

Big Horn



Big Horn, 2006

Horse Power

Deborah Butterfield (b. 1949) creates sculptures of horses, a subject deeply personal to her. Her first works portrayed equines as metaphorical self-portraits. Butterfield's assemblages feature found materials, including wood from meaningful locations near her studios in Montana and Hawaii.

Take a closer look

The artist casts her wooden sculptures in bronze and then paints on a chemical film. The resulting finish, called a patina, causes the metal to resemble the original wood, transforming delicate structures into durable artworks.

Something to talk about

Butterfield considers the role of horses in artworks throughout history, when they often symbolized male domination and power. What associations do you have with horses? How does this sculpture align with or challenge those ideas?

In her own words

"I wanted to do these big, beautiful mares that were as strong and imposing as stallions but capable of creation and nourishing life. It was a very personal feminist statement."

Who knew?

Butterfield was born on May 7, 1949, the same day as the 75th running of the Kentucky Derby. She credits this birthday with her lifelong connection to horses.

Deborah Butterfield, *Big Horn*, 2006; Cast bronze, 92 x 114 x 41 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Jacqueline Badger Mars in honor of Wilhelmina Cole Holladay; © Deborah Butterfield; Image courtesy of L.A. Louver

