

ANIMALS IN ART

ARTIST: Silvia L. Davis (1957-) Salt Lake City, Utah

TITLE: *The Colt* 1995

MEDIA: bronze sculpture

SIZE: 26-3/4" x 52" x 42"

TITLE: *Guest* 1994

MEDIA: wood sculpture

SIZE: 28-1/2" x 15" x 19"

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Born in Cupertino, California, in 1957, Silvia Davis enjoyed painting and drawing as a child. She also liked creating 3-D models using cardboard, paper, and mud. Her early artistic interests eventually led her to study art in college.(1)

Davis moved to Salt Lake City in 1966, and she earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in sculpture in 1980 and a Master of Fine Arts, also in sculpture, in 1993 from the University of Utah.(2) As a student, Davis preferred working with three-dimensional

forms in wood. More restrictive than clay, the limitations of wood forced her to resolve sculptural forms more clearly.(3)

Working almost exclusively in wood, Davis uses observations made from life to create realistic sculpture. Fascinated by the contrast between complex geometric patterns and clearly defined volumes, Davis designs and sculpts subjects that demonstrate geometric clarity.(4)

Davis has a recurring interest in "the coexistence of plants and animals with the man-made environment." While she tries to create sculptures "real enough so that people can empathize with the subjects portrayed," she also wants these works to appear "artificial enough so that they can be seen freshly."(Artist's Statement)

According to the artist, "No subject is too insignificant for me. The world is full of subjects that are looked at all the time but rarely seen. The more closely I pay attention, the more the world is worth looking at. I never create sculpture out of a void. Instead I try to open my eyes to what is already there."(Artist's Statement)

Davis received an award at the North American Sculpture exhibition in Golden, Colorado in 1983. Then in 1984, selected sculptures and drawings of hers were exhibited at a one-person show.(Resume) The Phillips Gallery in Salt Lake City sponsored another solo exhibit of Davis' recent sculptures in 1996. It highlighted her sculpture series entitled *Animates*.(5)

Davis has worked in a variety of artistic settings: as a sculptor for the Utah Shakespeare Festival, as an instructor at the Petersen Art Center teaching life drawing and sculpture, as an instructor in woodworking at the University of Utah, as a sculpture consultant for architectural firms, as a theater technician, as a free-lance sculptor, a scene painter for the University of Utah, fossil preparator, and casting technician at the Utah Museum of Natural History. (Biographical Information, p.2) Currently, she sells her work through Phillips Gallery in Salt Lake City.

Davis' wooden dog sculpture *Guest* is a fine example of her interest in geometric patterns in contrast with a clearly defined volume. Made from found wood, *Guest* is carved from an old painted door that was cut up and then laminated. The original candy-satin turquoise-colored surface of the door is visible on certain areas of the sculpture. After the carving was completed, some of the skin areas were touched up to unite the piece as a whole. Davis says using the door to create the dog forced her to see creative solutions in her sculpting.(Biographical Information, p.2)

The artist is uninterested in giving more visual information about her subject than is needed to create an expressive image. The economy of detail couples with a fine sense of gesture and form that allow her sculpture to have universal appeal. In recent years, she has expanded her oeuvre [work] into edition bronze casting.(6) Her bronze *The Colt* (1995) can be seen at the Springville Museum of Art.

ENDNOTES

1 "Visual Language: The Principles of Art," Evenings for Educators Packet, Silvia L. Davis Biographical Information, p.1.

2 Resume of Artist.

3 Davis Biographical Information, p.1.

4 Artist's Statement, n.d, taken from the History of Utah Artists Binder Series, Huntington Research Library, Springville Museum of Art.

