

# Spike Island

PRESS RELEASE  
ROSEMARY MAYER  
*WAYS OF ATTACHING*  
8 October 2022 to 15 January 2023



Spike Island presents *Ways of Attaching*, the first institutional survey exhibition of artist Rosemary Mayer (1943-2014). The show spans over forty years of Mayer's prolific and varied practice, from large fabric sculptures, travel diaries and fleeting performances of the 1970s through to pastels, watercolours and other works on paper from the 1990s and 2000s. Highlighting Mayer's formal interest in draping, knotting and tethering, the show focuses on the construction of real and imagined networks, in which friends and historical figures feature in expressions of affinity and attachment.

Mayer was born in Brooklyn and lived in New York City all her life. She studied Classics before pursuing art; an influence that persists throughout her work, which is populated by references to historical figures, artworks and writing, from medieval literature to Mannerist painting. In 1972 Mayer co-founded A.I.R., the first not-for-profit, artist-directed gallery for women artists in the United States. It was there that she mounted a solo show of fabric sculptures titled after women from the Middle Ages and Antiquity: from *Galla Placidia* (1973), the regent of the Western Roman Empire, to *Hroswitha* (1972-73), the early medieval poet Hrotsvit of Gandersheim. *Ways of Attaching* marks the first time that these sculptures have been displayed together since.

Also included in the exhibition are works on paper, photographs and documentation relating to Mayer's performances of the late 1970s, which she called "temporary monuments". Incorporating materials



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such as weather balloons, ribbons, and snow, these ephemeral works were shaped by a unique lexicon connecting sites to time, drawing together the grounded and the cosmic.

*Ways of Attaching* marks the most comprehensive presentation of Rosemary Mayer's artistic practice to date, and the first time her work has ever been shown in the UK. The title is purposefully equivocal: Attaching is not only a method for binding materials together, but also for establishing emotional connections with friends and peers, past and present, which was central to Mayer's understanding of art.

– Ends –

Image: Rosemary Mayer, *Galla Placidia* (1973), Satin, rayon, nylon, cheesecloth, nylon netting, ribbon, dyes, wood. Courtesy The Estate of Rosemary Mayer

For further information and high-resolution images please contact Sam Talbot on [sam@sam-talbot.com](mailto:sam@sam-talbot.com) / +44 (0)7725 184 630 or Jon McCall, Interim Communications Manager at Spike Island on [jon.mccall@spikeisland.org.uk](mailto:jon.mccall@spikeisland.org.uk) or +44 (0)117 929 2266.

#### NOTES FOR EDITORS

- **ROSEMARY MAYER**  
Rosemary Mayer (1943-2014) was a prolific artist involved in the New York art scene beginning in the late 1960s. Best known for her large-scale sculptures using fabric as the primary material, she also created works on paper, artist books and outdoor installations exploring themes of temporality, history and biography. She was additionally a writer, art critic and translator. Mayer was a founding member of A.I.R. Gallery, the first cooperative gallery for women in the U.S. and had one of the earliest shows there. During the 1970s and 1980s, her work was also shown at many New York alternative art spaces, including The Clocktower, Sculpture Center and Franklin Furnace, and in university galleries throughout the country. In 1982, her translation of the diary of Mannerist artist Jacopo da Pontormo was published along with a catalogue of her work. Recent exhibitions of Mayer's work have taken place at Southfirst, Brooklyn (2016), Lamar Dodd School of Art at the University of Georgia (2017), ChertLüdde, Berlin (2020) and Gordon Robichaux, New York (2021). Her work was included in the exhibition *Bizarre Silks, Private Imaginings and Narrative Facts, etc.*, curated by Nick Mauss at Kunsthalle Basel (2020).
- **PUBLICATIONS**  
On the occasion of *Ways of Attaching* two English publications on Rosemary Mayer will be published by Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König: *The Letters of*



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*Rosemary & Bernadette Mayer, 1976–1980*, edited by Gillian Sneed and Marie Warsh, with a preface by Eva Birkenstock, Robert Leckie, Laura McLean-Ferris and Stephanie Weber, (373 pages, release date May 2022) and *Rosemary Mayer: Ways of Attaching*, edited by Eva Birkenstock, Laura McLean-Ferris, Robert Leckie, Stephanie Weber with texts by Rosemary Mayer, Laura McLean-Ferris, Jenny Nachtigal and Jenni Sorokin (352 pages, release date Summer 2022).

- PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

*Ways of Attaching* is organised in collaboration with Marie and Max Warsh from The Estate of Rosemary Mayer and in partnership with the Swiss Institute, New York; Ludwig Forum, Aachen and Lenbachhaus, Munich. The exhibition is made possible through support from the Terra Foundation for American Art.

- ABOUT SPIKE ISLAND

Spike Island supports, produces and presents contemporary art and culture across an 80,000 square foot former industrial building in Bristol. Its diverse artistic programme includes free major exhibitions, events and engagement activities taking place on-site and online. Championing outstanding work by emerging and underrepresented local, national and international artists, the programme enhances access to contemporary art for audiences from all backgrounds.

Alongside its public offer, Spike Island directly supports artists through new commissions, over 70 subsidised studios, and sector-leading artist development opportunities that widen access to its programme and facilities. Its Exhibition Services business supports the bespoke production and installation of artists' film and video throughout the UK and internationally. Spike Island is home to a dynamic community of hundreds of artists and creative businesses, working in flexible, affordable workspaces, alongside UWE Bristol's Fine Art department, Spike Print Studio, and café bar Emmeline.  
[www.spikeisland.org.uk](http://www.spikeisland.org.uk)



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