

di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art
5200 Sonoma Highway
Napa, CA 94559
707-226-5991
dirosaart.org

   @dirosaart / #ViolaFreyCenterStage

di Rosa



VIOLA FREY:



CENTER STAGE

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February 23-December 29, 2019



A Note from the Director

The job of a contemporary arts center is, in great part, to be responsive to the times, to generate new ideas, and to bring fresh perspectives to established modes of thought. With this in mind, we are pleased to present di Rosa's lineup of exhibitions and public programs through 2019 and into 2020.

Drawing from our permanent collection, Brooklyn-based independent curator Dan Nadel has installed a powerful show in Gallery 1 exploring notions of transformation and repair, coming at a cultural moment when both are called for. Noted in the *New York Times* for positing alternate paradigms for recent art history, Nadel acknowledges and embraces the art of Northern California as a parallel universe reveling in idiosyncratic experimentation—a counterpoint to the more rigid canon of Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, and Conceptualism born of the East Coast.

We are especially pleased to dedicate all of Gallery 2 for the coming year to the first major West Coast retrospective in nearly forty years of Bay Area artist Viola Frey. Revealing her enormous and impactful output, the show is sure to surprise, featuring rarely seen monumental sculptures along with more intimate works in an astonishing range of mediums, all manifesting a perspective on feminism underscoring unshakable independence through creative expression.

Viola Frey: Center Stage launches a trilogy of solo exhibitions dedicated to women artists whose stories of determination, persistence, and extraordinary talent warrant a new look, and a reevaluation of their contributions to art history. The first institutional retrospective of Jean Conner, including new work, will open in 2020, followed by an exhibition of the under-examined but remarkable Deborah Remington.

di Rosa's 2019 exhibition program amps up our quest to make art and artists an essential part of the human experience.

Robert Sain
Executive Director

Viola Frey: Center Stage Introduction

Viola Frey: Center Stage marks the artist's first major museum survey on the West Coast since 1981 and includes more than 120 objects in ceramics, painting, drawing, and bronze. Spanning four decades, from 1963 to 2002, it is the largest presentation of Frey's work to date, coming at a moment of renewed interest in, and critical attention to, the medium of ceramics. In the many years since Frey's art was last seen on this scale in the Bay Area, much new research has been done, enabling di Rosa to present exciting new perspectives. In addition to the larger-than-life figurative ceramic sculptures for which the artist is renowned, the show includes pieces that have either never or seldom been seen, including a selection of large-scale paintings and works on paper. The diversity and interdisciplinary richness of Frey's art will surprise and delight even those who are already familiar with her work.

Ceramics were not always considered a fine art, worthy of museum exhibitions; historically they were associated with craft and utilitarian objects. But a watershed moment arrived in 1981 with the exhibition *Ceramic Sculpture: Six Artists*, co-organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Curators Suzanne Foley and Richard Marshall selected Robert Arneson, David Gilhooly, John Mason, Kenneth Price, Richard Shaw, and Peter Voulkos to represent the revolution taking place across Northern and Southern California, where ceramics

had been a major activity in university art departments for decades. Two years earlier, Europe had made an equivalent statement with the exhibition *West Coast Ceramics* at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

Viola Frey (1933–2004) had by that point been teaching in the ceramics department of the California College of Arts and Crafts (now CCA) in Oakland for more than fifteen years, while simultaneously maintaining a rigorous studio practice and exhibiting her work in solo and group exhibitions across the country. She maintained active, collegial relationships with Arneson and Voulkos, who helmed the ceramics departments at the University of California at Davis and the University of California at Berkeley, respectively. Frey received both of them as frequent studio visitors; they would look at her latest work and talk about the status of the medium more broadly. Given that she was (and still is) typically mentioned in the same breath as Arneson and Voulkos when discussing the most influential Bay Area ceramic artists, it must have been frustrating to have been eclipsed at this wider moment of critical reception, but at that time the ceramics field was very much male dominated. Given her resistance to categorization, however, Frey surely came away determined to elevate her work on its own terms.

Indeed, at that very moment in 1981, she was being featured in her first major retrospective at the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, which traveled to six other US museums (including the Oakland Museum). This

brought her to the attention of Patterson Sims, the first-ever curator appointed to oversee the permanent collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, who proceeded to feature her in a solo show there in 1984. The most recent major survey of Frey's work, titled *Bigger, Better, More: The Art of Viola Frey* (2009), traveled to several US museums but bypassed the West Coast.

Originally trained as a painter (artists Richard Diebenkorn and Mark Rothko were crucial instructors), Frey moved easily between two- and three-dimensional forms. After pursuing graduate studies at Tulane University in New Orleans and a stint exploring clay at the Clay Art Center in New York, she returned to the Bay Area and devoted her life to pushing the boundaries of her work. She frequently incorporated personal narrative through theoretical and autobiographical references, bold color and scale, and a complex iconography. The artist's wide-ranging interests across identity, class, culture, consumerism, and the precarious state of the environment resonate throughout.

