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The Significance of the Equestrian Monument "Joan of Arc" in the Artistic Development of Anna Hyatt Huntington

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JOAN OF ARC

Bronze, 1¼ times life. 1915. Riverside Drive and 93rd Street, New York, New York.
Anna Hyatt Huntington, Sculptor

THE COURIER

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Portrait of Anna Hyatt Huntington from Beatrice G. Proske's *Archer M. Huntington*, New York, Hispanic Society of America, 1963. Courtesy of Hispanic Society of America.

*The Significance of the
Equestrian Monument “Joan of Arc”
in the Artistic Development of
Anna Hyatt Huntington*

by Myrna Garvey Eden

The manuscript collection of Anna Hyatt Huntington, sculptor, 1876-1973, left to the George Arents Research Library at Syracuse University by Mrs. Huntington is of special interest to students and scholars of American culture. Her correspondence, scrap-books, and diaries are a record of a long and successful career as a sculptor.¹

Among the many awards she received during her lifetime was an Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts presented in 1932 by Syracuse University. Her sculptures are to be seen in museums and parks throughout the United States and Europe. One of her best known early works – the one which established her reputation – was her first monumental sculpture, “Joan of Arc.” Erected in 1915, it overlooks Riverside Drive at Ninety-Third Street in New York City.

By drawing upon archival materials and personal interviews, the present article demonstrates the mergence of two major characteristics of Mrs. Huntington’s work in this equestrian monument of Joan: technical precision and idealism.

One source of her masterly craftsmanship was an early devotion to animal study with the result that she became one of America’s greatest sculptors of animals with an extensive knowledge of equine sculpture. She cultivated this devotion to animal study from her earliest years. Letters, published articles, and memorabilia in the Syracuse University Archives throw light upon the beginnings of Anna’s artistic skill.

Mrs. Eden is a doctoral candidate in the Humanities Program at Syracuse University. Her dissertation involves the life and work of Anna Hyatt Huntington.

¹A few of the many correspondents represented in the collection include important figures in American sculpture, painting, and literature such as Herbert Adams, A. Stirling Calder, James Earle and Laura Gardin Fraser, Malvina Hoffman, Hermon MacNeil, Paul Manship, Brenda Putnam; Katherine Lane Weems, Cecilia Beaux, Adeline Adams, Maxwell Anderson, Joseph Auslander, Leonard Bacon, and Leila Mechlin. The collection includes, in addition to correspondence: manuscripts, photographs, published material, scrap-books, diaries, biographical materials, and other items of memorabilia.

Anna Vaughn Hyatt, born on March 10, 1876 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was the younger daughter of Audella Beebe Hyatt and Alpheus Hyatt II, eminent zoologist and paleontologist. As the daughter of a professor of zoology at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Boston University, Anna grew up with a keen knowledge of the customs, manners, and characteristics of animals. The intense observations of the naturalist were a daily preoccupation in the Hyatt household. In addition to his scientific work, Professor Hyatt became curator for the Boston Society of Natural History. He was among those scientists who helped establish the first Marine Biological Laboratory of which the Laboratory at Woods Hole in Massachusetts was the successor. Anna, undoubtedly, was much influenced by the example of her naturalist father's varied scientific activities; she maintained a life-long interest in natural realistic detail and constant observation of animal forms.

In addition to her father, the Agassiz family may well have influenced Anna's talent for observing nature. Louis Agassiz, the Swiss naturalist, taught Anna's father at Harvard University. Agassiz emphasized direct and careful study of nature. His teaching is epitomized in his directive: "Go to Nature; take the facts in your own hands; look, and see for yourself!"² Agassiz's son, Alexander, a fellow classmate of Anna's father and later a professor, became a family friend. From boyhood the younger Agassiz was trained by his father to the study of animals and was accustomed to observe and to draw practically anything he saw. Anna Hyatt's nephew, A. Hyatt Mayor, Curator Emeritus of Prints at the Metropolitan Museum, attested to Alexander Agassiz's influence on Anna: "... looking tremendously closely at something rubbed off as a family characteristic. I think that Aunt Anna unconsciously probably thought of this way that [Alexander] Agassiz used to teach."³ In Cambridge and during summers at the family sea-farm at Annisquam on Cape Ann, Anna would continue her close observations. She observed how animals move and arrange themselves in characteristic attitudes; she also learned how their anatomy determines these movements and attitudes. In this way, from earliest childhood throughout her youth, Anna's affinities for animals developed.

