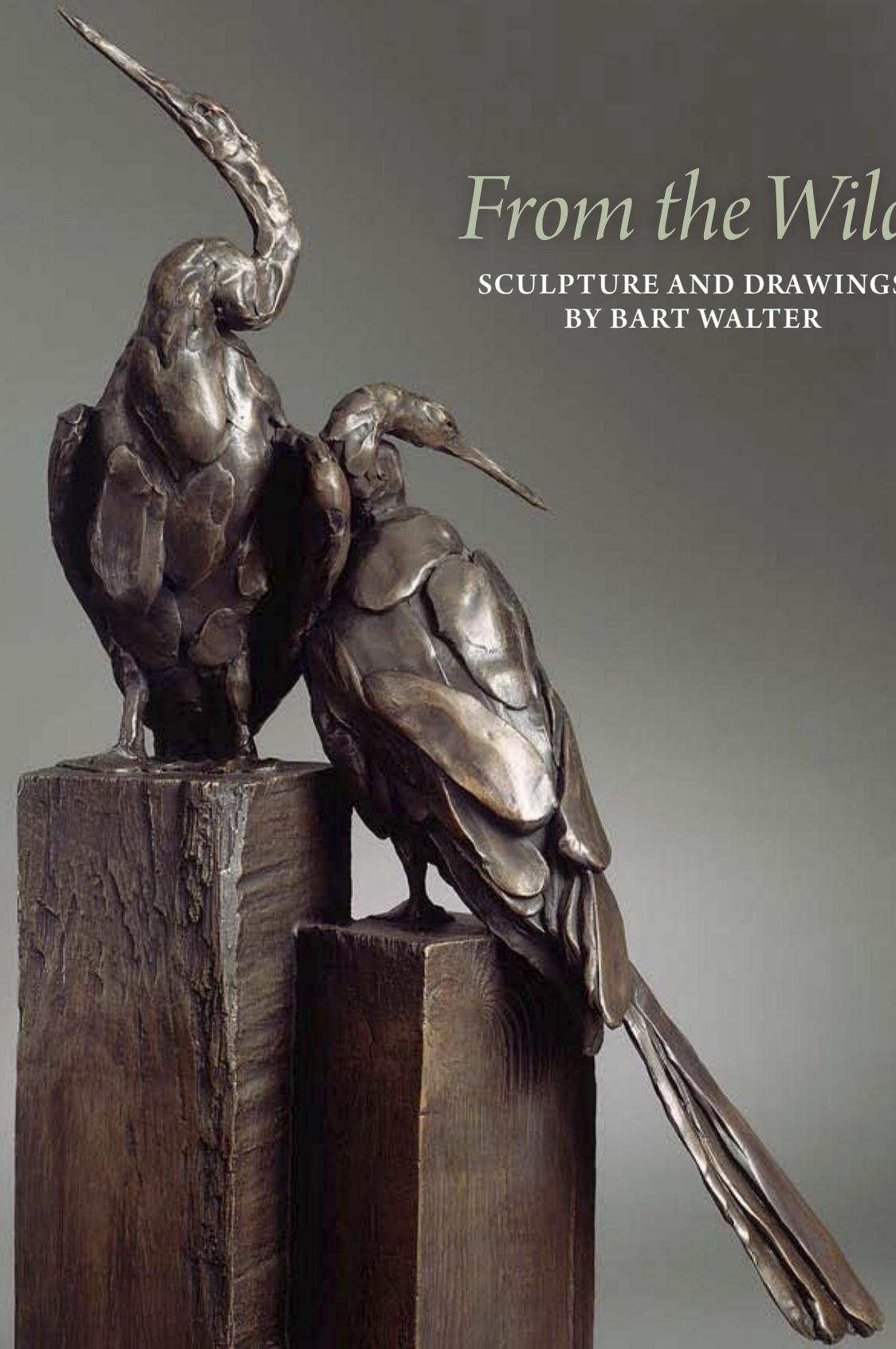


From the Wild

SCULPTURE AND DRAWINGS
BY BART WALTER





Having spent years in the wild studying animal behavior and rejoicing in nature, I find it rare to discover art that does my experience justice. The moods of animals, their complex relationships to nature, the sinew and strength beneath their surface, the poses and postures that evoke their being—to capture this in wax, charcoal, or bronze requires a reverence and heart earned over many hours. It is watching and knowing the trials in the lives of the animals the artist observes. It is the sculpting of tales.

