



## **DEBORAH BUTTERFIELD (b. 1949)**

### **Angus**

cast bronze with patina

36 x 42 x 11 in.

c. 2000

37437

### **PROVENANCE:**

with Zolla/Lieberman Gallery, Chicago  
Private Collection, Colorado, c. 2000

“Angus” (c. 2000) is a cast bronze work that showcases Deborah Butterfield’s dedication to depicting the horse in the third dimension. This piece has had only one owner, a friend of the artist.

Butterfield's choice of material, often natural or industrial, is central to the effect of her work. Her driftwood pieces such as this one are some of her most highly celebrated for their graceful compositions of seemingly fragile and worn materials set with the permanence and solidity of bronze. She has spoken of her chosen subject matter as a sort of self-portrait, drawing parallels between the character of the horse, its connection to its natural environment, and the varied expressions of serenity and power within the human experience. Butterfield was born the same day as the 75th Kentucky Derby and partly credits this for her desire to feature horses so prominently in her work.

The compact size of the work is a stark contrast to the other large examples, some of which are wall sculptures. Comparable quality Butterfield sculptures are featured in prominent museum collections, including The New Orleans Museum of Art, The Modern in Fort Worth, and Purdue University collections, among others.

The artist grew up in San Diego in the 1950s and 60s, and frequently rode and drew pictures of horses. At the University of California, Davis, in the 1970s, she studied ceramics under Robert Arneson, the funk artist who helped propel the medium from the realm of craft and encouraged his student to pursue her idea of making elaborate life-size saddles. In graduate school, she moved onto a horse farm and helped take care of the animals to pay her rent.

In the 1970s, Butterfield made her first horses from plaster, papier-maché, and mud and sticks. In 1980, she traveled to Israel on a John Simon Guggenheim grant, and worked with steel and other detritus of wars, and determined the material held emotional content. This set her on a course of making horses with found and welded steel, fused aluminum, copper, and wood — materials that also have a history. In the mid-'80s, she discovered the possibilities of bronze to retain the aesthetics of rotting wood in the casting process.

She and her artist husband John Buck live on a Montana ranch, where they maintain separate studios and sometimes host equine events, including dressage shows and training clinics.

Butterfield's work is held in the collections of dozens of U.S. museums, including Art Institute of Chicago, H.M. de Young Museum in San Francisco, Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, Palm Springs Art Museum, Seattle Art Museum, and Walker Art Center and Walker Sculpture Garden in Minneapolis.

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