



FLINT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

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## **Monumental Work Makes Its Mid-American Debut The Decline and Fall of Western Civilization Previously Shown only in Western U.S.**

Flint, MI – When *Monumental: The Art of Viola Frey* opens at the Flint Institute of Arts on Saturday, March 14, 2020, it will mark the Mid-American debut of the work considered the artist's masterpiece, *The Decline and Fall of Western Civilization*.

Over the course of her 50-year career, Frey produced an impressive body of work, including sculpture, paintings, and drawings, but she is best known for her brilliantly colored, monumental ceramic figures. Frey belonged to a generation of California artists who pushed the boundaries of clay as a craft to produce sculptural artworks, which elevated ceramics as a medium for fine art as it is known today.

Frey's multi-faceted approach and training as a painter and sculptor taught her to experiment using contemporary materials, art historical and pop culture references, and personal iconography, which she gathered from her surroundings. These deep sources of imagery allowed Frey to reflect on culture, power, gender dynamics, and in one particular, the broad topic of Western civilization.

*Monumental: The Art of Viola Frey* features artwork from her *Western Civilization* series, which Frey explored during the last 15 years of her life. The exhibition presents a variety of media highlighting her interest, not only in clay, but also painting and drawing. Widely considered Frey's masterpiece, *The Decline and Fall of Western Civilization*, which measures nearly 17 feet long and 9 feet high, will be on view for the first time outside of the Western United States at the FIA through June 14, 2020.

Viola Frey was instrumental in creating the Artists' Legacy Foundation. The ALF was incorporated in 2000 by Frey, painter Squeak Carnwath, and community advocate Gary Knecht with the intention of artists coming together to support and encourage other artists through grants and awards, promoting and protecting the legacy of deceased "Legacy Artists," and generally championing the visual arts, especially where the hand of the artist is a significant factor in making art. Frey, as well as Carnwath, planned to leave their artwork to ALF and all three founders arranged to leave their estates to the Foundation. With the death of Frey in 2004, the Foundation received its first bequest and Frey's estate, which included her artwork and funds, provided the ALF's initial endowment. This enabled the ALF to hire an executive director the following year and launch the Artist Award program in 2007. Currently one \$25,000 award, the program is designed to encourage professional enrichment, while allowing artists to spend more time in studio.

Cynthia de Bos, Director of Administration and Development of the Artists' Legacy Foundation (ALF), is available for in-person interviews on Tuesday, March 3 and Wednesday, March 4, 2020 by appointment.

For more information about *Monumental: The Art of Viola Frey*, and/or *The Decline and Fall of Western Civilization*, to schedule an interview with Cynthia de Bos or to view the installation of the exhibition, please contact Chene Koppitz, FIA Communications Coordinator, via email at [ckoppitz@flintarts.org](mailto:ckoppitz@flintarts.org) or by phone at 810.237.7387.

## **ABOUT THE FLINT INSTITUTE OF ARTS**

The Flint Institute of Arts is Michigan's second largest art museum and one of the largest museum art schools in the nation. The FIA's mission is to advance the understanding and appreciation of art for all through collections, exhibitions, and educational programs.

The FIA is located at 1120 East Kearsley Street in the Flint Cultural Center. The museum is open Mon–Sat 10 AM-5 PM and Sun 1-5 PM. Gallery admission is free for all Genesee County residents, FIA members, and children under 12; Adults are \$10; Senior Citizens and Students with I.D. are \$8. Saturdays are free for all visitors thanks to Huntington Bank.

For more information, please visit [www.flintarts.org](http://www.flintarts.org)