

Nasher Sculpture Center



Nasher Sculpture Center Announces *Nasher Public: Frances Bagley*

The veteran Dallas artist fills the Nasher's street-facing Public Gallery with a powerful architectural installation that speaks to a destabilizing era.

DALLAS, Texas (October 24, 2024) – The Nasher Sculpture Center announces *Nasher Public: Frances Bagley*, featuring *Shangri-La* (2020-24), a poetically disorienting installation comprised of abstracted figures, images, and found objects within an enveloping structure. The exhibition will be on view from November 1, 2024 to January 12, 2025.

For over four decades, artist and long-time Dallasite Frances Bagley has created a multivalent sculptural language through her objects, installations, and lens-based media. Bagley is a founding member of the feminist collective Toxic Shock, a Dallas-based group of women artists established in 1980 with whom Bagley has made works commenting on gender, politics, and identity. Her practice continues to explore contemporary social issues and dynamics, particularly relating to the gendered body. Often using cast body forms as well as ambiguously feminine signifiers like braided hair or draped fabric, Bagley creates a tension between the figurative and abstract. In recent years, Bagley has begun to incorporate enterable structures in her installations to create an architecture that bridges the viewer's world and the surreal universe that her organic forms and enchanted objects inhabit.

Shangri-La combines both immersive and closed spaces to describe an unreachable utopia. Originally exhibited in *State of the Art 2020* at the Momentary, a contemporary art space at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas, *Shangri-La* was intended to evoke a sense of the confusion that Bagley sees as pervasive to contemporary life. The work remained on view for only a few weeks due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and has been re-imagined for its display at the Nasher to reflect the intensified collective disorientation of the intervening four years.

Three larger-than-life figures made of cast and carved industrial spray foam on metal supports populate the ghostly outline and windows of a pitch-roofed house. While their bases retain Bagley's pencil lines and carving marks, their upper surfaces are coated in a mat chalked paint that has been meticulously sanded to give the impression of translucently pale flesh. The visible hand of the artist

and the process of their making, as well as their tender corporeality, lends these featureless and partially limbless figures a powerful vulnerability. Their form is reminiscent of classical sculpture, white-washed and degraded by time, as well as the feminine poses of milky, Rubenesque women from Renaissance painting or Bernini marbles. The postures of these creatures and the uneven surface of the spray foam also call to mind the helplessly frozen victims of Pompeii. A fourth and fifth figure can be found in the two illusory spaces of *Shangri-La*, which disorder the scale of the environment. One is reproduced crawling away from the viewer at nearly life-size in a large-format photograph, through the open door of Bagley's studio at night – a beckoning portal to a real place. The other is a miniature and more abstract version of its oversized counterparts on the floor of the space. Inside a dollhouse-like version of *Shangri-La's* architectural framework, suspended from its metal tubing, sits a twisted plaster element in front of a piece of cypress wood with a void that makes it appear to be a dwelling or another open door.

Navigating through the space without a clear vantage point, one is unsure if they are inside or outside, big or small. That absorbing experience puts the viewer in a position as vulnerable, anonymized, and headless as Bagley's chalky figures stuck in time. Adding to the disorientation of scale, space, and identity in *Shangri-La* are a number of spirit levels affixed to the upright metal framework, which comment on the balance or imbalance of this paradisaical environment. At the 'back' of the house, a vertical column of film stills closely cropped to the eyes and nose bridges of several of Bagley's friends and family returns the viewer's gaze. Without any other features, the subjects of these portraits are nearly impossible to identify. The struggle in *Shangri-La* to search for balance, security, connection, and ports of access are resonant in our tumultuous era. As many categories of our lives – work, healthcare, identity, home – have been unsettled in the wake of the pandemic and amidst transformative political and technological shifts, Bagley's installation creates an emotional space for reflection.

Please follow this link for high-res images that will be made available following the opening.
<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/nz8h6z56v0frwhxprno5i/ALJiWRH2YubvjRzU2tapSZw?rlkey=xv2l5xr0admthcq79gpdp2sqr&st=ngpjrw2p&dl=0>

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About Frances Bagley

Born in Fayetteville, TN, Frances Bagley earned her MFA in Sculpture from the University of North Texas after receiving her MA and BFA in Painting from Arizona State University. She currently lives and works in Dallas, TX. Bagley's work is informed by situations of social concern and often asks questions about the human experience in relation to the environment, architecture, and society.

Bagley has exhibited extensively throughout her more than 40-year career along with a strong community involvement in support of women's and artist's rights. She has been a member of the women's collaborative *Toxic Shock* since its beginning in 1980. An award recipient in the 10th

Kajima Sculpture Exhibition in Tokyo, Japan, and in the 2007 Texas Biennial, Bagley's work is included in museum and corporate collections, including the Dallas Museum of Art, the Nasher Sculpture Center, the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C., the El Paso Museum, the Kajima Collection, Tokyo, and American Airlines, among others. Bagley has also been involved in numerous public art projects, and collaborated with her husband, artist Tom Orr, to create sets and costume designs for Verdi's Nabucco, which opened The Dallas Opera's 50th anniversary season. Her awards include the Moss Chumley Artists Award from the Meadows Museum, the Individual Artist Grant from the Ludwig Vogelstein Foundation, and the Legend Award from the Dallas Center for Contemporary Art.

About Nasher Public:

Nasher Public is an ongoing, two-pronged public art initiative which aims to generate access to public art by North Texas artists at the Nasher and throughout the greater Dallas community. The project launched first at the Nasher in a newly formed gallery, presenting monthly exhibitions, followed by an ongoing series of offsite exhibitions in partnership with area businesses.

About the Nasher Sculpture Center:

Located in the heart of the Dallas Arts District, the Nasher Sculpture Center is home to the Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection, one of the finest collections of modern and contemporary sculpture in the world, featuring more than 500 masterpieces by Brancusi, Calder, de Kooning, di Suvero, Giacometti, Basquiat, Hepworth, LeWitt, Matisse, Miró, Moore, Picasso, Rodin, Serra, and Shapiro, among others. The Nasher Sculpture Center is open Wednesday through Sunday from 11 am to 5 p.m. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$7 for seniors, \$5 for students, and free for children 12 and under and members, and includes access to special exhibitions. For more information, visit www.NasherSculptureCenter.org.