As an observer of animals, Anna was particularly a lover of horses. Her fascination with horses showed itself early. Mr. Mayor recalls the following: "One of the earliest memories my grandmother had of her [Anna Hyatt] was of her running out of the house, lying down in the street among all the four legs of a horse in order to observe it and draw it. At that time she was a tiny child of four or five years old." Before she had learned to read, she knew by heart the distinguishing qualities and names of a hundred thoroughbreds from

²"Agassiz, [Jean] Louis [Rodolphe]," *The Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature*, ed. Max J. Herzberg, (1962), p. 10.

³Interview with A. Hyatt Mayor, May 14, 1975.

pictures, and during her youth she rode horses constantly. A letter from her mother reveals the great enthusiasm Anna had for horses. Mrs. Hyatt lightly admonishes Anna not to “. . . drive quite all the flesh off of Uncle’s horses.”⁴ This interest and knowledge of horses would be a crucial element in the acquisition of technical mastery, and later, the foundation of her equestrian “Joan.”

The love and knowledge of horses and other animals led Anna to discover her vocation. The following event seems particularly important in leading her to this discovery. One day her sister, already a sculptor, asked her to model the dog in a life-sized composition of a boy and a Great Dane she was planning. Mr. Mayor’s description of the event suggests its significance as a turning point in Anna’s life: “That was the beginning of it . . . They owned a Great Dane called Malac. This was in Cambridge when they lived on Francis Avenue in my grandfather’s house. They collaborated on it and that started Aunt Anna off.” Anna modeled the dog; the sculpture group was accepted for exhibition by one of the national art societies, and purchased.

Encouraged by success on her first attempt, Anna began to undertake serious instruction in her craft. First, her sister showed her the rudiments of modeling. Later, she studied briefly with the Boston sculptor, Henry Hudson Kitson. “I was a pupil for a short time of H. H. Kitson while in Boston, but left there shortly after 1900 and never saw Mr. or Mrs. Kitson later.”⁵ In 1903 she studied for a short period at the Art Students League in New York with George Grey Barnard, and later with Hermon MacNeil. She concluded her formal art training with Gutzon Borglum, sculptor of the Mt. Rushmore monument, from whom it is commonly believed she gained greater knowledge of horse modeling.

Informal self-directed education contributed to increased knowledge and technical control. Contrary to the fashion among many young artists of the time, Anna did not desire further formal study in Europe. Instead, she preferred to work independently. In an effort to extend her knowledge of animals, she often went to zoos and circuses where she modeled a variety of animals brought to her by keepers. “At the Bronx Zoo she modeled all day from an instant glimpse of a jaguar halted by a shout as it descended from its branch to its breakfast meat.”⁶ Following both the advice and examples of her father and Agassiz, she always regarded nature itself as her most important teacher and developed her art without extensive formal education.

She began to exhibit her work in 1898 when a firm of Boston silversmiths placed her models on display. They attracted the attention of a wealthy Boston merchant, Thomas W. Lawson, who offered to buy all that

⁴Letter from Audella Beebe Hyatt, April 11, 1887.

⁵Letter from Anna Hyatt Huntington, February 14, 1956.

⁶Mayor, A. Hyatt, “Memorial Tribute to Anna Hyatt Huntington,” Paper read before the meeting of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York, New York.

she could produce. In 1900, at the age of 24, she had her first exhibition at the Boston Arts Club; the show included nearly fifty animal studies. She worked perseveringly to develop her craft, and succeeded in selling much of her work despite the keen competition of such eminent animal sculptors as Alexander Phimister Proctor, Eli Harvey, and Albert Laessle.

Anna's dedication to craftsmanship was to be exceedingly important during all stages of work on her first large sculpture — "Joan of Arc." After a three year period of travel and work in France and Italy, she created her first modeling of Joan in 1909, the year Joan of Arc was beatified. In the congenial atmosphere of the studio of the late French sculptor, Jules Dalou, on the Impasse du Maine in the Latin Quarter, Anna worked on her equestrian "Joan" without assistance for a period of four months, working ten hours daily and seven days weekly. For the statue, she built her own armature, and massed a ton of clay, which she described as "a terribly brutal piece of work."⁷

She sought for truth and individuality in the animal form. A representative model of the horse had to be found that would suggest the kind used for military exploits in the fifteenth century. The Magasin du Louvre, famed for their stable of handsome delivery horses, agreed to furnish a model. Upon this model she based her conception of strength and vigor in Joan's horse.

