



Last year di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art featured an exhibition of works by Viola Frey, a prolific Bay Area artist.



**Viola Frey in her studio, 1986.
Photo by Christopher Felver,
on artistslegacyfoundation.org**



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WHEN WAS HER LAST MAJOR
WEST COAST RETROSPECTIVE?

☐ 5 Years

☐ 20 Years

☒ 30 Years

☐ 40 Years

Viola Frey in her studio, 1986.
Photo by Christopher Felver,
on artistslegacyfoundation.org



Answer:
30 YEARS!



Viola Frey in her studio, 1986.
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Viola Frey (1933-2004),
received her BFA and an
honorary doctorate from
California College of Arts and
Crafts (now known as CCA).
She additionally attended
Tulane University and studied
under the likes of George
Rickey, Katherine Choy, and
Mark Rothko. She returned to
the Bay Area and worked
from a studio space in San
Francisco before relocating to
Oakland. She was a faculty
member at CCA from 1964
until 1999.

**Frey's works are held in
numerous collections
worldwide.**

She is most widely known for her **ceramics**, but *Viola Frey: Center Stage* presented the opportunity to display a variety of works including paintings, drawings, sculptures, and some pieces seldom ever displayed to the public.



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New York. Photograph by Lowell Downey, 2018.

The *Decline and Fall of Western Civilization* is one such work that has rarely been exhibited. Created for a public installation in Esprit Sculpture Park in San Francisco, the sculpture was vandalized and later put into storage.

Interestingly, this piece features some major elements that were recycled from other sculptures.



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

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New York. Photograph by Lowell Downey, 2018.

“It's the biggest piece she's ever done. But that piece is full of, at least—I can name two, probably three—I wouldn't say rejects. One was a woman that was too big and she just said, ‘She's too big and horrible I'll just use the legs for something else.’ So she's cut off at the knees basically.”

“And she just stands there. And the other one, before I ever started working there, the lift that we used, we had a hydraulic lift that we used to beam the pieces up and down. I guess when Kevin (Anderson) was working for her, it rolled and knocked the piece down before he had the shoulders on it. So it's a bust basically—Viola never let him forget it. ‘Oh, we'd have a forklift if you didn't knock that piece over.’”

Artist **Sam Perry**, from an oral history interview for the Archives of American Art in 2014.



A di Rosa gallery teacher leads an activity with students in front of the monumental sculpture.

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