

AFTER VIOLA brings together these five Bay Area artists in collaboration with the Artists' Legacy Foundation to create new works reflecting on materials from the Viola Frey Archives:

Ashwini Bhat
Nicki Green
Cathy Lu
Nathan Lynch
Kari Marboe

Through publications, research, and exhibitions, the Artists' Legacy Foundation serves as a resource for scholars, curators and the general public by deepening their understanding of the work of Legacy Artists, including Frey.

A renowned California artist known for her colorful, robust, larger-than-life sculptures, Frey took inspiration from the world around her, and continually experimented with new techniques and ideas gleaned from colleagues, students, and the wider art community.

This exhibition looks at Frey's archival materials as an "active" source of inspiration generating further conversation in the field of ceramics. Through varied explorations, the artists bring together conceptual and material practices.

The California Clay Movement has been such a fertile ground for experimentation over the decades, of which Frey has been a major part. This exhibition connects two distinctly different generations in an exciting dialogue about material, meaning, and form.

Special thanks to:

CURATOR: Julia Schwartz, Artists' Legacy Foundation
ORGANIZERS: Ashwini Bhat, Kari Marboe



The Barn Gallery is honored to partner with the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA) to bring this exhibition to Yolo County.



Nathan Lynch



Title: *The Other's Mother Tongue*
(*aramptopublicspeaking*)

2021

glazed ceramic

12 x 48 x 20 inches

Retail Value: \$9,500

Artist Statement

In many of Viola Frey's sculptures her figures are presented on large bases or plinths, including this work, *Walking Men*, from 1994. While this could have simply been a formal device for presenting the sculptures, the bases also read to me as a way of elevating these figures' importance. The added height gives them more power visually.

In a similar vein, I am interested in the use of speech and theatrical devices in political events. What can we build to inspire more people to be heard? I have been building various soapboxes, podiums, platforms and ramps that give public speakers both a sense of power and vulnerability.

Nathan Lynch (continued)

My installations of handmade ceramic sculptures foster awkward, semi-public interactions between viewers, highlighting a shared experience of vulnerability. *Doubledrink*, a functional sculpture at Headlands Center for the Arts, is a fountain that prompts two people to drink simultaneously while looking each other in the eye, creating an unusually intimate moment in public space.

Similarly, *The Same Larry* is a two-person soaking tub that transforms into a stage for performances, and, at times, an impromptu confessional. For this sculpture, the private space of a tub becomes akin to a public elevator, where strangers inhabit a small physical space, inviting close conversations and heightening a sense of shared humanity.

My mid-sized ceramic sculptures appear to be inflated, yet slump, sag, and drip under implied pressure. The forms have the tonality of a 4-day-old helium balloon that hovers in the middle, suspending their meaning within layered emotions of elation, confusion, and panic.

In my current work I obscure boundaries between facts and fiction by comparing media reports of current political events to the allegory of Plato's Cave, where the division between reality and the representation of reality are confused. Truth becomes a malleable material, revealing the elastic quality of reporting within our present time. The ceramic and wood sculptures are presented with short stories to question the range in which "truth" can exist.

Nathan Lynch (continued)

Biography

Nathan Lynch was raised in Pasco, Washington an agricultural community in the shadow of Hanford Nuclear Power Plant. The futility of this environmental contradiction gave Lynch an acute sense of location and deep appreciation for irony. In the five formative years after graduation Lynch worked as the prop master for a local community theatre, the effects of which are still being realized in his current body of work.

His concerns for political conflict and environmental upheaval are filtered through notions of absurdity, hand fabrication and the dramatic devices of storytelling. As a sculptor and performance artist, Lynch has made collaboration and experimentation major components of his practice.

Recent projects include *Doubledrink* - a two-person drinking fountain for Headlands Center for the Arts, *Dead Reckoning* at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, and nest module design for the Wedge-tailed Shearwater on Oahu.

At the University of Southern California Lynch studied with Ken Price, and later earned an MFA at Mills College with Ron Nagle.

Lynch is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Ceramics Program and Glass Program at California College of the Arts. He is represented by Rena Bransten Gallery.

nlynch@cca.edu | www.nathanlynch.com

Kari Marboe



Title: *Women in the News - Viola Frey*

Media: ceramic, glaze

Dimensions: 28 x 28 x 28 inches

Retail Value: Available upon request ((for individual works and entire installation)

Artist Statement

Kari Marboe takes on the role of an artist and detective flattening as many data points as possible around the history of people, objects, and experiences in order to create new narratives that intertwine with our present moment. She presents her work in the form of ceramic sculptures, clay printed onto watercolor paper, archival images, accidentally stolen keys, and other site-specific elements.

