

## Stephen De Staebler

### EDUCATION

- 1961 University of California, Berkeley, CA, M.A., Art
- 1959 University of California, Berkeley, CA, General Secondary Teaching Credential
- 1954 Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, A.B., Religion
- 1951 Black Mountain College, NC. Studied with Ben Shahn.

### TEACHING

- 1967-95 San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA
- 1961-67 San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA
- 1961-62 San Francisco State College, San Francisco, CA
- 1957-58 Chadwick School, Rolling Hills, CA

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- Jan-April *Matter + Spirit: The Sculpture of Stephen De Staebler*, Retrospective at the de Young Museum, San Francisco Museum of Fine Arts, San Francisco, CA (catalogue)
- 2011-12 *Stephen De Staebler*, Dolby Chadwick Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 2010 *Stephen De Staebler: New Work*, Dolby Chadwick Galleries, San Francisco, CA
- 2009 *Stephen De Staebler: New Work*, Napa Valley Museum, Yountville, CA  
*Stephen De Staebler: The Sculptor's Way*, Richmond Art Center, Richmond, CA
- 2008 *Stephen De Staebler: Wrested From the Earth*, Zolla/Lieberman Gallery, Chicago, IL (catalogue)
- 2007 *Stephen De Staebler: New Figure Columns*, Paul Thiebaud Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 2006 *Stephen De Staebler: Figure Columns*, Zolla/Lieberman Gallery, Chicago, IL  
*Stephen De Staebler: Winged Figures*, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA  
*Stephen De Staebler: Recent Work*, Fresno Art Museum, Fresno, CA
- 2005 *Stephen De Staebler: Recent Work*, Franklin Parrasch Gallery, New York, NY
- 2004 *Stephen De Staebler: Recent Work*, Paul Thiebaud Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
*Stephen De Staebler: Selected Works*, Holter Museum of Art, Helena, MT
- 2003 *Stephen De Staebler: Figure Columns*, Franklin Parrasch Gallery, New York, NY  
*Stephen De Staebler: Master Artist VI: A Thirty Year Survey*, Hearst Art Gallery, Saint Mary's College of California, Moraga, CA  
*Stephen De Staebler: Figure Column Series*, Franklin Parrasch Gallery, New York, NY (catalogue)  
*The Human Condition: Sculptures by Stephen De Staebler*, University of California, San Francisco, CA
- 2002 Franklin Parrasch Gallery, New York, NY
- 2000 Campbell Thiebaud Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
Franklin Parrasch Gallery, New York, NY
- 1999 *Stephen De Staebler: Major Works from the 1980's*, Franklin Parrasch Gallery, New York, NY (catalogue)  
*Stephen De Staebler: Winged Figures*, Brauer Museum of Art, Valparaiso University Center for the Arts, Valparaiso, IN. Traveled to Union University, Jackson, TN
- 1998 Franklin Parrasch Gallery, New York, NY
- 1996 Campbell Thiebaud Gallery, San Francisco, CA

D O L B Y C H A D W I C K G A L L E R Y

- Stephen De Staebler*, Colorado University Art Galleries, Boulder, CO  
*Recent Works*, Fresno Art Museum, Fresno, CA  
*New Works in Clay*, European Ceramics Work Center, Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands  
 Lizardi/Harp Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
 1995 *The New Bronzes*, CDS Gallery, New York, NY  
*Stephen De Staebler: Sculpture*, Udinotti Gallery, Scottsdale, AZ  
 1994 Campbell-Thiebaud Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
 1993 *Stephen De Staebler*, The Academy of Art College, San Francisco, CA  
 CDS Gallery, New York, NY  
 1992 CDS Gallery, New York, NY  
 1991 *Stephen De Staebler*, Monterey Peninsula Museum of Art, Monterey, CA  
 1990 John Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
 1988 *Stephen De Staebler: The Figure*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA. Traveled to: Neuberger Museum, State University of New York, Purchase, NY; Renwick Gallery of the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois, Champaign, Illinois; Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA; Saddleback College, Mission Viejo, CA. (catalogue)  
 1986 John Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
 1983 Charles H. Scott Gallery, Emily Carr College of Art, Vancouver, British Columbia. Traveled to: Scottsdale Center for the Arts, Scottsdale, AZ; Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA; Honolulu Academy of Arts, Honolulu, HI; Laumeier International Sculpture Park, St. Louis, MO; Virginia Polytechnic University, Blacksburg, VA; Visual Arts Gallery, Florida International University, Miami, FL; Art Museum of Santa Cruz County, Santa Cruz, CA.  
 1981 Hansen Fuller Goldeen Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
 1979 James Willis Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
 Winona State University, Winona, MN  
 1974 Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA (catalogue)

**SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

- 2009 *Body Language: The Figure in Sculpture*, Vero Beach Museum of Art, Vero Beach, FL  
*Multiple Personalities: Figural Sculpture and Contemporary Craft*, Minneapolis Museum of Art, Minnesota, MN  
 2008 *Masters of Disguise*, The Mint Museum of Craft + Design, Charlotte, NC  
*Great Ceramics from the Ceramic Research Center*, Arizona State University Art Collection, Travels to: Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Fort Wayne, IN; The Arkansas Art Center, Little Rock, AR; J. Wayne Stark Gallery, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX; Roswell Museum and Art Center, Roswell, NM; Plains Art Museum, Fargo, ND; Las Cruces Museum of Fine Art & Culture, Las Cruces, NM (2008-9); Huntsville Museum of Art, Huntsville, AL (2009); Wichita Art Museum, Wichita, KS (2009); Vero Beach Museum of Art, Vero Beach, FL (2010)  
*Paradigms and the Unexpected: Modern and Contemporary Art from the Shey Collection*, Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL  
 2007 *Shy Boy, She Devil, and Isis: The Art of Conceptual Craft: Selections for the Wornick Collection*, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Boston, MA  
*A Legacy of Art: The Ted and Ruth Nash Collection*, Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA

D O L B Y C H A D W I C K G A L L E R Y

- 2006 *Soaring Spirits – Feet of Clay*, Schneider Museum of Art, Southern Oregon University, Ashland, Oregon
- 2005 *A Broken Beauty: Figuration, Narrative and the Transcendent in North American Art*, Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA  
*Innovation & Change: Great Ceramics from the Permanent Collection*, Ceramic Research Center, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ  
*Bodies of Clay*, Evansville Museum, Evansville, IN  
*From Tiles to Totems: A Century of Northern California Ceramics*, Art Foundry Gallery, Sacramento, CA
- 2004 *Onward and Upward*, Zolla/Lieberman Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 2003 *Stremmel Gallery @ 30*, Reno, NV  
*Bay Area Revisited*, Schick Art Gallery, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY
- 2002 *The 177th Annual: An Invitational Exhibition*, National Academy of Design, New York, NY (catalogue)
- 2000 *Defining Moments in Contemporary Ceramics: Color and Fire*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA  
*Made in California*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA (catalogue)
- 1999 *The Art of Craft: Contemporary Works from the Saxe Collection*, M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA (catalogue)  
*Clay into Art: Selections from the Collection of Contemporary Ceramics in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
- 1988 *Twentieth Century American Sculpture*, The White House, Washington, D.C.
- 1997 *Bay Area Art from The Morgan Flagg Collection*, M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco, CA
- 1996 *Generations: The Lineage of Influence in Bay Area Art*, Richmond Art Center, Richmond, CA
- 1993 *Sanctuaries: Recovering the Holy in Contemporary Art, Part One*, Museum of Contemporary Religious Art, Saint Louis University, Saint Louis, MO
- 1988 *New Visions of the Apocalypse*, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island
- 1987 *The Eloquent Object*, Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, OK. Traveled. (catalogue)
- 1986 *Contemporary Sculpture from the Martin Z. Margulies Collection*, Martin Z. Margulies, Coconut Grove, FL. permanent collection, (catalogue)
- 1984 *The 20th Century: The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Collection*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA
- 1980 *20 American Artists*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA. (catalogue)
- 1977 *Perceptions of the Spirit in 20th Century Art*, Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, IN. Traveled. (catalogue)  
*Public Sculpture/Urban Environment*, Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA (catalogue)
- 1975 *Public Sculpture/Urban Environment*, Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA (catalogue)

**GRANTS AND AWARDS**

- 1994 American Craft Council, Fellow
- 1993 National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts, Honorary Council Member
- 1992 Utsukushi-ga-hari Open Air Museum, Japan, The Fourth Rodin Grand Prize Exhibition, Nobukata-Shikanai Special Prize

D O L B Y C H A D W I C K G A L L E R Y

- 1989 American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, New York, NY, Award in Art  
 1983 Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, Artist's Fellowship  
 1981 National Endowment for the Arts, Individual Artist's Fellowship  
 1979 National Endowment for the Arts, Individual Artist's Fellowship  
 1965 Zellerback Memorial Prize in the Art of Sculpture  
 1964 Walnut Creek Art Festival, San Francisco, CA, Grant Purchase Award  
 San Francisco Art Festival, San Francisco, CA, Major Purchase Award  
 1961 Oakland Art Museum of California, Oakland, CA, *First California Craftsman Biennial Exhibition*, Award for Merit  
 San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Annual, San Francisco, CA, Prize for Sculpture  
 1960 Richmond Art Center, Richmond, CA, Prize for Ceramic Sculpture  
 1954 Fulbright Scholarship to Italy (declined by the artist)