The horse for the Joan of Arc statue was partly from imagination and partly from a Percheron model, lent to me in Paris by the Magasin du Louvre from their stable of three hundred stallions used for their delivery wagons. I wanted an active, heavy horse, not the draft Percheron. Pictures, engravings, etc., of the period during which armor was used show a heavy but active type of horse, strong enough to bear the combined weight of man, armor and heavy saddle, and travel the very bad roads of those early days. ⁸

In 1910 the clay model was cast in plaster and exhibited at the Paris Salon, then the most respected arbiter of academic standards, and won Honorable Mention.

Having successfully completed her first large non-commissioned sculpture, Anna undertook a commissioned sculpture, which was her second "Joan." Shortly after the completion of her 1910 model, J. Sanford Saltus and George Frederick Kunz conceived the idea of a statue for New York to celebrate the five hundredth anniversary of the birth of Joan in 1412. A competition was established for a statue of Joan that would commemorate American and French relations. After viewing numerous models submitted for competition, Saltus, an executive of the famous jewelry firm of Tiffany,

⁷Grace Humphries, "Anna Vaughn Hyatt's Statue," *International Studio*, LVII (December, 1915), p. XLVIII.

⁸Letter from Anna Hyatt Huntington, September 2, 1942.

enthusiastically recommended that Anna be commissioned for the work. John Van Pelt, the architect, was responsible for the work of stone pedestal installation as well as the emplacement of the statue on the wooded knoll overlooking Riverside Drive at Ninety-Third Street.

Before and during Anna's artistic formative years, a revival of the Joan of Arc legend had taken place. As subject matter for a young woman sculptor imbued with a spirit of independence and a deep creative instinct, Joan had a special appeal for Anna. Joan's story, although vague in many of its details, remained strong in outline and dramatic in historical consequences: a comet-like career beginning as a mystic at age thirteen, a commander-in-chief of an army at seventeen, a deliverer of France, and finally a martyr at nineteen. Joan's spiritual ardor and inner confidence captivated the young Anna Hyatt, as it did other sculptors and writers of the time.

To the nineteenth-century artist and writer, Joan appeared especially intriguing. The romantic views of Joan as the child of nature, the rebel, the tender-hearted humanitarian, the heroine, and the embodiment of a national tradition, called forth endless interpretations. Lacking in either a complete picture of her life or an adequate understanding of the Middle Ages, nineteenth-century artists and writers conceived of Joan as a glorious enigma. Interest began with the publication in 1841 of Quicherat's collection of records of the Rouen trial, 1431. A flurry of books followed including a romantic biography by Mark Twain entitled *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* published in 1896 under the pseudonym, Sieur Louis de Conte.

Mark Twain's picturesque account of Joan was particularly influential in Anna's understanding of Joan's extraordinary character and career. Twain had read widely in the lore of Joan, and he appears to have been most influenced by the French historian, Jules Michelet. Albert E. Stone, Jr. explains: "Michelet, in particular, seems to have influenced Twain more than any of the eleven writers he lists. On internal and external evidence his is the 'one French history' Twain told H. H. Rogers he used for the first two-thirds of his romance."⁹ Twain responded to Michelet's romantic image of womanhood. Michelet viewed Joan primarily as a compelling mystery. In addition, he painted a glowing picture of Joan the woman, sensible, brave, and compassionate. For Twain as for Michelet, Joan's essential charm lay in what both considered feminine characteristics; namely, infinite pity and invincible courage. Twain, however, added to Michelet's conception. For Twain, Joan was also the incarnation of innocence, youth, and purity. He described her as ". . . the most innocent, the most lovely, the most adorable [woman] the ages have produced."¹⁰

⁹Albert E. Stone, Jr., "Mark Twain's Joan of Arc: The Child as Goddess," *American Literature*, XXXI, No. 1 (March, 1959), p. 8.

¹⁰Sieur Louis de Conte [Mark Twain], *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*, New York: Harper and Row, 1896, p. XIV.



View of JOAN OF ARC showing setting in New York City. This picture was taken November 30, 1960, on the 125th birthday of Mark Twain. Paying homage to the great writer are Mrs. Bessie Wherry Noe, president of the Mark Twain Association of New York, Mr. Hugh Gordon Miller, Association historian, and Mrs. Anna Hyatt Huntington, center.