5 Animates Exhibition Announcement, Phillips Gallery, Salt Lake City, 11 October - 8 November 1996.

6 Dr. Vern G. Swanson, Director of the Springville Museum of Art. Interview. August 25, 1999

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES for *The Colt*

ARTIST: Silvia L. Davis (1957-) Salt Lake City, Utah

TITLE: *The Colt* 1995

MEDIA: bronze sculpture

SIZE: 26-3/4" x 52" x 42"

QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING (History, Aesthetics, History)

What does the pose the artist selected for the horse tell us about a horse? How old is the horse in this sculpture? Why do you think the artist created a sculpture about a horse of this age? Why do you think the artist wanted to create a sculpture of a horse? Was the artist who created *The Colt* a man or a woman? What makes you think this? When do you think this artwork was created? What are some clues that can help you know? Why do you think the artist just called the sculpture *The Colt*? How do you think this artist feels about animals? Do you like the artwork? How does it help you to remember things about a horse you have seen before?

ACTIVITIES

Art-Perceiving/Social Studies

Objectives: Students will expand their knowledge of art history by examining images of horses from various art periods. Students will extrapolate from the images ideas about the cultures that produced the images.

Show the class the slide of **The Colt** and allow students to respond to the image. Show them other images of horses. Mix these images up time wise, so the students have to rearrange them to create a timeline of the images. Show them several examples from among the following list:

- cave paintings
- clay sculptures from Egypt
- clay sculptures from South America
- relief stone carvings from Syria
- paintings of horses on Tepees and notebooks by Native Americans
- paintings of horses from England by artists such as Alfred Munnings, George Stubbs, Raoul Millais
- paintings of fox hunts
- paintings by Remington or Russell other "Cowboy art"
- Deborah Butterfield's abstract horse sculptures
- folk art wood carvings
- Merry-Go-Round horses
- the mechanical horses outside stores
- pony rides at the fair

Have the students comment about what each kind of image tells viewers about the culture that made it. Then have students arrange the images from oldest to most modern.

Art--Making--Perceiving--Contextualizing

Objective: Students will learn about two contemporary artists, compare one's Postmodernist works with the other's more Realistic work, criticize the works, and/or create a found-object sculpture or drawing.

Show the class slides of *Riders of the Range* (Elementary Poster Set SMA), *Ropin' out the Best Ones* by Grant Speed (November 12, 1997 TALES TO TELL, packet) and/or other western artworks that feature horses. Tell the students that in the 20th Century, at least in the United States, the image of a horse became so associated with western art and so trite it lost credibility as a worthy image in the rest of the artworld. (In Great Britain, Horse Racing was a more common theme) One artist who helped take the horse out of its triteness corral is Deborah Butterfield. See artworks below and then a short biography, which follows.

Artist: Deborah Butterfield
Title: *Horse #2-85*
Year Produced: 1985
Medium: Sculpture
Dimensions: 33-3/4"h x 48"w x 109"l
Location: Arizona State University Museum Lobby
Gift of the Graham Foundation and the Art Heritage Fund

Deborah Butterfield (1949-)
Derby Horse 1985
bronze 31"x 47"x 9'
Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture garden, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Deborah Butterfield

Hina, 1990-91

unique bronze

80 x 28 x 112 inches

Collection of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth,
Museum Purchase, made possible by a Gift from Web Maddox Trust, 1992.3.P.S.

Deborah Butterfield

Palomino 1981

plant and leaf material, paper pulp, with wire armature

Norton Museum of Art

Deborah Butterfield
Riot
Collection of the Delaware Art Museum

About the Artist

Deborah Butterfield creates sculptures of horses. With each one she manages to convey a distinct presence, with a downstretched head or paunchy girth. Yet her sculptures are stripped of all but the most basic anatomical characteristics. Some are life-size and made of discarded industrial materials, like *Horse #2-85* in the ASU Art Museum's collection. Others are smaller and made of mud and sticks. More recent ones are cast in bronze. Butterfield uses this mix of materials to explore her own fascination with horses, but she also uses the form of the horse as a vehicle to explore the human experience.

Butterfield was torn between pursuing art or veterinary medicine in college, but decided on the former and received a Master of Fine Arts Degree from the University of California at Davis in 1973. She bought her first horse and worked and lived on a thoroughbred farm, while still a student. In 1976 she moved to Montana to teach and started making horses out of natural materials. Using a wire armature, her horses became abstract sketches in mud and sticks.