Biography

Marboe earned a BFA from California College of the Arts in 2008 and MFA from UC Berkeley in 2012. She has exhibited work at the Saint Mary's College Museum of Art, CA, Greenwich House Pottery, NY, Mills College Art Museum, CA, A-B Projects (Nicole Seisler), CA, 500 Capp Street/Southern Exposure, CA, Berkeley Art Center, CA, Museum of Craft and Design, CA, Wave Pool Gallery, OH, Museum of Northern California Art, CA, Jacksonville University, FL, and the Waffle Shop Billboard, PA. She has also participated in residencies at Greenwich House Pottery, NY, Watershed Center for Ceramic Arts, ME, Mutual Stores, CA, and Elsewhere Museum, NC.

Marboe lives in the Bay Area and is an Assistant Professor at California College of the Arts.

kmarboe@cca.edu | www.karimarboe.com

Cathy Lu



Title: *Nuwa's Hands (Knot)*

2021

porcelain, gold luster, and steel cable

72 x 22 x 8 inches

Retail Value: \$6,800

Artist Statement:

Nuwa is a Chinese mythological goddess who is the creator of people. She is said to have the head and arms of a woman and the body of a snake. The story is that she took mud and started sculpting figures. It was taking too long so then she took a string and dragged it in the mud, and when the mud dried, she flicked it, and all the dried flakes became people. When I first learned about this story, I realized that she's a ceramicist, like me. I started to think of her as a guide for my own making and thought it was a poetic way to think about the empowerment of working with your hands and the agency you have as a creator.

The long nails are my way of referencing how Chinese royal women would have long nails to signify their life of leisure, the anti-Chinese propaganda in the US in the late 1800s that depicted Chinese men with long claw-like nails

Cathy Lu (continued)

to dehumanize them, as well as the many nail salons run by East Asian immigrants.

The peach pits that cover the arms reference the peach as an important symbol of prosperity and longevity in Chinese culture.

My work manipulates traditional Chinese objects as a way to deconstruct the assumptions we have about Asian American identity and cultural authenticity. By creating ceramic sculptures and installations, I explore what it means to be both Asian and American, while not being entirely accepted as either. Unpacking how experiences of immigration, cultural hybridity and assimilation become part of the larger American identity is central to my work.

I have made work comparing the cultural authenticity of vases in the Asian Art Museum SF with their replicas in Chinatown. I cast fruits from Chinese neighborhood markets as a way to talk about the struggle for immigrant communities to belong in the U.S. More recently, I have been reimagining garden creation myths like the Garden of Eden and the Immortal Peach Garden as a way to explore the U.S. as both a utopian and dystopian space for historically excluded communities struggling to belong.

Ceramics as a material is a contradiction in itself - of being both hard and fragile; my work embodies the contradictions of being Asian American, of being both invisible and hypervisible, attractive and repulsive, foreign and familiar.

cathyclu@gmail.com | www.cathyclu.com

Ashwini Bhat



Title: *Self Portrait, California Landscape (Viola on my Mind)*, 2022
ceramic, Spanish birthing chair from Lodi
9 x 8 x 8 inches

Artist Statement

Viola Frey’s creative restlessness drew me to her work, and later to her person as an artist. In an interview with Paul Karlstorm, she says, “I thought that the only way to establish oneself as an artist was to show that as an artist, I was multifaceted, that I could work in other media. So no one could put me in a box and limit me.” I feel a camaraderie with Viola’s exploratory spirit. My admiration for her has only increased as I’ve dived into her archival material at the Artists’ Legacy Foundation.

In my own studio practice, I create biomorphic sculptures that suggest a complex interplay between landscape, the human, and the non-human. I’m currently working on various iterations of Self Portraits. This work emerges from a focused contemplation of place, and it often evokes both ecological loss and regeneration— along with the desire to understand myself in the context of such relationships. These self-portraits bear the imprints of my own body. Although I’m not a figurative sculptor, I found that I could draw from the visual language of Viola’s early work. A particular reference for me is her “Fragment Series.” One of Frey’s abstract figures is the source of inspiration for this new work.

Ashwini Bhat (continued)

Biography

Ashwini Bhat, an artist born in southern India, currently lives and works in the Bay Area, California. Coming from a background in literature and classical Indian dance, she now works in ceramics, sculpture, installation, and performance. She often introduces radical but somehow familiar forms to suggest complex interplay between the landscape, the human, and the non-human.

Bhat is a recipient of the McKnight Foundation Residency Fellowship and the Howard Foundation Award for Sculpture. Her work has been exhibited nationally & internationally and can be seen in collections at the Newport Art Museum, USA; Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park, Japan; FuLe International Ceramic Art Museum, China; the Watson Institute at Brown University, USA; New Bedford Historical Society, USA; Daugavpils Mark Rothko Centre, Latvia, and in many private collections.