**COMMISSIONS**

- 1998 New Harmony, IN. *Angel of Annunciation*, Bronze Sculpture  
 Chiron Corporation, Emeryville, CA. *Two Figures*, Bronze Sculpture.  
 1993 San Jose Convention Center, San Jose, CA. *Winged Guardian*, Bronze Sculpture  
 Graduate Theological Union, University of California, Berkeley, CA. *Winged Figure*,  
 Bronze Sculpture.  
 City Center Garage West/Amphitheatre, Oakland, CA. *Three Figures*, Bronze Sculptures  
 1990 Portman Building, Embarcadero Center West, San Francisco, CA.  
*Torso with Raised Arm*, Bronze Sculpture.  
 1989 Geary-Market Investment Company, San Francisco, CA. *Angel*, Bronze Sculpture,  
 Installed at 720 Market Street.  
 1988 New Harmony Inn and Conference Center, New Harmony IN. *Pieta*, Bronze Sculpture  
 1986-87 New Harmony Inn and Conference Center, New Harmony IN.  
 Light Sculpture and Water Sculpture.  
 1985-87 General Services Administration, Old Saint Louis Post Office, St. Louis MO.  
*Birthplace*, Clay Sculpture.  
 1986 Iowa State University, University Library, Ames, IA. *Left Sided Angel*, Bronze Sculpture  
 1985-86 San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco, CA. *Man with Flame*, Bronze Sculpture,  
 Installed at the Moscone Parking Garage.  
 1981-82 Pacific Mutual Insurance Company, Pacific Mutual Plaza, Newport Beach, CA.  
*Canyon*, Stoneware Clay Sculpture.  
 1980-81 Department of General Services, New State Building, San Jose, CA.  
*Siracusa*, Ceramic Sculpture.  
 1976-77 Bay Area Rapid Transit District, San Francisco, CA. *Wall Canyon*, High Fired Ceramic,  
 Monumental Wall Sculpture, Installed at the Embarcadero Station, San Francisco, CA.  
 1972 Bay Area Rapid Transit District, San Francisco, CA. Stoneware and Concrete Water  
 Sculpture, Installed at the Concord Station, Concord, CA.  
 1970 University Art Museum, Berkeley, CA. *Seating Environment* for the Lower Lobby,  
 Stoneware Clay Sculpture.  
 1969 The Woman's Art League of the East Bay. *Farnsworth Memorial Sculpture (Sun Dial)*,  
 Stoneware Clay Sculpture, Installed at the Oakland Museum of Art, Oakland, CA.  
 1967-68 Sanctuary of the Holy Spirit Chapel, Newman Hall, Berkeley, CA. Five Stoneware Clay  
 Pieces: Altar, Tabernacle, Lecturn, Crucifix, Celebrant's Chair.  
 1963 Prudential Savings and Loan, Salt Lake City, UT. *Moab I*, Stoneware Clay, Wall Relief.  
 1961 Consumers Cooperative of Berkeley, Berkeley, CA. *Concerted Movement*,  
 Welded Bronze Wall Sculpture.

**SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS**

Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, CA  
Brunnier Art Museum at Iowa State University, Ames, IA  
Ceramics Research Center, Arizona State University Art Museum, Scottsdale, AZ  
Contemporary Art Museum, Honolulu, HI  
Copia: The American Center for Wine, Food & the Arts, Napa, CA  
Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA  
di Rosa Preserve, Napa, CA  
Everson Museum, Syracuse, NY  
Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN  
Fresno Art Museum, Fresno, CA  
Johnson County Community College, Overland Park, KS  
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA  
de Young Museum, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, CA  
MacNider Art Museum, Mason City, IA  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY  
Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, MN  
Mint Museum of Craft + Design, Charlotte, NC  
Moore School of Music, University of Houston, Houston, TX  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, ME  
Museum of Art & Design, New York, NY  
Neuberger Museum, Purchase, NY  
New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain, CT  
New Orleans Museum of Art, Sydney and Walda Bestoff Sculpture Garden, NOLA  
Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA  
Palm Springs Museum, Palm Springs, CA  
Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, OK  
Runnymede Sculpture Park, Woodside, CA  
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA  
San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA  
Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden, U. of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE  
Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, Topeka, KS  
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Renwick Gallery, Washington DC  
Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame, IN  
Utah Museum of Art, Salt Lake City, UT

## Statement

### **Stephen De Staebler**

December 8, 2011 – January 28, 2012

Opening: Saturday, December 10, from 3.00 to 5.00 pm

Dolby Chadwick Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of bronze sculptures by the late artist Stephen De Staebler (March 1933 – May 2011). Made during the last two years of De Staebler's life, the sculptures featured in this exhibition are indicative of the aesthetic themes and concerns that run throughout this accomplished artist's oeuvre.