The sculptures and paintings in this exhibition fall into loose thematic clusters: plates, bricolage, single and grouped figures, vessels, paintings on canvas, and works on paper. Pivotal large-scale pieces include *China Goddess Group* (ca. 1979–81), one of the artist's first forays into monumentality, and *The Decline and Fall of Western Civilization* (1992), the most ambitious sculpture of her career. At the opposite end of the spectrum are intimate early works from the 1960s and 1970s, including a re-creation of the experimental *Desert Toys* installation (ca. 1975–77), which echoes the monochromatic surfaces of her last monumental sculptures. Frey's wallpaper produced by the Fabric Workshop in Philadelphia exemplifies

an immersive installation tactic. The presentation as a whole embraces the artist's desire for her sculptures to function as extensions of her paintings and invites close study of surface, glaze chemistry, and technical mastery.

Frey was a fiercely independent artist up to her passing in 2004, and an undercurrent of feminism is discernible throughout her diverse and prolific practice, which placed women at the forefront. While she did not overtly identify as a feminist, her distinct mode of art making and her strong, independent spirit demonstrate an approach to feminism rooted in lived experience and unshakable determination.

Jodi Throckmorton, curator of contemporary art at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, contributes a thoughtful essay in these pages connecting Frey's work to urgent present-day feminist issues concerning women's rights, aging, toxic masculinity, and middle-class life. This timely take on such resonant work also frames the recent art presented in di Rosa's other exhibitions, thereby furthering our mission to provide transformative experiences with the art of Northern California and enhance the understanding and appreciation of contemporary art for a broad public.

—Amy Owen, Curator

VIOLA FREY: WE NO LONGER BELIEVE

Jodi Throckmorton

In pop culture and politics, older women are claiming power like never before—from spunky Sophia Petrillo in the 1980s and '90s sitcom *Golden Girls* to activist grandmas and even a grandmother almost becoming president in 2016. At a moment when the world is reevaluating the statues and symbols that purportedly represent history and authority, Viola Frey's grandmothers become monuments to the growing influence and dogged persistence of these women. In addition, her men—whether wearing stodgy business suits or nothing at all—reveal fraught notions of masculinity. These types of men are compassionately exposed by Frey to be complicated and vulnerable—perhaps a more sincere version of heroism. In 1988, Susan C. Larsen beautifully wrote that Frey's sculpture "is indeed intended to recapture the heroic stance she admires in historical sculpture, to command its own ground and to offer an experience which throws real space and human scale into sharp relief. Disabused of our heroes, gods, and giants, we no longer believe in the efficacy of powerful graven images to inspire us to great deeds. Frey's massive, emotionally flawed personages have the power to remind us of our true state of mind, of the commonplace nature of our aspirations and the tense, conflicted ground of our emotions. . . . Her silent witnesses to the impoverished emotional landscape of contemporary life are disturbing and heroic in their candor."¹ Frey's people are heroes of the everyday that resonate with urgent present-day feminist issues concerning women's rights, aging, toxic masculinity, and middle-class life.

It is necessary and important to acknowledge that Frey did not officially identify as a feminist. Her words on the subject are essential to read, and they reveal a type of feminism—one of doing but not defining or declaring—that was common for artists then, just as it is now. In her Archives of American Art interview with Paul Karlstrom in 1995, Frey clearly acknowledged her awareness of the movement and noted how she "came from a generation of farmer's wives . . . and they were independent."² In addition, she discussed



Untitled (Nude Woman on Lying Man), 1985
Acrylic on paper
Photo: M. Lee Fatherree



Joan Brown, *Girl Standing (Girl with Red Nose)*, 1962
Oil on canvas

the way male faculty members ignored or refused to discuss the work of female students working with feminist subject matter, as well as the violent use of female bodies in the work of other male artists, such as Manuel Neri's "chopped up" and "axed" women³. When asked by Karlstrom if she was "handicapped as a woman," she agreed, yet also stated that "in the sixties, they [feminists] wanted to have all these encounter groups. And I always had to say to myself, 'I don't have the time for that.' . . . They wanted to find a way out of their suburbia condition, and I knew that if they had done it right in the first place, they wouldn't have ended up there."⁴

Though Frey's words may sound harsh to some, this statement reflects a pragmatic feminism sourced from Frey's rural upbringing and derived from a valid impulse to be evaluated on her terms as a great artist without gendered restraints. Many female artists of the 1960s and 1970s—a time when second-wave feminism was in full force—chose not to actively declare themselves part of the feminist art movement despite exemplifying the tenets of liberation in their lives and work. For example, Joan Brown, an artist in the Bay Area at the same time as Frey who made work about self-identity, motherhood, spirituality, and romance, among other subjects typically defined as "feminist," found the feminist approach "a totally exterior motivation for working" and thus contradictory to her own process.⁵ However, Brown remained fiercely committed to female independence and to exploring the female point of view



