

Sculpture: A Wyoming Invitational
Deborah Butterfield

University of Wyoming Art Museum 2008
Gallery and Study Guide

Observe

The first step in understanding any work of art is to take the time to look closely. Here are some questions to consider when looking at the sculpture, ***Billings*** by **Deborah Butterfield**.

Question

- What draws you to this horse sculpture: materials, colors, textures, lines, marks, light, shadow, scale, size, balance, space, shapes and forms?
- Are you drawn to this sculpture because it is a horse? What else about it appeals to you?
- How would you describe the lines and textures and forms that you see?
- Can you identify the concepts behind the sculpture you are viewing? How are those concepts represented in the sculpture?
- Does this sculpture speak to you? Do you feel anything for the horse?
- Does it make you think of something you have never thought of before?
- What is it persuading you to think about or to do?
- What else about the art created makes you think or feel something?

Explore and Reflect

- What is three-dimensional art?
- How are two-dimensional and three-dimensional art different and the same?
- What qualities make three-dimensional art unique?
- Consider the sculptor's choice of materials along with scale, size, balance, proportion, form, structure, space.
- What is art?
- Is it an idea? A process? A product? All three?
- What is a concept?
- How does an artist take a concept and create art from it?
- Why do we make art?
- How do we find our creative processes?
- Do our human needs and wants motivate this process?
- Is it in response to personal thoughts and desires?
- How does a viewer recognize a concept in the artwork by observing it?
- What are examples of concepts?
- How does the sculpture you are viewing express ideas?
- Can viewing art and thinking about the concepts behind any artwork change the viewer's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings? How so?
- What do we mean by *style* when we speak of art?
- How does this work present the culture, the social and political climate of today? How so?

About the Sculptor

Deborah Butterfield first gained wide notice at the 1979 Whitney Biennial. Horses have been the single, sustained focus of Butterfield's work for over 30 years. Her early work, fragile creations of mud, sticks, and straw, and found metal, evoke horses either standing or resting on the ground. Since the mid-1980s she has been creating medium and full-size horses from driftwood branches, casting the finished sculpture in bronze. A true lover of horses, Butterfield is an accomplished dressage rider.

Butterfield is one of the world's leading sculptors and teachers of fine arts, with a solid career and many honors to her credit. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of California at Davis, in 1972, followed by her Masters of Fine Arts degree in 1973. In 1997, she received an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from Rocky Mountain College in Billings. This honor was repeated in 1998 by Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana. Butterfield's teaching career began in 1974 at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

In 1979, she became an assistant professor at Montana State University, Bozeman, and in 1984 became an adjunct assistant professor and a graduate student consultant. Her honors and awards are numerous and include a National Endowment for the Arts Individual Artist Fellowship in 1977; a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship in 1980; a National Endowment for the Arts Individual Artist Fellowship in 1980; a Citation for Excellence Award from the UC Davis and Cal Aggie Alumni Association in 1992; and an American Academy of Achievement Golden Plate Award in 1993.

Butterfield has exhibited across the United States and Europe. Her work is widely collected and she has been commissioned to create site-specific sculptures by a number of significant museums and public sites, including the Whitney Museum of American Art; the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Israel Museum; San Francisco Museum of Contemporary Art; the Walker Art Center Sculpture Garden, Minneapolis, Minnesota; and the Denver Art Museum.

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