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Media Contacts:

[danielle@frameworksf.com](mailto:danielle@frameworksf.com)

[kv@frameworksf.com](mailto:kv@frameworksf.com)

**di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art Debuts Two Exhibitions in 2019:**

***Viola Frey: Center Stage***

**February 23–December 29, 2019**



Viola Frey, *Untitled (Nude Woman Lying on Man)*, 1985. 2019 © Artists' Legacy Foundation / Licensed by ARS, New York. Photo: M. Lee Fatherree

***Building a Different Model: Selections from the di Rosa Collection***

**March 9–December 29, 2019**



William Allan, *Update for the Model of Rome*, 1992

**Napa, CA, January 31, 2019** – di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art will showcase the work of Viola Frey and its own significant collection of Northern California art in two exhibitions in 2019. On view February 23 through December 29, 2019, *Viola Frey: Center Stage* marks the artist's first major institutional survey on the West Coast since 1981 and includes more than 100 works of art, offering a fresh take on Frey's prolific and influential practice. On view March 9 through December 29, 2019, *Building a Different Model: Selections from the di Rosa Collection* is the first in a series of exhibitions exploring di Rosa's remarkable holdings of Northern California art, organized by guest curators from beyond the Bay Area.

Frey, a fiercely independent artist up to her passing in 2004, is best known for her larger-than-life figurative ceramic sculptures. *Viola Frey: Center Stage* traces her career through a chronological progression spanning five decades. A large portion of the featured work—which includes not just ceramics, but also painting, drawing, photography, and bronze—has never been shown publicly.

Monumental ceramic works, including *The Decline and Fall of Western Civilization* (1992) and *China Goddess Group* (ca. 1979–81) will be shown alongside early works from the 1960s and 1970s, presenting an unprecedented look at the artist's thinking and process. The large-scale presentation will occupy di Rosa's 8,500-square-foot Gallery 2, marking the first time the gallery has been devoted to the work of a single artist. The exhibition draws from a mix of di Rosa's extensive holdings, generous loans from Artists' Legacy Foundation, and private collections.

"Frey's wide-ranging interests—from identity to class, culture, consumerism, and environmental issues, with an undeniable undercurrent of feminist statement—parallel many of the pressing issues of our day," observes curator Amy Owen. "This presentation is a long-overdue look at an artist working far ahead of her time."

This is the first of three major solo exhibitions at di Rosa, rolling out over 2019 and 2020, focusing on singular artistic voices in Northern California art history. Exhibitions in 2020 will feature the work of Jean Conner and Deborah Remington. The series shines a light on the artists' years living and working in the Bay Area, highlighting their shared impulse to draw inspiration from the personal, cultural, and environmental realms, and how critical aspects of the region enabled their work to develop and flourish. While their practices may not be viewed as overtly feminist, their distinct approaches to art making and their strong, independent spirits demonstrate an approach to feminism rooted in lived experience and unshakeable determination.

Viola Frey was born in Lodi, California, in 1933, and died in Oakland in 2004. She received her BFA and an honorary doctorate from California College of Arts and Crafts and attended graduate school at Tulane University. She was awarded two National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, the Award of Honor in Sculpture from the San Francisco Arts Commission, and many other grants and awards. Her work is in numerous public and private collections worldwide.

This exhibition is curated by Amy Owen in conjunction with the Artists' Legacy Foundation, Oakland.

***Building a Different Model: Selections from the di Rosa Collection*** is the first in a series of exhibitions exploring di Rosa's remarkable holdings of Northern California art, organized by guest curators from beyond the Bay Area.

"One of the great strengths of postwar Northern California painting and sculpture is the collective reimagining of what art and the world can be," says di Rosa Executive Director Robert Sain. "The di Rosa collection offers a vision apart from most art histories, one led by individual sensibilities focused on building languages of communication and community."

Curated by Dan Nadel, some 70 works by 40 artists in *Building a Different Model* address the world through generative visions of transformation and repair through social, physical, and ceremonial relationships. Carlos Villa and K. Lee Manuel made garments-as-art or ceremonial garb; Norman Stieglmeyer and Robert Bechtle offer visions of psychic shifts; paintings by William Theophilus Brown, Irene Pijoan, Oliver Lee Jackson, and Joan Brown catch their subjects on the cusp of social change. Exhibited here for the first time are 12 collaborative drawings by William Allan and friends William T. Wiley, Robert Hudson, Robert Nelson, and Bill Geis, which were made for Dorothy Wiley and Gunvor Nelson's 70-minute film *Five Artists: BillBobBillBillBob* (1971) about those artists and their families. These and a handful of related drawings memorialize the ethos documented in the film and remain a powerful example of the collaborative, community-based art and life that found fertile ground at di Rosa itself.

