William S. Hart, the Gilcrease Museum’s small bronze of 1921, depicts a wooly-chapped cowboy in a wide-brimmed hat atop a bucking horse. His leg shoots from the stirrup as he twists in the saddle, the animal pawing the air in an effort to unseat him. The entire composition dramatically captures the manly essence of a classic American Wild West moment. Who would imagine that this work was made by a young woman from a wealthy New York City family who was married to a French count and working in Paris?
In a career lasting just eleven years before she was confined to a facility for the mentally ill, Constance Whitney Warren achieved critical success in Paris and the United States. Then she was largely forgotten until a posthumous exhibition arranged by her brother at New York’s Ferargil Gallery in 1953 spurred acquisition of her works across the country and assured her reputation.

Constance Whitney Warren was born in New York City in 1888. Her grandfather, George Henry Warren, was a wealthy real estate developer and a founder of the Metropolitan Opera. Constance’s father, George Henry Warren II, worked on the New York Stock Exchange and served as a director of the United New Jersey Railroad and Canal Company and the Metropolitan Trust Company. The Warrens lived at 924 Fifth Avenue, near 75th Street, and summered at Seafield, the family estate in Newport, Rhode Island. Constance Warren came from money and her life was one of privilege.

In her youth Warren was an avid sportswoman who excelled in swimming and equestrian sports. She started drawing when young, but no early teacher is known. Some watercolors and cartoons survive from her teenage years. In 1912, Warren married Guy de Lasteyrie, a French count and direct descendant of General Lafayette (Marquis de La Fayette). After wedding, the couple made an extended trip through the western states that included camping, hunting, and photography. This experience was likely an important influence on Warren’s later bronze interpretations of cowboys and horses.

By 1913 the Count and Countess de Lasteyrie had settled in the family home outside Paris, the Château de la Grange, in Seine-et-Marne. The following year, Warren reportedly assisted in the war effort by acting as a driver for English officers in the campaigns around Paris. After the war she studied sculpture, primarily in bronze, and exhibited in the Paris Salons throughout the 1920s. She is recorded as a pupil of French sculptor Pierre Louis Peyranne (1883–1952), who specialized in portrait busts and decorative figures in a popular art movement known as Les Orientalistes, from the eastern themes and motifs they employed.

To judge from Salon records, Warren had much early success. Her life-size bronze work entitled The Cowboy (Texas Cowboy, top right) won honorable mention in the Salon of 1923 and reportedly caused a sensation in Paris. It was given by Warren to the State of Texas in 1924 and installed in front of the state capitol, where it stands today. A second life-size statue of a cowboy on a bucking bronco (bottom right) was presented to the State of Oklahoma in 1928; it now flank the entrance to that state’s capitol. Numerous other bronzes by Warren of horses, dogs, and equestrian and western themes, most smaller in size, date from the 1920s. Her most frequent subject by far was the traditionally clad cowboy on a bucking horse. Despite the fact that the artist’s name continues to be found in the records of Paris Salons into the 1930s, no specific works by her are listed and no known works are dated after 1928.

Warren and the count had divorced in 1922. Her nephew, David Warren, stated that family accounts of the divorce held it was granted on grounds of lesbianism. She probably returned to the United States in 1928. Two years later she was institutionalized at Craig House in Beacon, New York. Craig House was a discreet asylum for the wealthy and famous (Zelda Fitzgerald, Truman Capote, and Jackie Gleason were among its patients). Family documents hold that Warren was a “voluntary patient” suffering from paranoia. She died of a heart attack in Beacon on October 11, 1948. Warren’s artistic career ended with her commitment to Craig House. No other information about her years there has been found. Craig House closed in 2000 and its records were destroyed.

Constance Whitney Warren: Texas Cowboy. 1921. Bronze, signed, slightly smaller than life-size, State Capitol, Austin, Texas.

