



**FIRST MAJOR JIM MELCHERT RETROSPECTIVE TO DEBUT AT DI ROSA  
SAN FRANCISCO**



*Images, left to right: Jim Melchert, **Feathers of a Phoenix (Blue)**, 2003-4, **Broken and fired porcelain tile with glaze**, 70 x 82 inches; Jim Melchert at home in Oakland, California, 2021, photographed by Griff Williams..*

**San Francisco, CA (Tuesday, September 16, 2025)** - di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art is pleased to announce the **first major retrospective** by the seminal Bay Area artist Jim Melchert. ***Jim Melchert: Where the Boundaries Are*** will open at **di Rosa San Francisco** on **October 18**, and will be on view through January 3. Melchert is often described as the “great philosopher of the post-war craft movement,” and the exhibition will celebrate and explore the legacy of one of America’s great artists, who challenged ceramic tradition of expression, form, and function and helped elevate the medium’s acceptance into mainstream contemporary sculpture. Curated by **Griff Williams**, founder of Gallery 16 and a close friend of Melchert’s, the exhibition will delve into his storied career, bringing together more than 60 works that span six decades for the first time, including several works that haven’t been publicly exhibited before.

Melchert was a central figure in a community of California artists in the 1960s who elevated the field of ceramics to a contemporary artform. He became a landmark figure in American art along with friends Pete Voulkos, Robert Arneson, Ruth Asawa, Bruce Conner, Roy De Forest, and Bruce Nauman. Through the works on view, the exhibition will explore Melchert’s work with

Voulkos, Ken Price, Viola Frey and Nagle in the 1960s, and will document the artist's involvement in the California Funk movement, his groundbreaking 1970s performances, his conceptual art, and showcases the thrilling broken tile works that preoccupied the artist at the end of his career.

"Melchert's artwork was the embodiment of his kind and inquisitive spirit," said curator Griff Williams. "We see in his late tile work a metaphor for life. What lies behind these broken shards in Melchert's mesmerizing works is something remarkable: Optimism. Nothing is beyond repair. These works are born from the belief that we have the power to bring positive change from our misfortune. By embracing the imperfect, he was celebrating our resilience, diversity, and human strength."

Melchert had a long and deeply influential career, and di Rosa is a natural fit to celebrate his work and legacy. Founder Rene di Rosa was an early collector and longtime friend of Melchert. Among the works in the exhibition will be a large-scale photograph of Melchert's seminal 1965 work "Earth Door," a land-art work commissioned by di Rosa. To create the work, which is still on view at di Rosa's Napa property, Melchert dug a mold into the land that echoed the pattern of plowed vineyards. He then poured concrete and eventually stood the casting upright, a monument to the land and the place.

"di Rosa was central to Melchert's life and career," said Kate Eilertsen, Executive Director and Chief Curator at di Rosa. "Over decades spent there in fellowship with other artists, it became a place that nurtured and expanded his multi-faceted, genre-bending practice. We are proud to present this overdue retrospective of a towering figure in the history of Northern California art."

Melchert was noted for his openness to experimentation and his encouragement of that in others. While championing the new with particular emphasis on conceptualism and clay, he also set standards of integrity and grace among artists. A philosophical concept underscores Melchert's artwork, proposing that when something is broken, it can be repaired and made stronger and more beautiful. We see in Melchert's tile work a metaphor for life. What lies behind these broken shards in Melchert's mesmerizing works is something remarkable: optimism. Nothing is beyond repair. These works are born from the belief that we have the power to bring positive change from our misfortune and contribute to the depth of our shared story.

The first-ever monograph on Melchert, *Jim Melchert: Where The Boundaries Are*, written by Griff Williams, will accompany the exhibition. The book is 256 pages of color illustrations with essays by artists and curatorial luminaries capture the artist's work in every stage of his

illustrious career illuminating his performance art and his celebrated ceramic works. The monograph includes essays by Tanya Zimbardo, Sequoia Miller, Renny Pritikin, and Maria Porges.

## **ABOUT JIM MELCHERT**

Jim Melchert (1930-2023) was born in New Bremen, OH and died in Oakland, CA. He received degrees from Princeton and the University of California, Berkeley, where he studied ceramic with Voulkos. He taught at the San Francisco Art Institute and then at UC Berkeley. He was director of the Visual Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts from 1977 until 1981 and in doing so, he created the Peer Review system used in nearly every field today. He is widely regarded as one of the most fierce defenders of artistic freedoms. He was also Director of the American Academy in Rome from 1984 until 1988.

His work has been exhibited extensively throughout the world and is included in such prestigious collections and Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto; World Ceramic Center; Icheon, Korea; Museum of Art & Design, New York; Renwick Gallery; Smithsonian Institution; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the di Rosa, Napa; and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven.

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

di Rosa is a non-profit art center and nature preserve specializing in the art of Northern California. Located at 5200 Sonoma Highway, di Rosa includes a permanent collection comprised of more than 1600 works housed in a large art gallery and outdoor Sculpture Meadow. Visitors can enjoy the integration of art and nature, as di Rosa is also home to a beautiful lake, walking trails with vineyard views, and picnic grounds. di Rosa presents contemporary exhibitions by Bay Area-based artists and maintains a permanent collection of notable works by artists with ties to the Bay Area from the mid-twentieth century to the early 2000s. di Rosa offers an array of public programs and events for all ages to inspire creativity and curiosity. di Rosa is currently open to the public without reservations Thursday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., and by appointment Tuesday through Wednesday. Beginning July 1 all visitors will need to book an advanced timed ticket. Visitors are encouraged to bring picnics. For more information visit [www.dirosaart.org](http://www.dirosaart.org).

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