Following in the twentieth-century tradition of assemblage art, Butterfield began working with found objects which she gathered at dumps and on her ranch. The sculptures are skeletal in construction or dense like *Horse #2-85*, composed of barbed wire, pipes, fencing, an old tire, and corroded scraps of metal and wood. Although the Museum's horse seems quiet and still, there is a great deal of movement in the combinations of

materials, solids and voids, colors and textures. Patches of rust look like paint, and light plays over the beaten, corroded metal as it would over a twitching flank.

Horses have a long tradition as political and philosophical symbols in the history of art. Butterfield's horses counteract the Western tradition of masculine, military equestrian statues. Her horses are vulnerable and fragile rather than mighty. They are made of materials that continue to rust and decay. Butterfield's horses are stand-ins for us and pose pointed questions about our history rather than glorifying it. Art writers have interpreted these sculptures as new images of the American West, echoing ghost towns and junkyards in their materials, and reflecting changes in our way of life. *Horse #2-85* incorporates a tire in its rump pointing out the replacement of the horse by the car and the changes to our environment in the process.

Butterfield finds inspiration in the art of Africa and Asia, and most importantly in her experiences as a horsewoman. Butterfield rides and trains horses for dressage, a discipline in which the horse and the rider work together to perform a specific set of tasks. She describes this process as a "kinetic language" and as her attempt to "try to communicate with another species." Butterfield continues to live on a ranch in Montana, dividing her time between her horses and sculpting.

Biographical Information taken from <http://asuam.fa.asu.edu/butter.htm>

More Biographical Information

The artist's earliest works were huge plaster mares, then came a series of horses made of sticks and mud, reminiscent to her of log jams. She used "horse images as a metaphysical substitute for herself, translating personal body measurements into measurements within the horse form."(1) She gradually eliminated the mud, evolving to junk sculpture, and finally, now to true welded, constructivist work, utilizing found materials, each with its "own history and diverse visual quality."(2) Butterfield was greatly influenced by the junk automobile sculptor, John Chamberlain, and reminders of David Smith's early work also may be observed in her recent pieces.

"You know, horses actually changed the history of the world. Up to World War I, the horse was used as a weapon--a way of exercising power over people who didn't have it. The horse conquered the world. But now, in the 20th century, we think of the horse for sport, for pleasure or for art. . . while horses are not intelligent at doing things that people do or that dogs do, they are very intelligent at doing things that horses do, and I'm interested in what that has to teach me. I want to try to communicate with another species, which happens to be the horse, and perhaps to gain more and different information."(3)

References:

1. & 2. "The New West." exhibition catalogue, Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, CO,

1986.

3. Marcia Tucker, "Equestrian Mysteries," *Art in America*, June 1989, p. 203.

the Object

Sheldon Selections I Home Sheldon Selections I Works

Home Artist Index

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Show the class the slide of *The Colt* and then several of Deborah Butterfield's horses. In addition to those here, you can find images of her works at

http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/butterfield_deborah.html

This site has a list of museums and galleries that have images of her work on the web with links to each. One of the links is to the Boise Art Museum and it has a section on her especially for kids. That address is

http://www.boiseartmuseum.org/content/fr_kidsite.html

Then complete one or more of the following activities:

Criticism--Describe, Analyze, Interpret, Come to an Informed Judgement about *The Colt* and one of Butterfield's works. (See pages 133-135 for more help with a criticism model and for a model for young students)

Aesthetics/Art History--Compare and Contrast the realistic approach of Silvia Davis in *The Colt* to Butterfield's approach. Have the students read (or you read to them) about the two artists and what they each say about the ideas and purpose behind their approaches. For older students, after they have compared and contrasted the two approaches and works, show them Davis' *The Guest*, which is less realistic than her sculpture *The Colt* and ask if seeing the other artwork changes their opinion or reaction.

Variation: Give the students information from the biographies of each artist and then have a panel debate the merits of the two artworks or the two approaches, as represented by these two artists.

For advanced or motivated students: **Making**--Create a found-object sculpture of an animal. Have students choose an animal they are familiar with to make a sculpture of. Have pictures of common animals available for the students to look at. Exhibit the finished works.