The French romantic poet, Alphonse de Lamartine, along with Twain and indirectly Michelet, influenced Anna Hyatt's impression of the Maid. Anna found Lamartine's image of Joan significant because of its spiritual emphasis: "... Lamartine's life [of Joan], more than others, shows her as a spiritual person, almost a fanatic."¹¹ Anna describes this spirituality more fully:

... she [Joan] must have been a beautiful woman, otherwise the Dauphin of France would not have taken such a fancy to her. She must have been spiritual. She could not have been the ordinary rough peasant type. A certain fanaticism possessed her to carry her through those forced marches, riding on horseback – a thing she had never done before.¹²

Although the views of the writers she studied enlarged her own conception of Joan, Anna created a personal vision. This ideal vision of Joan evolved as a celebration of vital energy and humanist values. Most importantly, Anna saw in Joan a means of symbolizing heroic humanism. During an age of materialistic expansion, and America's increasing devotion to the power of the machine, Anna sought to dramatize spiritual values and the power of human daring. Her expression of enthusiasm for Joan suggests this affirmation of human force and courage:

I thought of her there before her first battle, speaking to her saints, holding up the ancient sword . . . it was only her mental attitude, her religious fervor, that enabled her to endure so much physically, to march three or four days with almost no sleep, to withstand cold and rain. That is how I thought of her and tried to model her.¹³

Anna's ideal is antithetical to what is frequently considered a contemporary spiritual decay brought about by an ugly spread of industrialism. Her Joan epitomizes a hero sharply in contrast to the corporate hero venerated during the closing decades of the nineteenth century in America.

A sense of monumentality combined with deep simplicity underlined Anna's modeling of the New York statue. The model was increased to life and a quarter; the larger size suggests monumentality. In order to give the monument more dignity, Anna accorded less action to both horse and rider. Joan is represented before her first battle, armored and astride her horse, lifting her sword with spiritual intensity.

¹¹Humphries, *loc. cit.*

¹²*The New York World*, December 3, 1922.

¹³Humphries, *loc. cit.*

Anna began her clay studies from a nude model and added the armor later. Working painstakingly, she created several models. The New York figure is an entirely new modeling of the 1910 Paris Salon cast. Years later, Mrs. Huntington dictated the following to her secretary, Miss R. Sands, in response to a request for information about the statue:

Anna Hyatt Huntington did seven trial models of Joan of Arc, from very small to life size, before the final work; Joan is holding the sword, a vision told her to find under an ancient altar, and praying with it held aloft as she enters battle taken from one of the many vague traditions about her.¹⁴

Whereas heroic humanism was the basis of romantic idealism in the new modeling of Joan, and painstaking craftsmanship was the means by which the statue was given form, historical accuracy contributed to its realism. Accuracy in sculpting the accouterment of the period was an essential element in Anna's conception of the statue. After extensive research, Anna concluded that no other celebrated statues of the Maid had been rendered with complete historical accuracy, and consequently she called upon the research talent of medieval art specialists, Dr. Bashford Dean and his assistants at the Metropolitan Museum, to help establish precise characteristics of the armor and equipment. They worked with details supplied from drawings that included rubbings of old tombs, old paintings, and stone and bronze figures. The armor was modeled from an authentic example of a fifteenth century medieval suit assembled by Dr. Dean. Anna emphasized the authenticity of her model:

