

Deborah Butterfield's Evocative Sculptures Come to Life at the Manetti Shrem Museum in Fall 2023



Deborah Butterfield, *John*, 1984. Found steel, welded, 82 x 88 x 32 in. The Fine Arts Collection, Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art, Gift of Edward Nicoll and Helen Kent-Nicoll. © 2023 Deborah Butterfield / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY. Photo: Muzi Rowe

DAVIS, CA (Aug. 1, 2023) — The [Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art](#) at the University of California, Davis, is proud to present a career-spanning exhibition of renowned contemporary sculptor Deborah Butterfield opening October 1, 2023. *Deborah Butterfield: P.S. These are not horses* — the first exhibition following her Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Sculpture Center — brings together key works ranging from the artist's most recent wildfire sculptures to rarely exhibited pieces including ceramics made 50 years ago while studying at UC Davis.

Butterfield is known for remarkable equine sculptures crafted from detritus and found materials such as mud, scrap metal, driftwood and fallen branches. Collected by nearly 90 major public and private institutions throughout the United States, her distinctive work is instantly recognizable to art lovers and travelers. *Deborah Butterfield: P.S. These are not horses* is her first solo museum exhibition in California since 1996 and the first major sculpture exhibition at the Manetti Shrem Museum.

“Deborah Butterfield’s art celebrates a logic of making that is inherent to our place in the world,” said museum Founding Director Rachel Teagle, who curated the exhibition. “Her commitment to the hand-crafted as a means of activating a contemporary approach to

sculpture is born of her time in Davis training with mentors such as Robert Arneson, Roy De Forest and Wayne Thiebaud.”

Teagle added: “At the same time, her sculpture advances concerns that remain core to our university today; environmentalism and the changing nature of the West loom large in her most recent work. As we confront a changing environment, now is the time to look back and look again at what Butterfield’s horses can teach us.”

With *P.S. These are not horses*, Butterfield returns to the place she considers her artistic and equine home. She began exploring the form and presence of horses as a student at UC Davis, where she graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in 1971 and master of fine arts degree in 1973. The exhibition takes its name from the closing line of a poem by William T. Wiley, Butterfield’s lifelong mentor and friend, written on the occasion of her first traveling museum exhibition in 1981. Wiley concludes his ode to horses with an early proclamation that Butterfield’s art is about so much more — her sculpture is a sustained poetics of intimacy that explores the nature of connection.

Deborah Butterfield: P.S. These are not horses highlights works from every phase of the artist’s career and presents her sculpture in the context of her contemporaries who also sought to expand Minimalism’s vocabulary. Accompanying works by Robert Arneson, Joan Brown, John Buck, Roy De Forest, Martin Puryear, William T. Wiley and Jackie Winsor emphasize Butterfield’s focus on process and materials as an alternative approach.

Collaborative Public Program Highlights

Dedicated public programming exploring connections to the art legacy of UC Davis as well as the museum’s ongoing commitment to present new ideas and diverse voices will be announced at manettishrem.org in coming months.

- **Fall Season Exhibition Opening:** A public celebration of *Deborah Butterfield: P.S. These are not horses*; *Malaquias Montoya and the Legacies of a Printed Resistance*; and *Undercover / Ayanah Moor* features a curatorial overview and Q&A with the exhibiting artists. (Oct. 1)
- **Artist Talk:** Deborah Butterfield discusses her formative years at UC Davis, her inspirations and mentors, and how her experience in Northern California still resonates in her work today. (Oct. 22)

Deborah Butterfield: P.S. These are not horses will be on view October 1, 2023, through June 24, 2024, at the Manetti Shrem Museum of Art. The exhibition is curated by Manetti Shrem Museum Founding Director Rachel Teagle. Admission is free for all.

Support

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About Deborah Butterfield

Born in 1949 in San Diego, California, Deborah Butterfield is a major American sculptor. She holds an honorary doctorate of fine arts degree from Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana (1998), as well as honorary doctoral degrees from Kansas City Art Institute; Rocky Mountain College, Billings, Montana; and Whitman College, Walla Walla, Washington. Butterfield has received a National Endowment for the Arts Individual Artist Fellowship, an American Academy of Achievement Award, a Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship and the International Sculpture Center's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2022, among others. Her work has been collected by nearly 90 public institutions including Denver Art Museum; di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art, Napa; the Whitney Museum of American Art, N.Y.; the M.H. de Young Museum, San Francisco; Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; the Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C.; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, N.Y.; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Oakland Museum of California; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Seattle Art Museum, Wash.; Walker Sculpture Garden, Minneapolis; and Yale University in New Haven, Conn. She has exhibited widely in solo exhibitions, and is represented by Greg Kucera Gallery, Seattle; LA Louver Gallery, Los Angeles; Marlborough Gallery, N.Y.; and Zolla/Lieberman Gallery, Chicago. Butterfield lives and works in studios in Hawaii and Montana.

Art Wide Open

The Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art at the University of California, Davis, is a contemporary art museum for today, committed to honoring the past and shaping the future while making art accessible and approachable to all. It builds on UC Davis' legacy of exceptional teaching and practice of the arts to offer engaging experiences, exhibitions and educational programs that reflect and serve the community. The museum shares the university's core values of innovative research, interdisciplinary experimentation and a commitment to educational programming. One-third of the museum's 50,000-square-foot space is devoted to instruction, including a 125-seat lecture hall, classroom space and the drop-in Carol and Gerry Parker Art Studio. Opened in November 2016, the museum has earned LEEDv3-NC Platinum status and was named one of the 25 Best Museum Buildings of the Past 100 Years by ARTnews. 254 Old Davis Road, Davis, CA, 95616; manettishrem.org.

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