

Robert Hobbs, *Beverly Pepper Monumenta*. New York: Rizzoli, 2012.

Text © Robert Hobbs

# Beverly Pepper MONUMENTA

SKIRA

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# Beverly Pepper's Sculpture: Time as Space

A Dialogue with Henri Bergson, André Malraux, and Walter Benjamin

Robert Hobbs

An American sculptor living mainly in Italy since the 1950s and an artist with an enviable international reputation beginning in the early 1960s, Beverly Pepper, together with the two "Louises"—Bourgeois and Nevelson—heads the list of outstanding American women sculptors achieving artistic maturity in the mid-twentieth century. As her 1998 full-scale retrospective of 70 sculptures and related works at Florence's Michelangelo-designed Forte Belvedere clearly demonstrated, her art deserves being ranked among the most distinctive and overall ambitious bodies of modern sculpture created in the twentieth century. Even in the new millennium Pepper's art continues to be remarkable; and there are several important reasons for its continued impact: its inherent monumentality irrespective of its actual size;<sup>1</sup> notable public presence; and ongoing experimentation with a wide range of media. These include wood, steel, stainless steel, Cor-ten steel (one of the first, if not actually the first sculptor to use this material in a work of art), forged and cast iron (the artist deserving credit for singlehandedly reviving its use in contemporary sculpture), cast stone, aluminum, and concrete. While sculptors working in metal before Pepper took great pains to eradicate all traces of rust in their completed pieces, she is the first artist to endorse this process's particularly rich surfaces and their ability to impart a distinctive painterly quality to her sculpture, endowing works using it with a sense of time passing, a crucial theme for much of her art. In addition to these impressive and far ranging contributions to modern sculpture, Pepper has singlehandedly reconceived the outdoor theater, with antecedents going back to Greek and Roman times, as monumental sculpture, thereby establishing an entirely new artistic genre.

*Todi Columns*, Forte Belvedere, Florence, 1998  
Exhibition "Beverly Pepper a Forte Belvedere. Trent'anni di scultura"

## PART I

### *Preamble: Some Postmodern Misconceptions of Modern Art in Relation to Pepper's Sculpture*

Despite these historically notable innovations, Pepper's work has suffered from essentially the same type of misunderstanding affecting most modern abstract sculpture in recent decades.<sup>2</sup> Exemplars of the mid-twentieth-century development of this style include Alexander Lieberman, Barbara Hepworth, Isamu Noguchi, George Rickey, Kenneth Snelson, Richard Stankiewicz, Mark di Suvero, and William Tucker, among others who have not received the type of informed and sympathetic treatment their work so clearly merits. This later and certainly myopic view of modern sculpture, constituting an almost wholesale rejection of it, has taken place over several generations; and because it has precluded understanding modern sculpture's purview, an explanation of its modus operandi at the outset will enable us to move beyond its censorious attitudes and misunderstandings in order to underscore the distinct nature of Beverly Pepper's perspective and its contributions to this genre. After looking at some postmodern attitudes toward modern sculpture, which have used it as a foil for making points about postmodern and post-structural work's ability to investigate its own context and operational modes, I will briefly consider how Marcel Duchamp's and Wilhelm Worringer's early-twentieth-century views of art, though significant and meritorious for postmodern approaches, have created an intellectual climate inimical to modern abstract sculpture, in particular the latter art's reliance on Immanuel Kant's reflective judgment to empower viewers.

The best way to appreciate how modern abstract sculpture's contributions to the history of art and aesthetics began to be undermined is to look at philosopher Arthur Danto's 1964 essay "The Artworld," featuring in its title a purposefully conflated neologism, in which he states unequivocally: "To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry—an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld."<sup>3</sup> Danto elaborated on this approach a decade later in "The Transfiguration of the Commonplace," a title he subsequently used as a book title, subtitled *A Philosophy of Art*, thereby validating it as official.<sup>4</sup> Earth artist Robert Smithson subscribed to this type of tactic in 1972 with his quip, "I'm just interested in exploring the apparatus I'm being threaded through. ..."<sup>5</sup> Made when the zenith of the

United States' interest in structuralist theory was just beginning to be eclipsed by French post-structuralist critiques, Smithson's characterization of his own work constitutes a retrospective view of structuralism's paramount role in viewing the artworld as an overarching structure, superintending and transforming all work consciously made under its purview. Mainly language-based, with its origins in the linguistics of the early-twentieth-century Swiss theorist Ferdinand de Saussure, structuralism is a system of knowledge informing a range of different approaches; these include French cultural anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss' overarching cultural patterns concentrated on uniting a given tribe's kinship laws, mythology, and traditional dress; California psychotherapist Virginia Satir's views on the family's constructed mode of operation and suggested ways to change it; and New York City critic Susan Sontag's analysis of the camp sensibility advanced by the city's gay population as both a set of life-style choices and a means for differentiating itself from mainstream culture. Irrespective of their chosen fields, structuralists in the mid-twentieth century tended to view knowledge in terms of elaborate, socially based constructs, implicit sets of rules capable of cohering seemingly disparate facts, bodies of knowledge, and even institutions into discrete forms of intelligibility. At the height of its popularity in academic circles, structuralists believed their systematic tactics would even enable them to discern and codify the human mind's characteristic way of working.

Although the apex of structuralism's popularity was the 1950s and '60s, a number of scholars and critics since that time have continued to subscribe to its basic tenets by looking for much less pervasive, localized structures, most often in order to analyze, decode, and evaluate them. Their far more focused research has taken a number of its cues from the wide-ranging post-structuralist critiques spearheaded by such thinkers as Roland Barthes, Judith Butler, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Julia Kristeva.

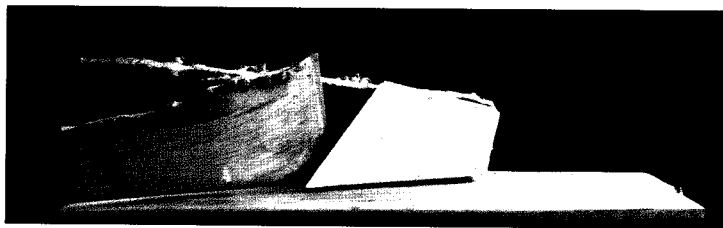
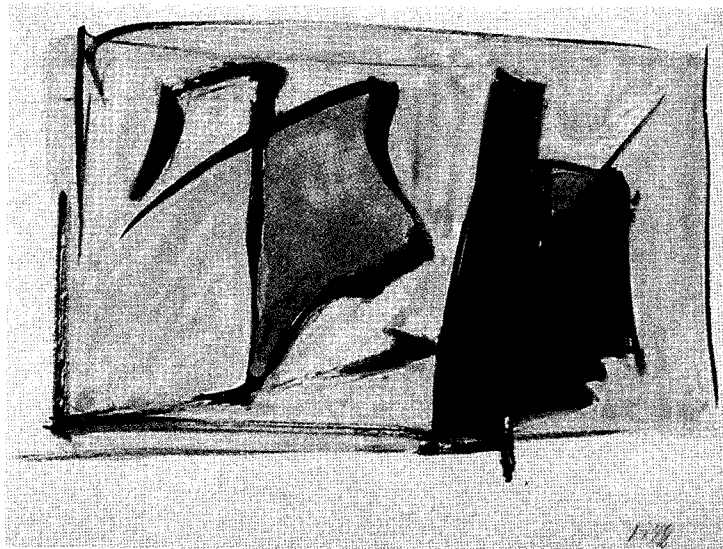
For the art world, the net effect of this change has been a move from individual works of art to studying the systems legitimizing them as art, including the ways they need to participate in the roles artworld systems have prescribed for them, if they are to be ratified as cutting-edge art. This type of epistemological tactic has been personalized by a number of artists and works, including most notably Smithson's sites/nonsites directed toward rethinking sculpture as an ongoing set of presences and absences; Marcel Broodthaers' *Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles* as an elaborate



*Wind Totem*, 1962  
Steel  
Private collection

(No Title), 1948  
Gouache

Poker, 1965  
Stainless steel, 31 x 7 x 7 cm  
Collection of the artist



semiotic construct predicated on the many social and historic denotations and connotations associated with this figure; Daniel Buren's easily recognized stripes serving as placeholders for art; Allan McCollum's surrogate paintings and "perfect vehicle" sculptures, resembling cremation urns, which are intended to mark the system enunciating and validating them as art; and Sherrie Levine's photographic and water-color copies as a way to interrogate art's originality from a feminist perspective. While the result of this research has produced postmodern works commendably focused on art's network and its means of articulating, critiquing, and at times undermining the processes validating it as art, this tact has, ironically enough, also constituted an updated art-for-art's sake attitude, different from its nineteenth-century very precious and *recherché* antecedent and yet still cloistered within art's special cocoon: this time Danto's artworld, with its ability to separate works of art from the world at large in order to ensure their cogency and legitimacy.

This still rarefied art network is capable not only of misjudging and misunderstanding modern sculpture but also at times turning it into postmodernism's *bête noire* in order to score points for an account of both art itself and its modes of authorization. Several generations of perceptive late twentieth-century theorists, in fact, have subscribed to this type of artworld critique, in which the art network replaces the solitary art object as the focus

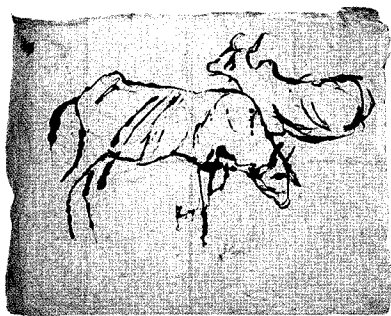
of inquiry. Comparative literature specialist Charles Russell in "The Context of the Concept" succinctly characterizes the postmodern condition as an eminently self-aware process:

*To make discourse evident is the main goal of postmodern literature and art. To reveal the absolute and intimate connection between ourselves as speakers and listeners and our socially determined patterns of perceiving, thinking, expressing, and acting is the function of self-reflexive artworks. Meaning as a system, culture as a web of discourses, individual identity as a product of social codes of behavior—these are the themes of our art.*<sup>6</sup>

Because Russell is too subtle a thinker to even try to diminish modern art in order to enhance postmodernism, his characterization of it in terms of "emphatic self-reflexiveness," "elitist hermeticism" leading to "self-mysticism," ultimately "tautolog[ical]," and intent on privileging "the priority of any single language" as "individualist self-creation and freedom"<sup>7</sup> demonstrates the difficulty serious scholars have had in attempting to be objective about modern art and the ways their views of it have had the net effect of turning a rich and varied tradition into a monolithic production. Less thoughtful writers have tended to underrate modern art as constituting merely self-indulgent, autonomous, and closed propositions, while participating in New York critic Clement Greenberg's special mid-century brand of intrinsically developed modernism known as "modernist art," with its emphasis on a type of formalist *gestalt* immediately present and readily discernible. Such critics cite Greenberg's once widely subscribed to critical doctrine of medium specificity as modern art's most ideal content and definitive goal as a *sine qua non* for this type of art. Viewing Greenberg's insightful and focused theoretical view as comprising all of modernism rather than one notable development of it, postmodernists have been prone to damn all modern art, including modern abstract sculpture, as simply idealist and locked into a unitary meaning. Because of the widespread subscription to this postmodern approach, the significance of such sculpture as Beverly Pepper's innovative type of modernism, which is not at all unitary in its intent and in fact is informed by Henri Bergson's theorization of intuition and duration, as well as the elaboration of these ideas found in André Malraux' works, as this essay will demonstrate, has unfortunately been written off by postmodernists



Angkor Wat. A Banyan tree's roots



Two Cows, 1960  
Ink, Nepalese handmade wood paper



Two Indian Women, 1960  
Ink, Nepalese handmade wood paper

and poststructuralists as merely an autonomous production—a type of myopic Buddha condemned to a perpetuity of staring at its own proverbial navel.<sup>8</sup>

There is, of course, a significant idealist strain in early modern art, a “rhetoric of purity” to use art historian Mark A. Cheetham’s apposite term,<sup>9</sup> relying on neo-platonic concepts revived in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century abstract art, a lineage beginning with Paul Gauguin and including Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian when Plato’s Ideas were invoked in works attempting, in various ways, to use essences in direct opposition to the Greek philosopher’s downgrading of art to mere appearances. “Abstract art,” Cheetham writes, “seeks to answer Plato by inventing a type of image that is mental because it has immateriality as its telos, but which nonetheless works through the material instrument of painting.”<sup>10</sup> Continuing in the same vein, art historian Patricia Matthews succinctly observes:

*Essentialism...—the belief in some fundamental, purist, universal substratum or deep structure of universal meaning—runs through almost every form of modernist avant-gardism. A reductive search for single principles that define complex phenomena is one condition of the modernist culture.*<sup>11</sup>

Beginning the 1940s abstract expressionist Robert Motherwell perpetuated this view with his often-cited Søren Kierkegaard’s statement “purity of heart is to will one thing” from his *Fear and Trembling* as a definition of abstract art, even though his own work never attempted to attain this type of remarkable closure.<sup>12</sup> While a quest for absolutes may have defined some turn-of-the-twentieth-century artists’ highly romantic efforts to make their most essentialized selves the subject and mainstay of their work, it has not been the ambition of all abstract artists, and Beverly Pepper for one did not wish to make her sculptures surrogates for herself. Rather than closing off meanings in this self-absorbed manner, Pepper intended, as we will see, for her works to catalyze a range of disjunctive temporalities, capable of opening viewers to a fluidity of experiences tantamount to Henri Bergson’s duration, his heightened view of a single moment as a multiplicity in which one can intuitively grasp truth happening, an idea, which would be increasingly timely, beginning in the early 1960s when Yale art historian George Kubler reworked duration’s vitalistic current by replacing it with systems and mathematical sequences in his highly influential *The Shape of Time*.<sup>13</sup>

Pepper’s interest in setting up a force field of

allusions, thereby opening her work to a multiplicity of possible responses is no doubt one important reason she was unable to fit in with the coterie of artists championed by Greenberg, even though on several occasions he invited her to join his group. For Greenberg, the best response to art is an immediate one, focused on the presence of an individual work of art and its indefinable yet apparent quality. Following the direction of the New Critics, he believed all possible meanings to inhere in a work of art; going beyond its immediate sensuous surface in search of other meanings was, in his view, a transgression of its nature.

*Marcel Duchamp’s Fountain and the Artworld’s Imprimatur in Relation to Pepper’s Modernism*

Author and editor Louise Norton’s brief 1917 essay *Buddha of the Bathroom*, focusing on Duchamp’s infamous alias Richard Mutt and this figure’s notorious *Fountain*, mocks modern art’s self-absorption by viewing it in terms of a hypothetical self-absorbed Buddha. This perceptive piece focuses on Duchamp’s transformation of a urinal into a controversial work of art about art through re-contextualizing a practical piece of plumbing into a gratuitous object intended to cause The Society of Independent Artists’ jurors to reject it for one of their sponsored exhibitions because of its questionable artistic status.<sup>14</sup> In the second half of the twentieth century, the epistemological inquiry inaugurated by this first publicly exhibited Readymade has also served as a basis for later self-directed ruminations on the artworld’s role in validating art’s status as art, even though these inquiries have been labeled institutional critiques and have been considered far removed from art-for-art’s-sake preciousness.

However, investigations of the knowledge art is capable of yielding do not need to be restricted to the art complex and can in fact productively look at empirical and phenomenological ways of approaching and understanding art as well as ontological theories for theorizing it. Pepper’s statement about her main goal in creating a work helps to dramatize the enormous difference separating her art from postmodern structural analyses:

*I work until I feel a space outside the sculpture exists. I’ll keep going until there’s something I can’t explain that’s there. But I have no idea how one puts it in. But I don’t think content is something that you achieve mentally—it is not a mental achievement.*<sup>15</sup>

While ontological, empirical and phenomenological

*Laocoon*, 1961  
Bronze and elm  
Estate of Shareover, Jerusalem, Israel



*Matter and Energy*, 1961  
Cast aluminum and bronze  
Estate of Abraham Feinberg, New York

methods certainly do not obviate structural analyses of works and institutional definitions of its way of functioning, they do offer the advantage of focusing on other crucially significant aspects of art, in particular the means individuals can employ for personalizing and dramatizing their connections with separate pieces so they become part of an ongoing dynamic—an enduring contrapunctus, so to speak, assuming the guise of a living force—and thus meaningful experiences for them. This latter approach is the one I wish to explore in my analysis of the ways Pepper's works intriguingly present viewers with sets of polarities, encouraging different types of empathic responses, and contradictory modes of looking and reacting, without any final or easy resolution, thus setting in motion a mean to consider sculpture far removed from the solitary moment or autonomous idea so often associated with modern sculpture.

