

# James Barron Art

## *Beverly Pepper: Legno*

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# Beverly Pepper: Legno

Opens February 26, 2024

Our exhibition highlights important Beverly Pepper works from the 1960s, which are among her earliest sculptures, as well as her later use of wood in her totemic plazas and Messengers from the 1980s.

“I was very lucky to see [Angkor Wat] in an incredible state. And I was haunted by it. When I got back to Rome... there were about 30-some-odd trees that had been cut down on the property... I started cutting up the trees. And the result of those cut-up trees was that I had my first show.”

Beverly Pepper



BEVERLY PEPPER

*Untitled*, c. 1960s  
chestnut with bronze  
14 1/2 x 20 x 14 inches  
(36.8 x 50.8 x 35.5 cm)



BEVERLY PEPPER

*Untitled*, c. 1960 - 63  
steel and wood on stone base  
35 x 21 x 11 inches  
(88.9 x 53.3 x 27.9 cm)







BEVERLY PEPPER

*Mahogany Perpetua Plaza*, 1986-89  
steel and mahogany  
46 x 18 x 18 inches  
(116.8 x 45.7 x 45.7 cm)







BEVERLY PEPPER

*Antediluvian I*, 1960

wood

54 3/4 x 63 x 21 1/2 inches

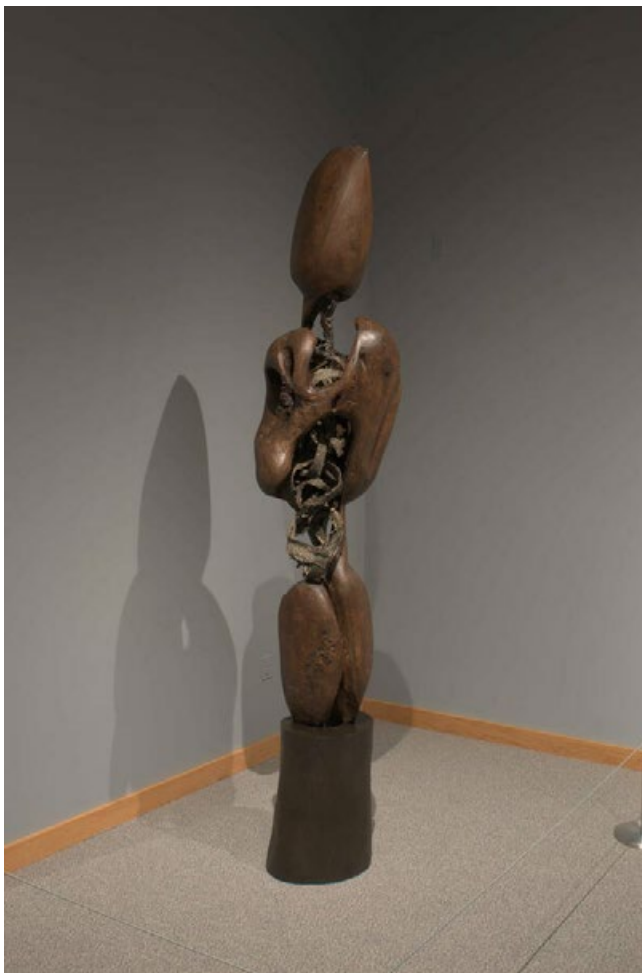
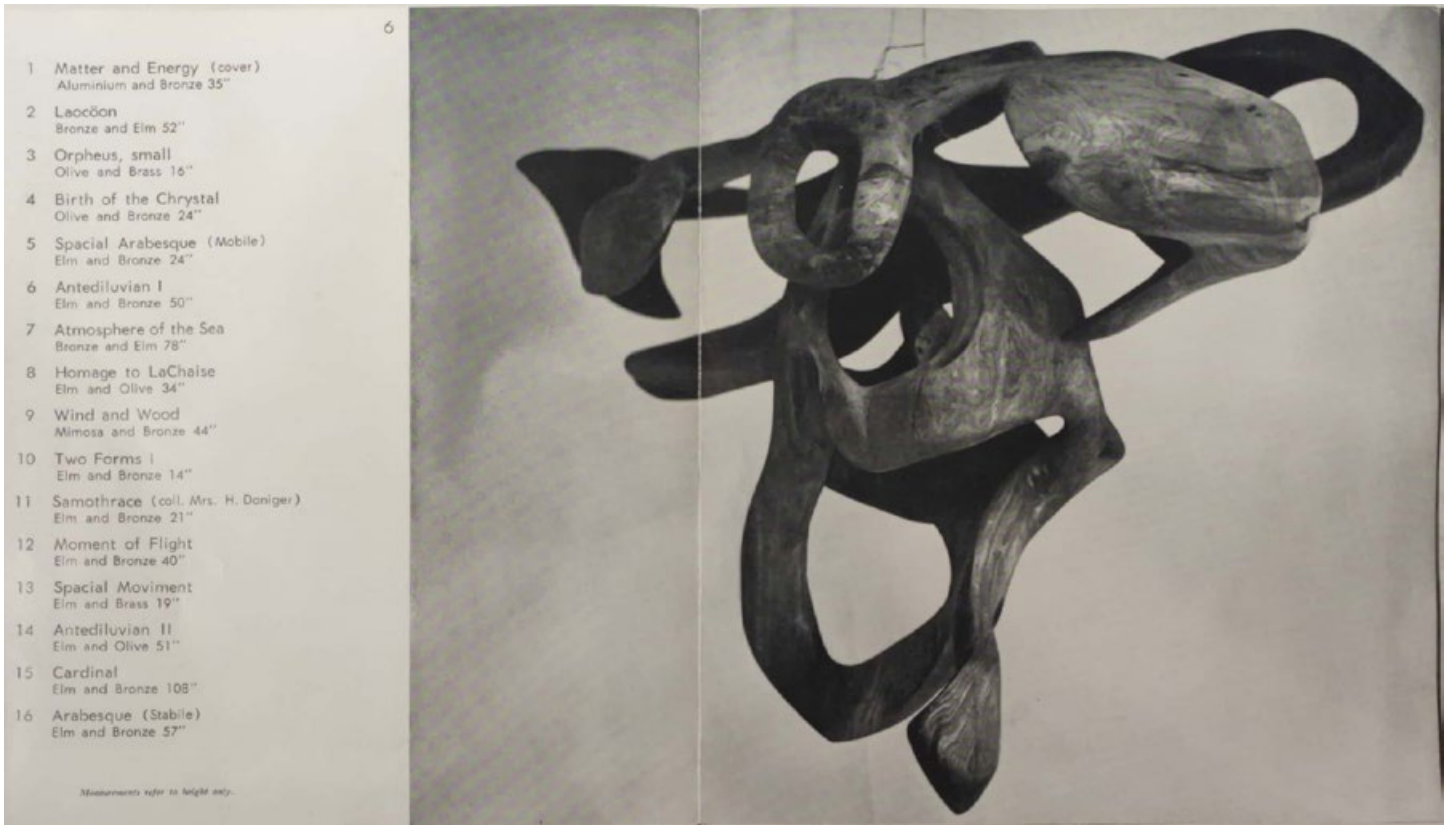
(139.1 x 160 x 54.6 cm)





