in order to assemble and move these jumps around the world, and to be transformed into anything that may strike your imagination!