

The Ravages of War



Sculpture by Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller (1877-1968)
Donated to West Virginia State University
by the Solomon C. Fuller, Jr., Family
Through the West Virginia State University Foundation
Located in the Drain-Jordan Library

The Ravages of War



Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller was a brilliant sculptor who, at the turn of the twentieth century, went to Paris and studied with the renowned sculptor Auguste Rodin, who had much praise for her work.

In 1917, Meta Fuller modeled in gray-green wax and standing approximately twenty inches high, *Peace Halting the Ruthlessness of War* resulting from her patient development of an idea. She was inspired by a passage from the *New Testament*, 1 Corinthians 15:54-57.

To Meta, peace was “the spiritual power which shall strengthen and sustain that which is temporal.” Subconsciously, she had this conceptualization in mind when she chose to convey the sanity of peace and the insanity of waging war. She portrayed War symbolically, as one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. In his right hand is a spear upon which is impaled a horrifying trophy—a human head. Beneath his helmet is a scarf—a token of love in medieval times—which twines and flutters about the spear’s shaft. A sightless horseman, War laughs wildly at his mount, which is as blind and as crazed as he, tramples and crushes men, women and children beneath its hooves. Meanwhile, an angel symbolizing Peace alights, faces him with upraised hand, and commands him to stop. *Peace Halting the Ruthlessness of War* was reminiscent of the symbolic sculpture for which Meta Warrick Fuller had been known in Paris. (Kerr 1987).

According to her son, Solomon C. Fuller, Jr., in 1917, World War I was thought to be “the war to end all war,” so with this idea the angel was appropriate. Mr. Fuller explains that with many years and conflicts through the world since World War I, both the angel figure and the idea itself have been lost. In April, 1999, Solomon Fuller renamed the sculpture *The Ravages of War* which was presented as a gift to West Virginia State College (now University) on October 15, 1999, by members of the family.

Shonnette Koontz
September, 2010

BIOGRAPHY

Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller (1877-1968), Sculptor

Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller was born June 9, 1877, in Philadelphia. She was a sculptor, illustrator, and writer. She studied at the Pennsylvania School of Industrial Arts, graduating in 1904. In 1903, she exhibited two of her works, *The Impenitent Thief* and *The Wretched*, in the Paris Salon. Fuller’s interest in sculpture led her to study with Charles Grafly and at the Academic Colarossi in Paris with Rodin. She was the first African-American woman to become a professional artist.



She married Dr. Solomon C. Fuller in February, 1909, and before moving to Framingham, in the Boston area Meta Warrick Fuller had left her tools and sculpture in a Philadelphia warehouse, with the intention of having them shipped to her later. In 1910, a fire in that warehouse destroyed sixteen years of work done in Philadelphia and Paris. Fuller was devastated and lost the urge to continue sculpting; instead she concentrated on her role as wife and mother. Between 1910 and 1916, she gave birth to three children, Solomon, Jr., William Thomas, and Perry.

Winner of numerous awards, Fuller again in 1913, began her sculpturing and created *Spirit of Emancipation*, the beginning of fifty years of work. Between 1914 and 1921, she dealt with a variety of issues stemming from American anxieties over the world at war—nativism, the atrocities of war, and the search for peace. In 1917, believing that World War I was “the war to end all war” Mrs. Fuller was inspired to create *Peace Halting the Ruthlessness of War*. She continued to create new sculptures, including *The Madonna of Consolation*, 1961 and *The Statue of Jesus on the Cross*, 1962.

Mrs. Fuller exhibited at the New York Emancipation Exhibit in 1931 and continued exhibiting until her last show at Howard University, Washington, D.C., in 1961. The Boston Art Club and the Harmon Foundation exhibited her works and today representative pieces of her sculpture can be found in the Cleveland Museum. Fuller left behind a body of work which is on display at several museums across the country including the Danforth Museum of Art in her hometown of Framingham. Exhibited are important humanistic insights into the significance of the life and art of this courageous and remarkable woman. She received an honorary Doctor of Letters degree from Livingstone College, Salisbury, North Carolina, in 1962. Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller died in Framingham in 1968.

Note: Mrs. Fuller was the grandmother of Dr. John L. Fuller, Sr., former Director of Registration and Records at West Virginia State University (retired 2007).