"I selected works that surprised me and might surprise a visitor based on our knowledge of the art and artists," said Nadel. He wanted to show extra dimensions of each artist, when possible, and bring to the fore artists who are known in the Bay Area but not much outside of it, like Oliver Lee Jackson and Carlos Villa. "It was important to me that this not be another show of 'the usual gang' or 'funk art,'" he says.

Nadel focuses on the idea of "repair," guided by two works by Bill Allan and William T. Wiley that appeared in the 1969 *Repair Show* at Berkeley Gallery: *Indian History Repair* (1969) and *Repair for Super Natural Events and Natural Events* (1969). The theme, repairing ourselves and our communities, is emphasized through collaboration (thus the 12 collaborative drawings), ritual (Carlos Villa), spiritual awareness (Stieglmeyer, Bechtle, Pijoan, H.C. Westermann, Gage Taylor, James Melchert) and art made for the sake of demonstrating new ways to think about life and the land around us (Allan's Rome painting, Paul Kos's drawings). Nadel hopes visitors will come away with a sense that art

can be transformative, and that these artists were working with the intent to demonstrate its potential for personal and communal revelation.

Based in New York, writer and curator Dan Nadel has previously curated the exhibitions *What Nerve! Alternative Figures in American Art: 1960 to the Present*, Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence (2014) and Matthew Marks Gallery, New York (2015), *Victor Moscoso: Psychedelic Drawings, 1967–1982*, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York (2015), *Return of the Repressed: Destroy All Monsters 1973–1977*, PRISM, Los Angeles (2011); *Karl Wirsum: Drawings 1967–1970*, Derek Eller Gallery, New York (2010), *Suellen Rocca: Bare Shouldered Beauty*, Matthew Marks Gallery, New York (2016); *The House That Jack Built*, the first major Jack Kirby retrospective, Fumetto, Lucerne, Switzerland (2010), *Macronauts*, Athens Biennale (2007), *The Passing of Time: Michael Hurson at Work, 1971–2001*, Paula Cooper Gallery, New York (2017); *Gertrude Abercrombie*, Karma, New York (2018), *Red Grooms, Handiwork 1955–2018*, Marlborough Contemporary, New York (2018); and *Alan Turner: Paintings 1979–2009*, Parker Gallery, Los Angeles (2018). Nadel is a frequent contributor to *Artforum* and the *New York Review of Books* and has authored the books *The Collected Hairy Who Publications* (Matthew Marks Gallery, 2015), *Art Out of Time: Unknown Comics Visionaries 1900–1969* (Harry N. Abrams, 2006), and *Dorothy and Otis: Designing the American Dream* (Harper Design, 2014).

*Viola Frey: Center Stage* is on view February 23 through December 29, 2019. *Building a Different Model: Selections from the di Rosa Collection* is on view March 9 through December 29, 2019. **A public reception for both exhibitions takes place Saturday, March 9, 2019, 4–5:30 p.m.**

For details about upcoming public programs related to the exhibitions, visit [www.dirosaart.org](http://www.dirosaart.org).

## **ABOUT DI ROSA CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART**

di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art presents contemporary exhibitions and educational programs for all ages and maintains a permanent collection of notable works by artists living or working in the San Francisco Bay Area from the mid-twentieth century to the present day. A wide range of styles, media, and subject matter provides an overview of the creative energy and freedom to experiment that characterizes this region of California. di Rosa features multiple galleries, a sculpture park, and a 35-acre lake, located on 217 scenic acres in Napa Valley's famed Carneros region that are protected in perpetuity under the Napa County Land Trust. di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art is located at 5200 Sonoma Highway, Napa. The galleries are open Wednesday through Sunday, 10 a.m.—4 p.m. For more information, visit [dirosaart.org](http://dirosaart.org).

## **CONTACT**

For images, interview requests, and curatorial media tours, contact [info@frameworksf.com](mailto:info@frameworksf.com)

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