

VISUAL ARTS

If you go

Deborah Butterfield: 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, 10:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday. Through June 15. Gallery Paule Anglim, 14 Geary St., S.F. (415) 433-2710. www.gallerypauleanglim.com.

Deborah Butterfield: Hawaii's ohia tree branches out, giving twiggy vibe to artist's personified equine creatures

By Kimberly Chun

Taking in Deborah Butterfield's epic, fully embodied horse sculptures, it's clear that her animals are her muses. You can hear it in the passion with which she describes the nine horses and three mules she cares for in Bozeman, Mont., the energy she's poured into competing at the Grand Prix level in dressage, and the thrill she's experiencing, having recently bred a baby mule from one of her mares.

"I'm so excited because he's so gorgeous," Butterfield, 64, marvels of the newborn, her voice trembling. She's back home and in the barn after the installation of her current show at Gallery Paule Anglim. "My horses are very big and athletic and high-strung. They don't like riding in the mountains — it's like taking a Ferrari out on a dirt road — so I decided to get some mules, and they're so funny and entertaining. It's interesting to find out what part is horse and what part is donkey."

Yet the trees are also speaking to her in her latest work — particularly the ohia on Hawaii's Big Island, where she lives in a cloud forest with her sculptor husband, John Buck, for several months a year.

"I've been working with wood for 30 years, and I feel like I'm just getting it," she says. "Trees in Hawaii do different things than trees in Montana: They can make more frivolous decisions. Ohia have a rapid growth, then it looks like the whole tree dies, and then sprouts will come out of the giant dead-looking tree trunk."

At the root of Butterfield's sculptures is the wood she trucks from Montana or ships from Hawaii. She "draws" or builds the body in sticks, which are cast in bronze and patinaed to resemble the original branches and twigs,



Gallery Paule Anglim

Deborah Butterfield builds a horse body of sticks, which are cast in bronze and patinaed to resemble branches and twigs' natural state.

with the head and tail coming at the end. "I'm dealing with a long, rectangular body shape suspended like an easel, and I fill that in like a composition, which explains to me gradually who the horse is," Butterfield says. "It's a dialogue with the gut of the piece that leads to how it's personified."

With a work like "Piney" — part arboreal, part equine — the artist says, "I'm thinking of

Morse code with the dot, dot, dash of little branches and pinecones.

"They're horses but they're not horses. It's really the idea of personifying nature and our human instinct to find meaning in chaos."

Kimberly Chun is a Berkeley writer.
E-mail: 96hours@sfgate.com
Twitter: @kimberlychun

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Estabrook, Eric Koziol and Heath Orchard, videography. Wed.-Sun. 1-5 p.m.; Fri. 6-8:45 p.m. Through June 2. "Geri With a Pearl Earring: Dutch Paintings From the Mauritshuis." Through June 2. "Rembrandt's Century." Works by Rembrandt's predecessors. Through June 2. "Eye Level in Iraq." Through June 16. "Mapping the Contemporary Print: Selections From the Anderson Gallery." Through July 7. "From the Exotic to the Mystical: Textile Treasures from the Permanent Collection." Through Aug. 4. "Objects of Belief From the Vatican: Art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas." Through Sept. 8. 9:30 a.m.-5:15 p.m. Tues.-Thurs., Sat.-Sun.; 9:30 a.m.-8:45 p.m. Fri. 50 Tea Garden Drive, Golden Gate Park. (415) 750-3600. www.thinker.org.

GLBT History Museum "Migrating Archives: LGBT Delegates From Other Collections" Through May 31. 4127 18th St., S.F. (415) 621-1107. www.glbthistorymuseum.org.

Legion of Honor "Gifts from the Gods: Art and the Olympic Ideal." Through June 23. "Artful Animals: Part 2." Through Oct. 13. "A Swarm, A Flock, A Host: A Compendium of Creatures." Darren Waterson, aquatint paintings. Through Dec. 29. 9:30 a.m.-5:15 p.m. Tues.-Sun. Lincoln Park, 34th Avenue at Clement. www.legionofhonor.org.

Marin Museum of Contemporary Art "Fourth Annual Altered Book and Book Arts Show." Closing reception 5-7:30 p.m. Sat. Ends Sat. "Magical Expressions." Senior Access artists group exhibition. Ends Sat. 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Wed.-Sun. 500 Palm Dr., Novato. (415) 506-0137. www.marinmoca.org.

Museo Italo Americano "Contemporaneity: Signs of Modern Times." Through July 21. Noon-4 p.m. Tues.-Sun. 99 Marina Blvd. www.museoitaloamericano.org.

Museum of Craft and Design "Creatures From the Deep." Arline Fisch, sculptural installation. Through June 23. "Affinity." Rebecca Hutchinson, ceramics, installation. Through June 23. "A Sculptural Odyssey." Michael Cooper, sculpture. Through June 30. 2569 Third St., S.F. (415) 773-0303. www.sfmcd.org.

Oakland Museum of California "Customizer-in-Residence Open Studio Series." Ends Sun. "California Photography: Suburban Dreams." Through