

Kayne Griffin Corcoran GR | MAG

Beverly Pepper Exhibit Looks At Previously Unseen Works



Landscape Study (Haute de Cannes), 1953-54



Untitled (Woman Shelling Peas), 1953

In one room, sketchbooks lie under glass—open diaries of intimate musings. In another, small steel sculptures rest on pedestals, catching the light as onlookers stroll by. The blue-gray and rust-colored walls are adorned with large framed drawings in every manner of color and shape. Among each collection of frames is a snapshot of stories and experiences from the life of world-renowned sculptor Beverly Pepper—the artist to whom these creations belong.

“Drawn Into Form: Sixty Years of Drawings and Prints by Beverly Pepper” showcases 70 of the over 900 unseen works from Pepper’s collection. As vice president and chief curator at Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park, Joseph Becherer is excited to display the sculptor’s private works and introduce gallery-goers to a side of her they’ve not likely seen.

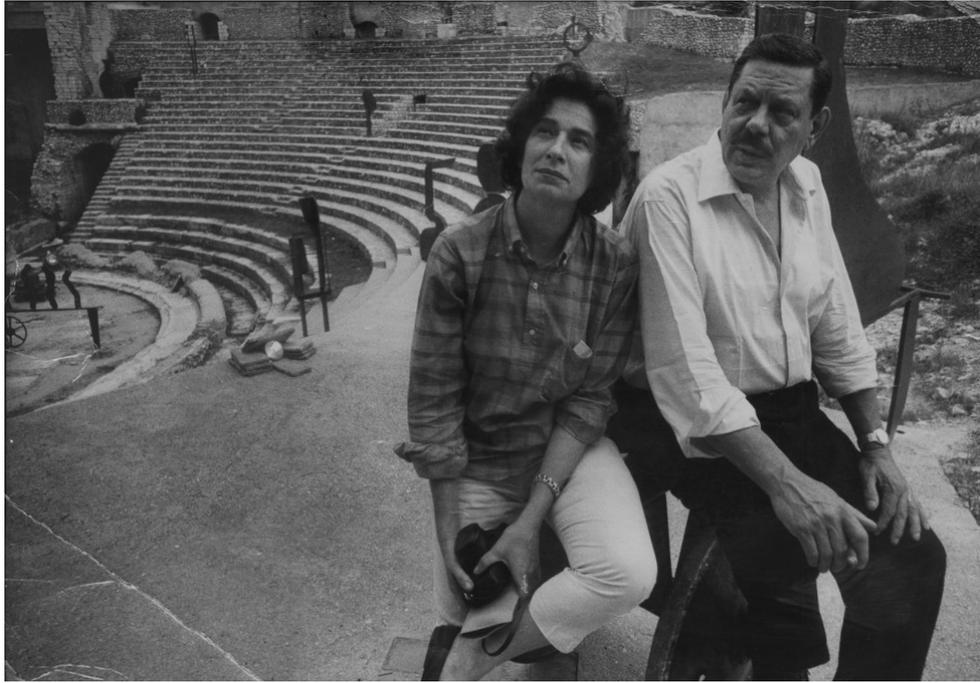
“I got to know just what an important role that drawings were for Beverly and her work,” he explained. “She does different kinds of drawings, she does different kinds of prints. She’s always been very open and very experimental.

“On one hand sometimes the drawings can be preparatory—a way for the artist to think about ideas, to think about forms, to put together proposals,” he continued. “Sometimes they are done afterward as a kind of meditation—as a kind of thoughtful remembrance of a piece that was done, and sometimes they’re just a completely independent work in and of themselves.”

Pepper is more than a sculptor. She’s a pioneer who pursued her passion for metal work in a male-dominated landscape. “She definitely has been groundbreaking,” Becherer said.

Shipp, Pasha. "Beverly Pepper Exhibit Looks At Previously Unseen Works." GR|Mag. 12 February 2018. Web.

"She definitely has plowed new fields, not only for herself but in general for women in the arts. And I think that the other reality is that she was never afraid to experiment – to try. And so she was always... Even today she's always pushing herself to do something that's authentic to her but to do something that's new."



Beverly Pepper with David Smith, 1962

Not only does the anthology expound upon Pepper's talents, it also adds to the richness of the permanent collection at Meijer Gardens. The 900+ pieces were gifted to the institution by Pepper herself.

"To have that kind of depth--to have that kind of information on a grand scale is pretty unique," Becherer said. "Many museums, whether it's the Metropolitan Museum of Art or whether it's the Whitney--they do have special artist collections. It gives the gardens depth and distinction," he continued. "That's the permanent gift."

And beyond that gift is another—the opportunity for long-time fans and newbies alike to share in a compelling narrative. "I think that the rewarding thing about the exhibition is that it really tells a story," Becherer said.

"You can be someone who's very much interested in the visual arts, or you can have a much more casual relationship with the visual arts. I think that it's quite clear that if you come in those front doors of the gallery, by the time you go through and you come back out again, you will have taken in a very impressive story."

Though Pepper, 95, won't be able to visit the exhibition in person, her spirit is captured through little vignettes that accompany some of the works.

"We tried to make her feel very present," Becherer said. "We've been trying to put her words--her voice in the space with the work as much as possible." The caption of an untitled piece from 1970 reads: "In the end, a work of art is an ethereal thing, as it has space around that defines it."

"Drawn Into Form: Sixty Years of Drawings and Prints by Beverly Pepper" will be showing at Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park through April 29.

— Pasha Shipp