



Three Sorrows (quake, tsunami, meltdown from, Gretel Ehrlich in Facing the Wave), 2016
cast bronze, wood, plastic and wire
primary element: 81.25 x 100.75 x 40 in. (206.4 x 255.9 x 101.6 cm)
installations dimensions variable

DEBORAH BUTTERFIELD

THREE SORROWS

15 NOVEMBER 2017 – 6 JANUARY 2018

RECEPTION FOR THE ARTIST:

WEDNESDAY, 15 NOVEMBER, 6-8 PM

VALET PARKING

Venice, CA -- L.A. Louver is pleased to present new and recent works by Deborah Butterfield. For the artist, found materials are a continued source of inspiration for her horse sculptures. In a new direction, Butterfield has incorporated marine debris from the 2011 Japanese earthquake and tsunami to create some of her most powerful and poignant works to date. The sculptures will be featured in the front courtyard, the second floor gallery and our open-air Skyroom.

To create each sculpture, Butterfield uses gathered wood to build the skeletal armature of the horse. Once these wooden pieces are cast in bronze and welded together, this becomes the foundation over which the artist can begin forming the sculpture. With a keen eye, Butterfield selects wood from accumulated stockpiles to build her compositions, fastening them one by one to this underlying structure. The rectangular body of the horse is the area of focus, which according to the artist is a “container for objects which often have lyrical line quality, emotional resonance, and narrative history, whether from wind, water, fire, pressure, or man.” As a finishing touch, Butterfield composes the neck and the head to personify the sculpture, realizing the form as a horse. At this stage, the artist meticulously documents the sculpture before disassembling it and casting the remaining wooden pieces in bronze at the Walla Walla Foundry in Washington state. She then works with the foundry to weld the pieces to their original configuration, and applies a specialized patina to its surface. Some are smaller in scale, while others are larger-than-life.

For Butterfield, the sculptures are less about the horse, but the wider context and emotional response invoked by their materials. In select works, Butterfield has introduced another kind of found material, marine debris that drifted to the coastal regions of Alaska and British Columbia following the Japanese earthquake and tsunami. She first took notice of these washed-up materials during a visit to Iceland, which she collected and brought back to her studio. This led her to research volunteer initiatives aimed at gathering excess debris amassing in the Pacific Ocean, and was given access to these materials for use in her sculptures. “I have been collecting driftwood and assorted debris all my life, finding beauty and order in the disorder and disintegration of our treasured or discarded everyday objects.” says Butterfield. “When given the opportunity to use marine debris from the tsunami in Japan, I jumped at the chance to work with such emotionally, spiritually and tragically infused material.”

Pairing natural wood with man-made refuse, the artist touches on the delicate balance of our environment, and the increasingly common phenomenon of natural disasters in our current age. In two smaller sculptures *Maulele* and *Kōkai* (both produced in 2017), the artist has cast both the wood and debris in bronze, but in a larger work, the artist chose to utilize the actual rubbish alongside the bronze wooden forms. *Three Sorrows* is a monumental installation that takes its title from Gretel Ehrlich's novel *Facing the Wave*, which accounts the aftermath through those who endured the tragedy. Butterfield combined wood (cast in bronze) and detritus (plastic and foam objects) to realize the horse's physicality. Driftwood, plastic container and scraps, foam buoys and materials are scattered around its base. With its head tilting downwards in a melancholic gesture, the horse appears to reflect upon the materials of its making, lamenting their very existence.



Elkhorn, 2016
cast bronze
97 x 86 x 29.75 in. (246.4 x 218.4 x 75.6 cm)

Born and raised in San Diego, Deborah Butterfield studied at the University of California, Davis and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine. From the mid-1970s through the mid-1980s, Butterfield taught sculpture at the University of Wisconsin at Madison and Montana State University, Bozeman. Since 1976, the artist has exhibited extensively. Solo shows include the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, 1981; ARCO Center for Visual Art, Los Angeles, CA (traveled to Oklahoma State University, OK; University of Colorado, CO; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Seattle Art Museum, WA; Boise Gallery, ID; and Utah Museum of Fine Art, UT) 1981-1983; the Seattle Art Museum, WA and the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, TX, 1982; Oakland Museum of California Art, CA, 1983; San Diego Museum of Art, CA, 1996; Yellowstone Art Museum, Billings, MT (traveled to the Contemporary Art Museum, Honolulu, HI and Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, FL) 2003 – 2004; Denver Botanic Gardens, Denver, CO, 2015; and The Mennello Museum of American Art, Orlando, FL, 2016. Commissions include the Walker Art Center and the Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden at UCLA, CA. Works are also represented in numerous public collections, including the Art Institute of Chicago, IL; The Brooklyn Museum, NY; Cincinnati Museum, OH; Dallas Museum of Art, TX; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; San Diego Museum of Art, CA; Speed Museum, Louisville, KY; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY.

Butterfield divides her time between her home and studio on the Big Island, Hawaii, and her studio and ranch in Bozeman, Montana.

Concurrently on view at L.A. Louver (15 November 2017 – 6 January 2018)

MAIN GALLERY

Heather Gwen Martin: *Currents*