

The Laguna Art Museum is pleased to have participated in presenting *Stephen De Staebler: The Figure* at four major museums across the United States (the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Neuberger Museum, the Renwick Gallery/Smithsonian Institution and the Krannert Art Museum). This major exhibition now comes to Southern California as the final venue in a widely-acclaimed national tour.

For the trustees and members of the Laguna Art Museum, I want to express thanks to Philip Morris Companies Inc. and Mission Viejo Company for their generous support of this exhibition nationwide. Their assistance, along with the work of curator Dr. Lynn Gamwell, are greatly appreciated.

Stephen De Staebler's remarkable sculptures have an intense effect on all who engage them, as the tour and its public reception have shown. They are disturbing objects, certainly: desiccated corpses, crumbling back into the earth which bore them; crippled angels on wings, not of down or gossamer, but of cast bronze; dismembered torsos doused with violent color.

Yet for all their intimations of degeneration, De Staebler's figures are not predictable clichés of pain, sorrow and anguish. Whatever suffering is implied here is borne stoically—even heroically. Crippled and weighted down though they may be, these angels will still attempt flight. This is art about our victories: over pain, over mortality, and over our fears of these inevitable conditions of life.

Charles Desmarais
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