Having worked primarily in clay for the first part of his career, De Staebler began experimenting with bronze during the late 1970s. Rather than viewing the two mediums as mutually exclusive, clay's organic and malleable qualities exerted an undeniable influence upon De Staebler's innovative approach to casting. The first step in his process was to cast into bronze hundreds of fragments of arms, legs, wings, and "earth forms" originally made from clay and wax. From this library of bronze fragments he was then, by means of assemblage, free to create entirely new forms. Even his ostensibly finished works were often subjected to further additions, subtractions, and modifications, as if he were still "modelling" the material. By producing new sculptures using fragments excavated from his own art practice, De Staebler developed a signature aesthetic recognized today as uniquely his own. From a material perspective, the formal possibilities introduced by bronze enabled De Staebler to push this aesthetic to another level:

Working with the figure on its sculptural ground is like the figure/ground problem in painting, the relationship of the figure or object to the space around it. [...] I was struggling with the same relationship of figure and ground in sculpture. Then, when I shifted from clay to bronze, I learned quickly that the reason I needed bronze was to separate the figure even further from the ground and let it stand on its own form, which isn't possible in clay. Bronze offers this great freedom to cantilever masses. When you vertically wedge a form in clay, it has massiveness at the base, like a triangle going to a small top. In bronze I can reverse it, having big, massive forms at the top of the figure, and the figure holding all this mass with an ankle.

De Staebler's bronzes defy easy signification in that they encode diametrical, even contradictory, phenomena; straddling earthly monumentality and spiritual transcendence, fragility and strength, and the primordial and the modern, the sculptures evoke tensions that excite a complicated, visceral reaction in the viewer. By portraying the body as fragmented and incomplete — an aesthetic first embraced by Auguste Rodin in the late 19th century — De Staebler renounces classical idealism's flawless corporeality in favor of depicting the body as inextricably bound by the human condition. As this condition is contingent on its own mortality, De Staebler's bodies are inscribed with a palpable melancholy, even suffering, and evoke a sense of searching or yearning. His awareness of the cyclical nature of being is further enhanced by the arc between fertility and deterioration that unfolds within each of the

sculptures. And as with his clay works, parallels between the earth and the body as territories of life and death are conjured by the formal similarities his figures often bear to the raw, cracked landscape.

In his quest to express the complexities of humanity's earthly existence, De Staebler also sought to access a realm of fuller being and admit the possibility of transcendence despite our earthly limitations. While a student of theology at Princeton, De Staebler describes a formative spiritual experience in which the paths of a boy riding a bicycle and a girl walking intersected perpendicularly to create a cross. Reflecting on that powerful moment, De Staebler concluded: "...what gave me peace of mind was the realization that you can exist on two planes, the plane of accomplishment and the plane of the spirit—where you need nothing but being to affirm being alive." This recognition of the spiritual's place in and impact on the physical, temporal world is expressed formally through various visual references. The often armless or headless torsos of his figures, for example, sit magically atop slender, gracefully elongated legs reminiscent of the exaggerated anatomy found in Italian Mannerist paintings. The preternatural, almost ethereal quality of these limbs, together with the occasional appearance of a winged appendage, as in *Winged Figure Ascending* (2011) and *Winged Woman Walking V* (1990), produce strong totemic associations in which humanity's kinship to a divine other is affirmed.

Timothy Anglin Burgard, the Ednah Root Curator of American Art at the de Young Museum, reflects on this rich synthesis of existential alienation and spiritual affirmation that De Staebler masterfully achieves in his art:

De Staebler's creation of his sculptures was inherently an act of affirmation, yet the artworks offer equivocal rather than definitive statements. They focus instead on the transitional or metamorphic states that lie between nature and culture, life and death, integration and disintegration, and matter and spirit. They thus manifest the pervasive dilemma of existential doubt while also serving as rare sanctuaries for humanist values and spiritual beliefs in an increasingly materialist age.

Stephen De Staebler was born on March 24, 1933 in a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri. He earned his BA in theology from Princeton University in 1954 and his MA seven years later at the University of California, Berkeley, where he studied under Peter Voulkos. He taught at the San Francisco Art Institute during the mid-1960s and held a long tenure at San Francisco State University, from which he retired in 1995. Over the course of his career, De Staebler was the recipient of numerous awards, including two National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships and a 1983 Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship. His work can be found in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Oakland Museum of California, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, amongst others. The de Young Museum will present "Matter + Spirit: The Sculpture of Stephen De Staebler," a retrospective of De Staebler's work that will run from January 14 through April 22, 2012. A monograph with essays written by Timothy Anglin Burgard, Rick Newby, and Dore Ashton will be published in conjunction with the exhibition.