

**title*****Shoulders of Giants*****artist****Nina de Creeft Ward****Location**

Lobby, Parks Library

**Material**

Low fired clay with oxides and light glaze

**Size**

3.5 x 5.5 x 2.9 feet

**Date**

1998

**About the Work of Art**

*Shoulders of Giants* depicts an older Percheron horse (Doc) with a younger horse (Charlie) placed side by side in harness, while the older horse teaches the younger horse how to work the farm equipment. These two animals represent the student to mentor relationship between faculty members and students.

The sculpture has a smoky, dark grey and black coloration. Ward placed an emphasis on the sculpture's surface, making it rippled and textured, giving the horses a contemporary look and feel. Ward maintained the visibility of some of the scratched texture created in fabrication in order to add to the composition and design. She also formed the anatomy of the horses as they emerge from the clay, signifying the student and teacher emerging from the university system. Iowa State University is more specifically represented in the columns at the legs of the horses. These columns reflect Greece and the beginnings of the university system in the Socratic Method. The horses' hind legs merge with the columns in an intentional representation of the relationship between the university, faculty, and students. The physical features of the individual horses are noticeably different and in their bodies the difference in age can be seen clearly. Doc carries his head lower, while the younger Charlie holds his up slightly higher, with more energy. Ward added a sense of movement to *Shoulders of Giants* through the placement of the two figures set towards the back of the foundation so they have plenty of room to stride forward. The base of the sculpture represents a very rough, sloping terrain, symbolizing the combined effort that must be made by both the student and the teacher in an academic setting for success to occur.

University Museums - Art on Campus Program

Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa

## About the Artist

Born in New York City, Nina de Creeft (American b. 1933) grew up in Santa Barbara and Ojai, California. She moved to Cedar Falls, Iowa for a time in 1975, where she taught art at the University of Northern Iowa for nine years and now resides in Santa Barbara, California. Her father, the New York sculptor Jose de Creeft, and her mother, Santa Barbara sculptor Alice de Creeft, created bronze sculpture portrait commissions of horses and dogs.

Ward has loved animals from an early age, since her mother raised goats and a variety of other animals, and her brother had a succession of horses. She was twelve when she bought her first horse, Red, out of a field in Goleta, California for twenty dollars. This horse predisposed her to favor draft horses, which she sketched at the Los Angeles County Fair in Pomona, California while attending Scripps College. Once in Iowa, she drew horses at the Cattle Congress in Waterloo, the Britt Horse Fair, and at the Iowa State Fair. Study drawings done from life serve as reference material for both her printmaking and sculpture. Preparatory drawings for *Shoulders of Giants* can be seen in the east stairwell of Morrill Hall.

Ward has a Bachelors of Art degree from Scripps College and a Masters of Fine Art degree from the Claremont Graduate School. She has done additional study at the Massachusetts College of Art. Her solo exhibitions have been held in the Philippines, California, Maryland, Iowa, Chicago, and Kansas City. She is now a full-time artist and carves in wood and stone, works in wax for bronzes, and creates soft sculptures, etchings, woodcuts, and monoprints.

## Artist's Comments

"This sculpture was inspired by the horse depicted in the Grant Wood designed mural, *Breaking the Sod*, and is analogous to a teaching and learning situation. This theme of mentoring is demonstrated by a team of Percheron draft horses. The older experienced horse is teaching the younger horse to work in harness. The title of the art is derived from the quotation: 'If I have seen further it is by standing of the shoulders of giants.' Sir Isaac Newton 1675/1676"

## About the Art on Campus Collection

Iowa State University is home to one of the largest campus public art programs in the United States. Over 2000 works of public art, including selection by significant regional, national, and international artists, are located across campus in buildings, courtyards, open spaces, and offices. In 1982, the University Museums created the Art on Campus Program that codifies acquisition, education, and care and conservation of the campus public art collection.

The foundations of the contemporary Art on Campus Program began during the Depression in the 1930s when Iowa State College's President Hughes envisioned that, "The arts would enrich and provide substantial intellectual exploration into our college curricula." In 1978, Iowa passed the Iowa Art in State Buildings legislation, which requires .5 percent of new construction or remodeling funds to be used to acquire public art. Since 1978, Iowa State has completed Art in State Building projects, commissioned or acquired public works of art, and involved faculty, students, and staff in the commissioning and acquisition processes.

## Parks Library

*Shoulders of Giants*

Art on Campus accession number U98.10ab

Additional information on public art, other Art on Campus information sheets, and Art on Campus maps are available at the University Museums office, 290 Scheman Building, (515) 294-3342, or visit us online at [www.museums.iastate.edu](http://www.museums.iastate.edu)

**This information sheet is intended to be used in addition to viewing the Art on Campus Collection.  
At no time should this sheet be used as a substitute for experiencing the art in person.**