



Phoenix Art Museum presents first mid-career survey of contemporary artist Sheila Pepe

SHEILA PEPE: HOT MESS FORMALISM : EXPLORES THE ARTIST’S RELATIONSHIP TO CRAFT, IDENTITY, AND TRADITIONAL FORMS OF DISPLAY THROUGH AN EXHIBITION OF MORE THAN 70 WORKS



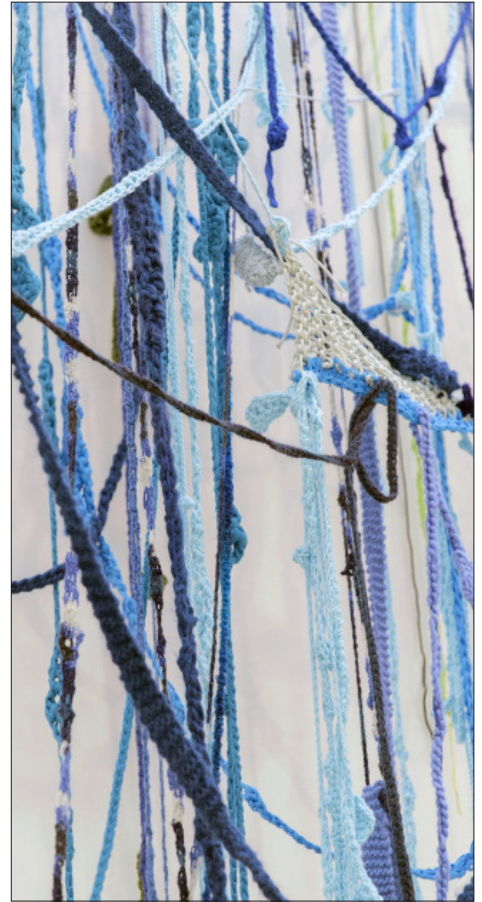
PHOENIX (August 11, 2017) – Beginning October 14, Phoenix Art Museum will present the first mid-career survey of Sheila Pepe, an under-recognized artist best known for her immersive crocheted structures. *Sheila Pepe: Hot Mess Formalism* is composed of more than 70 works, including the premiere of a three-story, site-specific work created exclusively for Phoenix Art Museum. From October 14, 2017 through January 28, 2018, Museum visitors will be able to experience the spontaneity in Pepe’s immersive structures, sculptural assemblages, and other works in the broadest examination to date of an artist who poses a formidable challenge to conventions of museum display, identity, and craft.

“We are pleased to organize the first mid-career survey of the works of Sheila Pepe,” said Amada Cruz, the CEO and Sybil Harrington Director of Phoenix Art Museum. “To bring an artist like Pepe, whose groundbreaking installations challenge how we experience and think about art, is to create access to new forms of art for our region. We are excited to be a destination for internationally-known artists and to participate in conversations happening on the cutting edge of contemporary art.”

Pepe was born in Morristown, New Jersey, in 1959. She received a BA from Alberta Magnus College in New Haven, CT, in 1981, a BFA in ceramics at Massachusetts School of Art, Boston, in 1983, and later an MFA at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 1995. She first received significant recognition in 1997 with her participation in an exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in Boston entitled *Gothic: Transmutations of Horror in Late 20th Century Art*. The artist’s name has since become associated with her large-scale crocheted installations and their conceptual engagement with feminism, queer theory, and economic class, themes that were highly prevalent in the art-world-discourse of the 1990s. What *Hot Mess Formalism* seeks to expand upon is the critical perspective through which Pepe is viewed, encompassing a wider range of influences and impulses. This includes the artist’s reinterpretation of the readymade, the historic concept coined by Marcel Duchamp, which is evident in her earlier pieces as well as her found-object installations, and situates her work within the larger trajectory of Modernism. Additionally, considering Pepe

MEDIA CONTACT:

Margaree Bigler, Marketing and Communications Manager
602.257.2105 | Margaree.Bigler@phxart.org



within the current historical correction on the contributions of women artists provides further understanding, positioning her alongside figures including Magdalena Abakanowicz, Lenore Tawney, and Sheila Hicks, who pioneered a fiber-based practice more than 60 years ago. *Hot Mess Formalism* aims to provide Museum visitors with a comprehensive understanding of Pepe’s work and appreciate the role she has held as a thinker and innovator for nearly 30 years.

The exhibition will feature pieces ranging from the early years of Pepe’s career to a never-before-seen fabric structure created expressly for Phoenix Art Museum. The premiere of a site-specific Museum installation will be imagined and constructed specifically for the design and architecture of the Museum’s Ellen and Howard C. Katz Wing for Modern Art, designed by Tod Williams and Billie Tsien. Pepe has chosen to create an installation to activate the nearly 50-foot tall central light well, a normally-overlooked space in the Museum that is visually connected to the Katz Wing’s three floors. The logistical and engineering challenges presented by the extreme verticality of this space will require close collaboration with members of the local community, an essential feature of Pepe’s practice; her installations are known for their process-oriented nature, in which the artist calls on the resources of a community to contribute to the realization of a project. Visitors will also be able to view a remake of Pepe’s *Women are Bricks* (*mobile bricks*, 1983), a seminal piece which brought key elements of Pepe’s work to the forefront: domesticity, fiber, ceramics, and craft. There will also be a wide selection of sculptures, drawings, and other works on view.

