

Robert Graham

Born Mexico City, August 19, 1938

Died Venice, California, December 27, 2008

Graham was born in Mexico City, Mexico on Aug. 19, 1938, to Roberto Pena and Adeline Graham. Roberto Pena died when his son was six years old, and the boy, his mother Adeline, his grandmother Ana, and his aunt Mercedes left Mexico and moved to San Jose, California. Robert Graham began his formal art training at San Jose State University. He continued his studies at the San Francisco Art Institute in California, finishing in 1964. Within five years he had one-man exhibitions of his sculpture at important contemporary art galleries in Palo Alto, Los Angeles, New York City, London, Cologne, and Essen, Germany. He lived in London for a period before settling in Los Angeles in the early 1970s. His first solo exhibition in a museum was at the Dallas Museum of Art in 1972. Since then he has had dozens of one-man shows, including several at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Graham's first major monumental commission was the ceremonial gateway for the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, for the occasion of the 1984 Olympics. He also designed the commemorative silver dollar for the event. The gateway featured two bronze torsos, male and female, modeled on contestants in the games. The gateway was a major design element of an Olympiad noted for its lack of new construction. To the surprise of many, the nudity of the torsos became an issue in the media.

Graham used a range of materials and scales in his work. In the 1970s Graham created very small wax sculptures (circa 4" - 10 cm), depicting sexual congress. His 1986 monument to the boxer Joe Louis is a 24' bronze fist and forearm. He has created hundreds of nude figures and groupings in intermediate scales.

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and First Lady Maria Shriver announced on May 28, 2008 that Graham would be inducted into the California Hall of Fame, located at The California Museum for History, Women and the Arts. The induction ceremony took place on December 15, 2008 and he was inducted alongside 11 other legendary Californians. Graham died 12 days after the ceremony on December 27, 2008. His funeral was held at Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, which has bronze doors that Graham created for the cathedral. His remains are interred in the Crypt Mausoleum of the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels.

Education

1961-1963 San Jose State College
1963-1964 San Francisco Art Institute

Recipient

2005 Hope of Los Angeles Award, Latino Heritage Month, City of Los Angeles
2004 Estrellas de Nuestra Cultura Award, Mexican Cultural Institute, Los Angeles
2004 Lifetime Achievement Award of the 24h Roses and Lemon Awards, Downtown Breakfast Club
2003 Commander of Merit of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta

- 1993 ACLU Freedom of Speech Award
- 1993 California Governors' Award for the Arts

Board of Trustee

- 2000 - 2008 Advisory Board, Homeboy Industries, Los Angeles
- 1998 - 2008 San Francisco Art Institute, California
- 1997 - 2008 Yo San University of Traditional Chinese Medicine Santa Monica, California
- 1993 - 2008 The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, California
- 1985 - 2008 Otis College of Art and Design, Westchester, California

Civic Monuments

- 2002 The Doors for the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angeles, Los Angeles
- 2001 Washington D.C. - addition to Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial
- 1999 Kansas City, Missouri - Charlie "Bird" Parker Memorial
- 1997 Duke Ellington Monument - New York City
- 1997 Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial - Washington D.C.
- 1994 Plumed Serpent - City of San Jose, California
- 1986 Joe Louis Memorial - Detroit, Michigan
- 1984 Olympic Gateway - Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, California

Architectural Projects

- 1995 Huston-Graham House, Venice, California & adjacent studio in progress
- 1995 Design of UCLA Doumani Sculpture Garden, California
- 1994 Santa Fe City Center Project, Mexico City, Co-design with Jon Jerde, for Reichman Intl. (unbuilt)
- 1979 Doumani House, Venice, California

Award & Coin Design

- 2006 "Spirit of California" Award
- 2003 - 2008 American Jazz Museum Award
- 2003 - 2008 Rodeo Drive Walk of Style Award
- 2001 Franklin Delano Roosevelt International Disability Award
- 2000 Carousel of Hope Award
- 1994 - 2008 The California Governors' Award for the Arts
- 1994 - 2008 The John Huston Award for the Artists Rights Foundation
- 1985 - 2008 National Medal of Arts, presented by the President of the United States
- 1985 - 2008 Spirit of Liberty Award, presented by the People for the American Way
- 1984 Olympic Silver Dollar for the United States Mint (\$4 million minted)

Public Art Direction

- 1987 Ronald Reagan Building, Los Angeles, California with Beckett Development

1985 Mitsui Bank Tower, Home Savings Bank Tower, Los Angeles, California for
A.C. Martin Architects

Selected Solo and Group Exhibitions

2010 "REAL: Realism in Diverse Media," Imago Galleries, Palm Desert,
California
2007-08 "Robert Graham: Body of Work", USC Fisher Gallery
2006 Palm Desert, California
2005 Palm Desert, California
2003 Palm Desert, California
1999 Contemporary Art Institute, Sapporo, Japan
City of Iwamizawa, Hokkaido, Japan
Kemper Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri
1994 San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, California
1988 Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles
1984 Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
ARCO Center for Visual Art, Los Angeles
1982 Norton Gallery and School of Art, West Palm Beach, Florida
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas
Joslyn Art Center, Omaha, Nebraska
Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, Iowa
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, California
1981 Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles
School of Visual Arts, New York
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota
1979 Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, New York
1978 Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles
1972 Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, Dallas, Texas

Public & Private Commissions

2007 "Blessed Basil Moreau", Basilica of Notre Dame University, Indiana
2006 "Glass Panels", School of Architecture, University of Southern California
2005 "Garden Panels". San Francisco, California
2003 "Torso" Rodeo Drive, City of Beverly Hills, California
1994 "Door" Mr. & Mrs. Sidney Unobskey, San Francisco, California
1991 "Source Figure" First Interstate World Center, Los Angeles, California
1990 "Wall" Andy Williams Residence, Branson, Missouri
1987 "San Jose Fountain" U.S. Courthouse/Federal Building, San Jose,
California
1985 "Kentucky Derby Plaque" Kentucky Derby Festival
1984 "Column" 72 Market St. Restaurant, Venice, California
1983 "Column" Federal Reserve Bank, San Francisco, California
1983 "Four Crocker Fountains" Los Angeles, California
1981 "Retrospective Column" Los Angeles County Museum of Art
1980 "Garden Pool" Michael's Restaurant, Santa Monica, California

- 1978 "Dance Columns" Wright - Runsted Building, Seattle, Washington, UCLA
Murphy Sculpture Garden, Los Angeles, CA
- 1978 "Dance Door" for Marcia & Frederick Weisman Residence, Beverly Hills,
California, donated to The Los Angeles Music Center, Los Angeles,
California

Public Collections

Bank of America, San Francisco, California
The Contemporary Museum, Honolulu, Hawaii
Dallas Museum of Fine Art, Dallas, Texas
Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, Iowa
Detroit Institute of the Arts, Detroit, Michigan
Doumani Sculpture Garden, University of California, Los Angeles
Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden, University of California at Los Angeles
Frederick Weisman Art Foundation, Los Angeles
Hirshorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.
Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, Kansas City, Missouri
Kunstmuseum, Hamburg, Germany
Kunstmuseum, Cologne, Germany
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California
Ludwig Collection, Aachen, Germany
Museum of Art, Rotterdam, Netherlands
The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, California
Museum of Fine Arts, Des Moines, Iowa
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York
Museum of Modern Art, Paris, France
National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, Wales
Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena, California
Oakland Museum of Art, Oakland, California
Palm Springs Desert Art Museum, Palm Springs, California
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, California
Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts
Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame, Indiana
The Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York