

ABOUT THE ARTIST

FLOYD T. DEWITT



AUTOBIOGRAPHY

In Wolf Point, where I was born August 25, 1934 I devoted every available moment of my youth to drawing, painting, and working with horses. This intense interest in animals, particularly horses, developed into an obsession and it was only after several years of ranch work, breaking and training horses, that a stint in the United States Army broke this strong environmental mold and drove me to pursue seriously an art education.

Prior to entering the army, I had thought of myself as a kind of "Cowboy artist". I had done a lot of western painting, a few large commissions as well as some commercial illustrating. As a result, I had developed a certain facility and self-confidence which while serving in Germany enabled me to execute a life-sized battalion-monument for the U.S. army. As I served the army in the unusual capacity of sculptor, there was ample opportunity for me to question and be questioned by a variety of people, some of whom encouraged me to continue in art and to broaden my visual and mental horizons.

Upon leaving the military in 1956, I returned temporarily to Montana where I worked as a bartender, a city policeman, and at various other occupations until I entered the Minneapolis School of Art in 1957, where I remained for period of two and half years. While attending that art school I worked under David Ratner, Paul Granlund, Daniel Soderland, and the Australian sculptor Bob Klippel. The diverse influences of each of these four artists made it clear to me that art was an incredibly complicated field and that I had a great deal to learn. During this

period, the sculptor Granlund had the most profound influence on my work. It was through him that I first began to see that life and sculpture involved not only infinite possibilities, but limitations as well, and that these limitations could be a strength rather than a weakness. I became aware of personal values and motives of my own and to more fully examine these values; it became necessary for me to escape the 'action-packed', theory-ridden system of art education prevailing in America at that time.

I returned to Europe in January 1961, and enrolled in the Rijksacademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam, Holland. I continued there on a full tuition scholarship for six years, working under the supervision of the Dutch sculptor, V.P. Semeijn Esser, and regularly participating in exhibitions. At the Royal Academy, the emphasis was placed on hard work and the classrooms were large studios. Sculpture was the subject, and sweat-soaked, clay-covered clothes were the uniforms. Students were required to work out their problems, talk was cheap, and it was there I learned that





BIOGRAPHY

Through his art Floyd Tenneson DeWitt has reconciled America's diverse European heritage and its remarkable Western culture with his commitment to excellence in the sculptural form. He uses fine art to blend metaphor and myth with artistic knowledge to express the transforming power of the human spirit.

United States

Born in Wolf Point, Montana, 1934, DeWitt is intimately familiar with the land that the Indians roamed and that his father later homesteaded. In his youth, Floyd DeWitt aspired to be a cowboy artist, emulating the work of C.M. Russell and Frederick Remington. His love of the West was never forgotten but rather it developed dimension and quality when DeWitt attended the Minneapolis School of Art. Formal art education opened his mind and broadened his horizons, reflecting his desire to grow in knowledge and understanding not only as a sculptor but as a man. Reaching deep within, the young artist became fascinated with contemporary sculpture and immersed him-self in this new direction.

Europe

In 1960, DeWitt received a full six-year scholarship to study at the prestigious 400-year-old National Academy of Fine Art (Rijksakademie voor Beeldende Kunsten) in Amsterdam, Holland. He worked under the guidance of the Dutch sculptor V.P.S.

sculpture is in itself a language-the silent language of form!

At the end of six years of work at the Academy, the transition from student to sculptor presented few if any difficulties. Somewhere along the line I had, without realizing, become a sculptor. Aside from the fact that I began to work in my own studio, this transition period was a relatively simple matter of continuing the daily task of making sculpture. Although sculpture subscribes to many definitions, in my opinion it's most profound function and most significant strength lies within the fundamental limits of the monument. While developing my own work, I endeavor to draw from both inner and outer sources an objective synthesis which pays tribute to man's lofty ideals as well as to his macabre side. I attempt to infuse my sculpture with a certain monumental quality and an inner need to identify with image of the horse becomes an obvious dominating characteristic of my work. The scale of my expression ranges from joy to despair and techniques vary in accordance. Since I am essentially a modeler I work with clay, wax and the oxyacetylene technique.



Esser. During this period, DeWitt made the transition from student to sculptor. For the next twenty-five years he refined his skills as an artist in Europe where he retains a respected reputation as a professional sculptor.

As an artist, DeWitt is known in Europe for his knowledge and execution of the human figure, animals and mythological compositions. His work is highly regarded and he has received numerous commissions which are now permanent works in parks and public buildings throughout Europe. He was honored in 1994 in the Dutch book "The Guide to Public Sculpture throughout the Netherlands" where he was recognized as the most important contributor to equine sculpture in the history of the Netherlands.



United States

The artist returned to the United States in 1984 and moved back to his native Montana. He continued actively to produce fine art, as evidenced by the largest one man show in the history of Montana, held at the Holter Museum of Art in Helena in 1991. This exhibition paid tribute to DeWitt as a world class sculptor. DeWitt exhibited over 150 pieces, including eighty sculptures and his effort was well received by both the general public and professional artist.