#### *Pepper's Trip to Angkor and Her Early Sculpture in Italy*

Beverly Pepper's decision to become a sculptor in 1960, an act one might characterize as a type of religious conversion except that the artist is a confirmed secularist,<sup>16</sup> helps to explain her particular approach to modernism. Prior to going to Angkor with her daughter Jorie (who later became the celebrated American poet Jorie Graham) where this tremendous change took place, Pepper was a painter working mostly in a socialist-realist vein. Even before becoming an artist, she had

studied advertising and industrial design as well as photography at the Pratt Institute in her native Brooklyn, before electing to augment these studies by enrolling in philosophy courses at Brooklyn College and taking additional courses there in art theory with Gyorgy Kepes, a major design theorist, whose work joins Bauhaus functionalist concepts with Gestalt psychology and who had already written books on Paul Rand's contemporary design and the art of his former teacher and colleague at the New Bauhaus, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy. Later, while employed as a commercial designer for Decca Records, Beverly Stoll, as Pepper was then known, studied painting at night at the Art Students League in New York with Yasuo Kuniyoski, before moving to Paris in 1949 to continue her education in painting by taking classes with the former cubist André Lhote at the Grande Chaumière and also with one of the masters of early-twentieth-century modernism, Ferdinand Léger, at his studio. After meeting and marrying the American writer and art-history aficionado Bill Pepper,<sup>17</sup> who soon became known in the 1950s for his celebrated column "It Happened in Italy," published in the *Rome Daily American*, and for his cutting-edge work with CBS broadcast journalist Edward R. Murrow, Beverly Pepper continued painting socialist-realist works, no doubt influenced by pertinent social issues featured in Italian neorealist films (neorealismo) then being successfully practiced by a number of directors with whom she and her husband associated, including Michelangelo Antonioni, Federico Fellini, and Luchino Visconti.

The visit to Angkor in Cambodia was part of an extensive trip intended to introduce Jorie to the wide world of antique and modern cultures. At first only a day or two was going to be spent investigating the great temple complex of Angkor Wat, situated in Angkor, one of the world's largest preindustrial cities, but the trip was extended to 10 days. According to Pepper:

*I was overwhelmed by Angkor. ... I just realized that there was dimension in Angkor. The heads. But also the trees, you see. Now they're cleaning it; it's just too bad. But the banyan trees were just about totally absorbed into the statuary. And there was mystery—that the heads in themselves have—plus the combination of the trees and the roots of the trees and the history of them, and they [the sculptures and buildings] had only been dug out about 70 years before then.<sup>18</sup>*

Related in an interview occurring almost five decades after this trip, the excitement of this experience is still





*Gift of Icarus*, 1962  
Iron and steel  
18 ft 6 in x 19 ft 7 in x 3 ft 8 in  
(8.63 x 5.96 x 1.12 m)  
Festival dei Due Mondi of Spoleto, Italy

Beverly Pepper and David Smith in Spoleto, Italy, 1962



evident in Pepper's phrasing. It was obviously both a life-changing and life-enhancing event. Viewed in retrospect, the tremendous vitality of banyan (fig) trees, encircling, entrapping, and all-but-overwhelming the imposing Khmer constructions around them dramatized an amazing clash between nature and culture. The trees' customary mode of reproducing themselves can be understood as the botanical equivalent of mammals' birth processes, since birds deposit banyan seeds in the crevices of trees, buildings, and sculptures where they then germinate and sprout roots, which grow downward to the ground, enveloping their hosts, whether natural or human constructed, with woody protrusions capable of achieving mammoth proportions. Beginning in the fifteenth century, when Angkor was abandoned, the growth of banyan trees was allowed to continue unobstructed until the late nineteenth century. When the Peppers visited the site, only a few buildings and sculptures had been freed from the strangling death-like grip of the trees' gargantuan roots. Although an age-old home remedy for female sterility or infertility is regular dosages of the ground-up banyan tree's aerial roots mixed with milk and although the roots of a mature banyan tree can encompass circumferences of 1000 feet or more, causing Hindu religious devotees to compare their reach to God's all-encompassing shelter for his worshippers, these associations with female and divine benevolence seemed to have been overturned at Angkor, where these trees' mighty roots vied for supremacy with one of human culture's proudest accomplishments,

Angkor itself becoming a dramatization of chaotic and unbridled growth irreconcilably pitted against civilization in an extremely poignant and resolute contest. For Beverly Pepper the age-old combat between nature and culture was so "haunting,"<sup>19</sup> it convinced her to continue tentative forays into sculpture begun a few years earlier and become a full-fledged sculptor, and it enabled her to move beyond socialist-realist figurative painting to broach a more elevated and profound dialogue between extraordinarily powerful forces—a contemporary struggle every bit as moving as the battle between the Giants and the Olympian gods, known through the second-century Gigantomachy decorating the Hellenistic Pergamon Altar frieze in Berlin.

When Pepper returned to Italy and moved into a house outside Rome, with insights from Angkor serving as both a catalyst for rethinking sculpture and a foil for avoiding the trap of more conventional and less dialectic work, she found 30-some felled trees on the property, which became the material for her first concerted series of sculptures. As she later recalled: "I went out and bought not sculpting tools; I bought jigsaws and this and that, and started cutting up the trees. The result of those cut-up trees was that I had my first sculpture show [at the Galleria Pogliani in Rome in 1961]." Giovanni Carandente, the assistant to the celebrated Italian critic Giulio Carlo Argan, who wrote an essay for Pepper's first show, comprised of wood sculptures and cast bronzes, asked her point blank if she could also weld. He was putting together sculptors for the 1962 exhibition *Sculture nella*

*città*, part of the Festival of the Two Worlds in Spoleto, a major art fair combining U.S. and Italian dance, drama, opera, and the visual arts, and he wanted to invite 10 artists, including Alexander Calder, Lynn Chadwick, Pietro Consagra, Arnaldo Pomodoro, and David Smith, among others, to create works in Italsider factories for his show.

Although Pepper did not know how to weld, she decided to learn:

*When he [Carandente] told me that the exhibition would be [taking place] seven months later, I decided I would be able to learn welding by then, so I said yes. We were living at Monte Mario and near us there was a blacksmith who made wrought-iron gates. I told him I would pay him if he let me work with him. He used to make gates with circular forms, so I learned how to do that kind of work.<sup>20</sup>*

Carandente assigned Pepper a factory in Piombino where she had a staff of experienced metal workers and was able to take full advantage of this extraordinary opportunity Italsider offered her by working three shifts a day to complete her sculptures for the Festival. Because she had earlier met David Smith in New York, he felt free to telephone her frequently from Genoa, where he was creating his Voltri series, to ask for help communicating with the locals since he knew no Italian. The two became good friends, and continued to be in close contact during the few remaining years of Smith's life. Pepper's highly expressionistic sculptures for the Festival conveyed her continued fascination with the conflated nature/culture struggle she had witnessed at Angkor.

Fully launched in the art world by the success of her sculpture in the Festival of the Two Worlds, Pepper found herself a couple of years later working in a U.S. Steel factory. When the American Iron and Steel Institute (AISI) sponsored her for a project, she was given sheets of very thick steel, so thick in fact it was impossible for her to cut them, so she improvised a way of working by overheating welding rods to create a series of densely expressionist small sculptures with jagged molten edges like teeth, which she exhibited in her first show at Marlborough Gallery's space in Rome in 1965. "I wanted to humanize the steel," she recalled. "Instead of the mechanical cuts one usually gets with a shears or a guillotine cutter, I wanted to show the guts of the steel, I'm still involved with that idea today."<sup>21</sup>

In 1964 U.S. Steel provided Pepper with its new product, marketed under the brand name Cor-ten, and she began working with it when she was at its factory in Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, making her one of the first,

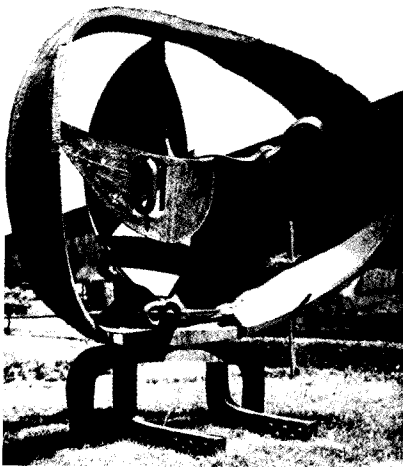
if not actually the very first sculptor to use this material, subsequently known as "Cor-ten," a highly weather-resistant steel, which forms a protective layer of rust when exposed to the atmosphere. *Cor-ten Viewpoint* of 1965, a piece painted on the inside and allowed to form a protective coating of rust on the outside, documents Pepper's early investigations with this material. Although she was initially attracted to Cor-ten steel, over time she found its uniform color too reductive and later preferred working with iron because it "react[s] to the acid in the rain, the atmosphere ..." changing and becoming "redder ...darker" so the material "has its own life."<sup>22</sup> When Pepper works with iron, she employs acids to introduce rust, knowing that her patinas will work only under controlled conditions. Once the sculptures are outside for a certain amount of time, they begin to change. For this reason, Pepper believes iron ultimately demands its own patina: it has a life of its own and plays a major role in how it "ages" outdoors.<sup>23</sup> This openness to atmospheric conditions is a means for Pepper to attribute a type of life force to her iron sculptures, making them far different from Duchamp's static Readymades, which remain the same, even though the perspectives through which they are viewed change over time. In her choice of materials, then, Pepper opts, when possible, for ontological associations, whereas Duchamp chooses objects requiring epistemological inquiries into art's status and its particular mode of operating.

In addition to working with such basic materials as wood, steel, and Cor-ten in the '60s, Pepper initiated a series of highly polished stainless steel pieces with enamel interiors in the late 1960s and early '70s, a move enabling her to continue to be responsive to the tremendously poignant nature/cultural dialectic, an outside/inside contrapuntal, she found at Angkor while responding at the same time to Italy's postwar social, economic, and cultural renaissance by creating her own brand of minimalist art.

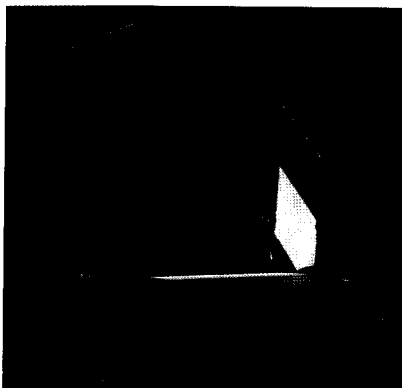
According to Pepper, these pieces establish an essential and ongoing tension:

*The works of highly polished stainless steel ...achieve this kind of dualism, primarily through the mirror-like finish of their surfaces. These sculptures acted to emphasize the actual density and weight of the steel. At the same time, they made the physical bulk of the sculpture withdraw behind a screen of reflections.<sup>24</sup>*

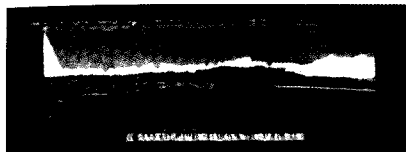
Predicated on the polarity of internal solids and external voids and comprising a panoply of reflections of their environs, including earth, sky, and onlookers



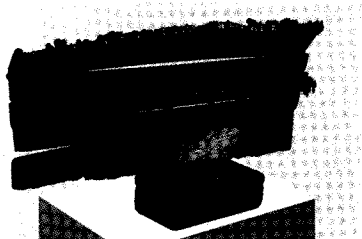
*Agli Operai di Piombino*, 1962  
Iron and steel  
Severstal iron industry collection, Piombino, Italy



*Cor-ten viewpoint*, 1965  
Cor-ten steel, nitric color, chestnut wood base  
81.5 x 105.5 cm

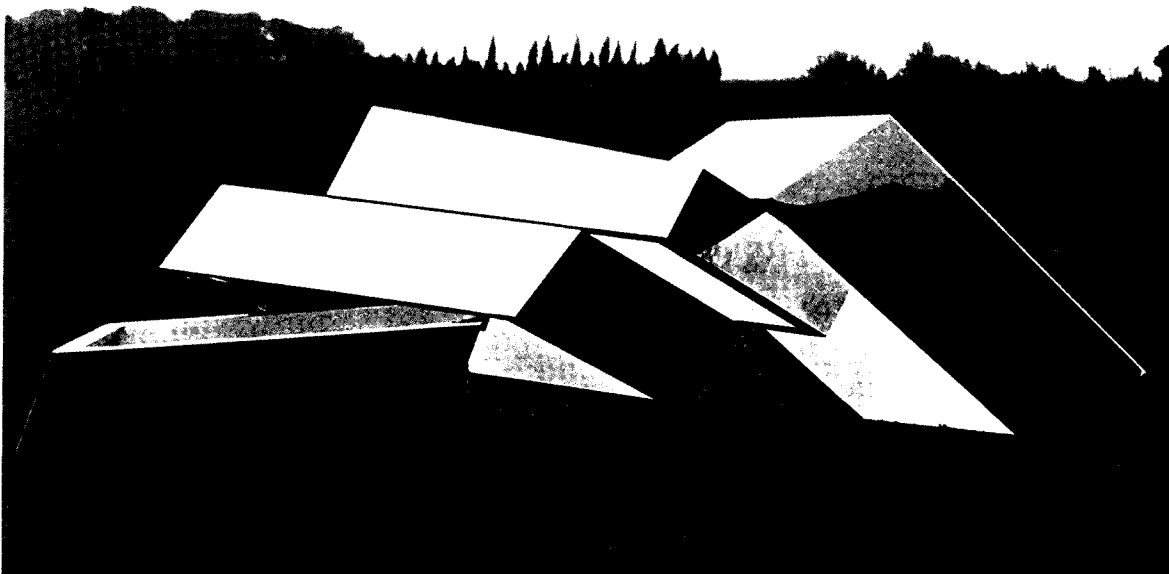


*Avanti*, 1965  
Stainless steel, nitric paint, slate base  
22 x 8 x 3 in (56 x 20 x 8 cm)



*Magical Change*, 1965  
Stainless steel, nitric paint, slate base  
14 x 9 x 3 in (35 x 23 x 8 cm)

*Fallen Sky*, 1969  
Stainless steel  
Hirshorn Museum and Sculpture Garden,  
Washington D.C.



coming within their purview, these sculptures make compelling comparisons with both Robert Morris's mirrored cubes shown at the New York City Greene Gallery in 1965 and also Donald Judd's famous 1962 essay "Specific Objects," concentrating on the use of new materials, and the interim position they can occupy between traditional two- and three-dimensional work.<sup>25</sup> But unlike these New York artists' intent to investigate the subtle yet important qualitative differences separating sculpture from inanimate objects, Pepper is concerned with the "way the reflected illusions [in her stainless steel pieces] seem to be the sculpture's anima—appearing to generate its total being, from within the shifting depth of the mirror."<sup>26</sup>

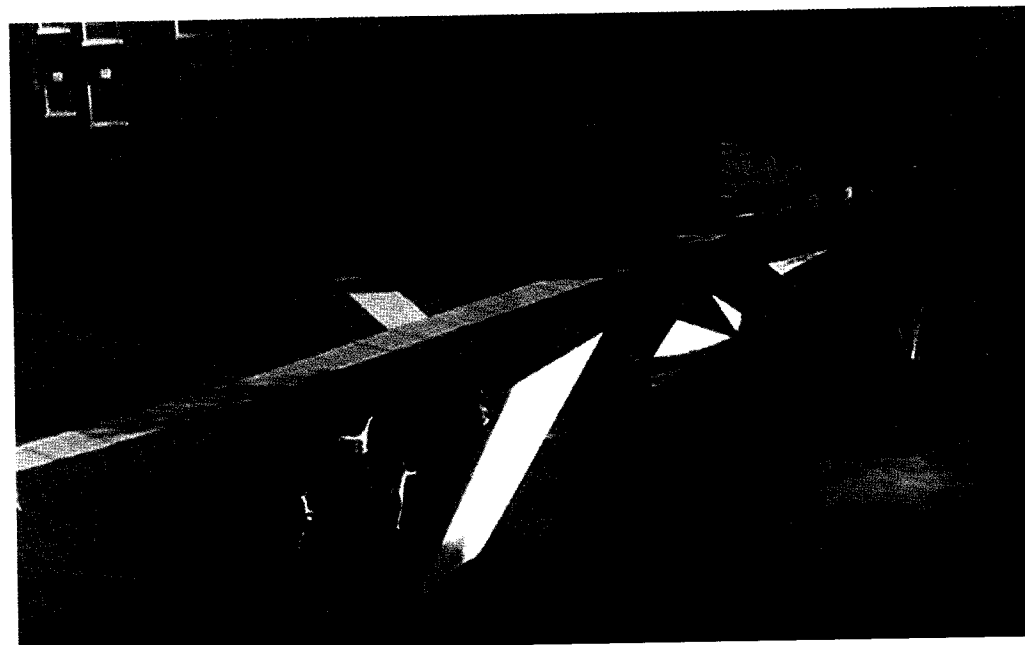
Although Pepper has spent the majority of every year since the early '50s in Italy, critics and scholars amazingly enough have insisted on viewing her work totally in terms of American art, rather than connecting it to what her Italian contemporaries and peers were doing, thus overlooking the significant decades-long conversation she has carried on with these artists. Certainly her early works in steel, their edges dramatically accentuated with powerful drips of metal from welding, participate in a conversation with Lucio Fontana's elegantly smooth slashes in his paintings, intended to open his works to the very different metaphorical realities of his transcendent monochromatic paintings and the prosaic realities of the mundane object supporting them, as well as to the far more organic gashes found in his bronzes. Her stainless steel sculptures also make compelling comparisons with Michelangelo Pistoletto's painted and silkscreened images on stainless steel, inviting viewers' reflections to enter into a type of *sacra*

