

MA(i)SONRY

N A P A V A L L E Y

MANUEL NERI

Bio for Ma(i)sonry

Born in Sanger, California, Neri attended San Francisco City College from 1949-50 with the idea of becoming an electrical engineer. A single class in ceramics turned him to art and a move to California College of Arts and Crafts and subsequent studies at California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute). Studies with such artists as Elmer Bischoff and Richard Diebenkorn led him to abstract expressionism, but a radical turnabout occurred in the 1950s. "I would say that I did a U-turn in my art in 1955 when I saw my first child being born," he says. "It was a fantastic moment. I realized then that the female body has the magic. The male may have the power, but the female has the magic."

Neri is known primarily for his life-size figurative sculptures in plaster, bronze, and marble, as well as for his association with the Bay Area Figurative movement during the 1950s and 1960s. Since 1972, Neri has worked with the same model, Mary Julia, creating drawings and plaster figures that merge contemporary sculptural concerns with classical forms. The anatomical skill of these works recalls the sculptures and drawings of Rodin, Giacometti and Degas. The fragile nature of his plaster sculptures led him to cast some of the plasters in bronze, which became a vehicle for color to emphasize surfaces and form.

Manuel Neri has received numerous awards including the Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts Grant, San Francisco Arts Commission Award for Outstanding Achievement in Sculpture, Honorary Doctorate for Outstanding Achievement in Sculpture by the San Francisco Art Institute, Awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the California College of Arts and Crafts, and an Honorary Doctorate by the Corcoran School of Art, Washington, D.C.

Manuel Neri's work has been acquired for many important collections including: Eli Broad Family Collection, Los Angeles; The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Crosby Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City; Denver Art Museum; Des Moines Art Center; The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; Gap Collection, San Francisco; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Honolulu Academy of the Arts; Janss Collection, Sun Valley, Idaho; Levi Strauss Associates, Inc., San Francisco; Memphis Brooks Art Museum, Tennessee; Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach, California; The Oakland Museum, California; Palm Springs Desert Museum, California; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; San Diego Museum of Art; Seattle Art Museum; Virlane Foundation, New Orleans; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

In 1990, Neri retired from the University of California, Davis, where he taught since 1965. Neri lives in the San Francisco Bay Area, and also has a studio in Carrara, Italy, where he spends several months each year creating sculptures in marble.