Untitled (*Grandmother Series*), 1978
Ceramic and glazes

in her work. The impact that those women had on the art world is often overshadowed by female artists who were more vocal about the cause or who made work that is considered more explicitly feminist.⁶

This type of feminism is, perhaps, best exemplified by the generation of women that Frey celebrates in her grandmother sculptures. She brings forward into the 1970s figures from an earlier generation, who, to Frey, exemplified power outside of the home. Her paternal grandmother, for example, was the leader of her family, in charge of the house, the farm animals, the vineyard, and the bookkeeping. Frey watched this exercise in power, noting that she found it more interesting than learning how to make quilts from her maternal grandmother.⁷ This generation of women had helped to lead their families through the Great Depression and worked outside of the home during World War II while their husbands were away—a stark contrast to the women of the 1950s, who were expected to stay at home. She dressed her life-size ceramic grandmothers as if they were off to church in the 1950s or 1960s—with Sunday hats topped with flowers, collared dresses, and peep-toe sandals. To Frey this type of dress demonstrated dignity and its own kind of independence: "You don't feel sorry for my six-foot grandmother with a splashy dress like that; you feel she has a certain leverage and power."⁸ She based her early grandmother sculptures on a woman whom she fondly called "Mrs. National Geographic"—a



Tourist and Winged Victory, 1978
Ceramic and glazes

funder of the magazine and an adventurer often seen in its pages riding ostriches or at the base of a pyramid in Egypt.⁹ Mrs. National Geographic accomplished all of this while wearing the clothing of a proper lady.

In *Old Hag* (1985), Frey seems to take on her own process of growing older. A witch of sorts, the old hag in folklore stories makes no attempt to hide her age and is often portrayed as menacing or sinister. Frey's *Old Hag*, presumably a self-portrait of the artist, seems to take on the stooped position of an archetypal crone, but, in fact, is leaning or even pushing forward with strength, head held high. The sculpture strikes a remarkably similar pose and is draped in the same way as *Winged Victory* of *Samothrace*, a masterpiece of classical sculpture and a symbol of glory and conquest that rests at the top of a grand staircase at the Louvre Museum. It is a dignified, almost classically heroic, portrait of a mature female figure.

There is a remarkable group of sculptures in the exhibition in which Frey creates vignettes or surreal narratives out of slip-cast objects sourced from flea markets.¹⁰ In *Tourist and Winged Victory* (1978), a figure (perhaps one of Frey's adventurous grandmothers) stands on a buckling carpet in front of *Winged Victory* of *Samothrace*. Frey's interest in the figurine—an object collected and lovingly displayed by many grandmothers—is in itself a comment on feminism, as well as class. In her catalogue essay for *Dirt on Delight: Impulses That Form Clay*, an exhibition that included Frey's work,



Pink Man Apologue, 1976
Acrylic on unstretched canvas
Photo: M. Lee Fatherree

Ingrid Schaffner notes that “diminutive scale, decorative surface, exquisite detail, unabashed sentiment, and artisanal craft, these are the terms of the figurine. And if they sound familiar, it’s because feminism has made them a generative means for addressing contemporary life through art for decades.”¹¹ There was certainly a feminist impulse to use domestic knickknacks to make art—Ellen Lanyon, for example, made surreal paintings from a trove of flea market finds that included taxidermied frogs and bowling trophies, while Laurie Simmons photographed dolls in their miniature domestic spaces. The use of nostalgic imagery and objects from the home subverted domestic power structures that favored men, and it reflected the lifestyles and interests of middle-class women, some of whom decorated and arranged figurines and collectables on their shelves at home as an outlet for play and creativity amid domestic drudgery.

A series of Frey's paintings featuring a nude, plastic, male doll she alternatively called “pink man” or “manikin man” in her titles seems to be a continuation of her interest in composing narratives from mass-produced toys and figurines. She photographed many of the scenes that she created with pink man—a body of work that interestingly aligns with the Pictures Generation artists (like Simmons) and their critical eye toward social constructions of sexuality and gender. Frey's paintings of pink man in fanciful scenes are frilly, frothy, and abundant; they are over-the-top in

their stereotypical femininity. Surrounded by an improbably scaled cocker spaniel and rooster, pink man is frequently depicted lovingly grasping a classical sculpture of the goddess Venus—most sweetly in *Pink Man, Venus and Gold* (1975), where he seems to gently press his body against the sculpture. Frey's men often seem vulnerable, dejected by a world that did not live up to its promises. Even her towering ceramic men in business suits—symbols of commerce, prestige, and competency—are awkwardly, almost mechanically posed, with crestfallen faces and body postures.