*conversazione*, the title in fact of a 1963 work, playing on the Renaissance tradition of depicted sacred colloquies between saints, who stand on either side of an enthroned Madonna and child. Pepper's enlarged understanding of art and its ability to create distinct worlds and cosmic cosmologies—a legacy of her experience at Angkor—is also enhanced by looking at it in relation to Piero Manzoni's *The Base of the World, Homage to Galileo* of 1963, a work incorporating the artist's ironic artistic claims to make the entire planet his work. Without doubt Pepper's interest in history and myth also needs to be compared to the meditations on these topics by her fellow American Cy Twombly, who similarly resided in Italy for decades, beginning in the 1950s. In addition, her embrace of tradition flies in the face of the early twentieth-century Italian futurists' goal to obviate the past, even to the extent of closing museums. While Pepper's assertively new stainless pieces can be viewed in terms of American prosperity in the late 1960s, they can also be understood in terms of the so-called Italian post-war economic miracle when the country moved from the ignominious condition of a defeated country to becoming an affluent nation, far removed from its totalitarian and fascist past. While Pepper has maintained an ongoing conversation in her art with a number of constituencies both in the United States and Europe, her belief in the ontological richness of her materials and reliance on their cogent semiotics sets her apart from the late '60s Italian *arte povera* group—a late '60s phenomenon, coming of age during the economic volatility and political unrest attending the collapse of the Italian economic miracle—whose members wished to investigate prosaic materials as well as the art world in which they were placed, thereby updating Duchamp by substituting for his Readymades the energy they discerned in a range of materials from the ancient to the modern and the industrially fabricated to the raw and natural.

#### *Worringer's Coercive Abstraction versus Kant's View of Reflective Judgments as Empowering*

Even though *arte povera* artists picked up on Duchamp's Readymades and their characteristic mode of operating, the responsibility for undermining modern art's playful dynamics, predicated on persuading knowledgeable viewers to continue looking at individual works of art while encouraging them to consider a range of interpretive options and on viewing art as dictating viewers' response to it, cannot be attributed to either postmodern institutional critiques

*Theil*, 1975-1977  
 Cor-ten painted white, sod  
 15 x 18 x 135 ft (4.5 x 5.5 x 42 m)  
 Dartmouth College, Hanover NH



or Duchamp's Readymades. The early-twentieth-century German theorist and art historian Wilhelm Worringer must also assume partial responsibility for this view of art as autocratic. In the first decade of the twentieth century he regarded the basic stylistic and abstract components comprising art as essentially invincible and ultimately dictatorial; in doing so, he set the stage for considering modern art as capable of mandating certain types of responses from viewers rather than being responsive to feelings, which might arise in them in the process of looking at a given work of art. In his famous doctoral dissertation entitled *Abstraction and Empathy* (1907), which was soon published, reprinted, translated, and repeatedly read and cited throughout the twentieth century,<sup>27</sup> Worringer indicts all art—especially art predicated on abstract stylistic components—as ultimately alienating; to his way of thinking it constitutes an indomitable force in and of itself. He even questions the wisdom of

continuing to entertain the idea of the pleasurable empathic responses he thinks ancient Greek and Italian Renaissance naturalistic art permitted its viewers, since art's abstract stylistic components separate viewers from their own feelings by substituting its more cohesive and coercive ones for their diffuse and subjective responses.

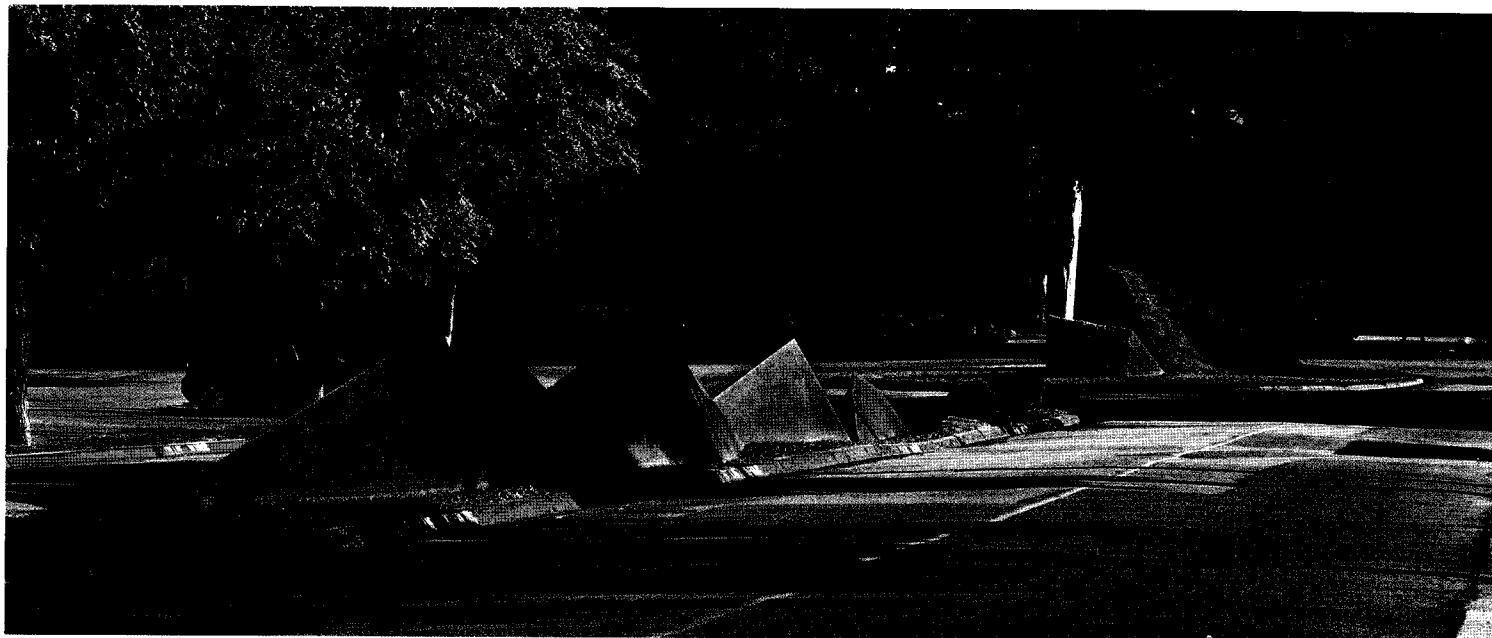
Worringer's theorization of this type of resolute abstract work and its subjugated viewers differs substantially from Kant's empowered and cultivated observers developed in his third critique, including his sensitive analysis of the ongoing dynamic of cogitating about individual works of art, an approach crucial for the appreciation of modern sculpture. Unlike Worringer's subjugated viewers, Kant's ideal enactors of reflective judgment—as opposed to its determinative counterpart—are invited to develop their own criteria for making individual aesthetic decisions, predicated on dialogues between their own imaginative faculties and socially based understanding. In *The Critique of Judgment*, Kant writes:

*When the imagination is used for cognition, then it is under the constraint of the understanding and is subject to the restriction of adequacy to the understanding's concept. But when the aim is aesthetic, then the imagination is free, so that, over and above that harmony with the concept, it may supply, in an unstudied way a wealth of underdeveloped material for the understanding [,] which the latter disregarded in its concept. But the understanding employs this material not so much objectively, for cognition, as subjectively, namely, to*



*Dallas Land Canal and Hillside*, 1971  
Cor-ten, planting  
60 x 70 x 236 in (150 x 170 x 600 cm)  
Patsy and Raymond Nasher Collection, North  
Park, Dallas TX

*Major Ritual II*, 1975-1976  
Painted steel  
157 x 393 in (399 x 998 m)  
City Hall of Toledo, Toledo, OH



*quicken the cognitive powers, though indirectly this does serve cognition too.*<sup>28</sup>

Quickening one's cognitive power in the process of looking at works of art and thinking about the many allusions this method can make to contents outside a given work's boundaries while originating possible interpretations for it is the type of beauty Kant extolled; this is also the type of thoughtful and responsive looking Pepper's modern sculpture intends to enlist or catalyze in its viewers.

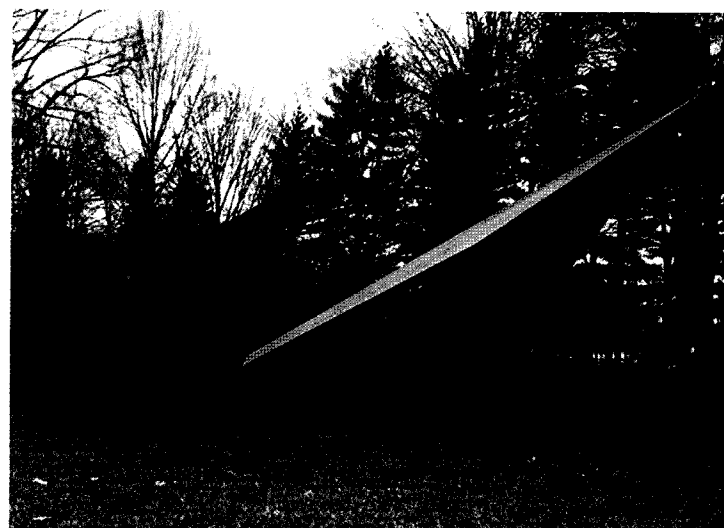
#### *Pepper's Thel and The Modern Art of Allusion*

We can see how this internalized conversation, initiated through the process of looking and responding to works of art by thinking possible ways of interpreting and understanding them, can occur when approaching Pepper's *Thel*. Her 1977 site-based 135-foot sculpture, which she calls "earthbound"—a term used to connote works situated so the earth appears as if it has given birth to them or as if they are rising up from it—is situated in a depressed area of Dartmouth College's Wheeler's lawn in Hanover, New Hampshire.<sup>29</sup> Pepper's use of the word "Thel" comes from William Blake's small, illustrated volume, *The Book of Thel*. Together with this title she has referred to the book's motto:

*Does the Eagle know what is in the pit,  
Or wilt thou go ask the Mole?  
Can Wisdom be put in a silver rod?  
Or Love in a golden bowl?*<sup>30</sup>

Some people view the motto as Blake's rejection of the Church of England while others connect the

meaning of Thel with the Greek word for "will," "wish," or "desire," and still others consider it feminine, a means for connoting a delicate female or the frailty in humankind at large, which might be construed as a particularly apt symbol for an earth sculpture positioned in the center of a school then restricted to male students. But the word "Thel" and its connection with Blake's motto more reasonably leaves meaning open, as signaled by its consecutive questions, so that it might be personalized by Dartmouth's students and on-campus visitors. The artist has indicated her desire to create in this work a totality, comprising not just the site as given, but a reconstitution of it, through an ongoing dialectic between site and sculpture. In this situation, the work of art is not just a form occupying a definite space, but far more importantly a reframing and rethinking of the site, which in turn has an impact on the artist's fabricated components situated in it.



Regarding sited sculpture in this way, Pepper has noted:

*It is not simply a matter of the work fitting into the area. It is necessary that the area and the work supplement and enliven each other—not destroy or suppress by their presence.*<sup>31</sup>

Considered in this way, Pepper's work differs from most site-specific sculpture since the locale it occupies is much more than a stage for the work and an atmospheric, pre-formulative concept helping to endow the work with meaning. "What I am trying to do in nature-involved works like *TheI*," Pepper has reflected, "is to consider a particular quality of space—consider it in its totality, including those events experienced within it interacting between form and environment."<sup>32</sup> Once *TheI* was installed, Wheeler's lawn entered into a dynamic with the sculpture, in some spots seeming passively to accept it, while at other places appearing as a counterforce, flexing its own muscles, so to speak. These "events" include changes in the weather, so that *TheI*, a white metal sculpture, contrasts with green grass in spring and summer and with the remarkable colors of Hanover's New England foliage in the fall, and blends in with the New Hampshire winter landscape, when, according to the artist, for "one long period the work will be absorbed visually into the snow and slowly will emerge with the spring," thereby becoming "deeply involved with change."<sup>33</sup> The effect of the seasons on land sculpture is also a central feature of Pepper's later *Sol I Ombra Park* (1987-92), with its summer/winter division comprising *Spiral Trees*, which provides shade in the summer, and *Fallen Sky*, which is intended, according to the artist, to "reflect a summer sky even in the winter."<sup>34</sup>

Noted art critic and Princeton professor Sam Hunter describes *TheI* suitably as "a constellation of triangulated, webbed steel forms of white-enameled steel, echoing the white churches of New England and hailing its title *TheI* from the visionary poetry of William Blake," thereby setting up geographic and literary allusions, which in turn can be viewed as polarities marking off a force field or continuum of meanings whereby viewers can begin to interpret this sculpture.

Pepper herself has wondered about the prevalence of triangular forms in both this sculpture and in a number of other works from this period, remarking, "The thing that I have never understood, but with hindsight, is how I didn't give up the triangle at any point." Although the combination of white earth-

situated sculpture, with its many triangles would appear to connect this piece with 4,500-year-old white-marble Cycladic figures of mostly females, with triangular noses and often with engraved triangular-shaped mounds of Venus, which were either hand-held vertically or positioned horizontally, as suggested by tiny feet, too small for them to stand upright, none of the published literature on Pepper suggests this Neolithic group of sculptures as a possible source for her works. This lacuna is most surprising, given the then feminist interest in finding empowering female prototypes and idealizing the Neolithic period as a time of great agrarian goddesses, which later iron-age male gods managed to push aside.

In the annals of twentieth-century modern sculpture, Cycladic figures have been held in high esteem: Jacob Epstein discovered them in the Louvre in 1902-05; Henry Moore owned three of these figures; Alberto Giacometti noted similarities between his own sculpture and Cycladic art, and Pablo Picasso had one Cycladic sculpture in his own collection and even stated that it was "better than Brancusi," adding, "Nobody has ever made an object stripped that bare."<sup>35</sup> The total number of Cycladic sculptures is small, numbering between 1200 and 1600 pieces, with approximately 1000 entering western collections in the heated-up post-World War II market for these figures.<sup>36</sup> In the mid-twentieth century these figures were mistakenly regarded as the origin of western art and the direct progenitors of the Acropolis korai sculptures, even though they were made a millennium earlier.<sup>37</sup> Pepper may have found the sculptures particularly intriguing since they were then thought to be fertility figures and are remarkable for their monumentality, despite their small size, and for their imposing hieratic demeanor, despite their intimacy. Certainly the combination of allusions to ancient Cycladic figures and present-day industrialism, coupled with the reference to Blake's *TheI*, with its interrogative motto, sets up a scale of similarities and differences creating the basis for not only a wide range of responses but also a special understanding about how ancient and modern worlds can collide, overlap, differ, and even reinforce one another. Whereas art historian Miwon Kwon commendably looks at the site-specific art as "encompass[ing] a relay of several interrelated but different spaces and economies, including the studio, gallery, museum, art criticism, art history, the art market, that together constitute a system of practices that is to separate



from but remains open to social, economic, and political pressures,"<sup>38</sup> Pepper's work is predicated on polarities between past and present, far and near, as well as the changes of the seasons, which establish cyclical ways of viewing and understanding her site sculptures, and, as we will see, also her iron sculptures, whose colors change subtly and slowly over time. Although Kwon employs art historian James Meyer's term "functional site" to differentiate past and present attitudes toward site-specific art, her conclusion that it is a "conceptual shift ...[for] embrac[ing] the idea of meaning as an open, unfixed constellation, porous to contingencies ...the fluidity meaning" overlooks Pepper's modern abstract sculpture, with its allusive openness to meaning.

