

title

Escalieta I

artist

Manuel Neri

Escalieta I, 1998, view of right and left side respectively

Location

1st Floor Hallway
Gerdin Business Building

Media

Ordinario Marble from Carrara, Italy

Size

72 3/8 x 26 1/2 x 19 1/2 inches

Date

1998

About the Art

Dominating the subject matter of Manuel Neri's works of art is the female nude, often using the same live model. He works in a variety of media including marble, plaster, and bronze. Neri's nudes often rely on the counter-play between the complete and the seemingly incomplete. Neri distresses his sculptures by creating an abrasive texture that contrasts with smoothed unblemished portions of the work of art. Neri's sculptures, such as *Escalieta I*, are often featureless and compacted with arms tight to the body and legs rigid. His resulting female forms take on qualities of goddesses depicted in art from antiquity. His sculptures evoke the simplistic yet formal essence of the human form. Wrought in a humanistic paradox of perfection and imperfection, *Escalieta I* stands as a defiant monolith.

"Since the 1980s, Neri has become increasingly engaged with stone. The renowned marble of Carrara, Italy, initially captures his attention as much for its historical associations with artists such as Michelangelo as for its legendary color, luster, and veining. While Neri maintains a high esteem for the stone, he is now less awed by its precious value, in his new works, he confronts the unique character of the stone block and manipulates the medium with an abandon. In his marble sculpture, Neri defines a general form, which he then augments with coarse passages of brutal elegance. This is not the Michelangelesque notion of a form emerging from the block of marble, but rather the treatment of surfaces as a figure is brought forth, and after its essence has been realized." (From *Continuity and Change: Manuel Neri and the Human Figure*, Joseph A. Becherer and Lena Meijer)

A comparison can be drawn between Neri's *Escalieta I* and the *Left-Sided Angel* by Stephen DeStabler located at the entrance to Parks Library, central campus. Both artists have chosen to depict humanity in precarious transition as well as evolution of the body and mind. Often humans look to model their lives after examples of that which we consider perfection – the flawless body, the compatible personality, and the ideal sets of skills and knowledge. Through their sculptures, Neri and DeStabler depict a vulnerable representation of humanity because at the core of it all, humans are in a state of continuous transformation. We are but mere mortals.

The installation of these works of art on Iowa State University campus is strategic to their overall meaning. While in college, students are being "sculpted"-- they are defining who they are and what they are to become. From within the walls of the Gerdin Business Building, entrepreneurs, CEO's, academics, and business leaders will emerge. Time spent in college can be a renewal for some and a reality check for others; it is at this point in life that students make the fundamental choices that transform them into something yet to become.

About the Artist

Manuel Neri was born in Sanger, California, in 1930. He studied at the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, and at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco. He taught at the at the University of California, Davis from 1965 to 1990.

Neri has been featured worldwide in solo and group exhibitions, in private galleries and museums, and he has won numerous grants and awards. He is one of the only figurative sculptors to have been connected with the acclaimed 1950s-60s San Francisco Bay Area figurative painters. Other works of art by Neri are included in prominent public collections such as the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, California; the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Laumeier Sculpture Park, St. Louis, Missouri; and the San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego, California.

Currently Neri divides his time annually between his two studios, one located in a former church east of San Francisco in Benicia, California, and the other in Carrara, Italy, where he works primarily in the local marble.

About the Model

Painter and sculptor Manuel Neri and poet and model Mary Julia Klimenko have collaborated in making art for three decades. Klimenko, has been Neri's primary model since 1972.

Mary Julia Klimenko began writing poetry thirty years ago. She earned her masters in creative writing from San Francisco State University and taught creative writing there from 1983 to 1986. A licensed marriage, family, and child therapist, she has been in private practice in Benicia, California, since 1991. Klimenko's poems have been published in various literary journals and in two previous artists' book collaborations with Manuel Neri.

Additional Information

Publications on or including Manuel Neri

Doss, Erika Lee. *Twentieth-Century American Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Joans, Caroline A. *Bay Area Figurative Art: 1950-1965*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Neri, Manuel. *Manuel Neri: Early Work 1953-1978*. New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1997.

Escalieta I

Art on Campus accession number U2004.7

Additional information about public works of art in the Art on Campus Collection and Art on Campus maps are available at the University Museums main office 290 Scheman Building (2nd Floor) 515/294-3342, or visit us online at

www.museums.iastate.edu

**This information sheet is intended to be used in addition to viewing the Art on Campus.
At no time should this sheet be used as a substitute for experiencing the art in person!**