

MANUEL NERI: THE HUMAN FIGURE IN PLASTER AND ON PAPER

Sculptures and drawings by renowned Bay Area artist celebrate his studio practice and sustained engagement with the figure

March 2–July 8, 2018

March 2, 2018, New Haven, Conn.—The exhibition *Manuel Neri: The Human Figure in Plaster and on Paper* explores the artist’s tireless fascination with the human form, drawing from a recent gift to the Gallery of more than 150 sculptures and works on paper from The Manuel Neri Trust. A contemporary of other notable California-based artists such as Elmer Bischoff, Joan Brown, Richard Diebenkorn, David Park, and Wayne Thiebaud, Manuel Neri (b. 1930) is best known for his life-size sculptures that combine classical figuration with the dynamic mark making of Abstract Expressionism.

Neri’s engagement with the accessible and inexpensive materials of plaster and paper began in his early days as an art student of the 1950s and ever since has inspired an incredible proliferation of sculptures, drawings, watercolors, and more. The



Manuel Neri, *Ostrakon Plaster Maquette No. 4*, 1998. Plaster with water-based pigment. Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of The Manuel Neri Trust. © The Manuel Neri Trust

artist has a unique and visceral method of working that is most visible in his plaster pieces, which he builds up roughly with his bare hands over homemade armatures made of scrap materials. He alters many of his sculptures once they have dried, snapping off limbs or reworking the surface with pigments and tools—sometimes over the course of decades.

Jock Reynolds, the Gallery’s Henry J. Heinz II Director—who observed Neri’s studio process firsthand as his student and teaching assistant at the University of California, Davis—curates the exhibition, paying homage to his former teacher and mentor. In 1975, shortly after Reynolds left UC Davis to begin his own career as an artist and teacher, he cofounded 80 Langton Street, an alternative artists’ space in San Francisco. It was there, one year later, that Reynolds invited Neri to create a sculptural figure in plaster every day for a little more than a week, resulting in an installation of eight figures surrounded by the debris



Manuel Neri, *Re-making of Mary Julia No. 6*, 1976. Plaster with pigment. Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of The Manuel Neri Trust. © The Manuel Neri Trust

and tools that accompanied their making. The exhibition came to be titled *The Remaking of Mary Julia: Sculpture in Process*, named for Mary Julia Raahauge, who was Neri's great muse at the time. Now, more than forty years later, and upon the culmination of a twenty-year directorship at the Gallery, Reynolds again puts the talents of his former mentor on display, with a solo exhibition of 29 sculptures and 11 works on paper.

While Neri has also frequently worked with bronze, marble, and other materials, Reynolds has always been especially enamored with the artist's work in plaster and on paper. He explains, "To my eye, Neri's plaster sculptures, collages, and drawings are his most expressive creations. They embody the restlessness and intensity that have marked his devotion to representing the figure throughout his career, the hallmark of his contribution to the art of our time."

On View

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Related Publication

Manuel Neri: The Human Figure in Plaster and on Paper

Jock Reynolds

This engaging publication examines the prodigious body of work of American sculptor Manuel Neri (b. 1930) through the unique perspective of one of Neri's former students. A near-contemporary of other notable California-based artists Richard Diebenkorn and Wayne Thiebaud, Neri is best known for his large-scale figurative sculptures that combine classical figuration with the dynamic mark making of Abstract Expressionism. The book traces the compelling yet often contradictory thematic arcs of Neri's powerful work and his greater impact on the field of sculpture. At the heart of the publication are Jock Reynolds's personal reflections on Neri and his legacy as a teacher, adding insight and intimacy to the scholarly understanding of the artist. Photographs of Neri in his studio, archival images, and installation photographs of the related exhibition at the Yale University Art Gallery round out the book. With its blend of art history and personal reflection, this unique book offers valuable insight into an important, understudied California artist.

120 pages / 9 × 12 inches / 87 color and 17 black-and-white illustrations / Distributed by Yale University Press / 2018 / Paper over board / Price: \$35; Members: \$28



Manuel Neri, page from *Unos Actos de Fe Sketchbook*, ca. 1974–76. Sketchbook with graphite, water-based pigment, ink, cut and pasted paper, and red pencil. Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of The Manuel Neri Trust. © The Manuel Neri Trust

Related Programs

Costume Ball

Thursday, March 1, 5:30 pm

“Plaster, Paper, Wood, and Wire”

Exhibition Tour

Tuesday, March 6, 12:30 pm

Gallery Talks

Wednesday, April 4, 12:30 pm

“Manuel Neri: His Muses Made Material”

Jock Reynolds, the Henry J. Heinz II Director

Wednesday, April 18, 12:30 pm

“The Human Figure in Ancient Mediterranean Sculpture”

Susan B. Matheson, the Molly and Walter Bareiss Curator of Ancient Art

Studio Program

Friday, April 13, 1:30 pm

“Material, Form, and Color”

Mariana Garibay Raeke, M.F.A. 2014, artist

Registration required; please call 203.432.9525.

All programs are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted. For more detailed programming information, visit artgallery.yale.edu/calendar.

Exhibition Credits

Exhibition organized by Jock Reynolds, the Henry J. Heinz II Director. Made possible by the Joann and Gifford Phillips, Class of 1942, Fund; the Raymond and Helen Runnells DuBois Publication Fund; the Rosalee and David McCullough Family Fund; the Stephen S. Lash Fund; and the Wolfe Family Exhibition and Publication Fund.

Yale University Art Gallery

The Yale University Art Gallery, the oldest college art museum in the United States, was founded in 1832 when the patriot-artist John Trumbull gave more than 100 of his paintings to Yale College. Since then its collections have grown to more than 200,000 objects ranging in date from ancient times to the present.

General Information

The Yale University Art Gallery is located at 1111 Chapel Street, New Haven, Connecticut. Museum hours: Tuesday-Friday, 10 am-5 pm; Thursday until 8 pm (September-June); and Saturday-Sunday, 11 am-5 pm. The Gallery is closed Mondays and major holidays. Free and open to the public. For general information, please call 203.432.0600 or visit the website at artgallery.yale.edu.

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