When viewed as a feminist, Pepper, like so many women of her generation, cringes at being categorized in a way that might be perceived as limited, and yet she hedges on this subject, both closing it off and keeping it open at the same time. Despite her favorite quip, "I'd never considered *woman* an adjective, some kind of definition of what [an] artist was,"<sup>39</sup> she also admits:

*It's not easy to answer that question. I don't think about gender, and I wouldn't want my art to be feminine, because that word is often used in a belittling way. On the other hand, I'm not a man [,] and don't try to be one. If I can find the unexplainable in my art, I think I succeeded. That's an inexplicable but fundamental point.<sup>40</sup>*

Pepper is also extraordinarily proud of the social activism of both her paternal grandmother and mother and has often referred to their strong views as a role model:

*I was brought up in a world of freethinking women. My paternal grandmother left Russia with her hair bobbed, at seventeen. She was a Menshevik. Her daughter in law, my mother, was also an activist. She was committed to Roosevelt and the NAACP. She gave me a sense of commitment that became part of what I think of as professional pride in what one does.<sup>41</sup>*

After learning of this liberal background, art historian Eleanor C. Munro asked Pepper if she were a feminist, and the artist responded to her question by focusing on the legacy of World War II liberalism when women were treated as equals:

*Even when the men came back, we held on to our independence. Many of us were fiercely political. We read Lenin on the women's question, we agreed with the idea of women's equality.<sup>42</sup>*

These deeply engrained attitudes have definitely had a demonstrable impact on Pepper and her art. Even though she started as an abstract painter in 1948, she turned in the following year to socialist-realist painting, based on her empathy for people suffering from abject poverty in postwar Europe. As she told art critic and noted journalist Deborah Solomon, "The poverty was unbearable, and I felt a deep sense of guilt at having survived the war."<sup>43</sup> Her emotional investment in these paintings continued until the late '50s when she began in 1957 to overlap painting with sculpture.

Although this social commitment may have seemed to be at odds with a move to modern abstract sculpture, it has actually been channeled into Pepper's enormous respect for public sculpture and is one of the reasons she became so involved with land art in the 1970s.

In her talk *Public Sculpture and Its Public*, presented in 1978 to three mid-western museums in the U.S.,

Pepper emphasized her solidarity with the public:

*So this is what we see happening around us: in small towns, suburbs, city squares, shopping centers, federal buildings and so on, we are setting up monumental sculptures and paintings, as well as environmental works for the public. These works that in the past belonged exclusively to rich patrons, industries or institutions—sponsors who commissioned works for their individual tastes or needs to enhance their prestige. ... Most of these sponsorships were restrictive by their very nature—limiting both artist and audience. This has changed greatly. Today cultural activity is no longer so restricted to the few.<sup>44</sup>*

While Pepper's feminism and social activism have tended to take a back seat to her sculpture, even though they have continued to be important, on one particularly notable occasion, she has discussed her work in terms of gender. Although she could have been describing *TheI*, she in fact was speaking about a group of sculptures made before the Dartmouth piece. "I also think the[se] pieces are strongly sexual," Pepper has conjectured, adding with measured eloquence, "They deal with all the inner mystery that is the cavity, that can be entered through several gates. The angles, almost cantilevered, which variously are the protector or the aggressor, create a field of tension, a dynamic of defense and attack."<sup>45</sup>

Rejecting out of hand the type of poetic allusions on which modern sculpture is predicated, postmodern critics, Duchampian adherents and Worringerian followers have largely ignored the actual perception of art objects such as *TheI* and people's reflections on them for an analysis of how they are apperceived, a conception of art intent on moving beyond the object to consider the artworld comprising and validating it. While this postmodern view is certainly a worthwhile method for analyzing art, it unfortunately obviates other significant means for considering art, particularly those associated with Beverly Pepper's type of modern abstract art. Important as these critical views have proven to be, they have entirely overlooked the ways modern works of art can authorize viewers to participate in an ongoing collaborative process as we have seen with *TheI*.

## PART II

A more in-depth analysis of Pepper's sculpture needs to begin with the significant mid-twentieth-century

approach to art proposed by the French novelist, statesman, and theorist André Malraux in his widely read and reviewed publications of the late 1940s and '50s, which were crucial for the mid-twentieth-century art world as well as for Pepper, who read his books and remembers discussing his ideas in the 1950s. In them, Malraux concentrates on qualitative moments in humanity's battle against its ultimate mortality and subjection to the forces of chaos (anti-destiny as opposed to fatalistic destiny), as well as its ability to be transformed—"metamorphosed" is his word—depending on the needs and understandings of people in later times. In order to appreciate the ways Pepper's sculptures participate in an ongoing metamorphosis of past and present, it will also help to take into consideration Walter Benjamin's dialectical image or "now of knowability," his reconstitution of history, a theory unknown to most everyone in the 1950s, but an approach Pepper could have gleaned from her understanding of Malraux's metamorphosis, since he and Benjamin were in communication during this German critic's final years in Paris when he was formulating this concept and since Malraux's theory of metamorphosis, in my opinion, appears to be predicated, at least in part, on Benjamin's extraordinarily useful reframing of history as a dialectic predicated on mutually reflexive present and past views.<sup>46</sup> After reconsidering Malraux's metamorphosis and its connections to Walter Benjamin's "dialectic image," taking time to demonstrate how Pepper's sculpture activates them as means for vivifying and opening her art to new contents, I will take a fresh look at several of the *modi operandi* fundamental for comprehending the distinctness of her sculpture by relying in particular on her understanding of Henri Bergson's ideas about intuition and duration—sources important for Malraux as well—since a consideration of his thought enables us to historicize her often cited statements about relying on intuition and backing into her work and thus position ourselves to value the particular inflexions of modernism her art enacts. In addition, this essay will look at Bergson's special understanding of perception and representation and the roles they assume in intuition, duration, and memory—three of his most important categories—in relation to Pepper's work. Finally, this investigation of Pepper's work will examine her art's enactment of the significant and often-misunderstood concept of "aura" as a contrapuntal mode of looking, thereby reinforcing Bergson's duration by underscoring the uncanny ability of works of art to look back at their viewers or make



them uncomfortably self-aware. In order to do so, it will return to Benjamin's view of aura as part of an ongoing dialectic and not just the far-too-often-cited truncated view of it found in his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*.

*André Malraux's Metamorphosis and  
The Dimensionality of Time in Beverly Pepper's  
Sculpture*

Controversial and misunderstood, André Malraux's major discourses on art have been condemned over the past six decades to serious misunderstandings, harmful not only to his enormously useful ideas about the modern art he hoped to illuminate but also to our discussion of Pepper's sculpture, particularly its insightful reliance on some of his central theses. This overall confusion about the import and usefulness of Malraux's ideas necessitates, an acquaintance with some of his major publications, the temper of the criticisms aimed at them, and their major tenets before we can proceed with our analysis of its relation to Pepper's art.

Malraux's completed three-volume tome, famous for its then state-of-the-art illustrations, was released over the years 1947-49 under the title *La Psychologie de l'Art*.<sup>47</sup> Soon thereafter the prestigious United States-based Bollingen Foundation published in 1949-1950 the English translation of this three-volume work as *The Psychology of Art*, psychology being employed in the sense theorized by Malraux's good friend Jacques Lacan in his discussion of the Symbolic, the social language ("name of the father"), replacing the nonsymbolizable Real with the autocratic Symbolic register, necessary for becoming a member of society and for supplying individuals with the essential terms or bases for Imaginary projections. In his critique of Malraux's publication for *The Hudson Review*, the eminent British critic Herbert Read commended its author for being a philosopher of art in spite of his unsystematic approach.<sup>48</sup> This backhanded compliment, together with the exceptional prestige the publishers of this set of books accorded this and other publications by Malraux, who had served as General Charles de Gaulle's Minister of Information from 1945-46 in addition to being recognized for several decades as one of the century's preeminent novelists, had the distinct disadvantage of militating against positive or even sympathetic reviews of the lavish and prestigious incursion into the field of art and art history *The Psychology of Art* represented. The most damaging one by far was provided by Ernst Gombrich, the distinguished art historian and member

of the prestigious London-based Warburg Institute, who downgraded Malraux's *Voices of Silence* (1953)—his one-volume condensation of *The Psychology of Art*—to the status of a "'romantic saga' suggested by art."<sup>49</sup> Gombrich's consternation about Malraux's approach to art was so great he even included this condemnatory review in his collection of theoretical essays, *Meditations on a Hobby Horse*, and retained it in subsequent re-printings of this book.<sup>50</sup> Gombrich was clearly mollified by such an extensive and widely hailed work as Malraux's and consequently regarded it as a threat to traditional art historical studies, which, in many ways, it was.<sup>51</sup> Williams College professor S. Lane Faison in his consideration of *Voices of Silence* offers a more judicious and perceptive criticism of Malraux's work. "This is a book of reflection, not one of introduction," Faison mused, before remarking on its "...nearly vertiginous play of its allusion," thus formulating a response to Malraux's work in far greater accord with this author's approach and with Bergson's duration, as we will see, than any other from this period.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to the hurdle of Malraux's euphonious prose, with its many metaphors and ready use of beaux mots, a tendency making this writer's hard-won insights appear to be mere flummery, Malraux's books seemed to many to constitute only richly illustrated coffee-table books with a veneer of theoretical ideas in order to make them palatable to more serious audiences. In addition, Malraux's crucially important phrase "le musée imaginaire" was mistranslated as "museum without walls" instead of the more obvious and apposite translation, "imaginary museum," a misconception continuing to the present, which unfortunately places undue emphasis on the museum as a building somehow able to open itself to non-transportable works of art, rather than viewing it as metaphor for the twentieth-century educated mind's ability to identify heretofore unprecedented numbers of fantastic art objects—humanity's vast visual Symbolic, to use Lacan's phrase—and permute them into new possibilities, as Malraux intended. In concert with this view, Pepper has reflected:

*I decided that monument should be brought into monumentality. The obelisk that transcends time loses its original meaning, so that even if it was built by the worst of the Caesars or was carted out of Egypt, the monument, when it works and lasts for centuries, creates a kind of credence.<sup>53</sup>*

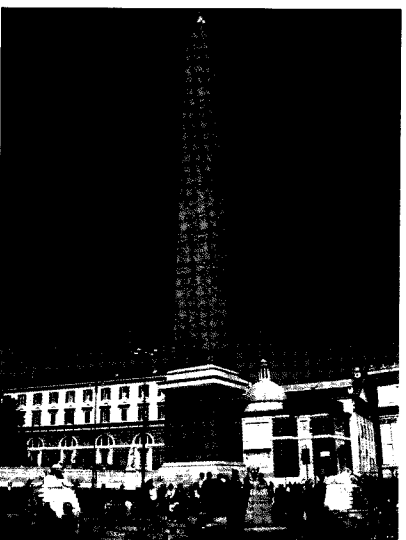
Malraux's view of photography as a means for



Todi Columns, Santa Maria della Consolazione, Todi



Marcus Aurelius Column (193 A.D.), Piazza Colonna, Rome



Obelisco Flaminio, Rameses II obelisk, Heliopolis, Egypt Piazza del Popolo, Rome

understanding all art in terms of its reliance on style—an extension of modern abstract art's purview—has regrettably been literalized and analogized as the French version of Edward Steichen saccharine, at times maudlin, and certainly high-Kitsch photographic celebration of humanity's essential planetary commonality across the planet entitled, *The Family of Man*, which opened at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1955 and remained on tour for decades. In order to appreciate Malraux's very different perspective, it helps to look at his characterization of style:

*For us, a style no longer means a set of characteristics common to the works of a given school or period, an outcome or adornment of the artist's vision of the world; rather, we see it as the supreme object of the artist's activity, of which living forms are but the raw material. And so to the question, "What is Art?" we answer: "That whereby forms are transmuted into style."<sup>54</sup>*

Instead of regarding, as Malraux did, style as the artist's ultimate quest and photography as merely the means to reveal it in multitudinous forms, a number of critics have emphasized the role of photography in his thinking to the detriment of style and thus have misconstrued his lofty mission to focus on the paramount role of the human imagination—Lacan's Imaginary—in terms of its ability to play with the innumerable permutations offered by the vastly enhanced world of art and thus enrich human life in ways never before dreamed to be possible. As philosopher-of-art and Malraux scholar Derek Allan aptly summarized:

*To suggest that "any work of art that can be photographed can take its place in Malraux's super-museum" or that the musée imaginaire is "the recurring issue of illustrated art books—is a trivialization of Malraux's position. Important though photographic reproduction has been, there is much more at stake."<sup>55</sup>*

In addition to de-contextualizing and mediating works of art so they are able to be read in terms of style, photographs also encourage the creation of subtle and important conjunctions of the past and present most clearly understood in terms of Walter Benjamin's "dialectical image." Benjamin's term represents a replacement of the usual view of history as linear progression with a conception of it as a series of almost uncanny insights afforded through a

reciprocity of past and present moments, also called "dialectics at a standstill,"<sup>56</sup> since they can take place when viewing a static work of art.

In my opinion, Malraux's theory about art's continual openness to change, which he named "metamorphosis," shares decisive affinities with Benjamin's dialectic image and also Beverly Pepper's work. In order to grasp this connection, it will help to look first at Benjamin's complex yet crucially important concept before moving to Malraux's personalization of it and Pepper's dramatization of the polarized allusions between past and present, the personal and the public, permanence and change, male and female, as well as the proletarian industrial and the elitist fine art that her work puts into play.

We can begin by looking at the initial problems posed by Benjamin's "dialectical image" since dialectics indicates dynamics, and images usually connote static entities. This basic contradiction between the two can be partially resolved if one considers "image," in the terms French art historian Georges Didi-Huberman suggests, as "designat[ing] something completely different from a picture, [defined as] a figurative illustration," since Benjamin's image is a "crystal of time, with a construct and a blazing shape, a sudden shock."<sup>57</sup> However, instead of subscribing to the qualifying metaphor "crystal of time," which ossifies, even as it distills and refracts, the ongoing movement implied by the concept "dialectic moment," a more apt characterization of the type of situation Benjamin has in mind might be the more fortuitous Didi-Hubermanian characterization: "origin as whirlpool."

For me, this notion of insight as a perpetual dynamic swirling around an idea, with the implicit corollary of remaining open to change during its circling, can be deemed an updating of Aristotle's theory of hylomorphism. Found in Aristotle's *Physics* and his *Metaphysics*, hylomorphism is a compound word joining matter (hylo) with form (morph) in order to circumscribe form's role as a transitive verb activating matter, rather than the noun often equated with it. Hylomorphism is consistent with Aristotle's definition of motion (kinesis) in his *Physics* as "the fulfillment of what exists potentially, insofar as it exists potentially."<sup>58</sup> Although potentiality inheres in a thing and gives rise to Aristotle's ontological views, it also represents the capacity for a thing (Benjamin's image) to be actualized or placed in motion, even though this ability might only be realized over a sustained period of time, say in

terms of fruit changing color as it ripens, and not in any discernable motion.

In my view, Aristotle's hylomorphism enables us to theorize and frame the dialectic moment as an ongoing dynamic between past and present, predicated on a contrapuntal realization of past informing the present and vice versa. We can think of this process as the heuristic opening up of a dynamic force field, a shock of recognition occurring when present circumstances and past conditions are aligned, so each term illuminates a heightened exchange of fresh insights with the other. Benjamin's classic statement on this extraordinary condition is contained in his essay "N/Re The Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress." A situation somewhat akin to Marcel Proust's *souvenir involontaire* (involuntary memory) but far less personal and idiosyncratic since it is a theory of history's incisive manner of working through forged connections between past and present, Benjamin's dialectical moment has been described by its author in the following way:

*It isn't that the past casts its light on the present or the present casts its light on the past; rather, an image is that in which the Then (das Gewesene) and the Now (das Jetzt) come into a constellation like a flash of lightning. In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill. For a while the relation of the Then to the Now is dialectical—not development but image [,] leaping (sprunghaft).— Only dialectical images are genuine (i.e., not archaic) images and the place one happens upon them is language \*Waking.\*<sup>59</sup>*

Benjamin believed that only certain moments of the past were available to be read at any given time, his "now of knowability," analogized in terms of the concept of Messianic time, yet seen as a secular incarnation, an image capable of splitting open history to reveal an oscillating and mutually inflicting dialectic, and thereby disclosing aspects of an earlier period "charged with the time of now"<sup>60</sup> through its ability not only to open up the past but also to use it as a means for reframing the present, thus producing fresh insights. Most importantly, Benjamin ascribes agency to both the views of the present as well as those of the past, enabling each in turn to be revealed, heightened, and elevated through this dialectic process of revelation, rather than empowering the individual experiencing them and making him or her responsible for them.