Bart Walter caught me in this search for excellence and I have been entranced now for more than a decade. I was first taken by the broad strokes of bronze, devoid of skin or hair, brilliant in tension and structure. But I soon learned the magic was in his process. Bart takes his wax to the wild and lives in study, in the blowing wind and singing savannah. His charcoals carry a deft efficiency, as if the lines flew from the animal through his being to the page. I hope you delight as I have, in the art and the artist, together a world class channeling of the wild.

John Francis, PhD
Vice President
Research, Conservation and Exploration
National Geographic Society

From the Wild

SCULPTURE AND DRAWINGS BY BART WALTER

An exhibition at the Ella Sharp Museum, Jackson, Michigan
June 23–September 8, 2012

Born in 1958, Bart Walter has always felt a strong connection to the natural world. As a boy growing up in Baltimore with weekends at Maryland's Eastern Shore, he became fascinated with the culture of watermen, particularly with birds and duck hunting. Bart spent a great deal of his time creating lifelike, detailed bird sculptures in wood and by his mid-twenties Bart was one of the top artists in his field, competing on the national level.

In 1986 Bart met Dr. Jane Goodall, who changed his life forever. Upon seeing the extreme level of care and detail in his work, she asked that he create a chimpanzee, planting the idea of sculpting mammals. Later that same year he and his wife travelled on their first African Safari, where he realized the allure of large animals. Thus was one successful career traded for another: Bart began changing his focus from detailed sculptures of birds in wood to loose gestural studies of birds and mammals in bronze.

Two decades later, Bart now has multiple large public installations across America: most notably at the National Museum of Wildlife Art, the Maryland Zoo in Baltimore, the Hunter Museum in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Brookgreen Gardens in South Carolina. To date Bart has had 6 solo exhibitions in art museums including one in France, and has made a name for himself as one of the few *plein air* sculptors.

Bart made his first sculpting excursion to Africa in 1996, nine years after beginning his career as a bronze sculptor. Ironically another decade passed before he felt the lure of American mammals: while Kenya has lions, Wyoming has cougars; while the Maasai Mara holds thousands of wildebeest, impala, and cape buffalo, Yellowstone National Park holds bison, moose, and elk. Only through Bart's interaction and growing familiarity with the exotic animals of Africa, was he able to recognize similar characteristics in the mammals of North America.

Through Bart's work we are able to see the beauty and elegance of his subjects, from the megafauna of Africa to the familiar animals of our own homes. As the French novelist Marcel Proust once wrote, "The only real voyage of discovery consists not in seeing new landscapes, but in having new eyes." In this sense Bart's artwork leads us on a true voyage, enabling us to see the familiar with a new perspective: through the eyes of an artist, even the mundane becomes new and exciting.

We first met Bart Walter in 1983 and acquired his fantastic *Great Blue Heron* at that time. Two years later, we purchased *Wild Threats*, arguably one of his best sculptures in wood. Shortly thereafter, he changed from precise and tight surfaces in wood to loose, interpretive surfaces in bronze, both immensely successful at capturing the essence of the animal portrayed. In his bronze sculptures, many of which we own, he displays the subject, whether bird or mammal, as if time were standing still. This exhibition in the Andrews Gallery of Wildlife Art at the Ella Sharp Museum, celebrated the successes of our friend, Bart Walter, who once worked in wood and now creates in wax and clay, to then cast in bronze, capturing the movement and spirit of his subjects.

Sandy and Andy Andrews



Great Blue Heron (above)
1983

Wild Threats
1985





Family Outing (left, and above)
1996

Reflections I
1993



Ascent (far left)
1994

Resting Arrows (left)
1992

Running Guinea Fowl (above
right)
2002

Mare and Foal (right)
2009





Cape Buffalo Maquette
2002

Leaning Acacia
Elephant and Acacia Tree
2001





Sleeping Barn Owl
2008

Winter Bison II
2008

Elephant Approaching II
c. 2007

Sleeping Rhino
2001

Wood Stork
2000

Sleeping King I
2005





Counterpart (left)
2002

Kibale Chimp
2002





My art evolves from a passion for all living things. I strive to capture the essence of a living being; to explore some kernel of truth that may have gone unnoticed and to depict an otherwise elusive moment in time. In my mind's eye, I strip away all that is unnecessary, even as I build the sculpture with layer upon layer of clay. My goal is a distillation of subject until only true essentials are left. If in so doing I can reveal some intangible spirit, make evident the soul of my subject, and communicate this in my art; then I have accomplished something real.

