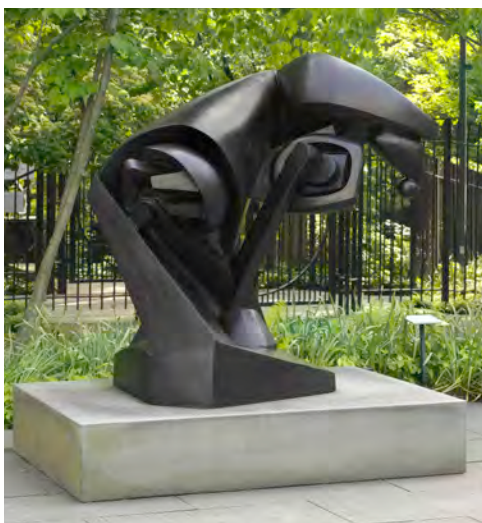




MAY 2017

HORSE POWER

The Horse | Raymond Duchamp-Villon



VISIT THE BMA
and see *The Horse* in the
Wurtzburger Sculpture
Garden.

Raymond Duchamp-Villon (French, 1876–1918). *The Horse*. Original 15-inch plaster model, 1914; this enlarged cast, 1966. 59 x 59 x 31 inches. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Alan and Janet Wurtzburger Collection, BMA 1974.62.5

**BALTIMORE
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Raymond Duchamp-Villon was well acquainted with horses. He served as a doctor in a cavalry regiment of the French Army during World War I, when horses were still being used on the battlefield. As an expert horseman, he had a feel for how horses move, and as a trained medic, he must have had some understanding of a horse's musculoskeletal system. Duchamp-Villon observed horses closely, drew many pictures, built clay models, and studied photographs of horses in full gallop. Why then did he create a sculpture that looks nothing like the flesh-and-blood horses he knew so well?

In 1914, Duchamp-Villon was witnessing the advent of modern warfare. The same year that he began work on *The Horse*, heavily armored tanks were making their first appearance on the battlefields of Europe. Vulnerable soldiers were removed from horseback and assigned instead to these steel-plated vehicles that inflicted great damage and destruction across the land. Even off the battlefield, horses that had been essential for transportation and heavy labor were being replaced by mechanized equipment.

Change was in the air, and people everywhere saw the effects of industrialization upon their lives. During his days away from the battlefield, Duchamp-Villon worked in his studio, creating a sculptural form that merged the horse's brute strength with the machine's limitless energy. Smooth, sleek, and polished, the sculpture retains the horse's thick, muscular neck and defining hoof. At the same time, it is propelled forward by forms resembling the gears, pistons, and shafts found in a machine shop. Part lunging beast, part churning engine, Duchamp-Villon's hybrid sculpture looks like neither a horse nor a machine, but it clearly conveys the power and dynamism of both.

CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS

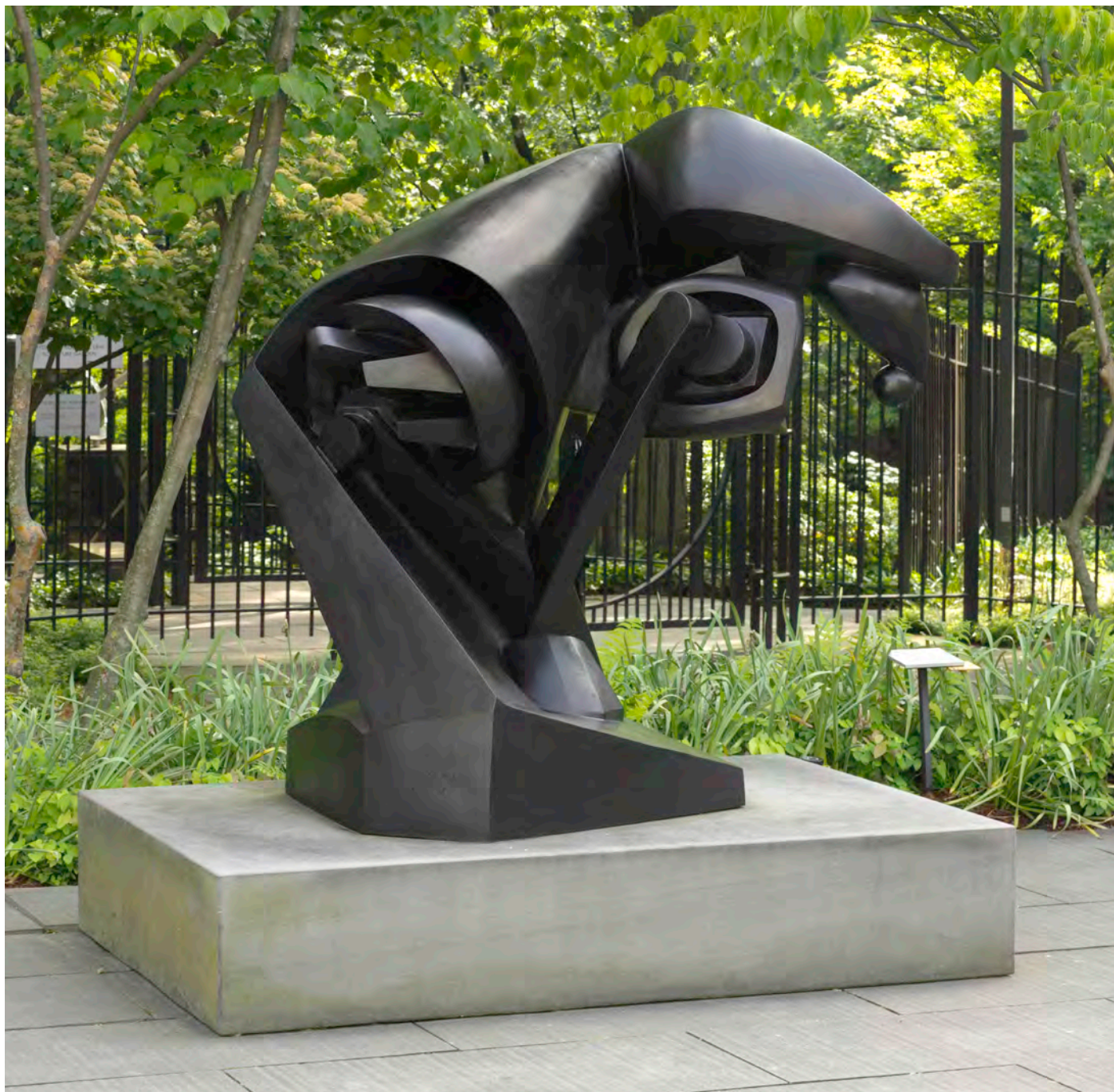
View Duchamp-Villon's *The Horse* from all sides at bit.ly/2q35RtV. This video includes World War I battlefield photographs as context.

In 1914, Duchamp-Villon made a plaster original of *The Horse*, just 17 inches tall. bit.ly/2pK6bLg. The BMA's sculpture is a 1966 enlargement, five times the size of the original, and cast in bronze. Compare the two, and discuss how the size and material affect your attitude toward the piece.

Check out previous issues of Art-To-Go to see how horses have been treated in both conventional and abstract styles:

Eclipse with Mr. Wildman and His Sons by George Stubbs bit.ly/2pK6QMN
and *Racing* by Sybil Andrews bit.ly/2q3iPrN.

PRINT THE IMAGE ON PAGE 2 FOR YOUR STUDENTS.



The Horse

Raymond Duchamp-Villon (French, 1876–1918). Original 15-inch plaster model, 1914; this enlarged cast, 1966. 59 x 59 x 31 inches. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Alan and Janet Wurtzbarger Collection, BMA 1974.62.5