In many respects Benjamin's view of the "now

of knowability" is very much like Kant's reflective judgment, so much so that it could be considered an aestheticization of history or a view of history as an aesthetic act, which makes this concept tremendously important for not only Malraux's metamorphoses but also the nature of the aesthetic as a happening and an opening, both constituting, as we will see, chief aspects of Pepper's sculpture. Where Benjamin differs from Kant is the use to which he directs this open-ended cogitation consequent with truth happening: to history instead of aesthetic apprehension.

Malraux in turn transforms Benjamin's focus on the capacity of certain specific moments to provide stirring glimpses of historical connections between the past and the present into sets of artistic insights or art historical realizations rather than historical moments per se. Recognizing the secular nature of the world in which he lives, Malraux triumphantly points to art as the replacement of the spiritual. For him, art is not just a unity over time and certainly not an absolute: instead, it is a continuous response to basically the same set of questions humans continue to ask over time: How can they triumph even briefly over the daunting chaos of unknowing that surrounds them? How can they win some sort of victory, no matter how small, from humanity's ultimate destiny, death? Art, for Malraux, is an Apolline distillate of a Dionysian world, and yet it is a realm still aglow with the heat of primeval fire, and therefore Nietzschean in its outlook. For this reason, art's essential dynamism and its ability to change when confronted with new art is crucial to its meaning and continued relevance since it forges new hybrids and finds innovative ways to instantiate moments of stirring human will in the face of continuously threatening meaninglessness.

Malraux employs art's ability to change over time as a means to split open art history's presumed linearity and its customary bracketing of art into discrete periods in order to show how an earlier period "charged with the time of now"<sup>61</sup> can affect the present and vice versa—how, in other words, a metamorphosis between different styles and times, consequent with Benjamin's image, can be enacted. He does this both by looking broadly at the history of art and by depending on modern art's overweening dependence on style (as mentioned earlier) as the key for unlocking its metamorphic potential. He describes this imaginative process for achieving

new and particularly relevant historical insights in the following way:

*We have learned that, if death cannot still the voice of genius, the reason is that genius triumphs over death not by reiterating its original language, but by constraining us to listen to a language constantly modified, sometimes forgotten—as it were an echo answering each passing century with its own voice—and what the masterpiece keeps up is not a monologue, however authoritative, but a dialogue infeasible by Time.*<sup>62</sup>

All art from Cro-Magnon cave paintings to the latest works of mid-twentieth-century creations, according to Malraux, depend on the common language of style in order to connect past with present and open both to the future. Whereas style is usually regarded as transcendent to distinct historical periods, and Malraux certainly agrees with this view, he also regards it as an immanent and changing force, attainable through its many conversations with other styles and time periods, so much so that he considers its metamorphosis to constitute not a serendipitous moment but instead “the very law of life of the work of art,”<sup>63</sup> as it serves as both a destructive and reconstructive process. Moreover, as Malraux attests, the life of art and the essential nature of its being is to be found in its capacity to change, its eminent openness to new possibilities, and its refusal to be constrained by one particular view or meaning.<sup>64</sup> While this type of confrontation of different times, media, styles, and forms of address can be readily found in museums, according to Malraux, they are certainly not limited to them. Malraux writes:

*To the “delight of the eye” there has been added—owing to the sequence of conflicting styles and seemingly antagonistic schools—an awareness of art’s impassioned quest, its age-old struggle to remould [sic.] the scheme of things. Indeed an art gallery is one of the places which show man at his noblest. But our knowledge covers a wider field than our museums.*<sup>65</sup>

His ideas also resonate well with c.1980s appropriation theories since metamorphosis involves ongoing tensions between past and present meanings as well as the establishment of new and insightful ones. This process can readily be understood in terms of his observation, “So far as history is concerned, the Renaissance ‘made’ antiquity no less than antiquity ‘made’ the Renaissance.”<sup>66</sup>

### *Pepper’s Moline Markers*

An example of this happening of truth, consequent with the opening up of past and present as evidenced by Malraux’s metamorphosis and Benjamin’s dialectical image, is Pepper’s *Moline Markers*, a series of sculptures so remarkable in their transformative liminality the artist has concluded, “with the *Moline Markers* I think I was born, or transformed in some ways.”<sup>67</sup> The liminality starts with the artist’s hands, her own tools, both literally and metaphorically functioning as prostheses, ways of reaching out to the world, and thus serving as logical yet inspired sources for the sculptures. “I saw these extraordinary screwdrivers,” Pepper recalls, “that had wooden handles with metal going through them. And they were such beautiful



*The Moline Markers*, 1981  
Cast iron



things that I bought a lot of them, just as objects."<sup>68</sup> She started the series of *Moline Markers* by welding some of these tools, making them the same size she found them. As she continued, the idea of transforming the tools she uses for making sculptures into the sculptures themselves, so that they apotheosize the process and transform it into a hierarchical form, was enormously appealing to her. She wanted to incorporate the concept of time into this series by making them appear as if these present-day ubiquitous items were ancient idols, thereby setting into place a series of contrapuntal past/present and present/past associations:

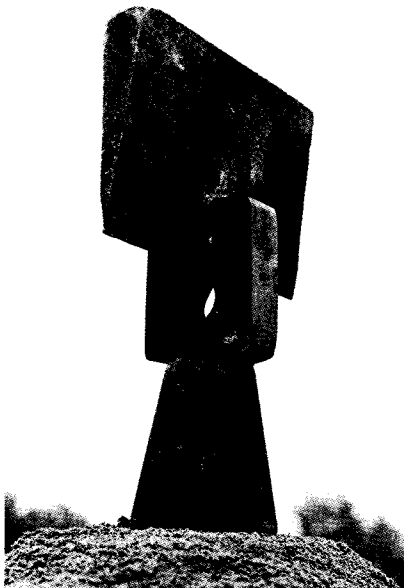
*I took those tools and I aged them and destroyed them, sometimes they looked like they had gone through centuries of decay. I became very obsessed with the idea of having time as part of the work that I was doing ...once again the next generation of Moline Markers were now decayed, and they were cast in bronze. ... I wanted to destroy the form and have a sense of time having ravaged the form.*<sup>69</sup>

Using sculpture as a placeholder in order to provide viewers a window on a continuum, set up and activated by the sculptures' contradictory past/present references, thereby catalyzing a field of responses while also memorializing them, was important to Pepper. Recognizing the significance of this shift in her work, Sam Hunter wrote:

*Her weighty columns suggest the primitive functionality of simple bronze-age tools, even as they are recognizably the product of the modern industrial process that shapes the I-beams, steel trusses, and the other mighty underpinnings of the structures of our modern world.*<sup>70</sup>

Instead of an either/or situation, Hunter readily comprehends the importance of both/and propositions for Pepper's works. After our look at Malraux and Benjamin, we can consider how these associations set up metamorphoses between different worldviews, establishing relays, making the sculptures ideal "dialectic images."

In reference to using the word "marker" as the title for this series and also for the *Umbrian Markers* and *Sentinel Markers*, the artist recalled, "I am so glad



*Damiano Wedge*, 1978  
Cast-Iron, 57 x 37 x 17 in (145 x 94 x 43 cm)  
The Brett Mitchell Collection, Lundhurst, OH

that my desire when I first got to Rome to tear down all the fascist monuments never came true because once again they're markers; they tell you where we've been."<sup>71</sup> While all these markers are still extant, Pepper also regards cemeteries as markers of the past, noting "They speak to me of the containment of the past in the present,"<sup>72</sup> making the idea of death and perhaps even regeneration implicit in this series. Regeneration may also be implied in the artist's desire for "The past to participate in ... [the *Moline Markers*]' presentness."<sup>73</sup> Whether commemorating regeneration or not, these markers are highly cathected works for the artist. In notes on these works found in one of her sketchbooks from the early '80s, she cryptically refers to the "union of male and female," "sites and sacred places," "vital points of contact and centers," and "accumulated energies." In the same sketchbook, she reveals the deeper meaning she hopes viewers will discern in this series:

*The outer reality is the industrial too—but for viewers, hopefully, their past identities will participate in the present in that they preserve countless archetypal associations.*

She also calls the markers "tuning forks," a term, as we will see, having special resonances with Henri Bergson's duration as time's brilliant melody, constituting a multiplicity, played simultaneously within the space of a single moment.

Although some people have preferred to view the thin vertical *Moline Markers* as continuing the legacy of Alberto Giacometti's emaciated figures, Pepper's sculptures are far removed from this Swiss artist's view of an already established space overwhelming his figures, which are always seen at a far removal no matter how close one gets to them, as the French existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre so astutely pointed out.<sup>74</sup> The *Markers* might be viewed more productively in terms of the Villanovan iron-age sculptures found in central and northern Italy, important for both Giacometti and Picasso, and works to which Pepper would have easy access, but this historical antecedent must be considered one productive component of the dynamic metamorphosis Pepper's work puts in play, since their associations with ordinary screwdrivers, files, and other such tools is an important component of this work.

Even though Pepper had started casting iron a decade before making the *Moline Markers*, its use for this series is a crucial aspect of the dialectic image this work helps

to set in place. As early as 1962 when she was working in Piombino for the Carandente's exhibition, Pepper was introduced to the imperviousness of iron, a material utilized in this area since Etruscan times. In fact, during World War II, when Italy was running out of steel, the people of Piombino and other areas once part of ancient Etruria would dig up ancient iron age metal from the fields and recycle it. Protected by a coating of rust, iron is more resistant to corrosion than most metals, an exception being stainless steel, but even this material, if uncared for, will form pits over time.

Because it is easy to become confused about the differences between diverse forms of iron, it helps to note *iron* itself is a natural material, a chemical element with the symbol Fe, the most common element in the entire Earth, comprising much of its outer and inner core and produced eons ago in the same way it is in the other parts of the universe through fusion in high-mass stars. *Cast iron*, by contrast, is a brittle alloy formed through the addition of carbon and silicon and is often comprised of scraps of cast and fabricated iron. An iron alloy with less carbon makes up *steel*, while *ductile iron* is relatively flexible and even elastic because of the inclusion of nodular graphite. Finally, *Cor-ten steel* has a range of alloys, primarily copper, nickel, chromium, and magnesium, contributing to its weathering capabilities.

Pepper actually began working with forged iron before casting it. She recalls:

*I happened to be passing a scrap yard [in the mid-70s] where they sold used metal. ... I saw these extraordinary molds that were cast iron. ... I thought they were forged, so I went to a place and asked them to teach me, show me how to forge things. And for about a year I made forged sculpture.<sup>75</sup>*

Although Pepper had first been fascinated with Cor-ten steel, she grew tired of it both because it had become so common the decade after its invention and also because the uniformity of its rust coating was not variegated enough for the type of work she wanted to produce. In 1976 she began using cast iron as a primary sculptural material when she purchased a set of factory tools, including molds and cones from a scrap-metal shop outside Todi, the Umbrian hill town where she and her husband had moved. Made of both cast and forged iron, the tools were encrusted with rust, and a number were extremely corroded. Pepper then cut up and reworked some of them for her exhibition, *Small Sculpture 1977-1978*, at the André Emmerich Gallery in New York City in March 1979.



*Senatorio Column*, 1978  
Cast Iron, 20 x 5 x 5 in (51 x 13 x 13 cm)



*Manhattan Sentinels*, 1993-1996  
Federal Plaza, New York



Henri Matisse, *The Back Series*, 1908-1931



Detail of *Palingenesis*, 1993-1994  
Credit Swiss Headquarters, Zurich,  
Switzerland

Because there has been some confusion about whether Pepper or David Smith was the first to use rust in sculpture, a review of Smith's own statement about the aesthetics of rust will help to clear up some of the confusion. Among Smith's unpublished notes during his lifetime is the following undated paragraph found in the posthumously published *David Smith: Sculpture and Writings*:

*The red of the rust has a higher value to me than antiquity relationship. It is the metal of terra rasa, ochre, Indian red, the Mars group, etc. It is the order of time—natural destruction, oxidation. It is intrinsic growth... Its susceptibility to this eventual theoretic destruction is the means by which it is refined—and most easily controlled to shape (oxy-acetylene cutting). It is the red of the east's mythical west. It is the blood of man, it was a precultur[al] symbol of life.<sup>76</sup>*

Although Smith waxes poetic about the possibilities of using rust as inspiration for his sculpture, he was unwilling to risk incorporating it in his welded pieces of mild steel and spent years in fact devising ways to protect them from its incursion. When he was not coating his pieces with protective and decorative layers of paint or turning to stainless steel in his late work, Smith developed a method of permitting his sculptures to rust for a season before removing its surface with a wire brush and coating the entire surface with Masury oil. The finished pieces then would be a dark reddish color, approximating rust's color but not its deleterious effects to mild steel. When he was in Italy, Smith employed Isofan Transparent Protective Coating for his Voltri series. He discovered this material through Pepper, and she later employed both transparent and the colored Isofan in her stainless steel boxes. While the above statement by Smith may have had effect on Pepper when it was published in 1968, her alliance of rust and cast iron differs significantly from Smith's need to protect his sculpture from this iron oxide.

Even though Pepper's concentration on iron was preceded by Julio Gonzalez's utilization of it in the 1930s, she has found ways to personalize her use of this material, beginning most notably with the *Moline Markers*. The works were commissioned for the John Deere headquarters, a complex located on 1400 acres in Moline, Illinois, centered around four Cor-ten buildings designed by Eero Saarinen, who died before the compound was completed; it was then finished by Kevin Roche. Because John Deere, the brand name

for Deere & Company, which was begun in the early nineteenth century, is the world's chief manufacturer of agricultural machinery and also a leader in producing construction and forestry equipment as well as a respected supplier for diesel engines, transmissions, gearboxes, and axles used in heavy equipment, in addition to offering a line of equipment for lawn care, Pepper's choice of such simple tools as screwdrivers and files appealed to the company's administrators as an inspired idea. But, unbeknownst to them, it also is enormously transgressive, as the one-time French surrealist, writer, and theorist George Bataille has indicated, because it goes against the idea of work.<sup>77</sup> Since Bataille views art as existing at the furthest remove from work, he considers its initial development to constitute humanity's first transgression.<sup>78</sup> If one, then, turns tools into gratuitous objects—a form of play—as Pepper does in the *Moline Markers* the infraction is even greater, even though the administrative staff headquartered at Deere & Company's campus fortunately did not understand this aspect of her art.

Pepper was excited about the John Deere commission for a number of reasons, including her desire "to work in the factory where ductile iron was invented," and she used this opportunity to learn as much as she could about this type of iron. As she later recollected:

*Well, I was interested in iron, and I did a lot of reading on iron. John Deere and someplace in England, both of them at the same time, added magnesium to the ore, making it more malleable, so that they could cast the motors of their tractors.<sup>79</sup>*

She has often pointed to iron as her "favorite material,"<sup>80</sup> extolling both its independence and its ability to connote the passage of time:

*Well, at the beginning I help it along with certain acids and salt. And then time. What I love most is what I think of as time-fingerprints, [the] imprints of time, or "what happens." The rust has its own inclinations. You know, you do what you want; then you do what it wants.<sup>81</sup>*

Her estimation of the power of cast iron is corroborated by some of her most important works in this material, including the General Services Administration Commission of the *Manhattan Sentinels*, a wonderfully regal set of sculptures with a powerfully nuanced patina in black, brown,

and blue for New York City's Federal Plaza, made between 1993-96; *Palingenesis*, a 1993-94 Credit Suisse-commissioned 227-foot relief in Zürich, which represents a substantial rethinking of Henri Matisse's series of four magisterial reliefs, *The Back Series* of 1908-31, in terms of the growth of columns, one giving birth to the next, until the emerging pilaster detaches itself from the wall to become a full-fledged column; and *Spazio Teatro Celle* for the Fattoria di Celle, a private Italian museum, located near Pistoia, which is remarkable for its sizable collection of land art, and will be discussed later.