Her sculpture also has been widely reviewed and featured in *Los Angeles Review of Books* (USA), *Alta Journal* (USA), *Brooklyn Rail* (USA), *Lana Turner: a Journal of Poetry and Opinion* (USA), *Riot Material* (USA), *Ceramic Art and Perception* (USA/Australia), *Ceramics Ireland* (Ireland), *New Ceramics* (Germany), *Caliban* (USA), *Crafts Arts International* (Australia), *The Studio Potter* (USA), *American Craft Council* (USA), *Logbook* (Ireland), and *Ceramics Monthly* (USA).

ashwini@ashwinibhat.com | www.ashwinibhat.com

Nicki Green



Title: *Slime Mold, 2018*

glazed stoneware
31 x 39 x 24 inches

Artist Statement

Slime mold, a generalized term used to describe eukaryotic organisms (those with a defined nucleus) that function autonomously and also intelligently, collectively, in conjunction with each other, are used as a metaphor here for an interconnected community dynamics. Pushing off of a larger body of work utilizing fungi as a stand in for otherness, Slime Mold's collected formations articulate an immediate symbiosis more tangible and more gestural than the subterranean mycelial threads of the fungi kingdom.

This collection of cylindrical forms, undulating in conjunction, is contrasted by the aggressive "seaming" of the sculpture. I often describe this technique as "Viola Frey-ing the form," a technique learned from studying deconstructed images of Frey's work alongside informative studio visits with her lead assistant Sam Perry. This technique, which consists of building an internal series of flanges that allow the piece to be cut apart before firing and reassembled after glazing, breaks the integrity of the form in a profound way. Frey's figurative seams often read as intuitive - following joints, hairlines and musculature, breaking the integrity of her figures in ways that both acknowledge the humanity of the

Nicki Green (continued)

form while also exploring a profound awareness of the body as severed, broken, articulated. The seams present in Slime Mold intentionally move away from this intuitive tracing of the form and intentionally contrast the collectivity of the Mold's organic, intuitive form.

Biography

Nicki Green is a transdisciplinary artist working primarily in clay. Her sculptures, ritual objects and various flat works explore topics of history preservation, conceptual ornamentation and aesthetics of otherness. Often constructing heavily ornamented painted glaze surfaces and experimental, organic building techniques, Green explores material and object integrity by utilizing transness as a lens with which to look at the world.

Green has exhibited her work internationally, notably at the New Museum, New York; Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris, France, and The Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco. She has contributed texts to numerous publications including Transgender Studies Quarterly, Fermenting Feminism, Copenhagen and The Center for Arts Research publications, University of Oregon, Eugene. Green is a 2022 Nancy Graves Foundation Grantee, and was a 2020 Art Matters Fellow, and in 2019, a finalist for the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's SECA Award, and a recipient of an Arts/Industry Residency from the John Michael Kohler Art Center, among other awards and residencies.

Originally from New England, she completed her BFA in sculpture from the San Francisco Art Institute in 2009 and her MFA in Art Practice from the University of California, Berkeley in 2018. Green is currently a visiting professor and artist in residence at California State University, Long Beach Center for Contemporary Ceramics.

nickigreenstudio@gmail.com | www.nickigreen.org



Viola Frey, (1986, Photo: Chris Felver. 2021
© Artists' Legacy Foundation, Oakland/ARS, New York)

Viola Frey

Over the course of her five-decade career, Viola Frey (1933–2004) produced an impressive body of artwork that evolved out of the post-war West Coast aesthetic. While best known for her monumental sculpture, Frey's oeuvre also includes paintings, drawings, and bronze and glass sculptures. Frey was obsessively devoted to her practice and produced thousands of artworks during her lifetime. Her work explores social constructs, marks of civilization, and gender dynamics, and features a thoughtfully built iconography including suited men, hands, and cast figurines.

Viola Frey received her BFA and honorary doctorate from California College of the Arts and Crafts and attended graduate school at Tulane University. She taught at California College of Arts and Crafts (now CCA) for over four decades, influencing generations of young artists and formalizing the use of clay as an artistic medium.

Frey was the recipient of two National Endowment for the Arts fellowships and the Award of Honor in Sculpture from the San Francisco Arts Commission, among many other honors. During her lifetime, her work was presented in solo exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of

Viola Frey (continued)

American Art (New York, NY), the St. Louis Art Museum (St. Louis, MO), the Fresno Art Museum (Fresno, CA), and the Crocker Museum of Art (Sacramento, CA), among others. Her work is held in numerous public and private collections, including the Paris Museum of Modern Art, Paris, France; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Houston, TX; and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA.

In 2000, Frey co-founded the Artists' Legacy Foundation with Squeak Carnwath and Gary Knecht. Upon her death in 2004, she became the Foundation's first Legacy Artist. Since then, her work has been included in over 120 exhibitions and referenced in more than 300 publications. Recent solo exhibitions include *Monumental: The Art of Viola Frey* (Flint Institute of Arts, Flint, MI, 2020), *Viola Frey: Center Stage* (di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art, Napa, CA, 2019).