



According to Sculpture Milwaukee's website *Big Piney* preserves “the majesty of these animals, and creates a permanent, and more peaceful, memorial for horses and their influence in the development of civilizations.” That’s maybe what her sculptures of horses look like to curators in an art museum.

But don't let the highfalutin language throw you off. “Horses die, and they break your heart, just like children do,” says the artist Deborah Butterfield who lives with horses on her Montana Ranch.



Butterfield was part of an art movement in the 1980's that brought the figure back into art after decades of abstraction and minimalism. But the best artists outgrow of their labels, the way the art world packages its product to first gain our attention. There has to be something more, to hold our attention.





Deborah Butterfield loves horses like Picasso loved woman. They are majestic and alien, intimate and incomprehensible. And erotic. (I don't think someone can make a sculpture like this without having a horse between their legs.)



It's a relief to get Butterfield's horses out of art history and on to the street where they can stretch their legs and our imagination. Very much alive, rising out of a planters on Wisconsin Avenue just east of the Pfister Hotel.





Butterfield doesn't humanize the animal as they do in the movies. This horse is not smiling at us.

*Big Piney* stands there. Butterfield's horses know you are looking at them. They have a life of their own.