Constance Whitney Warren: Tribute to Range Riders, 1926, bronze, 140 x 87 x 37 inches, State Capitol, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Image courtesy of the Oklahoma Arts Council.
We can see the artist’s early mastery of bronze sculpture in the small horses she executed during the period 1917 to 1922. Hackney No. 1, from 1920, is known in two casts, the one shown here from the Rhode Island School of Design, and another in a Warren family collection. The work was included in a 1953 retrospective exhibition in New York at the Ferargil Galleries organized by her brother George H. Warren III. He and gallery director Frederic Price subsequently worked to place Constance’s works in museums and public collections throughout the country. In the Rhode Island work, the horse is rather large in proportion, yet naturally modeled and poised in a graceful trot. It is a pose seen in equestrian statues of the nobility and military leaders beginning in the Renaissance. Here, the trimmed mane and bobbed tail also suggest equestrian sports in which Warren was known to have participated. Her horses of these years gradually show a greater naturalness of movement and more effectively handled physiognomy. Her last small bronze horse, from 1922, shown above, was formerly in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (deaccessioned, June 9, 2014) and is now in the author’s collection. Here the animal’s weight is distributed evenly on all four legs. The head is a bit smaller and is nicely balanced by the arc of the tail. This highly polished bronze figure conveys a majestic strength that must have appealed to a devoted horsewoman like Warren.

A work located not far from the Gilcrease is Steeplechase of 1921 in the Philbrook Museum (pages 24–25). This date, like those on all Warren’s bronzes, is taken from the inscription on the base and may be assumed to be the date of the original plaster or clay work. The actual casting may have occurred later. In Steeplechase four horses and their riders are shown jumping over a low vine-covered stone fence with water on the far side. This water jump was common in steeplechase then and now. In Warren’s bronze the equestrian event appears in a stroboscopic view with the horse and rider shown in four successive phases and the last horse and rider falling. The sense it conveys of a slow-motion moving picture prompts the question of whether Warren used a camera to capture the image as preparation for her work. Might she have known photographs of animal locomotion by Eadweard Muybridge that date to the 1870s, or those made by Jules Marey in France a decade later? Although that is likely to remain unanswered, we do know the artist was an avid equestrian sportswoman and that steeplechase was popular in Newport society.
From the late 1870s steeplechase races were held in Newport, climaxing annually with the famed Newport Handicap Steeplechase. Doubtlessly Warren’s personal observations aided her creation of *Steeplechase*, a unique work conveying the excitement of the sport.

A similarly personal connection is found in *Venture*, an ambitious piece from the artist’s later years depicting multiple figures and horses. Dated 1928, it measures thirty-six inches in length and includes in its title the phrase, “driven by the late Alfred G. Vanderbilt,” someone whom Warren knew well. Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt was born in 1877 and died in 1915. The son of Cornelius Vanderbilt II and great grandson of the dynasty’s founder, Alfred became head of the House of Vanderbilt in 1899. The family’s New York home was at Fifth Avenue and 57th Street; its summer residence, in Newport, was the famous estate called The Breakers. The Vanderbilt and Warren families moved in the same social circles and were connected in many ways. Both lived on Fifth Avenue and summered in Newport. Alfred Vanderbilt’s father and uncles built the Metropolitan Opera House in 1880. Constance Whitney Warren’s grandfather was one of the opera’s founders and its first vice president. Mrs. Vanderbilt attended Constance’s wedding. Constance was
eleven years Alfred’s junior; both were avid lovers of horses and equestrian sports. One of Alfred’s favorite sports was to race horse-drawn coaches, which in the early years of the century were called drags (hence the name “drag races”). Alfred had two drags called Viking and Venture; Venture was the name of the coach in Warren’s work. Alfred often raced drags in England, where the sport was popular. He was en route to England in the late spring of 1915 for a meeting of the Board of Directors of the International Horse Show Association. Unfortunately, he never arrived. He was aboard the Lusitania, the luxury liner that was struck by German U-boat torpedoes in the Irish Sea on May 7, 1915, and was one of 1,198 who perished.12 No doubt Warren’s bronze of 1928 was a remembrance of her friend. She chose to depict him the way she best knew him, as a sportsman and horseman.

Among Warren’s other animal works are two depicting her dog: Josephine No. 1 from 1922 is just five inches long; Josephine No. 2, from a year later, is an inch longer and in a different reclining pose. Documents from Constance’s life in Paris refer to a police dog as her companion and so the dog is probably a German shepherd.13 The pieces are not highly detailed and serve to convey a general interpretation of her pet with a feeling for the animal’s character in the handling of the head and eyes. Warren’s horses and dogs doubtlessly reflect her life interests, yet they are also within the tradition of French and American sculptors who specialized in animals.