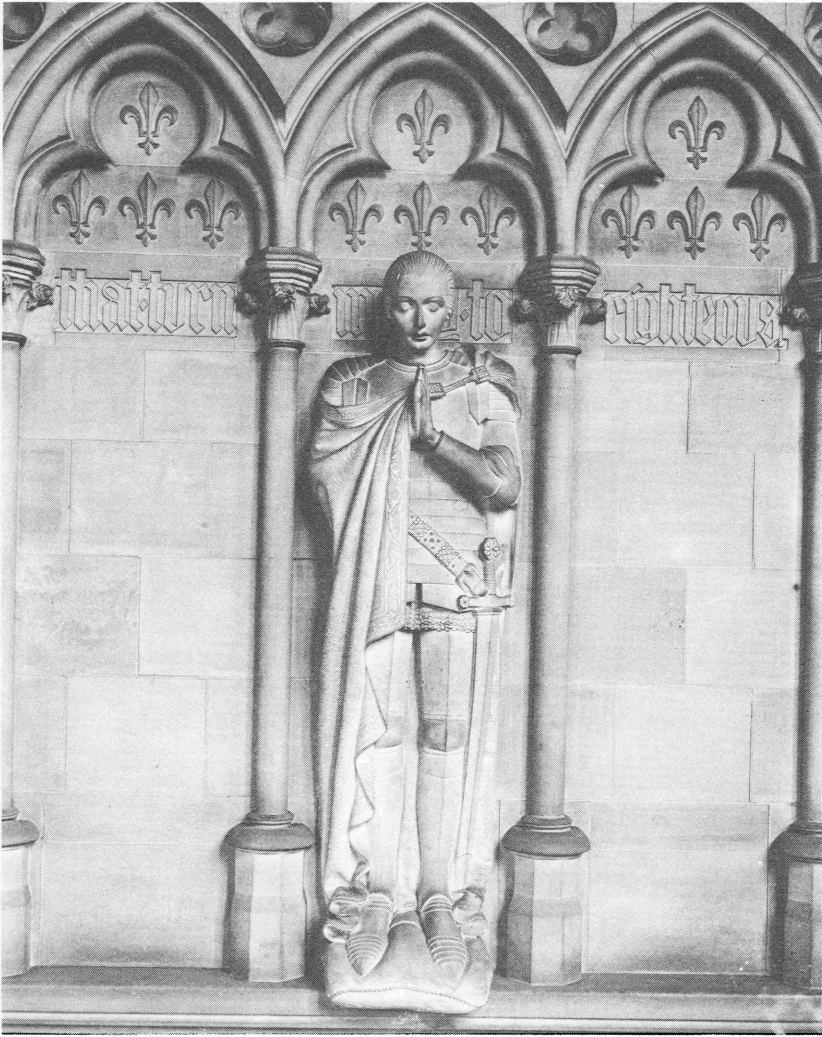
. . . The interesting fact about this statue is that Joan is wearing the armor of her period. I do not know that any one has been able to do this before on account of the difficulty of finding out precisely what armor was like. I have been greatly helped by Dr. Bashford Dean of the Metropolitan Museum. He has had access to some of those few homes in France where such armor is preserved. It fitted closely to the body and is therefore all the more becoming.¹⁵

In addition, Anna's research studies revealed that, with the exception of a small headpiece, horse armor was not used in France for about one hundred and twenty years after Joan's death. Thus, she approached with exactitude all details regarding realism. Her attention to historical detail gave added force to her romantic ideal.¹⁶

¹⁴Letter dictated by Anna Hyatt Huntington to Miss R. Sands, her secretary, June 16, 1932.

¹⁵*The New York World*, *loc. cit.*

¹⁶Other sculptors who created romantic representations of Joan were Paul Dubois and Emmanuel Frémiet. While Dubois's monument is in Paris, Frémiet's work stands in Philadelphia. Both of their statues, however, lack the spiritual fervor and historical accuracy of Anna Hyatt's "Joan."



JOAN OF ARC

Bronze, 63 high. 1922. Replica at Syracuse University of standing relief created for the French Chapel in the Collection of St. John the Divine, New York, New York.

Several other details illustrate her great attention to accurate historical relationships. Some of the statue's foundation stones hold special historic interest. The base of the statue was built, in part, with stones taken from the cell at Rouen where Joan was confined. In addition, a fragment of a pilaster from the Cathedral at Rheims, scene of Charles VII coronation, was worked into the pedestal.

The completion of the monument aroused great public interest. A widely publicized unveiling of the statue on December 6, 1915 was attended by a corps of dignitaries. A letter from President Woodrow Wilson, enthusiastic over the formation of the Entente Cordiale with France during World War I hailed the occasion:

. . . Joan of Arc is one of those ideal historic figures . . . in her seems to have been embodied the pure enthusiasm which makes for all that is heroic and poetic.¹⁷

With the success of her "Joan of Arc," Anna Hyatt achieved an international reputation. Honors and recognition followed. In 1922 she was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor and an honorary citizen of the city of Blois, France where a bronze replica of her Joan was erected.¹⁸ Other replicas stand in Gloucester, Massachusetts, San Francisco, California, and Quebec, Canada. Thus, her fusion of technical mastery and ideal vision brought her world fame.

Anna Hyatt's treatment of the Joan legend resulted in a romantic depiction of Joan as virtuous heroine placed against an historically accurate Gothic background. The work had another significance; it was the first monument in honor of a woman accomplished by a woman. The undertaking of this monument was itself an heroic task. Initially prompted by a broad knowledge of equine sculpture, Mark Twain's account of Joan, spiritual and artistic currents of the late nineteenth century, and a strong desire to create an historically realistic and thereby a new image of the Maid, Anna Hyatt succeeded in creating one of our nation's finest and most expressive monuments. Personal vision within the framework of an artistic academicism was the true strength of Anna's monumental statue to Saint Joan.

¹⁷Letter from President Woodrow Wilson, December 6, 1915.

¹⁸That same year Anna made a bas-relief of a standing Joan for the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in New York City.