

From: Artists' Legacy Foundation info@artistslegacyfoundation.org
Subject: Catch Viola Frey: Foundations In Person and In the News
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ARTISTS' LEGACY FOUNDATION

Viola Frey: Foundations In the Press



Viola Frey's *Self Portrait with Figurines* (1970), reproduced in *Diablo Magazine*, reviewed by Deborah Kirk.

The early career-spanning exhibition *Viola Frey: Foundations* enters its final month at the Bedford Gallery in Walnut Creek, California. Come visit this momentous collection of rarely seen work.

In a recent review for Square Cylinder, Barbara Morris notes the connection between Frey's collecting and her art practice:

"Her favorite excursion was to the nearby Alameda Flea Market, where she would take photographs as she scoured the booths for the kitschy figurines that obsessed her. Near the entrance to the survey are 'Alameda Flea Market I and III' (1970), lively monochromatic acrylic works on paper. Here Frey used a ceramic technique, sgraffito, scratching images into the paint to reveal surface beneath. These convey fully realized scenes with an economy of means, with quirky figures enmeshed in a jumbled environment of junker cars, furniture bits, and assorted flotsam. The selection of works on paper here reveals her beautiful line quality, love of figure drawing, and that Rothko-inspired color sense."

[Read the Square Cylinder review here.](#)





Installation view of *Viola Frey: Foundations*, courtesy of Bedford Gallery. Photo: Shaun Roberts.

The exhibition unfolds in a spiral shape throughout the gallery, a recurring visual motif across Frey's oeuvre, the layout of the exhibition presents the artist's work in varied media from 1965 to 1987. While some may know Frey for the monumental sculpture of her later career, *Viola Frey: Foundations* offers a comprehensive and rare look at the process and exploration of an influential artist's early practice, as well as an expanded perspective on her enduring legacy in the Bay Area and beyond. The exhibition's curation underscores the cyclical nature of Frey's way of thinking, returning to previous themes and developing her ideas through art making.



Installation view of *Viola Frey: Foundations*, courtesy of Bedford Gallery. Photo: Shaun Roberts.

Deborah Kirk writes, "Viola Frey (1933–2004) was a legendary presence in the Bay Area art scene, known for her larger-than-life, colorfully painted ceramic

sculptures. The figures she created—which often reach nine feet tall—can feel strangely familiar: men in business suits, grandmothers in print dresses and sensible shoes. But they also reflect Frey’s lifelong interest in exploring themes of power, nonconformity, and identity politics—themes that remain especially relevant today."

“In art history, there has always been a divide between craft and fine art, and Frey worked to break down that boundary. She really elevated what clay can do, resulting in work that is commanding and beautifully made,” explains curator Emilee Enders.

[Read the review in Diablo Magazine here.](#)

Viola Frey: Foundations is on view until April 5 at Bedford Gallery.

[Get more information and tickets here.](#)



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