For inexperienced students: Making--Students will create a drawing of an animal by an unusual method such as using scribble lines, torn paper, scraps of fabric, etc. Do not give the students xeroxed animal shapes to fill in; this activity consists of creating a drawing/painting by assembling items on a 2-dimensional surface to create the *sense* of a

specific animal. Be careful not to turn it into a coloring book- type activity.

Social Science

Objective: Students will examine or compare the economic impact/role of horses in Utah in the present time or in the 1800s.

Show the slide of *The Colt* to start the activity. Show other artworks that feature horses. Ask the students to name all the ways horses are used in Utah and make a list on the board. Or, look at the ways horses were used in the early days of the state, or do both and then compare the two.

[There was an article on this in the *Deseret News* on Sunday March 5, 2000, front page of A section and then continued on A14 in the next section.]

You may be able to get someone who works with horses in some capacity to come talk to the class about their work with horses.

Science--Biology

Objective: The students' interest in animals will be engaged by their viewing slides of artworks featuring animals.

Use any or all of the artworks to introduce a biology lesson on animals. Show the slides, and ask how the artists knew how to use lines, paint, shapes, clay, etc. to create an artwork which we recognize as being about an animal(s). The answer, of course is they studied animals, looking closely at real animals and learning the bones, muscles, skin or fur and other physical characteristics that make up those particular animals. (See Biographical Information of artists Clark Bronson, Carel Brest van Kempen, and Jason Wheatley.) If you have access to the video "Animals & Art" which shows Clark Bronson out sketching and photographing animals in the wild, show selected clips. To order the video, write to Picture Animals, P.O. Box 50776, Provo, Utah 84605.

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES **for *Guest***

ARTIST: Silvia L. Davis (1957-) Salt Lake City, Utah

TITLE: *Guest* 1994

MEDIA: wood sculpture

SIZE: 28-1/2" x 15" x 19"

QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING

(History, Aesthetics, Criticism)

What is the sculpture made of? What is your first response to the sculpture? How do you think you would respond to it if it were made of other materials? How does the sculpture make you feel? Is the sculpture realistic in size, shape, color, proportion? Does the painted wood enhance or detract from the overall effect of the piece? What do you think the artist is trying to express? Is there energy and movement inherent in the sculpture? How does the artist's knowledge and use of proportion and balance contribute to the overall impact of the sculpture?

Proportion is a principle of concerned with the relationships between parts to the whole and parts to other parts. Examine *Guest*. What proportions have been used in this sculpture? For example, individual parts to the whole, parts to other parts, pieces of wood to the whole, areas left with paint in relationship to those without.

ACTIVITIES

Art-history

Objective: The students will learn about the Golden Mean and how it has been used in art and architecture.

Show the class the slide of *Guest* as well as slides or reproductions of other artworks that demonstrate proportion. Lead a brief discussion about the use of proportion in each of the artworks. Then show some artworks and architecture from the Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians such as the Great Pyramid of Giza, the temple of the Acropolis, da Vinci paintings, the Cathedral at Chartre, etc. Explain what the Golden Mean [often called the Golden Section] is and help the students see those proportions in the buildings and artworks.

The Golden Mean is a ratio that is most easily demonstrated by looking at a line, AC, where AB is to BC the same as BC is to AC.

A rectangle with sides proportioned in accordance with the Golden Section is known as the Golden Rectangle. It can be constructed as follows: The side AB of the square ABCD

is bisected at E, see diagram below. Then, using E as the center and EC as the radius, an arc is drawn that meets the extension of AB to create F. Then FG is drawn perpendicular to AF to meet an extension of DC to create G.

If the rectangle BFGC itself becomes a Golden Rectangle and the rectangular extension of that Golden Rectangle becomes a Golden Rectangle, and so on, a spiral can be drawn following the descending sizes of Rectangles which has the proportions of spirals found in nature.

You may want to limit the art activity to a class presentation/discussion. If not, divide the class into groups and give each one a photocopy of a piece of artwork or architecture and have the group discover where the Golden Section has been used. Students should use a bright-colored marker to draw in the examples of proportion that match the Golden Mean or Rectangle. Have groups share their discoveries with the rest of the class.