As early as the 1970s, Frey seemed to identify the beginnings of a cultural fault line that is only now becoming widely recognized. Recent headlines in the *New York Times* like “Seventy and Female Is the New Cool” and segments on Fox News that assess the purported troubled state of men in America demonstrate a change rumbling to the surface. Frey's work suggests that this crumbling of prestige and redistribution of privilege ultimately will be achieved through everyday deeds of heroism. However clichéd it now seems, the feminist statement that “the personal is political” resonates in the here and now, just as it did during Frey's lifetime. Her words lead us to understand the space in which these battles will take place. Frey noted that she “like[s] the space just between—a space into which private and public merge, each anticipating the other, a shift from the self to society.”¹²

Notes

1. Susan C. Larsen, *Viola Frey: Monumental Figures, 1978–1987* (San Francisco: Rena Bransten Gallery, 1988), 3.
2. Oral history interview with Viola Frey, February 27–June 19, 1995. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Oral history interview with Joan Brown, July 1–September 9, 1975. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
6. Portions of this were adapted from Throckmorton's essay “A Different Approach: Joan Brown, Viola Frey, and the Feminist Art Movement,” in *The Female Gaze: Women Artists Making Their World* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 2013).
7. Oral history interview with Viola Frey, February 27–June 19, 1995. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
8. Susan Wechsler, *Low-Fire Ceramics: A New Direction in American Clay* (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 1981), 73.
9. Reena Jana, *Viola Frey* (San Francisco: Rena Bransten Gallery, 1998), 5.
10. Ibid., 11.
11. Ingrid Schaffner, “On Dirt,” in *Dirt and Delight: Impulses That Form Clay* (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 2009), 28.
12. Davira S. Taragin and Patterson Sims, *Bigger, Better, More: The Art of Viola Frey* (New York and Manchester: Hudson Hills Press and Racine Art Museum, 2009), 71.



Pink Man, Venus and Gold, 1975
Gouache and ink on paper

About the Author

Jodi Throckmorton is the curator of contemporary art at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Prior to joining PAFA in fall 2014, she was curator of modern and contemporary art at the Ulrich Museum of Art, Wichita State University, Kansas, and had previously been associate curator at the San Jose Museum of Art, California. Throckmorton recently co-curated the exhibition and publication *Rina Banerjee: Make Me a Summary of the World* (2018). Other projects include *Melt/Carve/Forge: Embodied Sculptures by Cassils* (2016); *Alyson Shotz: Plane Weave* (2016); *Postdate: Photography and Inherited History in India* (2015); *Bruce Conner: Somebody Else's Prints* (2014); *Questions from the Sky: New Work by Hung Liu* (2013); *Dive Deep: Eric Fischl and the Process of Painting* (2013); *Ranu Mukherjee: Telling Fortunes* (2012); and *This Kind of Bird Flies Backward: Paintings by Joan Brown* (2011).

Works in the Exhibition

Viola Frey

Untitled (Lidded Teapot with Dimple), ca. 1963–64
Ceramic
9 × 6 ¼ × 3 ½ in.

Untitled (Wall Hanging of Female Figure), 1965
Ceramic and glazes
15 ¾ × 10 ½ × 3 ½ in.

Untitled (Hand Holding Vessels), ca. 1965–68
Ceramic and glazes
10 ¼ × 21 ½ × 11 ½ in.

Untitled (Silver Luster Tray with Pink Figures), 1967
Ceramic, glazes, and silver luster
15 ¾ × 15 ¼ × 3 ½ in.

A Visually Haunting Image, 1968
Stoneware and silver leaf
14 ½ × 15 × 15 ½ in.

Planet Full of People (Pink Nudes), 1969
Ceramic and glazes
16 ½ × 18 × 20 in.



Space Age Series (Ice Planet/Planet Pot), 1969
Stoneware and glazes
22 × 16 × 16 in.



Untitled (Blue Cloud Tray), 1969
Ceramic and glazes
11 ½ × 17 ½ × 2 ½ in.

Untitled (Copper Luster Tray with Black and Orange Figure), 1969
Ceramic, glazes, and copper luster
8 × 8 ⅞ × 1 ½ in.

Untitled (Gold Luster Tray with Dog and Two Women), 1969
Ceramic, glazes, and gold luster
13 ½ × 11 × 2 ½ in.

Untitled (Vessel with Clouds and Nudes), 1969
Ceramic and glazes
17 × 10 × 10 in.

Untitled (Cloud Plate with Figures), ca. 1969
Ceramic, glazes, and silver luster
16 × 14 × 2 in.
Collection of Foote Family Trust



Untitled (Blue Cloud Tray), 1969
Ceramic and glazes
11 ½ × 17 ½ × 2 ½ in.

Untitled (Tray with Pink Figurines and Blue Forms), 1969
Ceramic and glazes
15 × 15 × 3 ¾ in.

Untitled (Two Inverted Pink Figures with Blue Checks), 1969
Ceramic and glazes
14 ⅞ × 15 ½ × 3 ½ in.

Untitled (Tray with Blue Cloud and Silver Stripe), 1969
Ceramic, glazes, and silver luster
7 × 7 × 1 ¾ in.

