



# HAWTHORNE

## Fine Art

### **Ella Buchanan (1869-1951)**

Ella Buchanan was born in 1869 in Preston, Ontario, Canada to Catherine Bergey and John Calder Buchanan. Her Scottish-born father was raised in Canada from the age of 11 and went on to become superintendent of the Preston schools. He later worked as an editor and journalist including for the *Appleton Post* [Appleton, WI], *Le Mars Sentinel* [Le Mars, IA], *Springfield Journal* [Springfield, IL], and the *Pittsburg Kansan* [Pittsburg, KS]. Buchanan was educated at public schools in Iowa and at the Betty Stewart Institute, a finishing school for girls, in Springfield, Illinois.<sup>1</sup>

Buchanan was employed for 5 years as a librarian in Pittsburg, Kansas. Following the death of her father, Buchanan moved to Illinois to study at the Chicago Art Institute. She worked as an assistant instructor to Charles A. Mulligan in the sculpture department.<sup>2</sup> While a student at the Art Institute, Buchanan executed a figurative sculpture entitled *The Suffragist Arousing Her Sisters*. Buchanan's sculpture became, "...a bond of sympathy and effort between leaders of the 'cause'..." in cities throughout the country. The New York suffragists planned to produce the work in bronze and in "heroic size."<sup>3</sup>

Buchanan continued to produce art dealing with the social issues of the day. Her sculpture entitled *Votes for Women* "attracted a lot of attention," according to a review published in *The Public* in 1912. The review further noted that, "[Buchanan] succeeded, both in grasp of subject and in simplicity yet significance of expression..." in a clay sketch illustrating the work of economist Henry George who questioned, "Why does Poverty keep pace with Progress?"<sup>4</sup> In 1914, Buchanan was the general chairman for the exhibit of the Chicago Art Institute at the Exposition and Congress of Women's Achievements held in Chicago's Coliseum. Buchanan and artist Jean Richardson exhibited their work and gave a demonstration on clay modeling at the event.<sup>5</sup> That same year, Buchanan's *The Suffragist Arousing Her Sisters* was accepted for display on the fair grounds of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition to be held in 1915.<sup>6</sup>

In 1915, Buchanan moved to Los Angeles.<sup>7</sup> In 1918, she received the first prize of \$100 at California Liberty Fair.<sup>8</sup> In 1922, Buchanan's *Altar of Nations* was in an exhibition of the Sculptors' Guild of

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<sup>1</sup> John Steven McGroarty, *History of Los Angeles County*, Vol. II, (New York: The American Historical Society, 1923) 183.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> "Suffrage Awakens Her sisters With A Bugle Blast..." *The Wichita Beacon* (Wichita, Kansas) · Mon, Oct 30, 1911, 14.

<sup>4</sup> "Henry George's Thought Sculpture," *The Public* Vol. XV (Chicago: Louis F. Post, 1912) 291.

<sup>5</sup> "Chicago Club Women Ready to Welcome the General Federation Visitors," *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, Illinois), Sun, Jun 7, 1914, 50.

<sup>6</sup> "Suffragist Group of Statuary to Be Shown At S.F. Fair," *Los Angeles Herald* (Los Angeles, CA), Sat, Nov 28, 1914, 1.

<sup>7</sup> John Steven McGroarty, *History of Los Angeles County*.



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Southern California held at the Los Angeles Museum. The work was reviewed by R.W. Borough of the *Los Angeles Record* who said the sculpture was, “More powerful than any antiwar sermon....”<sup>9</sup> In 1925, Buchanan contributed a sculpture of a head entitled *Anna* to an exhibition of the Sculptors’ Guild held at the Southwest Museum.<sup>10</sup>

In 1923, the *Los Angeles Evening Express* stated, “[Buchanan] has done so many things for her own sex. She has pleaded the cause of women in almost everything that she has done – Women as the mother of the race.”<sup>11</sup>

Buchanan never married and spent her life dedicated to her work. She said, “The greatest thing in the world is work. We can live without love, but we must work to live. Everything we have comes because someone works for it.”<sup>12</sup>

Ella Buchanan died in 1951. She was 82 years old.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> “Committee Awards Liberty Fair Prizes,” *Evening Express* (Los Angeles, California), Thu, Jun 13, 1918, 17.

<sup>9</sup> John Steven McGroarty, *History of Los Angeles County*.

<sup>10</sup> “Head of ‘Anna’ Wins Praise in Gild Exhibit,” *Los Angeles Evening Express* (Los Angeles, California), Fri, Mar 27, 1925, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Idah McGlone Gibson, “Interesting Women in Los Angeles,” *Los Angeles Evening Express* (Los Angeles, California), Thu, Nov 1, 1923, 14.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> “Miss Ella Buchanan,” *The Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, California), Tue, Jul 17, 1951, 32.