The French animaliers arose in the mid-19th century under the influence of Antoine-Louis Barye (1796–1875). Later, a group of American artists, following the earlier work of the French, popularized animal sculpture in this country from the late 19th century into the early decades of the 20th.14 Barye’s bronze animals are well known. He was active from the 1820s until his death in 1875, during which time he had a host of pupils and followers. The numerous influential Americans enamored with his work included Joshua Taylor Johnson, the first president of the Metropolitan Museum.15 The Metropolitan acquired its first Barye bronze in 1885 and augmented its collection regularly with others in the early years of the 20th century. By the time Warren left New York in 1912, the Met had at total of twenty works by Barye, a strong indication of his popularity.16 Indeed, Barye’s popularity resulted in an increase in the number American artists who specialized in animals and whose works could be found in New York in the first decade of the century. These include Eli Harvey (animal sculptures for the New York City Zoo), Edward Clark Potter (lions in front of the Pierpont Morgan Library...
and the New York Public Library), Alexander Phimister Proctor (Buffalo, previous page), and Anna Hyatt Huntington. Animal sculptures were highly popular in America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and nowhere could more of them be found than in New York. It was in this milieu that we find the young Constance Whitney Warren.

The artist who generated the most excitement in his depictions of horses was Frederic Remington, best known for his images of the American West. Born in 1861 in Canton, New York, Remington traveled to the West in the 1880s and worked as an illustrator for Harper's Weekly. In 1891 he established a studio in New Rochelle, just north of New York City,17 where he executed his first sculpture, the famous Bronco Buster, in 1895 (page 31). This was followed by fifteen other bronze depictions of cowboys, American Indians, and horses that excited the imaginations of New Yorkers and art collectors throughout the country. Four of the artist's sculptures, including The Bronco Buster, were purchased by the Metropolitan Museum in 1907.18 By the time Remington died in 1909, his twenty-one bronze works had been reproduced in numerous authorized casts that spread his fame across the United States and Europe. Remington was also well known in France, first for his illustrations and then for his sculptures. In fact, the cowboy image and its artistic interpretations were extremely popular in London, Paris, and other Western European cities beginning with the Wild West Shows of Buffalo Bill Cody seen regularly from the mid-1880s.19

Indeed, the bronco buster was a very popular subject in the first decades of the 20th century, and Warren could have been inspired by any number of American artists active just before or during the formative years of her career. In addition to Remington, artists working in this genre included Solon Borglum, Alexander Phimister Proctor, and Charles Russell.20 Warren's response to the popularity of the genre is seen in Cowboy No. 3 of 1922 (page 32). There seems little doubt that she knew Remington's Bronco Buster of 1895. The general arrangement of the compositions compare, particularly the rearing horse with flaring tail and the cowboy with wooly chaps whose hat brim has blown up from the action of the bucking horse. Overall, however, Warren's work is less precise in the details of its modeling, especially in the figure. Her interests lie with the horse and its energetic pose. She has depicted a lean and attenuated animal, balanced precariously on an outcropping of cactus and rock. The reins on the right side are missing (broken off), which gives the pose of the cowboy's right hand an odd look.
Clockwise from top left:

Frederick Remington, *The Bronco Buster*. Bronze. GM0827.34.
Warren did a number of variations on this theme in the early 1920s. The earliest is Cowboy of 1920 (location unknown). Seven others followed a year later. William S. Hart (pages 18–19) is one of the finest. Purchased by Thomas Gilcrease in 1944 from the New York dealer James Graham and Son, it is dated 1921 and signed on the base “C. W. Warren.” Following the signature and again on the horse’s flank is the artist’s monogram, CWW, intertwined and fashioned as a brand. The first W is suggested by the C combining with the last or more legible W. This monogram-brand is common on Warren’s bronzes. Often, as in the Gilcrease work, it is accentuated by two short lines of varying length.

William S. Hart is known today in three casts: one in the Gilcrease Museum, another at Princeton University, and a third formerly in the Museum of Fine Arts in Springfield, Massachusetts, deaccessioned and sold at Sotheby’s Parke Bernet in 1977. Subsequently it appeared in other auctions, but its location is unknown today. The Gilcrease bronze acquired the title William S. Hart (a famous actor in western films of the first quarter of the 20th century) sometime after its creation and before the 1944 acquisition by Mr. Gilcrease. Another cast of the work was presented simply as Cowboy No. 2 in the 1954 retrospective of Warren’s work in New York City.