Untitled (White Cloud Tray), 1969
Ceramic and glazes
6 × 13 ¼ × 1 ¾ in.

Untitled (Bowl with Two Blue Female Figures), ca. 1969–71
Ceramic and glazes
20 ½ × 20 ½ × 5 in.

Junkyard Planet, 1970
Whiteware and glazes
44 × 18 × 18 in.

Untitled (Blue Striped Goblet with Suspended Pink Woman), 1970
Ceramic, glazes, and silver luster
8 ½ × 6 ¼ × 2 in.

Untitled (Green Goblet with Suspended Pink Woman, Space Ship Series), 1970
Ceramic, glazes, and gold luster
7 ½ × 7 ½ × 6 ½ in.

Bowl, ca. 1970
Ceramic and glazes
7 ½ × 18 × 18 in.
di Rosa Collection

Goblet Blue Bird, ca. 1970
Ceramic, glazes, and silver luster
10 × 5 × 5 in.
Collection of Foote Family Trust



Goblet Woman Theme,
ca. 1970
Ceramic, glazes, and
gold luster
9 × 8 × 6 in.
Collection of Foote
Family Trust

*Pair of Standing Women
Nudes*, ca. 1970
Ceramic, glazes, and
bronze luster
9 × 3 × 3 in.
Collection of Foote
Family Trust



Untitled, ca. 1970
Ceramic and glazes
11 ½ × 10 ½ × 10 ½ in.
Collection of Foote
Family Trust

*Untitled (Goblet with Gold
Form and Rim)*, 1970
Ceramic, glazes, and
gold luster
7 ¼ × 5 ½ × 3 ¾ in.

*Untitled (Goblet with Green
Stem, Figure and Forms)*,
1970
Ceramic, glazes, and
gold luster
10 ½ × 6 ½ × 3 ½ in.

*Untitled (Orange Goblet
with White Stripes)*, 1970
Ceramic, glazes, and
gold luster
10 ¼ × 6 ½ × 4 ½ in.

*Untitled (Goblet with Orange
Form and Gold Stem)*, 1970
Ceramic, glazes, and
gold luster
8 × 5 ½ × 5 in.
*Untitled (Green Goblet with
Suspended Pink Woman,
Space Ship Series)*, 1970
Ceramic, glazes, and
gold luster
7 ¼ × 5 ¼ × 4 in.

*Untitled (Blue Striped
Goblet with Suspended Pink
Woman)*, 1970
Ceramic, glazes, and
silver luster
8 ½ × 6 ¼ × 5 in.

Untitled (Goblet), ca. 1970
Ceramic and glazes
14 ½ × 7 ½ × 5 in.

*Deer, Endangered Animal
Series*, ca. 1972–74
Ceramic and glazes
35 × 20 × 21 in.
Photo: M. Lee Fatherree



Myth Bowl, 1973
Ceramic and glazes
18 ¾ × 18 ¾ × 5 ¾ in.

Non-Endangered Beaver,
1973
Whiteware and glazes
41 ½ × 26 × 24 in.

Chicken on a Chair, 1974
Ceramic and glazes
9 ½ × 15 ¼ × 17 ½ in.

China Goddess Painting,
1975
Acrylic on unstretched
canvas
19 ½ × 28 in.

L.A. Wall Piece, 1975
Ceramic and glazes
20 ¾ × 17 ¾ × 2 in.

Manikin Man and Swan, 1975
Acrylic on unstretched
canvas
22 ¾ × 30 ¼ in.

Pink Man and Venus, 1975
Watercolor on paper
22 × 30 in.

Pink Man, Venus and Gold,
1975
Gouache and ink on paper
22 ¼ × 13 ¾ in.

*Small World Civilization and
Culture Box*, 1975
Ceramic and glazes
10 ½ × 9 ½ × 9 ½ in.

Untitled (Bather Plaque),
1975
Ceramic and glazes
17 × 22 × 2 ½ in.

Wall Piece (Winged Sphinx),
1975
Ceramic and glazes
19 ½ × 19 ½ × 3 ½ in.

*Untitled (White Desert Glove
with Swirl)*, ca. 1975–80
Ceramic and glazes
11 × 8 ¼ × 6 in.

Father's Farm, ca. 1975–76
Oil and acrylic on canvas
58 × 78 in.
Photo: M. Lee Fatherree



*Untitled (Face in Desert Toy
Plate)*, ca. 1975–76
Ceramic
13 × 12 ½ × 1 ¾ in.

*Desert Toys series
installation*, ca. 1975–77
Ceramic and glazes
Dimensions variable



Pink Man Apologue, 1976
Acrylic on unstretched
canvas
23 × 31 in.
[Photo: M. Lee Fatherree]

Dancing Monster Head, 1977
Ceramic and glazes
26 × 26 × 5 in.

Flower Head Man, 1977
Ceramic and glazes
20 ½ × 10 ½ × 6 in.