“For more than two decades, Sheila Pepe has created works that shape-shift according to the conditions and context of where they’re exhibited,” said Gilbert Vicario, the Selig Family Chief Curator. “This exhibition brings to Phoenix Art Museum an artist whose work comes to life through uncontrollable, contingent factors. It is this spontaneity, an essential quality of the artist’s practice, which enables the possibility for an exploration of art, chaos, and the spaces where they coexist.”

MEDIA CONTACT:

Margaree Bigler, Marketing and Communications Manager
602.257.2105 | Margaree.Bigler@phxart.org

About the Exhibition

Sheila Pepe: Hot Mess Formalism will be on view from October 14, 2017 through January 28, 2018 in the Anderman, Marcus, and Marley galleries of the Ellen and Howard C. Katz Wing for Modern Art. The exhibition is organized by Phoenix Art Museum and curated by Gilbert Vicario, the Selig Family Chief Curator. It is made possible with support provided by The Maxine and Jonathan Marshall Endowment Fund and Contemporary Forum. The exhibition will travel to the Everson Museum of Art and the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts in 2018, and is accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalog with contributions by Julia Bryan-Wilson, Elizabeth Dunbar, Lia Gangitano and Gilbert Vicario. The publication is designed by Miko McGinty, Inc. and will be distributed by DelMonico Books • Prestel. For more details about the exhibition, please visit bit.ly/HotMessFormalism.

Admission is free for Museum Members; veterans, active-duty, and retired military; Maricopa Community College students, staff, and faculty (with ID); and youth aged 5 and under. Entrance to the exhibition is included in general admission for the general public. During voluntary-donation, free-access times, the exhibition is offered free to the general public. Free-access times include Wednesdays from 3 – 9 PM, the first Fridays of every month from 6 – 10 PM, and the second weekend of each month (Saturday from 10 AM – 5 PM and Sunday from NOON – 5 PM). For a full breakdown of general admission prices and hours, please see bit.ly/VisitPhxArt.

To request interviews and high-resolution photography, contact Phoenix Art Museum's Marketing and Communications Office, at 602.257.2105 or email margaree.bigler@phxart.org.

About Phoenix Art Museum

Phoenix Art Museum has provided access to visual arts and educational programs in Arizona for more than 50 years and is the largest art museum in the Southwestern United States. Critically acclaimed national and international exhibitions are shown alongside the Museum's permanent collection of more than 18,000 works of American, Asian, European, Latin American, Western American, modern and contemporary art, and fashion design. The Museum also presents festivals, a comprehensive film program, live performances and educational programs designed to enlighten, entertain and stimulate visitors of all ages. Visitors also enjoy vibrant photography exhibitions through the Museum's landmark partnership with the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona. To learn more about Phoenix Art Museum, visit PhxArt.org, or call the 24-hour recorded information line at 602.257.1222.

About Sheila Pepe

Sheila Pepe is best known for her large-scale, ephemeral installations and sculpture made from domestic and industrial materials. Since the mid-1990s, Pepe has used feminist and craft traditions to investigate received notions concerning the production of canonical artwork as well as the artist's relationship to museum display and the art institution itself. Pepe has exhibited widely throughout the United States and abroad in solo and group exhibitions as well as collaborative projects. Venues for Pepe's many solo exhibitions include the Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts, and the Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, North Carolina. Her work has been included in important group exhibitions such as the first Greater New York at PS1/MoMA; *Hand + Made: The Performative Impulse in Art & Craft*, Contemporary Art Museum Houston, Texas, and *Artisterium*, Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia.

###

CREDITS PAGE 1 (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT): 1. Sheila Pepe, *Common Sense II*, 2010. Crocheted baby and worsted weight yarns, rope, and community participation. Installation view, *Hand + Made: The Performative Impulse in Art & Craft*, Contemporary Art Museum Houston, Texas. 2. Sheila Pepe, *Short Stack*, 2017. Wood, paint, gloss medium. Collection of the artist. Photo by Alan Weiner.

PAGE 2: 1. Sheila Pepe, *Red Hook at Bedford Terrace* (detail with artist), 2008. Shoelaces, cotton yarn, and nautical towline. Variable dimensions. Smith College Museum of Art, Purchased with gifts from members of the Museum's Visiting Committee in honor of the retirement of Ann Johnson. 2. Sheila Pepe, *Oversewn Object with Different Things Underneath*, 2015. Fabric over accumulated object armature. Collection of the artist. 3. Sheila Pepe, *Put Me Down Gently* (detail), 2014. Parachute cord, laces, yarn and hardware. Installation view, Des Moines Art Center, Iowa. Collection of the artist. Photo by Rick Lozier Photography.