Cowboy No. 2, or William S. Hart, was also cast in a nearly life-sized version we see today as Texas Cowboy in front of the Texas State Capitol in Austin (page 21). According to articles in the Austin American Statesman in 1924, the statue was given to the state through the auspices of Charles Cason, vice president of Chemical National Bank of New York and a former resident of Houston. Cason, a friend of the Warren family, told Texas governor Pat Neff about the bronze and how it had been exhibited in the Paris Salon, missing a bronze medal by just two votes and taking honorable mention. This was prestigious recognition for an American woman artist. The Cowboy was praised in the French press and highly popular in Paris. Cason told Governor Neff that the artist wished to donate the bronze to a western state. The governor agreed to accept it on behalf of Texas. The work was shipped to Austin in fall 1924 and dedicated on January 19, 1925.21 In Salon records of the 1920s, Warren’s only honorable mention occurred in 1923.22 Yet Texas Cowboy carries a date of 1921 on its bronze base. This may be explained by the practice of recording on the bronze the year of its original creation in plaster or clay rather than the date of its casting.23 Indeed, 1921 Salon records list a Cowboy by Warren done in plaster. The fame of Texas Cowboy lives on today, and, with its 1994 cleaning and new patina, it is Warren’s most renowned work.

Like Texas Cowboy, it was placed at the state’s capitol building. An inscription on the base declares it a “bronze tribute to those romantic riders of the range … unveiled under the direction of Governor W. J. Holloway and Oklahoma’s own Will Rogers . . . . on May 30th, 1930.” Despite the inscription, the 1930 unveiling never happened because of Rogers’s inability to attend; the statue had to wait until 1957 for its formal dedication.24 Tribute to Range Riders is signed and dated 1926 on its base. It is identical to a smaller undated bronze entitled Mounted Cowboy, now in the Georgia Museum of Art in Athens. The Oklahoma bronze, like all of Warren’s works, was not a commission. The considerable resources of her family doubtlessly made these castings possible. Warren’s third life-size equestrian bronze, Cowboy Lariat (below), is seen today in front of the Calvin C. Goode Municipal Building in Phoenix, Arizona. The work is signed and dated 1926. It was acquired by the City of Phoenix as a gift from the artist’s brother George through the Ferargil Gallery.
in 1954. Again Warren’s brand—monogram of an entwined CWV appears on the work’s base and the horse’s flank. The horse’s pose is identical to one employed by Warren in an earlier small bronze cowboy in 1922. The Phoenix cowboy is missing most of his lariat, not surprisingly given the fragility of this detail. Like most of Warren’s bronzes, it was cast by the H. Rouard Foundry in Paris and bears that foundry’s name on its base. Certainly this striking work, with its dramatic rearing horse with twisting head and flying hooves capped by a lariat—swinging cowboy, is one of the high points in Warren’s oeuvre.

Warren’s fourth monumental bronze, and for her, a rare European subject, is the Equestrian Portrait of Velázquez at the University of North Texas in Denton, signed and dated 1924. It was installed in 1995 as a gift from the Harlan Crow family of Dallas. A plaster statue of Velázquez on horseback exhibited by Warren in the Paris Salon in 1924 was likely the model for this cast.27

A life-size bronze of the 17th-century Spanish painter Diego Velázquez is a surprising subject for Warren given that her other heroic equestrian works feature cowboys. The reason for this choice of subject likely stems from the artist’s years in Paris. August Barye’s successor in Paris, and an artist who had a great influence on American sculptors in that city, was Emmanuel Frémiet (1824–1910). I believe Frémiet’s life-sized bronze of the same subject had a direct influence on Warren. Frémiet was the teacher of numerous American artists in Paris; his reputation continued for several years after his death in 1910. His equestrian Velázquez was executed in 1890 and installed three years later in the Garden of the Colonade at the Louvre. It remained there until 1933, when it was given to the Casa Velázquez in Madrid.28 Frémiet’s work would have been readily accessible to Warren and is generally comparable in size and in the pose of the horse. Warren’s figure of Velázquez is turned slightly to the right in the saddle and the costume differs from Frémiet’s. Nevertheless, given Frémiet’s reputation, the accessibility of his statue, and the unusual subject common to both works, it seems likely that Constance knew the work by the older French artist and was inspired by it.