Self-Portrait, 1977
Ceramic and glazes
20 ½ × 20 ½ × 3 in.

*Self, Rooster and Manikin
Man*, 1977
Ceramic and glazes
19 ½ × 19 ½ × 2 ½ in.

*Skeleton and Horse and
Questioning Woman*, 1977
Ceramic and glazes
21 ½ × 21 ½ × 3 in.

*Untitled (Face Made from
White Figure Stencils)*, 1977
Whiteware and glazes
20 × 20 × 2 ½ in.

Untitled (Rabbit Head), 1977
Ceramic and glazes
20 × 20 × 3 in.

Viola (Plate), 1977
Ceramic and glazes
19 ½ × 19 ½ × 3 in.

*Untitled (Circle Group
of Figurine Stencils)*, ca.
1977–78
Whiteware and glazes
19 ½ × 19 × 2 ½ in.

*Untitled (Pink Self-Portrait in
Profile)*, ca. 1977–78
Ceramic and glazes
18 ¾ × 18 ¾ × 2 in.

*Untitled (Orange Profile
of Viola)*, ca. 1977–78
Ceramic
19 ⅝ × 19 ⅝ × 2 ⅝ in.

Grandmother's Teacup, 1978
Ceramic and glazes
25 × 15 × 14 ¾ in.

H.K. in Doorway, 1978
Ceramic and glazes
26 ½ × 26 × 3 ½ in.



Pitcher of Mother, 1978
Ceramic and glazes
23 ½ × 10 ½ × 12 in.

Skeleton with Venus, 1978
Ceramic and glazes
19 ½ × 19 ½ × 2 in.

Tourist and Winged Victory,
1978
Ceramic and glazes
17 × 20 ½ × 13 in.

*Untitled (Dark Silhouetted
Skeleton and Horse and
Questioning Woman)*, 1978
Ceramic and glazes
21 × 21 × 3 in.

*Untitled (Double Self
Dialogue with Brown and
Green)*, 1978
Ceramic and glazes
20 × 20 × 3 in.

*Untitled (Grandmother
Series)*, 1978
Ceramic and glazes
70 × 22 ½ × 23 in.
di Rosa Collection

*Untitled (Silhouettes of
Manikin Man, Rooster and
Cart)*, 1978
Ceramic and glazes
21 × 21 × 3 in.

*Untitled (Silhouettes of
Woman and Skeleton on a
Cart Next to a Figure #1)*,
1978
Ceramic and glazes
24 × 24 × 13 in.

*Untitled (Silhouettes of
Woman and Skeleton on a
Cart Next to a Figure #2)*,
1978
Ceramic and glazes
19 ½ × 19 ½ × 2 ½ in.

*Untitled (Silhouettes with
Head and Polka-Dotted
Hand)*, 1978
Ceramic and glazes
20 × 20 × 3 ⅛ in.

*Untitled (Vessel Bust with
Ladle and Doll)*, 1978
Ceramic and glazes
28 ½ × 13 × 20 ½ in.

*Untitled (White Oval Head
against Gray)*, 1978
Ceramic and glazes
25 ½ × 25 ½ × 4 in.

Untitled (White Silhouette People and Animals), 1978
Ceramic and glazes
19 ¾ × 19 ¾ × 3 in.

Willa Cather's America, 1978
Whiteware, glazes, and china paint
82 × 30 × 30 in.
Courtesy of the Bransten Gallagher Collection

Art I, ca. 1978
Ceramic and glazes
19 ¼ × 19 ¼ × 3 in.

Untitled (Blue Nude Standing on Crouching Figure), ca. 1978–80
Oil on paper
30 ½ × 23 in.

Phobia: Monster Head Don't Die Yet, 1979
Ceramic and glazes
25 × 14 × 12 in.

Phobia: Monster Head Don't Eat Too Much, 1979
Ceramic and glazes
25 × 15 × 12 in.

Phobia: Monster Head Don't Shout, 1979
Ceramic and glazes
25 × 14 × 12 in.



Untitled (Blue Figure Stencils #2), 1979
Ceramic and glazes
Edition of 10
21 × 21 × 3 in.

Untitled (Oval Head, Blue Wavy Lines), 1979
Ceramic and glazes
20 ½ × 20 ½ × 2 in.

Untitled (White Oval Head and White Gloves), 1979
Ceramic and glazes
24 ¾ × 24 ¾ × 3 in.

China Goddess Group, ca. 1979–81
Whiteware and glazes
Dimensions variable



Three Graces, ca. 1979–81
Whiteware and glazes
77 × 54 × 21 in.



Untitled (White Monster Face on Blue), ca. 1979–81
Ceramic and glazes
20 ¼ × 20 ¾ × 3 in.

Monster Chaos, 1980
Ceramic and glazes
24 ½ × 24 ½ × 3 in.

Monster/Mind/Chaos, 1980
Ceramic and glazes
24 ½ × 24 ½ × 3 in.

