di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art Outdoor Sculpture Labels Fall, 2020

Veronica di Rosa
Canadian, 1934–1991
Diretto Di Passaggio (Aqueduct), 1990
Steel, patina, rust
Born in Canada in 1934, Veronica di Rosa attended the Emily Carr School of Art, Vancouver, B.C. (BFA, 1969). A watercolor painter, sculptor and author of cookbooks, she married vineyard owner Rene di Rosa and was active in the fine art community in Napa Valley. The di Rosas donated the buildings and part of their winery to establish the di Rosa Preserve: Art & Nature and what is today di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art.

Manuel Neri
American, b. 1930
Posturing Series, 1985
Bronze with patina
Neri is considered a key member of the second generation of the Bay Area Figurative Artists, who applied the visceral mark-making of the Abstract Expressionists to classical figuration. We see this in how Neri chips, gouges, and scratches the surfaces of his sculptures in order to convey a painterly quality of movement. For “Posturing Series”, Neri took inspiration from a still photograph sourced from the fashion magazine Italian Vogue. Notice how the artist focuses our attention on the gesture of the body by removing the elements that he sees as defining “character”—the hands, feet, and face.

Al Farrow
American, b. 1943
Soap Box Derbyman, 1978
Wood and steel
Al Farrow built this piece for the 1979 San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's Artists' Soap Box Derby, an event in which eighty-seven artists were invited to design and race their sculptural “cars” down a 1,000' incline in San Francisco. Farrow’s entry into the contest consists of an elongated human form carved from wood. The stealth racer grips one wheel in his hands and props his feet atop two more, beckoning us to cheer him on. During the race, the derby’s announcer cautioned onlookers, “If one of these cars runs into you, remember, you are being hit by a work of art.”

Viola Frey
American, 1933–2004
Reclining Nude #2, 1987
Ceramic and glazes
This sculpture is an homage to Frey’s studio assistant, Kevin Anderson, who died of an AIDS-related illness. It renders the nude male in Frey’s signature, fleshy style—notice how the body’s over-exaggerated muscles seem to exude their humanity beneath Frey’s vibrantly colored glazes. Throughout art history, the reclining nude is portrayed as a woman who serves as an object of desire. By putting a man in this role, Frey intervenes in this tradition while challenging gender stereotypes.

William T. Wiley
American, b. 1937
Harp, 1986
Steel and paint
While Wiley is best known as a visual artist, he also practiced as a musician. This piece demonstrates his interest in incorporating music into his artistic practice via instruments, structures, and sounds. Here, Wiley collapses elements of the sonic and visual arts into an interactive form. You are encouraged to “play” the harp using the baton attached to the sculpture.

Robert Hudson
American, b. 1938
Figure of Speech, 1984
Steel and paint
In this sculpture, Hudson transforms a stick figure into a three-dimensional object, playfully investigating the relationship between form and illusion. As we circumnavigate the work, our perception of the structure shifts from flat to sculptural. Part of a larger series of works, Figure of Speech came out of Hudson’s mounting interest in assemblage, which became popularized in the Bay Area as an artistic strategy that created art by assembling disparate objects. To produce his assemblage constructions, Hudson would often collect materials from antique stores, junkyards, and a government surplus yard that he was given access to while an Assistant Professor at UC Berkeley. Hudson fabricated various components to move with the wind, such as the head, right foot, and shield. By doing so, he challenges the common assumption that sculptures are static.
Charles Ginnever
American, 1931–2019

Rashomon, 1994
Bronze with patina

In this sculpture, Ginnever addresses perceptual concerns that are central to his artistic practice. The sculpture originated from his interest in forms that are capable of standing in multiple positions. Here we see three such forms that are identical except for their positioning—the piece can be rotated into eleven different positions. According to Ginnever, “My work sits motionless and is only activated by the viewer moving around it—only then does it start to perform.”

Angelika Hofmann
Germany, b. 1952

Sky Space, 2000
Adobe

The adobe Hofmann uses in this sculpture is susceptible to natural processes such as entropy and biological overgrowth. The artist writes, “My primary material is earth. I find it very minimal, close to nothingness. It embraces all, but we like to forget that we come from it.” The structure is left exposed to nature: wind and rain will eventually erode it and bring the materials back to earth, from which they came.

Gordon Huether
American, b. 1959

di Rosa Pyramid, 1997
Steel, dichroic glass with “INNER-LITE” panels, crushed tempered glass

Huether created this work as a gift of appreciation for Rene di Rosa. The artist intended it to be in visual dialogue with another pyramidal structure at neighboring Artesa Winery, where many Huether sculptures live. The sculpture is made of dual paneled, tempered glass that has been etched and laminated with dichroic glass before being sealed into a thermal unit—a technique developed and patented by the artist’s studio. The broken glass around the perimeter was a later addition.

Alan Shepp
American, b. 1935

Poetry Houses, 1991
Green, mottled, red, black, and purple slate

These separate but interrelated sculptures are minimal and portal-like. They reference the four corners of the world, but not specific countries or continents. Instead of prescribing meaning to each house, Shepp invites us to make our own distinctions and to draw connections between past, present, and future.

Ray Beldner
American, b. 1961

Nature Remains, 1993
Metal

In this sculpture, Beldner investigates our relationship to the natural world and social systems we live within. Originally created as a site-specific public art piece for one of the last undeveloped hillsides by interstate 580 near Dublin, California, the title of this work is taken from the last words of Walt Whitman’s 1882 poem, “Nature Remains”:

“After you have exhausted what there is in business, politics, conviviality, and so on—have found that none of these finally satisfy, or permanently wear—what remains? Nature remains.”

Crosby Thornton Marshall Associates

Steel, concrete, and glass

Sitting at the juncture of architecture and sculpture, this massive work served as the entrance to the Venice Biennale at Fort Mason in San Francisco in the summer of 1982. Entry Portal was built solely for that exhibition and it was originally intended for destruction after the Biennale ended. Rene di Rosa determined to acquire the structure and site it at the edge of this olive grove, creating a theatrical framing device for an otherwise bucolic setting.