Bart Walter

Agile & Swift
Cheetah and Gazelles
2004

Giraffe Trio
2009





Mara Crossing (left)
Wildebeest
2005

Ice Storm II
Blue Jay
2008





Climate Change (left)
Polar Bear
2010

Trotting Moose (above)
2010

Generations (right)
1997



Exhibition Checklist

| SCULPTURE | Family Outing 1996 Bronze, Edition of 20 15 x 18 x 18 inches | Mare and Foal 2009 Bronze Field Study, Edition of 12 15 x 7 x 13 | CHARCOAL DRAWINGS |
|---|--|---|--|
| Agile & Swift 2004 Stainless Steel with bronze patina, Edition of 10 Cheetah: 12 x 23 x 20 inches Gazelles: 26 1/2 x 19 1/2 x 18 1/2 inches | Generations 1997 Bronze, Edition of 10 20 x 9 x 11 inches | Reflections I 1993 Polished bronze, Edition of 10 24 x 8 x 28 | Elephant Approaching II c. 2007, Field Study Charcoal drawing on paper 29 x 31 1/4 inches framed |
| Ascent 1994 Bronze Maquette, Edition of 6 5 x 5 x 25 inches | Giraffe Trio 2009 Bronze, Edition of 6 18 x 18 x 34 inches | Resting Arrows 1992 Bronze, Edition of 10 18 x 16 x 26 | Ostrich on the Mara II 2007, Field Study Charcoal drawing on paper 28 1/2 x 25 1/4 inches framed |
| Blue Herons 2003 Bronze, Edition of 10 25 x 18 x 33 inches | Great Blue Heron 1983 Polychromed Wood 23 x 27 x 59 inches | Running Guinea Fowl 2002 Bronze Field Study, Edition of 6 25 x 11 x 10 | Sleeping Barn Owl 2008, Field Study Charcoal drawing on paper 30 1/4 x 35 1/4 |
| Cape Buffalo Maquette 2002 Bronze, Edition of 10 17 x 10 x 10 inches | Ice Storm II 2008 Stainless Steel, Edition of 8 28 x 14 x 38 inches | Trotting Moose 2010 Bronze, Edition of 12 20 x 8 x 15 | Sleeping King I 2005, Field Study Charcoal drawing on paper 35 1/4 x 36 3/4 inches framed |
| Climate Change 2010 Bronze, nickel/silver patina, Edition of 10 9 x 8 x 15 1/2 inches | Leaning Acacia 2001 Bronze Field Study, Edition of 4 17 x 11 x 16 inches | Wild Threats 1985 Polychromed Wood 38 x 38 x 36 inches | Sleeping Rhino 2001, Field Study Charcoal drawing on paper 32 x 36 inches framed |
| Counterpart 2002 Bronze Field Study, Edition of 6 17 x 13 x 22 inches | Mara Crossing 2005 Bronze, Edition of 3 102 x 12 x 20 inches | Solitary Chimp 2001, Field Study Charcoal drawing on paper 36 x 40 inches framed | Solitary Chimp 2001, Field Study Charcoal drawing on paper 36 x 40 inches framed |
| | | Winter Bison II 2008, Field Study Charcoal drawing on paper 27 x 36 inches framed | Winter Bison II 2008, Field Study Charcoal drawing on paper 27 x 36 inches framed |
| | | Wood Stork 2000, Field Study Charcoal drawing on paper 31 1/4 x 34 1/2 framed | Wood Stork 2000, Field Study Charcoal drawing on paper 31 1/4 x 34 1/2 framed |



Photography Credits

Our Museum was thrilled to have the opportunity to show the exhibition *From the Wild*. It was extremely well received by our visitors. This exhibition highlighted the vast nature of Bart Walter's career ranging from his training and accomplishments as a wildlife wood carver to his success as a bronze sculptor. The three dimensions of Bart's sculpted work capture the energy and vitality of his subjects. The Ella Sharp Museum was proud to present this exhibition and we hope this catalogue will show the tremendous talent of Bart Walter to those who couldn't see the exhibition.

Charles Aymond
Executive Director
Ella Sharp Museum

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