If you have older students, you may want to assign them to research an artist (such as Michelangelo or da Vinci, both famous for their use of the Golden Mean), an artwork, or a building. Have them draw the proportions on the copies of the item(s) they researched and share that information with the class.

Science Extension: After completing at least the section of the previous activity that explains the Golden Mean, move to ways the same proportions exist in nature. Spirals based on the Golden Mean are seen in the shape of the Andromeda Galaxy, shells' spirals, the flight patterns of fire flies and other insects, the helixical shape of the human gene, the whorl of some flower petals, and the proportions are evident in the distances between leaves on the stems of some plants. You can find many more examples. You may want to have students research individual examples of the Golden Mean in nature. Have the students make sketches or find illustrations and make short reports to the class or make a class bulletin board display.

Geometry Extension: Explore the proportions of the Golden Mean in mathematics. Many web sites have information as do geometry and other math texts.

(See information about the Golden Mean and books and web sites at <http://galaxy.cau.edu/tsmith/KW/golden.html>.)

Art

Objective: Students will apply their knowledge of proportion in creating a three-dimensional figure.

Show the slide of *Guest* as well as other slides of sculptures of other animals. If possible, bring in several animal sculptures or live animals for the students to observe and touch. Have students measure parts of the sculptures, animals, or photographs of animals to determine typical proportions of different animals and different breeds of dog. See the Science activity for *Guest*.

The measuring step and the whole idea of proportion is likely to be easier if you have done an activity with typical human proportions. If you haven't, you may want to start with one. Use calipers, if possible, and have several children of different heights come to the front of the room. (Calipers can be made out of cardboard, the two arms joined with a brass fastener—the kind with two flat prongs that can be poked through paper and the prongs folded flat, so the cardboard is held together but can rotate.)

Measure from the top of the head to the chin. Then measure other parts using the head size as the measurement. If your students are very young, they may not quite fit the standard, which is 7 heads tall, 4 heads from hip to heel, 2 heads wide at the shoulders, and 1-1/2 heads across the hips. However, the students will come close, and different students are likely to be similar in proportion.

Have the students choose an animal to sculpt out of soap, clay, wood, or found objects. The sculpture may be a representation of the mythical dog the students wrote about, the breed of dog they chose to investigate in the science project, their own pet, or another animal. (Have good photographs of various animals available.)

First, students will sketch their chosen animal, measuring its proportions and trying to reproduce them. They should make sketches from several angles since the sculpture will be three-dimensional. Then the students should sculpt the dogs (animals) using the measured proportions as best they can.

Display the dogs and the stories; invite another class or parents to listen to the stories written by the students and to see their artwork.

Variation: have students use photocopies of animals and measure the proportions, writing them down on the paper. Then have students sketch the animal freehand, trying to reproduce the proportions correctly.

Language Arts

Objective: Students will show they understand what a myth is by creating a myth about a dog(s) and sharing it with the class.

Show the slide of *Guest* and ask for student reactions. Create a background for the piece: Where did it come from? Whose dog was it? Does it possess any magical or mystical qualities?, etc.

Ask the class to listen to discover what a myth is as you read or relate several myths to them. For example, the myth of the phoenix, the myth of Persephone, or a creation myth involving the dog, such as "Ulgen the Creator," a Russian creation story, found in a collection edited by Virginia Hamilton entitled "In the Beginning."

Discuss and list the components of a myth. Discuss and list the components of a good story. What is the proportion of the beginning and end to the middle of a story? How much description versus dialogue balances a story and makes it interesting? How much detail about character and setting is needed? How does the ratio of illustrations to text change the story?

Have each student develop a myth (perhaps about how the dog was created or what part the dog played in the creation) and share it with the class.

Students also can work with a partner or in a small group to develop the myth.

Drama

Objective: Students will participate in role play to develop an understanding of the relationship between pets and their owners.

Students will show their understanding of proportion by creating objects with their bodies in groups.

Use the following poems or other similar poems you may have or prefer. Look for poems containing character and action.