#### *Henri Bergson's Intuition, Duration, and Multiplicity and Pepper's Art*

In this analysis of Pepper's work and the theoretical concepts in which it participates, it will help to look at Henri Bergson's concepts, since they were formative not only for Malraux and Benjamin, but also for Pepper herself, who remembers carefully reading this philosopher's *Introduction to Metaphysics* as well as some of his other books and finding his theories particularly useful. In the second decade of the twentieth century and fully three decades before she came across his work, Bergson had been an extraordinarily popular philosopher, but the widespread and rapid dispersal of his ideas worked against him, when they helped to shape foundations for a number of subsequent philosophers' theories, leaving his formative role almost entirely forgotten. In the twentieth century his thought has inspired a range of philosophers, including Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Lévinas, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jacques Derrida, Alfred North Whitehead, and more recently Gilles Deleuze, who is responsible for the tremendous revival of this turn-of-the-twentieth-century philosopher's ideas called "Bergsonianism." In the field of art, Bergson's thought was also crucial for a range of European and American artists, including but not limited to the following: Umberto Boccioni, Constantin Brancusi, Arthur Dove, Marcel Duchamp, Raymond Duchamp-Villon, Marsden Hartley, Frantisek Kupka, Albert Gleizes, Fernand Léger, Wyndham Lewis, Kasimir Malevich, and Georgia O'Keefe, and Alfred Stieglitz.<sup>82</sup>

Bergson's reliance on *intuition* as a method for approaching *duration*—both significant components of his thought—has made his theories seem unduly accessible to a great number of people, even to those with only a casual acquaintance with them; however, they are multifaceted and well deserving of being

understood in their complexity. Assiduously avoiding traditional analyses, which he viewed as breaking up the integrity of objects, Bergson instead prized intuition as a synthetic and emphatic way of locating oneself *within* rather than *outside* an object, so that one regards it as absolute, capable of evincing a qualitative and fluid-like continuum of mutating yet connected elements. These ideas reverberate well with Pepper's assessment of both her involvement with her work and its own focus on itself and its heightened self-awareness.

*If I talk about the formal problems that involve me, it is because the abstract language of form that I have chosen has become a way to explore an interior life of feeling. In this way, my forms mirror emotional reality. The problems to which I have consistently linked my work concern the question of sculptural illustration. Put briefly, I wish to make an object that has a powerful physical presence, but is at the same time inwardly turned, seeming capable of intense self-absorption.*<sup>83</sup>

Pepper emphasizes this idea even more when she writes, "I want my sculptures to seem to be creating relationships which are very simple, yet at the same time are beyond the viewer's grasp." Following this statement with a goal sounding very much like Bergson's duration, she states, "I want it to seem as though an inexplicable coherence works inside the sculpture to generate external aspects of its physical being which are always unexpected, because they are unpredictable,"<sup>84</sup> a view in sync with Bergson's theorization of intuition as first and foremost a process of "grasp[ing] the thing itself in what it is, in its difference from all that it is not, which is to say in its internal difference."<sup>85</sup> Intuition is also a "metaphysical investigation" of an objects' essence<sup>86</sup> and a process involving the redirection of thought by reversing one's habitual mode or direction of thinking. In other words, with intuition one becomes involved in "think[ing] backwards," as philosopher F.C. T. Moore has so aptly translated Bergson's view of this nonlinear approach.<sup>87</sup> Pepper personalized this concept several decades earlier than Moore when she pointed out, "I think everyone has his own process. And mine is backing into my work."<sup>88</sup> On another occasion, she reinforced this position when she has said, "I do not work with the front of my head; I wake up and discover where I am. I follow myself."<sup>89</sup> Addressing intuition even more directly in her diary of c. 1960-63, she notes Bergson's statement, "Instinct knows things—intellect



the relationship between things” and includes the following paraphrase:

*Intuition has the advantage of entering into the very essence of life—of feeling its movement, its creation—but [its] disadvantage [is] it cannot express itself—language is [an] instrument of [the] intellect.<sup>90</sup>*

If intuition is the route to an awareness of reality, duration is its essence. In *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Bergson defines it in the following manner:

*If I consider duration as a multiplicity of moments bound to each other by a unity which goes through them like a thread, then however short the chosen duration may be, these moments are unlimited in number ... duration disintegrates into a powder of moments, none of which endures, each being an instantaneity. If, on the other hand, I consider the unity which binds the moments together, this cannot endure either, since by hypothesis everything ... is changing. ... As I probe more deeply into its essence, this unity will appear to me as some immobile substratum of that which is moving, as some intemporal essence of time; it is this that I shall call eternity.<sup>91</sup>*

We might think of this eternity as an instant and conversely a mere moment as an eternity, since duration, according to Bergson, consists of both a simultaneous and qualitative multiplicity, or as Berkeley University French professor Suzanne Guerlac calls it, “a continuous temporality but a discontinuous time.”<sup>92</sup> Often compared to music, the rhythm of duration, in my opinion, is closer to the structure of Renaissance polyphony with its interwoven melodic voices than the simple melody often cited as an analogy for this state of enfolded, partially melded, and overflowing parts, all connected in a chorus of diverse yet interpenetrating voices. Instead of being seen as a goal, Bergson’s duration is an ongoing process, an unremitting flux; he observed:

*Inner duration is the continuous life of a memory which prolongs the past into the present ... reality is a state which changes and endures ... a perpetual becoming. ... Becoming in general, i.e., a becoming which is not the becoming of any particular thing. ...<sup>93</sup>*

Both Pepper’s portrayal of Rome and Paris evidence a personalization of Bergson’s duration into several different types of continuous times:

*I was living in a medieval hill town [Todi] in stopped time. While in Rome, you had layered time. So*

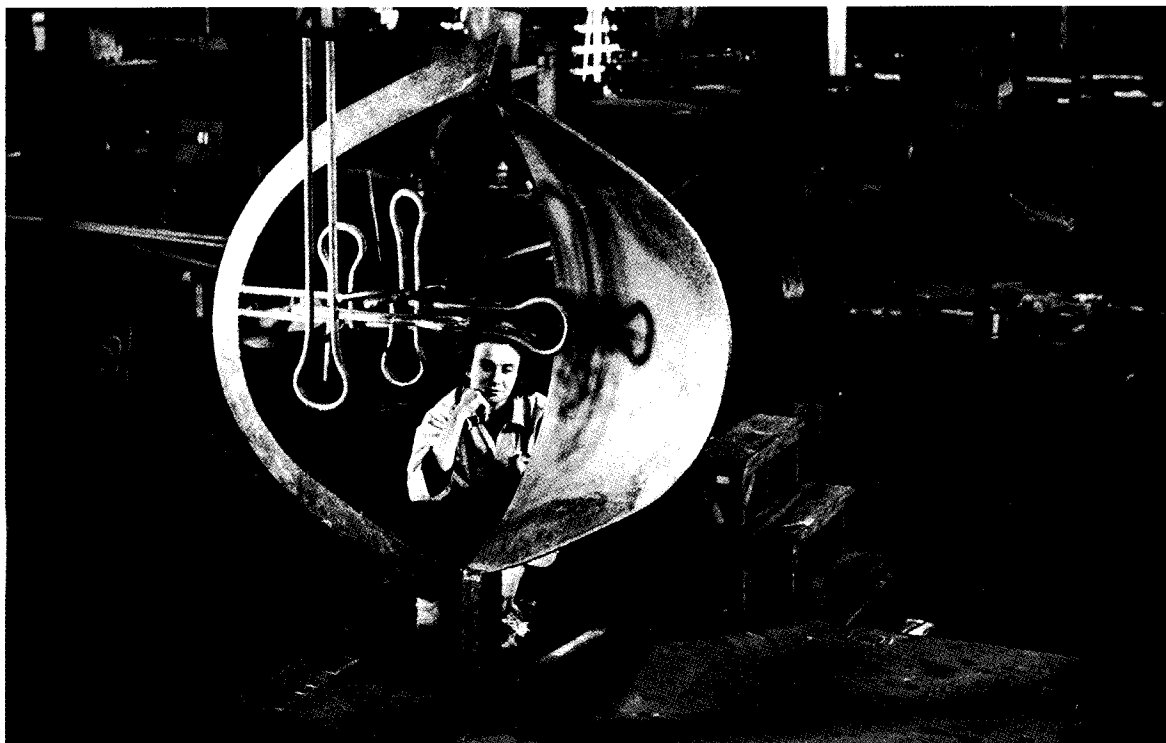
*there you went from the Caesars through fascism to contemporary architecture. ... Paris is not in a time zone. You’re in an energy zone, which is quite different. But when you live in Rome, you have history in your face.<sup>94</sup>*

Although Bergson’s definition of duration can appear to be a mystical revelation, he emphasizes its immanence since it “can be presented to us directly in an intuition,” and can also “be suggested to us indirectly by images, even though [it] ... can never ... be enclosed in a conceptual representation.”<sup>95</sup> The Scottish Bergsonian scholar Eric Matthew attests that this French theorist’s ideas could be considered “a variety of phenomenology,” particularly for the weight he gives to describing “the way we actually experience the world.”<sup>96</sup> Significantly, for Bergson, our actual experience of the world negates traditional definitions of form, which he considers an intellectual *précis* and not a perceptual or qualitative apprehension of things:

*There is no form, since form is immobile and the reality is movement. What is real is the continual change of form: form is only a snapshot view of a transition. Therefore, here, again our perception manages to solidify into discontinuous images the fluid continuity of the real.<sup>97</sup>*

Our intellect, then, renders form as a type of shorthand, enabling us to negotiate our way through the world. Without it, one would be overwhelmed with vertigo. The intellect operates at a removal from the world, and the intuitive insights leading into duration, which can be understood as flux, a perpetual becoming, with feeling “contain[ing] virtually within it the whole past and present of the being experiencing it, [which] ... can only be separated and constituted into a ‘state’ by an effort of abstraction or of analysis.”<sup>98</sup> Bergson’s abstraction, however, is an antipode apart from Worringer’s views, since he regards it as always comprising an extraction from the world and not an imposition on life, as Worringer considered it. For Benjamin abstraction as extraction is derived from life even if it has to absent itself from duration’s flow in order to define itself. Pepper understood this well and wrote in a sketchbook, identified as “New York, 1977,” the following passage from Bergson’s *Creative Evolution*: “There are things that the intelligence alone is able to seek, but which, by itself, it will never find. These things instinct alone could find but it will never seek them.”

Rather than being either an extraction or an abstraction, Pepper’s work creates the basis for not



Beverly Pepper, Italsider factory  
Piombino, 1962  
*Salute a Genova*, 1962  
Steel, 67 in high (170 cm)

one context but an ongoing interplay of allusions: a spectrum of historical prototypes and present-day references and an ongoing continuum so one is not extracted from the other; this is a situation akin to her experience of the continued oscillating forces between art and nature at Angkor, a realization, in other words, occurring in the work that is akin to Bergson's duration. In his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Bergson, in fact, sets up the terms for creating in art the basic components for a viewer to experience a work of art as a duration. His analysis could be construed as a description of the way Pepper's sculpture operates with its past/present emphases:

*No image can replace the intuition of duration, but many diverse images, borrowed from very different orders of things, may, by the convergence of their action, direct consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to be seized. By choosing images as dissimilar as possible, we shall prevent any one of them from usurping the place of the intuition it is to call up.*<sup>99</sup>

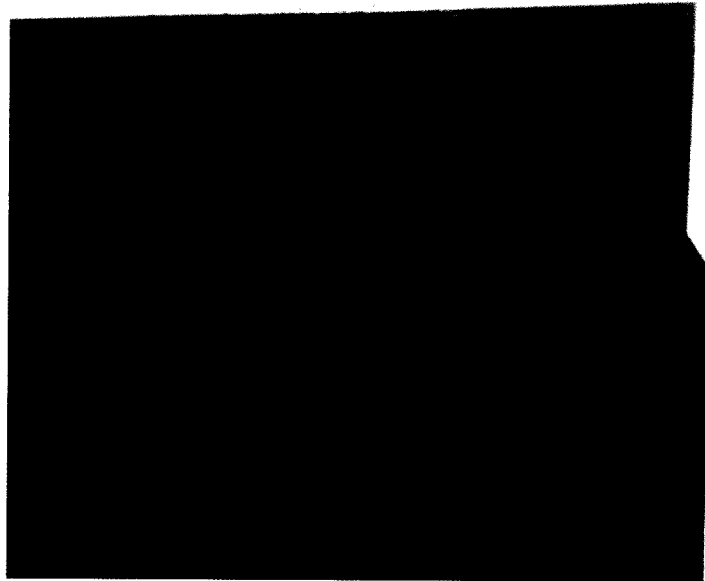
What the diverse assembly of images—or allusions in the case of Pepper's art—emulates is the multiplicity that is to be experienced as a basic condition of Bergson's duration, an approach with the distinct advantage of forestalling aesthetic closure, thereby keeping Kant's type of reflective judgment an ongoing operative. This ongoing cogitation parallels Bergson's conception of matter in terms of unending

dynamics, whereby every aspect has an impact on every other part. Although it is a representation, it can help to counter traditional views of representation, which detach and halt movement in order to make it discernible. However, since Bergson regards matter in terms of duration and its continued multiplicity, one would have to conclude that Bergsonian art cannot be a mere representation, but must constitute something else. And here the concept of a metaphor's many meanings is useful, since this trope can serve as the basis for an ongoing interplay between opposing terms and their momentary unity in the metaphor per se, which is then interpreted in a number of diverse ways—think of Kant's reflective judgment—thereby creating the effect of multiplicity. If one thinks of art in this fashion, then it is possible for viewers, embracing the method of intuition as a means for approaching art, to open themselves to its multiplicity and to come to terms with the idea of duration as one of its desired effects.

Art historian Mark Antliff's analyses of differences between Kant's and Bergson's theories of time and space have proven helpful, since they distinguish Kant's *a priori* space, which functions as a still envelope for all the things later placed with it,<sup>100</sup> from Bergson's new way of conceiving it. Unlike Kant's fixed intellectual entity, Bergson's space is polyvalent and intuitively understood, an *extensity*, defined as being eminently flexible and dependent on fusions of actual experience with time, so that time becomes a key indicator of space, a way of opening up discrete and radically different perspectives or vicinities, rather than the usual definition of time as merely sequential occurrences taking place in static, clearly stipulated precincts. Pepper expresses this concept well when she points out:

*They [the monumental sculptures] are large-scale illusionary works that use space as one of the elements to express our being in the world. There is, as we know, no fixed equilibrium between man and his environment. As a matter of fact, he spends his life seeking to maintain a balance between inner and outer reality. Within that struggle, I am trying to use forms that help him to redress the occasional imbalance by defining both himself and his environment.*<sup>101</sup>

Rather than regarding space as a preordained given in which to place a work, Pepper views its definition as part of the creative process. "As an artist," she has noted, "I create work to discover it. To make its



acquaintance. To sculpt a space. A sudden, energetic space.” Reflecting further on this situation, in which art is eminently *extensive*, Pepper has mused:

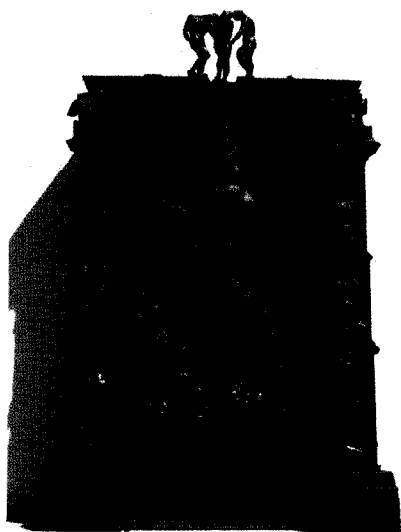
*It is difficult, if not impossible, to discuss sculpture—or any art form—without implicitly assuming some concept of space. Yet what is space? It has been said that space is existential. It could also be said that existence is spatial. However you look at it, monumental sculpture exists as experiential space. That is, it is neither entirely an external object, nor wholly an internal experience. What I am saying is that while we can use reason to describe space, it remains difficult to say precisely what space is in itself, and how it is related to matter and motion.*<sup>102</sup>

In this statement Pepper considers artists, and particularly sculptors, to be not just endowers of artistic form but, far more fundamentally, creators and definers of new kinds of space coeval with form’s appearance and working in concert with it. Art—and particularly Pepper’s—devises these space-time manifolds while homesteading them, so that people are then able to inhabit them in their imaginations.