Red Horse, 1980
Acrylic polymer on paper attached to canvas
77 × 56 in.
di Rosa Collection

Untitled (Manikin Couple), 1980
Oil and acrylic on paper
31 × 23 in.
Collection of Jack and Zelig Myers

Untitled (Manikin Man and Rose), 1980
Ceramic and glazes
25 × 25 × 4 ½ in.

Untitled (Robot Man and Sculpture), 1980
Oil and acrylic on paper mounted on canvas
32 × 23 in.

Untitled (Three Graces, Drapes, and Grey), 1980
Acrylic and oil pastel on paper
30 × 22 ½ in.

Untitled (Bowl with Oval Head and Hand), 1981
Ceramic and glazes
13 ½ × 13 ½ × 3 in.

Untitled (Two White Figure Surrounded by Yellow and Green Beads), 1981
Ceramic and glazes
20 ¼ × 20 ¼ × 3 in.

The Voyage, 1981
Oil on canvas
77 × 53 in.

Untitled (Blue Oval, Hands Holding Glasses, Stenciled Figures and Figurines), ca. 1981
Oil and acrylic on paper
60 × 40 in.
Photo: M. Lee Fatherree



Studio View—Man with Half Red Face, 1982
Alkyd oil on paper
60 × 40 in.
di Rosa Collection, gift of Bob Earnest

Old Age Spiral, 1983
Ceramic and glazes
25 × 25 × 3 ½ in.

Studio View: Man in Doorway, 1983
Alkyd oil on canvas
105 × 163 in.



Studio View: One Man Splitting, 1983
Alkyd oil on canvas
72 × 96 in.
di Rosa Collection

Untitled (Man Hoisting Nude), 1984
Acrylic on paper
31 × 22 in.

Untitled (Greek Hag Figure on Back of Figure in Chair), ca. 1984–85
Gouache and charcoal on paper
31 × 22 ½ in.

Untitled (Female Nude and Man in Suit with Green Hair), 1985
Oil on canvas
62 × 51 in.

Untitled (Man Leaning over Reclining Figure), 1985
Acrylic on paper
31 × 22 in.

Untitled (Man Standing on Glove), 1985
Bronze and paint
28 ½ × 13 ½ × 13 ½ in.



Untitled (Man with Vessel and Reclining Woman), 1985
Bronze, gold leaf, and china paint
19 × 24 × 13 in.

Untitled (Nude Woman on Lying Man), 1985
Acrylic on paper
31 × 22 in.
Photo: M. Lee Fatherree

Old Hag, 1985
Ceramic and glazes
33 × 18 × 15 in.
di Rosa Collection

Untitled (Abstract Standing Female Nude), ca. 1986–87
Oil on paper
30 × 23 in.

Untitled (Urn and Nudes), 1987
Charcoal and pastel on paper mounted on board
45 ¾ × 61 ¾ × 2 ½ in.
di Rosa Collection, gift of Robert Earnest

Untitled (Blue Buddha, Bird with Torch, Small Plate), 1988
Ceramic and glazes
29 × 29 × 9 in.
di Rosa Collection

Untitled (Blue Urn), 1988
Pastel on paper
41 ¼ × 59 in.
di Rosa Collection

The Decline and Fall of Western Civilization, 1992
Ceramic and glazes
95 × 202 × 66 in.



Wallpaper, from the series Artist's Mind/Studio/World, 1992
Reproduction vinyl of silkscreen original
Dimensions variable

Untitled (Plate with Seated Figures, Green Shape and Black Eyes), 1994
Ceramic and glazes
25 × 25 × 4 ½ in.

Untitled (Blue Hands and White Fan), 1997

Ceramic and glazes
26 × 26 × 4 ½ in.
Photo: M. Lee Fatherree

Seated Figure with Vase, 1998

Ceramic and glazes
69 × 60 × 36 in.
di Rosa Collection

Untitled (Hand with Black X and Faces), 1999

Ceramic and glazes
26 × 26 × 6 in.

Untitled (Four Men at Table and Two Faces in Profile), 2001

Ceramic and glazes
25 × 25 × 4 ½ in.

Untitled (Orange Monkey Riding Horses), 2002

Ceramic and glazes
26 × 26 × 6 in.

Unless otherwise noted,
all works are courtesy the
Artists' Legacy Foundation

Outside

All works from the di Rosa
Collection

Viola Frey

Group, 1985
Painted and glazed ceramic
102 × 104 × 52 in.

Reclining Nude #2, 1987

Ceramic and glazes
40 × 109 × 49 in.

Robert Arneson

Viola de Lodi, 1988
Glazed ceramic
56 ½ × 24 × 32 inches
Gift of Robert Arneson and
Sandra Shannonhouse

Hallway

Collection in Context
All works from the di Rosa
Collection

Robert Arneson

Balancing Act, 1976
Ceramic
38 × 14 × 7 in.

Joan Brown

Girl Standing (Girl with Red Nose), 1962
Oil on canvas
60 × 48 in.