MY DOG

by Marchette Chute

His nose is short and scrubby;
His ears hang rather low;
And he always brings the stick back
No matter how far you throw,

He gets spanked rather often
For things he shouldn't do,
Like lying-on-beds, and barking,
And eating up shoes when they're new

He always wants to be going
Where he isn't supposed to go.
He tracks up the house when it's snowing--
Oh, puppy, I love you so.

Tom's Little Dog
by Walter de la Mare

Tom told his dog called Tim to beg,
And up at once he sat,
His two clear amber eyes fixed fast,
His haunches on his mat. Tom poised a lump of sugar on
His nose; then, "Trust!" says he;
Stiff as a guardsman sat his Tim;
Never a hair stirred he.

"Paid for!" says Tom; and in a trice
Up jerked that moist black nose;
A snap of teeth, a crunch, a munch,
And down the sugar goes!

(The poems are taken from "The Arbuthnot Anthology of Children's Literature",
compiled by May Hill Arbuthnot and others, Scott, Foresman and Company, 1976, page
35.

Discuss how each of the dog owners must have felt about their pets. Then have the
students, working individually, show how they would feed, pet, bathe, walk, play, etc.,
with their dog.

As a class prepare and recite the poems together as a choral reading. Use solo, small
group, high, low, and medium voices with appropriate expression to give dramatic impact
to the reading. Vary the tempo and timing of the reading appropriately as well.

Act out the poem(s):

As the teacher/leader reads the poem slowly students may:

- a) role play the dog
- b) role play the owner
- c) work in partners: one partner is the dog, one the owner; then switch roles.

Divide the class into groups of eight or nine students each; have each group cooperate to
form a dog using their bodies (one person is one leg, a foot, the head, the body, the tail)
Can the dog walk, wag its tail, eat, etc.?

Create a puppet show based on the creation story or one of the poems (or students can
write their own poems about their pets to act out). Or, create reader's theatre scripts based
on the creation stories written by the students in the language arts activity.
Have the students practice and perform for the rest of the class.

Science

Objective: Students will identify the general characteristics of the dog family. Students

will identify and explain the unique characteristics (physical and temperamental) of a particular breed of dog and share this information in an illustrated report.

Show the class the slide of *Guest* and discuss the general characteristics of domestic dogs:

- appearance
- habits
- uses in society
- traditional ways of characterizing dogs

List as many breeds of dogs as the class can think of. If possible, display some pictures of these different breeds as well as others that may not have been mentioned. Good information is available on the internet; one good site is the American Kennel Club homepage: <http://www.akc.org/bredgrp.htm> (limit your search of dog breeds by specifying only sources with images)

Display a drawing and have students name as many parts of a dog they can. Add as much information as seems appropriate. Then compare the proportions of size (height/length) to weight for several different breeds of dogs. Ask students to examine how the different proportions are related to appearance. For example, do dogs with broad faces generally weigh more for their height than dogs with narrow faces? You also may want to relate size, build, coat, etc., to specific roles dogs have been bred to fill such as Portuguese water dogs which were bred to herd fish.

Each student (or partners) will choose a breed of dog and research its unique physical and temperamental features. They will present their findings in an illustrated report. If your classroom has access to the internet, this assignment can be used as practice in researching techniques for the web.

Math

Objective: Students will create and explain a graph based on an in-class poll.

Students will demonstrate their understanding of ratios by interpreting their graph. Explain how graphs are created and discuss what kinds of information they best communicate.

Take a class poll (structure this as you see fit):

- how many students own dogs?
- how many students own pets?
- what breeds of dogs do students own'?

After tabulating the results, have the students create graphs based on the information from the poll. For more advanced students, have them design and administer individual or group polls, create a graph with effective labeling, and display the graphs.

Have students calculate the ratio of students with dogs opposed to those without. Then they can calculate the ratio of the most popular breed to the least.

Social Studies

Objective: Students will investigate the use and treatment of dogs (or other animals) in a particular culture and share the results of this research.

Each student (or team of students), with the guidance of the teacher, should select a world culture to investigate. The students should use the following questions to guide their research:

- how are dogs used in this culture?
- how are they cared for?
- how are they (or have they been) depicted in the art of the culture?
- do they contribute to the economy of the culture?
- does one breed predominate?

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