#### *Benjamin’s Aura and Pepper’s “Disjunctive Temporalities”*

The term “disjunctive temporalities” is taken from Miriam Bratu Hansen’s important 2008 essay “Benjamin’s Aura,” which goes far beyond customary views of this critic’s use of the term in his well-known essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” where aura is linked to more traditional

art and its ability to maintain a distance from its viewers.<sup>103</sup> In Benjamin’s other writings, starting with his dissertation on German allegorical tragedies, he develops a much more inclusive theory of aura as potentially found in all things. He views it as only partially connected with the dialectical moment, when a spark of recognition occurs between the past and the present, and establishes, according to Hansen, “the doubly disjunctive temporality of auratic experience qua *memoire involontaire*—a memory at once ‘prehistoric’ and ephemeral, flashing past, referentially unanchored.”<sup>104</sup> But, instead of establishing a basis for shared and heightened understanding between present and past points or events, as the dialectic moment does, this force field sets up unforgettable and even disturbing oppositions. Benjamin’s aura contributes to an emotional resonance and troubling detachment consonant with the *uncanny*, a Freudian concept as well as an instantiation of the psychological sublime, which is eerie because it is ultimately unknowable. Predicated on the frisson of encountering something inanimate and finding it to be invested with the force of an alien and alienating power, uncomfortably capable of returning one’s gaze, this aura can be viewed as a fetish, which makes the encounter highly cathected, certainly memorable, and more than a little destabilizing. Hansen cites Benjamin’s own reference to Novalis’s observation, “In all predicates in which we see the fossil, it sees us” and notes this Frankfurt School critic’s view of aura as an out-of-the-ordinary entwining of distance and intimacy, the far and the near, the optic and the haptic, the latter terms being



August Rodin, *Gates of Hell*, 1880-1917  
Musée Rodin, Paris

those of the turn-of-the-twentieth-century Austrian art historian Alois Riegl. Putting this in the context of Bergson's *extensity*, I would say aura is capable of representing special instances of time opening up concomitant spaces by endowing elements from the past with the power to look back at us or at least make us uncomfortably self-aware, thus setting up unequal situations between this other and ourselves. Instead of a comfortable and insightful "now of knowability," taking the form of an enlightened colloquy between past and present, aura precludes an equitable conversation by setting up a disarming obstacle. Seen in this way, aura can be considered the dialectical image's unsettling other. It can be comprehended as a type of punctum—and here I differ from both Hansen and Roland Barthes—since Benjamin's aura is not the comforting prick of recognition theorized in either Hansen's essay or Barthes *Camera Lucida*; instead it's a definite jab, catalyzing a disarming estrangement and an alienating perspective by exposing the viewer to a puzzling affront.

In my opinion, some of Pepper's sculptures play on both the positive and negative aspects of Benjamin's dialectical image, including his idea of aura's discomfiting effect, while enlarging on Malraux's metamorphosis to create not just comforting alliances but also discomfiting ones, depending on one's point of view, and also the type of opening occurring between two or more different temporalities, which cannot necessarily be predicted at the outset. This

type of conflicting dialectical image or metamorphosis can be seen as a factor of Pepper's *Spazio Teatro Celle*, a theater, conceived in 1987 and completed in 1992. The theater is located in the expansive nineteenth-century romantic garden at the Fattoria di Celle surrounding a well-known seventeenth-century villa in the Pistoian hills where collector Giuliano Gori has assembled impressive collections of site-specific art. Because this outdoor piece, according to Pepper, is "the seminal work for my [theater] projects in Lithuania, in Tokyo, in ...Upstate New York," it serves as an excellent focus for the discussion of her sculpture that has taken the form of outdoor theaters.

Located well inside Gori's park and situated across from a nineteenth-century Gothic revival teahouse called the "Casina del Tè," *Spazio Teatro Celle* is announced by a pair of majestic 16-foot *Precursor Columns*, resembling giant tuning forks. They set the stage for the overall concave depression, forming the seats for this open-air theater and the stage itself with its two slightly misaligned, triangular-shaped high reliefs of rusted cast iron, named *Filiate Walls* by the artist, each relief being 45 feet in length and supported by a berm of earth to form the theater's backdrop. Depending on the performance being staged and the type of theatrical lighting employed, the cast iron backdrop can resonate positive energy or negative chaos, with a wide range of inflections between the two forces, acting altogether as a type of Bergsonian duration. Definitely the basis for a multiplicity, the



*Amphisculpture*, 1974  
AT&T Headquarter, Bedminster, NJ

*Filiate Walls*, art historically speaking reference one of Pepper's favorite sculptors, August Rodin, and the background for his most important work, the *Gates of Hell*, which he began in 1880 and continued working on intermittently until his death in 1917.

Considering the great body of literature on Rodin's *Gates*, it is surprising the foremost twentieth-century authority on this artist, Albert Elsen, has paid relatively little attention to the background of this formidable sculpture.<sup>105</sup> Although he briefly recognizes this area's "change from hard to soft, smooth to rough, tangible to intangible" and notes the *Gate's* "big, 'empty' planes are crucial both to the drama and to the composition ...[since] they set the desolate tone and allow the work to breathe,"<sup>106</sup> his abbreviated discussion of the work's background fails to take into consideration its tremendous psychological impact on the overall sculpture as a perpetual deluge constantly redefining itself. Art historian and critic Rosalind E. Krauss provides greater insight into the *Gates'* chaotic import when she refers to Rodin's "ground of relief [as] operat(ing) like a picture plane, and ... an open space in which the backward extension of a face or body occurs," before moving closer to circumscribe its emotional impact when she notes:

*The Gates are, then, simultaneously purged of both the space and time that would support the unfolding of narrative. Space in the work is congealed and arrested; temporal relationships are driven toward a dense unclarity.*<sup>107</sup>

In his *Gates* Rodin views Hell as a special type of anarchy, negating any solid grounding in either space or time. According to Krauss, most relief sculpture before Rodin's *Gates of Hell* relied on the poetic of setting up implicit narratives through the delineation of pregnant moments, thereby foreshadowing anticipated actions, so that viewers can then imaginatively complete them. This ploy of using relief sculpture to ground viewers in secure narratives, however, is an approach that the unruly background of Rodin's *Gates* entirely dismisses.<sup>108</sup>

As an act of criticism, pointing to the tremendous significance of this area in Rodin's *Gates*, Pepper's iron reliefs at Celle not only emphasize, by comparison, the crucial role of this area's utter confusion in the overall *Gates*, but they also offer the possibility of viewing this type of hopeless chaos as a realm of infinite potential, so that it might be perceived as a great surging sea giving rise to being and also drowning it.

By reiterating the shapes of the berms behind them, thereby re-presenting earth as a symbol, these reliefs set up an implicit relationship with Rodin's chthonic world. But instead of aborting human endeavors, they frame them with a range of both positive and negative metaphors, including life as energy, mystery, harvest, sea, *maelstrom*, and cosmos. As a theatrical backdrop, these reliefs compose a necessarily ambiguous frame for the great range of events that have been and will continue to be presented as plays and performances on this stage. They can be regarded as a late development of Pepper's meditations on the essential contradictions and ongoing struggle between nature and culture, first played out for her in Angkor, since the iron panels at Celle suggest the turmoil out of which culture develops and the flux ultimately reclaiming it.

The surging instable forces at work in these reliefs parallel the artist's open-ended process, so the two can be understood as working in concert. At a time when many artists were turning the fabrication of their work over to others, Pepper remained deeply involved in the process of making sculpture and continues to do so, even though she does rely on the help of a number of assistants. Usually she will make models in clay or Styrofoam, then give the models to engineers, who make detailed drawings for building full-scale pieces, but even then, as she has pointed out, "I don't feel obligated to keep to the exact drawings. I like to feel there should be a fluidity."<sup>109</sup> She began the *Spazio Teatro Celle* reliefs without sketches, using a mud of wet plaster to create forms hovering in an indeterminate arena between sculpture and painting.<sup>110</sup> She believes in accepting and mining accidents, occurring during this process, which she terms "divine" because they cannot be preconceived.<sup>111</sup> Deep gauges, abrasions, ridges, bubbles, and marbled pitted surfaces all document the actual construction of these pieces by referring to the artist's hand as well as to the accidents occurring to molten iron during casting, making the work's meaning dependent on both the artist's intentions, formulated in the course of working on this backdrop and during the actual process of casting the piece. However, instead of arresting time in her *Filiate Walls* as does Rodin, Pepper diverts it, by characterizing a present moment as a duration, which can also be understood in terms of both the past and the future.

Although the Celle Theater relates to Pepper's mid-'70s AT&T *Amphisculpture* in Bedminster, New Jersey, the two works are radically different in orientation and purpose. Unlike the piece at Celle, *Amphisculpture*

was not intended for theatrical productions. While both works play with the idea of ancient Greek and Roman theaters, the earlier piece is science fictional, seeming to condense aspects of the distant past into a compelling image of the not-too-distant future. Created at a time when a viable future through technology still seemed to be a possibility, *Amphisculpture* consists of concentric bands of concrete, separated by ground covering, while two monumental concrete wedges, which resemble aerodynamically engineered components, pierce the radiating bands. By contrast *Spazio Teatro Celle* looks as if it is the surviving remnant of an ancient temple complex.

In the thirteen years separating the conception of the first piece from the second, Pepper's attitudes toward technology changed radically. She ceased to be enamored with the space age and started elevating, as we have seen, such simple tools as axes, chisels, drills, and files into monumental sculptures—works serving as *memento mori* of industrialism. Viewing the nineteenth- and twentieth-century industrial *age of steel* as the modern-day equivalent of the Neolithic *iron age* in these and other pieces including the theater at Celle, Pepper has encouraged her sculptures to form a layer of rust so they might conjure up associations with both the distant and recent past. Unlike such archaeologically oriented artists as the Cornell professor Norman Daly, who delighted viewers with copper sulfate patina's ability to transform ubiquitous plastic bleach bottles into simulated relics of the recent past, Pepper's works uphold the formal standards of High Modernism and allude to both remote times and more recent ones.

*Spazio Teatro Celle's* notable affinities to still extant classical theaters around the Mediterranean bring to mind the customary dedication of ancient theaters to the god Dionysus, making them in effect sacred areas. In Pepper's theater, this classical figure is implied metonymically in terms of the berms of earth symbolically marking this deity's burial and the reliefs and stage celebrating his rebirth. The sacredness of both art and the theatrical event is also communicated indirectly through the metonym of meteoric iron. Before the discovery of the smelting process, iron was mainly obtained from meteorites, a reason why the Sumerians named it "celestial metal" and "star-metal," and the Hittites called it "the black iron of the sky." Extremely scarce, it was as prized as gold, and was consequently used primarily for ritual purposes. Although iron was not employed for ancient theaters, the already enumerated historical and mythic precedents for Pepper's iron reliefs

at Celle resonate with her work, as do comparable myths of smelted iron as "the telluric sacredness of the earth," according to comparative mythologist Mircea Eliade.<sup>112</sup>

Since ancient rusted sculptures are still being dug up in those areas of Italy once occupied by the Etruscans, the rust forming a coating on *Spazio Teatro Celle's Filiate Walls* could be considered not only a memorial to this past iron age and the peak period of western industrialization from the eighteenth century to the end of the twentieth century, but also a celebration of their resiliency and strength against all odds. Wonderfully ambiguous, rust can be thought of as a threshold image, celebrating change, transformation, metamorphosis, and survival, while leaving open-ended narratives of Dionysian destruction and rebirth. If rust appears to undermine the ideology of industrialization while continuing to extol its perseverance, then it serves as a splendidly apotropaic type of dialectic image, capable of opening new channels and instituting groundbreaking perspectives. But rust can also awaken fears concerning ruin and desolation; in art this quality can connote a passing way of life, including the downfall of our industrialized world, becoming a Benjaminian type of uncanny auratic form and ultimately a traumatic situation compressing distant fears and present realities. But since Pepper's *Filiate Walls* can connote modernism's end and its resiliency and continuance, it also forms a vital pendant to her *Amphisculpture*, because it extends the much more science-fictional future of the latter work to the remote past and to a possibly even more far-off future where it assumes the contradictory ontological positions of survivor and ruin.

### Conclusion

As Beverly Pepper approaches her ninth decade, there appears to be no slowing down of her sculptural activity; in fact she seems to be even busier than ever, with a great number of projects in Europe, the United States, and Canada, some of which are reproduced in this book in various stages of completion. While the illustrations in this volume testify to the tremendous success of her sculpture and the great esteem with which museums, municipalities, and collectors hold it, this is only part of this story. The other little-recognized part is the deleterious impact postmodernism's stereotypical views of modern abstraction, in conjunction with its concomitant practice of looking at art through the lens of the art network, have had

on both this abstract sculptural mode and Pepper's rethinking of it.

Veering away from early modern art's focus on purity, Clement Greenberg's assessment of its autonomy, Robert Motherwell's advocacy of art's contracted unity "to will one thing," Michael Fried's understanding of presence, and Marcel Duchamp and postmodernism's institutional definitions of art, Pepper has relied on her early understanding of a troika of impressive mid-twentieth-century thinkers—André Malraux and Henri Bergson, whom she read, and Walter Benjamin who shared his ideas with Malraux in the 1930s when the two both were in Paris and who also came under the impact of Bergson's thought early in his career. Working with the tremendously fertile set of related ideas provided by these men, Pepper has found ways to reflect on their theories in her sculpture so that its allusions to different times and places fuse with viewers' own experiences to establish Bergson-like *extensive* situations, akin also to Malraux's *metaphoric images* and Benjamin's *dialectical images*. Instead of accepting space, matter, and the present-day world as givens, Pepper's sculpture sets up force fields between such antinomies as ancient and modern, public and private, stable and transformative, male and female, blue-collar industrial and hand wrought elitist, which her work puts into fruitful play, so that seeing can connect with feeling and a moment of aesthetic insight can open up entire universes.<sup>113</sup> Altogether, this forms the basis for the dialectic synthesis of past and present art similar to the synthesized images Malraux terms "metamorphosis"; the intuitive multiplicity Bergson names "duration"; and the positive opening up of a nonlinear positive historicity, involving the heightened dialogues Benjamin calls the "dialectical image" as well as the more uncanny exposure of the self to itself or to a discombobulating other, a confrontation understandable in terms of the "aura." Because Pepper's work is dynamic in its references and dialectical in its interplays between positive forms and negative spaces, it is capable of generating compelling syntheses between the two that then combine to form new unities, which, taken together, are the sculptural equivalent of these three thinkers' special categories.

Instead of subscribing to the shibboleth of purity, Pepper's sculpture opens viewers to a dynamic host of indirect, overlapping, and changing references; in place of autonomy, it privileges contingency; rather than settling for unity, it prefers multiplicity; veering

away from an institutional definition of the artworld's legitimizing practices, it plays on allusion; and avoiding the singular limits of the mid-twentieth century formalist emphasis on "presentness," it opts for an ongoing contrapuntal play of presence and absence. At a time when historical references in art have been written off as comprising at best postmodern pastiches or, worse, boring academic exercises, Pepper has found ways to make her own experience of being an American in Italy, a cosmopolite in the U.S., and a contemporary artist, intent on comparing her art to the monumentality and many resonances of ancient and Renaissance art, all part of the referential nexuses surrounding her work. In her art, then, she establishes a range of persuasive allusions to periods near and far as well as past and present. The traces of the different times to which her art alludes provide the impetus for experiencing her sculpture in terms of a number of diverse spaces, thus making *time* a creative force and a means for the discernment and perception of the many spaces ascertained and understood as part of the experience of her art. Rather than being content to follow the age-old pattern of simply placing objects in static envelopes of pre-ordained space, Pepper's sculpture re-conceptualizes time so that it is a key factor in determining and locating different types of space.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Judith Olch Richards, "Oral History Interview with Beverly Pepper," *Smithsonian Archives of American Art* (July 1-2, 2009), p. 49. David Smith was among the first to recognize Beverly Pepper's ability to work on a monumental scale. Pepper recalls:

David and I became very good friends [after working in Italy for the Spoleto Festival in 1962]. In fact, the first commission that I got—I did not know this until after I got it—was a sculpture for Third Avenue [in New York City] at 47<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Street, a big stainless steel sculpture for the Swiss architect, Lescaze. At one point I said, "How did you come to pick me?" He said, "David Smith recommends you." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, I wanted David to do this, but he never worked on this scale." The sculptures I did in Spoleto were 18 feet [to] 20 feet.