Warren’s four monumental equestrian bronze works executed between 1921 and 1926 place her within a very elite circle of American women sculptors who were creating heroic equestrian monuments in the 1920s. The earliest life-sized equestrian work by an American woman was Anna Hyatt Huntington’s Joan of Arc. Huntington was born in 1876 in Boston and moved to New York in 1902. She went to Paris in 1907 and three years later she entered a plaster model of Joan of Arc in the Salon and won honorable mention.29 She returned to New York to learn that a Joan of Arc Committee headed by Tiffany’s President J. Sanford Salus was organizing a competition for the creation of a statue to celebrate the saint’s 500th anniversary. Huntington won the competition, defeating male sculptors from several nations. Five years later in 1915 her Joan of Arc was unveiled at Riverside Drive and 93rd Street in New York, where it still stands. Huntington received widespread acclaim for the work. Her heroic depiction of the saint was especially timely as World War I, then raging in Europe, brought a great deal of American sympathy for the French people. The French ambassador attended the unveiling and decorated the artist with the Purple Rosette of his government. The statue was popular in France as well, so much so that a replica was erected in 1922 in the Garden of the Bishops at Blois. At this time Huntington was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor. The fame of this statue crafted by an American woman and the event at Blois probably did not go unnoticed by Warren, who was then living in Paris. One year later she executed her first life-sized bronze of an American hero, Texas Cowboy.

Two other American women pioneers of sculptural monuments were working at the same time. In 1921 Sally James Farnham (1876–1943) created an equestrian statue of the Venezuelan patriot Simon Bolívar, which was erected in New York near Central Park. Farnham was a family friend of Frederic Remington and was influenced by him throughout her career.30 Her oeuvre consists of portraits and western-themed images of cowboys and horses. These were especially popular in New York during the years 1915 to 1921. Like Warren, Farnham was born to a wealthy family that made travel to Europe as well as the American and Canadian West important in her artistic education.

The fourth of these important women sculptors was Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875–1942), the sister of Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, whose family ties with the Warsens have been mentioned. Lloyd Warren, Constance’s uncle, was, in fact, a suitor of Gertrude’s in 1894, and they remained lifelong friends.31 Whitney was a wealthy woman who supported many of America’s most important early 20th-century artists and in 1930 founded the Whitney Museum of American Art. As an artist, she received commissions for public monuments in this country and abroad. Her Buffalo Bill (following page) was made in 1923 for the Buffalo Art. As an artist, she received commissions for public monuments in this country and abroad. Her Buffalo Bill (following page) was made in 1923 for the Buffalo

Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming. The 12.5-foot-high bronze follows the tradition of Frederic Remington and may have been inspired by his life-sized Cowboy of 1908 in Fairmont Park, Philadelphia.

Any assessment of the work of Constance Whitney Warren must align her with Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, Sally James Farnham, and Anna Hyatt Huntington as a pioneering American woman sculptor. All four women were from families whose resources facilitated their artistic education and production of art. Between 1915 and 1926 they entered the traditional male domain of large-scale equestrian sculptural monuments and produced works equal to those done by their male contemporaries.

Like them, Warren deserves greater recognition for her work, and for her willingness to follow her imagination into a male-oriented and male-dominated arena largely unexplored at the time by female artists.

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9. Frederic Newlin Price, Constance Whitney Warren, 1888–1948, Memorial Exhibition, February 2–15, 1953 (New York: Ferargil Galleries, 1953), not paginated. Warren’s sculptures were numbered in the Ferargil catalog. Those numbers have been retained to differentiate works of similar subjects. Standing Horse #2, catalog number 10, of 1917 is her earliest dated bronze. Its location is unknown today.


22. Société des Artistes Français, Le Salon 136 Exposition Officielle (Paris: Grand Palais des Champs-Élysees, 1923), 202. Société des Artistes Français, Le Salon 138 Exposition Officielle, Jardin des Tuileries (Paris: Grand Palais des Champs-Élysees, 1925). LXVIII. The 1923 listing is “Le Cowboy; statue bronze.” The previous Salon listing of a cowboy was in 1922, wherein the work was referred to as a statuette, or a smaller bronze. The honorable mention of 1923 is documented in the 1925 Salon listing.

23. This was likely the case of the 1921 dated William S. Hart in the Gilcrease as well. In traditional working methods, a smaller bronze casting such as the Gilcrease’s would precede a life-sized version such as Cowboy in Texas. Indeed, this chronology is supported by Salon records of 1922, wherein a cowboy statuette by Warren is cited. Among the other casts of Cowboy #2, the Princeton bronze is undated. The cast formerly in the original plaster model in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon. The only previous Salon listing is “Le Cowboy; statue bronze.” The work was sold at Elrée’s Auction House, East Sussex, UK, in 2013. At that time the location of the statue was missing.


26. Cowboy #1, Ferargil catalog.

28. The piece was destroyed in 1936 during the Spanish Civil War and replaced in 1956 with a new cast from the original plaster model in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon. See Catherine Chevillot, Emmanuel Fremiet, 1824–1910: la main et le modèle (Dijon: Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon, 1989), 142.