Manuel Neri

Coming in Last Thursday, 1987
Oil-based enamel and
bronze
64 × 23 ¼ × 14 ½ in.

Peter Voulkos

Plate, 1973
Stoneware with porcelain
21 ½ × 21 ½ × 4 ½ in.

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Artist Biography

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.

Curator's Acknowledgments

An exhibition of this size and complexity is never the undertaking of a single person, and *Center Stage* has been more of a collaboration than most. I would like to thank Artists' Legacy Foundation (ALF) for their unflagging support in producing this monumental undertaking. Codirectors Cynthia de Bos and Julia Schwartz offered their deep knowledge, encouragement, and dedication to all aspects of the exhibition. I also wish to thank Pauline Shaver, former executive director, for her early support of the project. ALF provided critical access to Frey's archives and made more than 2,500 objects available for research and consideration. Without their steadfast stewardship and collaborative spirit, much of this work would otherwise not be able to be seen.

di Rosa owes a great debt of gratitude to all the lenders who have kindly entrusted their works to our care for the run of the exhibition so that others may experience the art of Viola Frey: ALF, Trish Bransten, William and Peggy Foote, Nancy Hoffman, and Jack and Zelig Myers. We also wish to thank the donors to this exhibition, without whose involvement this project could not have been realized. We are grateful to ALF, Dana Simpson-Stokes and Ken Stokes, Blow Up Lab, and di Rosa's Patrons Circle for their generous support.

Robin Bernhard, di Rosa's exhibitions and collections manager, did heroic work in managing every aspect of the loan, transport, and handling of many delicate and difficult artworks. Artist Sam Perry expertly led our installation team to safely and swiftly install Frey's monumental sculptures, and Richard A. Ward Fellow Jordan Holms ably assisted with writing and research.

Finally, I extend my warmest appreciation to di Rosa's Board of Trustees for their continuing support and commitment to all of di Rosa's activities. They join me in expressing gratitude to everyone who has contributed to making this project possible.

Public Programs

Community Open Studios / Haciendo Arte con Todos

11 AM- 3 PM

2/23, 4/6, 6/1, 8/24, 12/7

Community Open Studios / Haciendo Arte con Todos is made possible with support from the Five Arts Fund and the Napa Valley Community Foundation.

March 23 / 24,

Viola Frey Clay Workshop for Families:

Portrait Plates

9 AM- 12 PM | MarinMOCA

April 6

In Conversation: Stewarding a Legacy: The Care and Conservation of Viola Frey's Work with Rowan Geiger, Robin Bernhard, and Cynthia De Bos, moderated by di Rosa Curator Amy Owen

3-5 PM | Gallery 2

May 11

di Rosa Days

10 AM-4 PM | Site-wide

May 11

Afternoon Exchange: Rethinking Northern California Figurative Painting with di Rosa Guest Curator Dan Nadel and Company

June 1

In Conversation: About Mentorship with Andrea Saenz Williams, di Rosa Director of Education and Civic Engagement and Allison Smith, Dean, Fine Arts Division, California College of the Arts

3-5 PM | Gallery 2

June 11, 18

interACTIVE

6 PM-8 PM | Napa County Library Main Branch

July 16, 23

interACTIVE

6 PM-8 PM | Napa County Library Main Branch

September 7

In Conversation: Architecture of Resilience with Brandon Jorgensen of Atelier Jorgensen and Guests

3-5 PM | Gallery 2

October

interACTIVE

5 PM-7 PM | Wednesdays | Sonoma Valley Regional Library

October 5

di Rosa Days

10 AM-4 PM | Site-wide

October 5

Afternoon Exchange: A co-organized discussion with di Rosa Curator Amy Owen and California College of the Arts Ceramics Chair Nathan Lynch

2:30-5 PM | Gallery 2

November 2

In Conversation: di Rosa Guest Curator Dan Nadel and Company

3-5 PM | Gallery 2

For information about these and other programs please visit dirosaart.org

Community Partnerships

Arts Council Napa Valley

Boys & Girls Clubs of Napa Valley

California College of the Arts

Community Resources for Children

MarinMOCA

Napa County Library

Napa Valley College Performing Arts

Nimbus Arts

Sonoma Valley Regional Library

Jeremy Benson, Poet-in-Residence, *Viola Frey: Center Stage*

Jeremy Benson is the current Poet Laureate of Napa County; whether as a participant, patron, or planner, Jeremy endeavors to cultivate a rich community of writers, readers, and artists. His poems have appeared in *Spittoon*, *Dead Flowers*, and *Mirage Period(ical)*. He is the co-founder of the Broken Nose Collective, an annual exchange of hand-made chapbooks. He lives in Napa with his dog Wendell.

As Poet-in-Residence for *Viola Frey: Center Stage*, Benson will craft twelve original short poems inspired by works in the exhibition. Visitors are invited to take-a-poem and leave-a-poem in exchange.