<sup>2</sup> Important modern artists whose work has been able to survive postmodernism include: the two Smiths—David and Tony—whose connections between humanism and industry has remained persuasive to a number of postmodernists, and Louise Bourgeois, whose many references to an assignation between her father and governess has enabled her work to be seen as an eminently feminist critique.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur Danto, "The Artworld," *Journal of Philosophy*, 61, No. 19 (October 15, 1964), p. 580.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Danto, "The Transfiguration of the Commonplace," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 33, No. 2 (Winter, 1974), pp. 139-148, and *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

<sup>5</sup> Bruce Kurtz, "Conversation with Robert Smithson" in Jack D. Flam, *Robert Smithson, The Collected Writings* (Berkeley: New York University Press, 1996). The conversation between Kurtz and Smithson took place on 22 April 1972.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Russell, "The Context of the Concept", in *Romanticism, Modernism, Postmodernism*, ed. Harry R. Garvin (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 1980), p. 190.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 183-189.

<sup>8</sup> This type of postmodern institutional approach has more in common with Michel Foucault's "Author as Producer" in which artistic genres, viewed as discourses, dictate their way of being approached, than with Roland Barthes' distinction between readerly (coercive) versus writerly (open) texts outlined in his introduction to *S/Z*. Cf. Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), pp. x-xii.

<sup>9</sup> Mark A. Cheetham, *The Rhetoric of Purity: Essentialist Theory and the Advent of Abstract Painting*, New Art History and Criticism Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103. On another occasion, Cheetham cites Schopenhauer, who affirms this approach, which became important in France when it was first translated into French in 1886:

Informed and sympathetic readers [in late-nineteenth France] could not have overlooked the neoplatonic strain in Schopenhauer's thought. "The object of art," he says "is an Idea in Plato's sense" (I, 233). And it is in the perception of the idea that art offers salvation from the ontologically wanting world of appearances.

Cf. Mark A. Cheetham, "Mystical Memories: Gauguin's Neoplatonism and 'Abstraction' in Late-Nineteenth-Century French Painting," *Art Journal* 46, No. 1, Mysticism and Occultism in Modern Art (Spring, 1987): 18.

<sup>11</sup> Patricia Mathews, "Review (untitled)," *Art Bulletin* 75, No. 2 (June, 1993): 333.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Motherwell, "Symbolism," (originally from February 1954), *The Collected Writings of Robert Motherwell*, ed. Stephanie Terenzio (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), p. 101; Robert Motherwell, "On the Humanism of Abstraction," (originally from February 1970), *The Collected Writings* ... p. 178. During the years 1974-75 when the author was researching and writing his dissertation on Motherwell, he often heard him refer to this phrase by Kierkegaard.

<sup>13</sup> George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

<sup>14</sup> Louise Norton, "The Buddha of the Bathroom," *The Blind Man*, No. 2 (January 1917), pp. 5-6.

<sup>15</sup> Richards, "Oral History Interview with Beverly Pepper," p. 87.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87. Pepper explains:

Many people think my work is very spiritual. ... I remember my first show of the *Moline Markers* ... [The art historian and critic] Robert Pincus-Witten came to the gallery, and we were alone. He said to me, "Beverly, where's the organ music?" ... I'm not only not religious, I'm anti-religious. [But] I'm not anti-spiritual.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33. Beverly Pepper reflected, "Bill Pepper has an insatiable mind for learning. And he was studying art history in Florence at the time. I think I got a complete education and then a Ph.D. with Bill. He took me to see everything.

He took me to see the Duccios. He took me to see the Giotto's. He took me everywhere."

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23. Pepper's sculptures made at the Italsider factory for this exhibition include: *The Gift of Icarus* and *Leda*, together with several other large works plus 17 smaller ones.

<sup>21</sup> Eleanor C. Munro, *Originals: American Women Artists* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), p. 350-351.

<sup>22</sup> Richards, "Oral History Interview with Beverly Pepper," p. 114.

<sup>23</sup> Beverly Pepper, Interview with Robert Hobbs, New York City, October 3, 1993.

<sup>24</sup> Richards, "Oral History Interview with Beverly Pepper," p. 127.

<sup>25</sup> Donald Judd, *Donald Judd: The Complete Writings 1959-1975* (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1975), p. 187.

<sup>26</sup> Richards, "Oral History Interview with Beverly Pepper," p. 127.

<sup>27</sup> In addition to referring to Worringer's important book, I recommend Juliet Koss excellent essay "On the Limits of Empathy," *The Art Bulletin* 88, No. 1 (March 2006): 139-157.

<sup>28</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), p. 185.

<sup>29</sup> An informative essay on this piece is Jan van der Marck, "Sculpture around Campus: Dartmouth College," *Art Journal* 37, No. 3 (Spring 1978): 248-250.

<sup>30</sup> Beverly Pepper, "Space, Time, and Nature in Monumental Sculpture," *Art Journal* 37, No. 3 (Spring 1978), p. 251. Pepper cites Thel's motto from William Blake's poem *The Book of Thel* in this essay.

<sup>31</sup> Beverly Pepper, "Untitled Comments, 1970-71," *Beverly Pepper, Sculpture: 1960-1973* (Rome: Christen Tipografia and Tipografia Emmebi Grafica, 1973), p. 50.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Beverly Pepper, conversation with Robert Hobbs, New York, 5 October 2005.

<sup>35</sup> W.J. David Gill and Christopher Chippindale, "Material and Intellectual Consequences of Esteem for Cycladic Figures," *American Journal of Archaeology* 97, No. 4 (October 1993), p. 605. The Picasso reference comes from André Malraux, *Picasso's Mask* (New York 1976), p. 136.

<sup>36</sup> Gill and Chippindale, in "Material and Intellectual Consequences of Esteem for Cycladic Figures" speculate that there are perhaps 1600 known sculptures, while Gail L. Hofmann in "Painted Ladies: Early Cycladic II Mourning figures?," *American Journal of Archaeology* 106, No. 4 (October 2002), p. 531, writes: Beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, their [Cycladic female figures'] growing popularity on the art market resulted in the illicit removal of over 1,000 sculptures from the islands. ... Perhaps 1,200 FAFs are currently known ...

<sup>37</sup> Gill and Chippindale, p. 647.

<sup>38</sup> Miwon Kwon, "One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity," *October* 80 (Spring 1997): 88.

<sup>39</sup> Richards, "Oral History Interview with Beverly Pepper," p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> Bruno Cora, "Conversation with Beverly Pepper: Forms of Silence, Face to Face in the Landscape," *Beverly Pepper* (Milan: Electa, 1998), p. 33.

<sup>41</sup> Munro, *Originals*, p. 346.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 354.

<sup>43</sup> Deborah Solomon, "Woman of Steel," *Art News* 86 (December 1987): 115.

<sup>44</sup> Beverly Pepper, "Public Sculpture and Its Public," in *Research & Information Bulletin of the National Council of Art Administrators*, ed. F. V. Mills and D. Kinnett (March 1979), n. p. Pepper delivered this talk, together with a slide presentation, to audiences at the Toledo Art Museum, Toledo, Ohio on 24 October 1978; Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois on 24 October 1978; and the State University of New York in Buffalo on 26 October 1978.

<sup>45</sup> Beverly Pepper, "The Artist on Her Sculpture: Excerpts from a Letter, July 22, 1975" in *Beverly Pepper, Sculpture 1971-1975* (Todi: Tipografia Tiberina, 1975), p. 4.

<sup>46</sup> Geoffrey T. Harris, ed., *André Malraux: Across Boundaries*, Faux Titre, No. 199 (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), p. 258, writes:

I have demonstrated the influence of Benjamin's text on Malraux's concepts. He [Malraux] quotes the German writer several times. An offprint of Benjamin's text published in the German magazine *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, (1, 1936) dedicated to Malraux by its author, is available among the books in André Malraux's library, donated by his descendants to the Musée National d'Art Moderne. Cf. *Bibliothèque André Malraux* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1986).

Walter Benjamin, *Correspondance 1920-1949* (Paris: Aubier, 1979), p. 210. In a letter of August 10, 1936 to Max Horkheimer, Benjamin notes exchanging ideas with Malraux in Paris:

I wanted to have a quick word with you about the repercussions of my article



in the last issue of the magazine. ... It is about the point of view that Malraux expressed in the Conference of Writers last month. ... Malraux stated, before the audience, that he agreed with my reflections, which he confirmed to me on the occasion when we met in Paris. He even made me understand that he would make a direct reference to my article in his clearly theoretical next book.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Geoffrey H. Hartman, *André Malraux* (New York: Hillary House Publishers Ltd., 1960), p. 73. Malraux began his formal exposition of art in 1935. According to literary theorist and Yale University professor Geoffrey H. Hartman, the Nazis destroyed Malraux's first manuscript. He then undertook the enormous task of rewriting it during WWII, and this second version constitutes his most ambitious work. He entrusted the completed manuscript to the Swiss firm Albert Skira, then with a stockpile of excellent paper, perfect for the many excellent illustrations Malraux deemed essential to his study and, just as importantly, without any of the worries of possible Gestapo interference.

<sup>48</sup> Herbert Read, "Review: Malraux's World of Art," *The Hudson Review* 13, No. 1 (Spring 1950): 141.

<sup>49</sup> E.H. Gombrich, "André Malraux and the Crisis of Expressionism," *The Burlington Magazine* 96, No. 621 (December 1954): 374.

<sup>50</sup> E.H. Gombrich, "André Malraux and the Crisis of Expressionism," *Meditations on a Hobby Horse and Other Essays on the Theory of Art* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1963, rpt. 1985), pp. 78-85.

<sup>51</sup> Gombrich, "André Malraux," p. 374. Gombrich speculates in a manner unworthy of both him and Malraux, "There is no evidence that Malraux has done a day's consecutive reading in a library ... his outlook and purpose differ fundamentally from those of the historian or the scholar. ..." Not only Gombrich, but also other art historians took great umbrage with Malraux's publications on art. In *Art History after Modernism*, Hans Belting notes: "I still remember Wolfgang Fritz Volbach [my art history professor] warning students against reading Malraux because he would rob them of their belief in art history." Cf. Derek Allan, "'Reckless Inaccuracies Abounding': André Malraux and the Birth of a Myth," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 67, No. 2 (Spring 2009): 148.

<sup>52</sup> The American philosopher, literary theorist, and classical scholar Philip Wheelwright espoused a similarly considerate view when he called it "nearly a literary masterpiece" and a "brilliant improvisation." Cf. Philip Wheelwright, "Art as Language," *The Sewanee Review* 62, No. 2 (April-June 1954), p. 298.

<sup>53</sup> Solomon, "Woman of Steel," p. 116.

<sup>54</sup> André Malraux, *The Voices of Silence*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 272.

<sup>55</sup> Derek Allan, *Art and the Human Adventure: André Malraux's Theory of Art* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), p. 264.

<sup>56</sup> Walter Benjamin, "N/Re The Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress" in Gary Smith, ed., *Benjamin: Philosophy, History, Aesthetics* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 49.

<sup>57</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, "The Supposition of the Aura: The Now, The Then, and Modernity," trans. Jane Marie Todd in Richard Francis, *Negotiating Rapture* (Chicago: Museum of contemporary Art, 1996), p. 52.

<sup>58</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, 3.1; 201a 10-12, trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye in *The Works of Aristotle Translated into English*, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930).

<sup>59</sup> Walter Benjamin, "N/Re The Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress," p. 49.

<sup>60</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), p. 253.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> André Malraux, *The Voices of Silence*, 69.

<sup>63</sup> Derek Allan, *Art and the Human Adventure: André Malraux's Theory of Art* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), p. 203.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> André Malraux, *The Voices of Silence*, p. 15.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.

<sup>67</sup> Richards, "Oral History Interview with Beverly Pepper," p. 125. Pepper's markers and altars are based on a range of hand tools, including chisels, files, wedges, punches, and ax blades.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>70</sup> Sam Hunter, *The Todi Columns*, in *Beverly Pepper in Todi* (Todi: Il Comune e l'Associazione Piazza Maggiore di Todi, 1980), p. 57.

<sup>71</sup> Richards, "Oral History Interview with Beverly Pepper," p. 89.

<sup>72</sup> B. Guzzuti Hanson, "Beverly Pepper: She's Gotta Have Art," *Mirabel Magazine* (July 1990), p. 110.

<sup>73</sup> Phyllis Tuchman, "Beverly Pepper: The Moline Markers," *Bennington Review* (Winter 1982), p. 42.

<sup>74</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, "The Search for the Absolute," trans. Lionel Abel in *Albert Giacometti* (New York: Pierre Matisse Gallery, 1948).

<sup>75</sup> Richards, "Oral History Interview with Beverly Pepper," p. 55.

<sup>76</sup> David Smith, *David Smith: Sculpture and Writings*, ed. Cleve Gray (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1968), p. 120. In this statement Smith must have been referring to sheet metal since iron cannot be cut with an oxy-acetylene torch.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Richard White, "Bataille on Lascaux and the Origins of Art," *Janus Head*, <http://www.janushead.org/1-2/White.pdf>, p. 325, last consulted 20 October 2011.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Suzanne Guerlac, "Bataille in Theory: Afterimages (Lascaux)," *Diacritics* 26, No. 2, Georges Bataille: An Occasion for Misunderstanding (Summer 1996), p. 14.

<sup>79</sup> Richards, "Oral History Interview with Beverly Pepper," p. 77.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>82</sup> The list of European artists comes from Mark Antliff, "The Rhythms of Duration: Bergson and the Art of Matisse" in John Mullarkey, ed., *The New Bergson* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 207, fn. 103.

<sup>83</sup> Beverly Pepper, "The Artist on Her Sculpture," p. 4.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>85</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Bergson's Conception of Difference*, trans. Melissa McMahon in John Mullarkey, ed., *The New Bergson*.

<sup>86</sup> Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. T. E. Hulme (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub Co Inc, 1999), p. 13.

<sup>87</sup> F. C. T. Moore, *Bergson: Thinking Backwards* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>88</sup> Richards, "Oral History Interview with Beverly Pepper," p. 140.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>90</sup> The diaries and sketchbooks referred to in this essay are located in the artist's archives in her connected house and studio in Todi, Italy.

<sup>91</sup> Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 14.

<sup>92</sup> Suzanne Guerlac, *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 92.

<sup>93</sup> Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 11.

<sup>94</sup> Richards, "Oral History Interview with Beverly Pepper," p. 89.

<sup>95</sup> Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 6.

<sup>96</sup> Eric Matthes, "Bergson's Concept of a Person" in Mullarkey, *The New Bergson*, p. 118ff.

<sup>97</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911), p. 302.

<sup>98</sup> Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 4.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>100</sup> Antliff, "The Rhythms of Duration" in Mullarkey, *The New Bergson*, p. 187.

<sup>101</sup> Pepper, "Space, Time, and Nature in Monumental Sculpture," p. 251.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

<sup>103</sup> Miriam Bratu Hansen, "Benjamin's Aura," *Critical Inquiry* 34, No. 2 (Winter 2008): 336-75. Please note that my discussion of Benjamin's aura is in large part indebted to Hansen's thoughtful and very useful essay.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 348.

<sup>105</sup> A. E. Elsen, *The "Gates of Hell" by August Rodin* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 217-218.

<sup>107</sup> R. E. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (New York: Viking Press, 1977), pp. 20 and 22.

<sup>108</sup> Krauss, *Passages*, pp. 9-10. Krauss writes:

The rationalist model, on which Neoclassicism depends, holds within it two basic suppositions: the context through which understanding unfolds is time; and, for sculpture, the natural context of rationality is medium of relief.

<sup>109</sup> Richards, "Oral History Interview with Beverly Pepper," p. 112.

<sup>110</sup> Pepper had three New York painting exhibitions with the Charles Cowles Gallery in 1994, 1997, and 1998.

<sup>111</sup> Beverly Pepper, Interview with Robert Hobbs, Todi, Italy, 1993.

<sup>112</sup> Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas: Volume I, From the Stone Age to the Eleusinian Mysteries*, trans. W. R. Trask (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) p. 52. Please note this and the following discussion on the mythological ramifications of mining and smelting are indebted to Eliade's work, cf. pp. 52-54.

<sup>113</sup> This view of time as a key to the opening up of different types of spaces has affinities with Martin Heidegger's view of time, first cogently developed in his magisterial *Being and Time*, as the primary means for revealing different aspects of Being in discrete bits over a period of time. Instead of focusing on this crucially important feature of Heidegger's thought, this essay has looked instead at Pepper's own preferred source, Henri Bergson's theories, which have had a widely recognized major impact on this German philosopher's thinking.