



Spike Island

ROSEMARY MAYER
WAYS OF ATTACHING

8 OCTOBER 2022
TO 15 JANUARY 2023

Spike Island

ROSEMARY MAYER
WAYS OF ATTACHING

8 OCTOBER 2022 TO 15 JANUARY 2023

Ways of Attaching is the first institutional survey exhibition of artist Rosemary Mayer (1943–2014). It spans three decades of Mayer's prolific and varied practice, from fabric sculptures, artist's books and ephemeral installations of the 1970s through to ink drawings and pastels from the 1980s and 90s.

Mayer was born in Brooklyn and lived in New York City all her life. She was fascinated by history and her work often references historical artworks and writing, from Greek mythology to medieval literature and Mannerist painting. In 1972, Mayer co-founded A.I.R., the first not-for-profit, artist-led gallery for women artists in the United States. The following year, she held her first solo exhibition there of fabric sculptures named after historical and mythological women. Three of these works are on display here: *Galla Placidia*, after the regent of the Western Roman Empire; *Hypsipyle*, referencing the fabled queen of Lemnos in Ancient Greece; and *The Catherines*, celebrating every woman called Catherine throughout history (all works 1973).

An elaborate, handmade artist's book titled *Passages* (1976) documents Mayer's only trip to Europe in 1975 through exquisite drawings, collage and calligraphy on paper and vellum. Also on display is rare archival documentation of Mayer's ephemeral installations of the late 1970s, which she called "temporary monuments". Using materials such as weather balloons, ribbons and snow, these fleeting works reveal Mayer's fascination with the passage of time, acts of naming and memorialisation.

Large print guides are available in the gallery and to download at spikeisland.org.uk

Spike Island is an international centre for the development of contemporary art, located in Bristol's harbour area.

Admission to the gallery is free.
Visit our website to explore upcoming events and activities.

Some of her later work became more muted and darker in tone. Black and white ink drawings of classical vessels from the 1980s are overlaid with menacing phrases that invoke feelings of fragility and despair. Likewise, extremely modest sculptures made from cheesecloth and rabbit skin glue from the 1990s seem like decomposed remnants of the lush materiality of her early pieces.

Ways of Attaching is the first time Mayer's 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 connections with friends and peers, both living and dead, which was central to Mayer's understanding of art.

Image: Rosemary Mayer, *Scarecrow* (1943–2014).
Courtesy the Estate of Rosemary Mayer.

Ways of Attaching is organised in collaboration with Marie and Max Warsh of the Estate of Rosemary Mayer and in partnership with Swiss Institute, New York; Ludwig Forum, Aachen; and Lenbachhaus, Munich.

This exhibition is made possible through support from the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Spike Island, 133 Cumberland Road
Bristol BS1 6UX
+44 (0)117 929 2266
spikeisland.org.uk
Facebook / Instagram: @SpikelIsland
Twitter: @_SpikelIsland



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND



TERRA
FOUNDATION FOR AMERICAN ART

LENBACHHAUS

SI

Ludwig
Forum
Aachen