*Antediluvian* (“before the flood”) refers to the period in the Bible between the fall of man and the Flood. The term was coined by Sir Thomas Browne, a 17th century English writer who studied science, the natural world, medicine, and religion. Scientists used the term well into the 19th century while mapping geological strata and describing fossils of “antediluvian” monsters and giants, which we now recognize as dinosaurs and ancient giant mammals and marine reptiles. “Antediluvian” fell out of scientific use after the 1860s, following the work of Charles Darwin and Louis Agassiz, and now is most commonly used to refer to anything ancient.

The work was first exhibited by Galleria Pogliani in Rome (1961), alongside various other important early works in wood and bronze executed after Pepper’s transformative trip to Angkor Wat in 1960. *Cardinal* (1961), which was shown in the same exhibition, is now in the permanent collection of the Snite Museum of Art at the University of Notre Dame.



Above:

1961 exhibition catalogue for *Pepper*, the artist's debut sculpture exhibition at Galleria Pogliani in Rome. The exhibition included several other important early works, one of which, *Cardinal*, is now in the permanent collection of the Snite Museum of Art at the University of Notre Dame.

Left:

*Cardinal*, 1961  
elm and bronze  
108 x 20 17 inches  
Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame



“[Pepper’s] point of departure is a spatial intuition free of any preconception of category or formal structure. Space becomes then a perception, an extension of vision, a possibility of movement, an occasion for unplanned, unexpected meetings with the elements of nature: light, atmosphere, color, matter close at hand yet distant, within yet also without.”

G. C. Argan

BEVERLY PEPPER

*Cryptic Messenger*, 1982  
mahogany and steel  
89 7/8 inches  
(228.3 cm)



BEVERLY PEPPER

*Reappearing Messenger*, 1983 - 88  
oil painted steel and rosewood  
89 7/8 inches  
(228.3 cm)



BEVERLY PEPPER

*Merging Presence*, 1982  
mahogany and steel  
115 x 5 3/8 inches  
(292.1 x 13.7 cm)



# Interview / Beverly Pepper

## November 2015

**James Barron:** You met David Smith during the Spoleto Festival in 1962. What was he like?

**Beverly Pepper:** David was fabulous. We spent a lot of time together. He helped me get my start by recommending me for a major steel sculpture commission. David always worked with the human scale but I frequently worked larger.

**JB:** It must have made quite an impression, a young woman working with Cor-Ten steel in the 60s and 70s.

**BP:** I actually helped test and pioneer Cor-ten at US steel. But David was not working in Cor-Ten, nor was I then. We were both working in stainless and carbon steel.

**JB:** Are these Messenger sculptures related in some way to Smith?

**BP:** Not at all. They are more related to Giacometti. But they don't really have an artistic root as such—Smith was more interested in assembling disparate parts and I was more drawn to unified organic forms.

**JB:** You've lived in Todi for decades, close to Etruscan sites. These Messenger sculptures have a similar timelessness—as if they've been unearthed.

**BP:** I like that.

**JB:** What do you mean by calling them Messengers?

**BP:** Messengers literally go between a sender and a receiver who are not in the same place. They arrive with news from elsewhere. It could be this world it could be another. Once they arrive, things are changed. They tell us that change is possible.

**JB:** Do you have an idea of how one of these sculptures might look before you start?





**BP:** No. I don't have a design or pre-conceived ideas. It evolves like a drawing. The hand follows the mind. They happen simultaneously, and there is sometimes the benefit of divine accident. If I know in advance what it's going to look like, I don't make the work. As with drawing, you accept or reject a great deal. It has a lot to do with the subconscious. While I am making the works, they become.

**JB:** How do you know when the work is completed?

**BP:** I continue to work on a piece until it is what it wants to be. I keep working until I have nothing more to add.