

DEBORAH VAN DER BEEK



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C o l l a t e r a l

5 – 27 November 2011



Cover:
A History of the World in Four Fruits
11 cm high bronze ed 25

COLLATERAL

At first sight there is very little to connect the pieces in this body of work, but various strands are linked in interests and concerns that have been developing over many years. Sometimes an idea jumps one way, sometimes quite another and in the end a structure like a spider's web emerges. I enjoy drawing from all quarters, from ancient texts, as the Bible and Greek legend, to modern images and objects and relating these to contemporary concerns. Some of the pieces are quite simple and straightforward or even light hearted: 'First Fast Food', 'Cloud Nine', the 'Sadhu' pieces. The Bulls are just bulls, but this is not to say they have no integrity. Although they owe a lot to my fascination with their body language and movement, I would have no interest in them without their position as deeper symbols of power and masculinity. It's the same with horses. Our relationship – man, woman and horse is based deep in our psyche, beyond and before words.

I saw the terrible newspaper image of the mother and baby buried in rubble. I think it was in Lebanon, but it could have been anywhere in the world blighted by warfare. I hope it doesn't diminish their tragedy to link it in with a statistic I read about the First World War: *eight million* horses killed. I wanted to make something which encapsulated the cruelty, the destruction of modern warfare, the sheer waste of it all. The rockets and mortar shells cast into 'Collateral' were collected by weapon decommissioning experts in Iraq and Afghanistan, the sand still on them. There is shrapnel too, cruelly sharp.

I had been wanting to do this piece for years, but had to wait until I got hold of a horse skull to draw from. I needed to know every turn and curve intimately before I could begin to sculpt, the whole sad beauty of it.

In Ancient Egypt and later in Greece, strange upright figures or kouros – strictly, young men, though 'Kouros Reedman' is not – stood outside tombs, always left foot in front of right, arms held stiff and straight to their sides. They may have been a guardian, or a portrait of the dead. His bundle of reeds came from a local thatcher: the scattered star fossils, segments of crinoids stem washed out of Jurassic rocks by a nearby spring – locally called 'Holy Well'. The strange leaves came from a ginkgo tree, most primitive of trees and closer to ferns found in Jurassic times than to other trees.

Like many readers I can't quite decide what Blake meant in his poem 'Tyger, Tyger'. The poem has been one I have loved since I first learned it at school, and had been thinking about how to make a sculpture around it, when by an extraordinary coincidence I was given a real tiger skull to draw from, hence 'Tyger'.

In 2007 I was commissioned by a private collector to make a 1.6m high piece I called 'The World Gone Pear-Shaped'. The idea flowed from our present hopes and anxieties about the future of life on earth. Artists have long used fruit as a metaphor for both the abundance and transience of life; the pear's irregular shape and in particular its knobbly skin suited my purpose. In 'A History of the World in Four Fruits', now a quartet and cast from real fruit, I have revisited the idea, giving the earlier piece a kind of 'back story'.

'Modern Pentathlon' was commissioned by Art at the Edge and is one of thirty sculptures made especially for the 2012 Olympics. It will be part of a show touring Britain next year; from the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and London's Oxo Tower to Victoria Gallery, Bath and several other venues. Modern Pentathlon involves five sports originally derived from skills to make a perfectly balanced athlete: fencing, swimming, shooting, running and riding. The circle recalls Leonardo's famous encircled Ideal Man, the gold pentagon fitting precisely into it. The wild horse flying over his shoulder refers to the fact that in Modern Pentathlon, participants must ride a randomly allotted horse they have never ridden before, round a timed course of jumps.

On the steep hillsides of the Marlborough Downs near where I live, the slopes are furrowed with animal tracks and giant horses are carved into the chalk, where they can be seen from many miles away. On top of the hills are Iron Age forts. Although re-carved in modern times the oldest were originally part of pre-historic worship of horses and of the goddess Epona. A folk memory of this may explain why the British – alone in Europe – have a taboo against eating horseflesh. In the brook that runs through our garden I found a fossilised horse tooth, curved and ridged like the chalk hills. Now cast in bronze, it seemed the perfect place for a tiny silver 'Fossil Horse'.

Deborah van der Beek, October 2011



A History of the World in Four Fruits
11 cm high bronze ed 25
Available individually and as set of four

Clockwise from top left:
The Ancient World The Age of Gold
The Fall The World Gone Pear-Shaped



Tyger
23 cm high bronze ed 9



Collateral
reverse view and detail above



Collateral
63 cm high bronze ed 5
and detail above



First Fast Food
12 cm diam bronze ed 25
detail to left



Cloud Nine
14 cm high aluminium ed 15



Kouros Reedman
reverse view and details

Kouros Reedman
90 cm high bronze ed 5





The Sadhu's Wife
15 cm high bronze and brass ed 15

Sadhu
15 cm high bronze ed 15

Modern Pentathlon
40 cm high bronze ed 25



Fossil Horse
8 cm high bronze ed 25 (base), each horse silver or bronze and unique



Bull 3
30 cm high bronze unique





Bull 1
30 cm high bronze unique



Bull 2
30 cm high bronze unique

DEBORAH VAN DER BEEK

Born, London 1952

Education

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|---------|---|
| 1970–71 | Foundation at Central School of Art |
| 1971–72 | Cambridge Art Foundation, year 2 |
| 1972–75 | BA Fine Art/Ceramics, Cardiff College of Art and Design |

Worked as illustrator and writer until 1997, then switched to sculpture.

Solo exhibitions

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| 2005 | Campden Gallery |
| 2006 | Brewery Barn Gallery, Norton St Phillip, Bath |
| 2007 | The European Commission, Storey's Gate, London |
| 2008 | Campden Gallery Corsham Arts Festival, Pound Arts Centre, Corsham |
| 2010 | The Victoria Art Gallery, Bridge Street, Bath |

Group exhibitions

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| 1999 | Hot Bath Gallery, Bath |
| 2000 | '12 Artists on Common Ground', Cantax House, Wiltshire |
| 2003 | Autumn Exhibition, Gallery Pangolin, Chalford, Gloucestershire |
| 2000, 02, 04, 06 | RWA, Bristol, Autumn Exhibition |
| 2001 | Wine Street Gallery, Devizes, Wiltshire |
| 2001–present | Bath Society of Artists Annual Exhibition |
| 2002–2005 | Compton Cassey Gallery, Gloucestershire |
| 2005–06 | 'Small is Beautiful', Flowers Central, Cork Street, London |
| 2006 | Rebecca Hossack, London |
| 2007 | 'Sculpture in Paradise', Chichester Cathedral Royal Society of British Sculptors 'Spectrum' exhibition, Abbey Gardens, Malmesbury |
| 2008 | Threadneedle Figurative Prize, Mall Galleries, London |
| 2009 | Celebration of British Sculpture, Richard Attenborough Art Centre, University of Leicester 'Myth and History', The Bristol Gallery |
| 2011 | Paisnel Gallery, St James, London |

Commissions

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| 1999 | 'Priory Lion', Kington St Michael, Wiltshire |
| 2002 | 'Ram', Somerset |
| 2007 | 'The World Gone Pear-Shaped' (private), Oxford |
| 2009 | 2012 Olympics, 'Modern Pentathlon' commissioned by Art at The Edge |

Prizes

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| 2011 | The Bristol Guild Sculpture Prize, Bath Society of Artists Annual Exhibition |
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Sunday 11.00am – 4.00pm