

CHECKLIST

Beverly Pepper, American, born 1922
Model for Thel, 1975

Painted steel, wood, and Astroturf
Gift of Jan and Ingeborg van der Marck; S.979.68.1

Beverly Pepper, American, born 1922
Section 2A-2A of Site Plan, Drawing No. 3
(construction drawing for *Thel*), 1975

Blueprint on paper with blue and black ink, graphite,
and green and orange crayon additions
Gift of Jan and Ingeborg van der Marck; D.979.68.6

Beverly Pepper, American, born 1922
Revision (construction drawing for *Thel*), July 31, 1977
Blueprint on paper with ink and graphite additions
Gift of Jan and Ingeborg van der Marck; D.979.68.8

Beverly Pepper, American, born 1922
Untitled (study for *Sudden Presence*), 1971
Brown and green felt-tip pen, graphite,
and acrylic spray-paint on the reverse side of graph paper
Gift of Daniel and Eugenia Robbins in honor of Jan van der Marck's
accomplishment in bringing important sculpture to the
Dartmouth campus; D.977.172

Beverly Pepper, American, born 1922
Untitled (study for *Sudden Presence*), 1971
Brown and green felt-tip pen, graphite,
and acrylic spray-paint on the reverse side of graph paper
Gift of Daniel and Eugenia Robbins in honor of Jan van der Marck's
accomplishment in bringing important sculpture to the
Dartmouth campus; D.977.173

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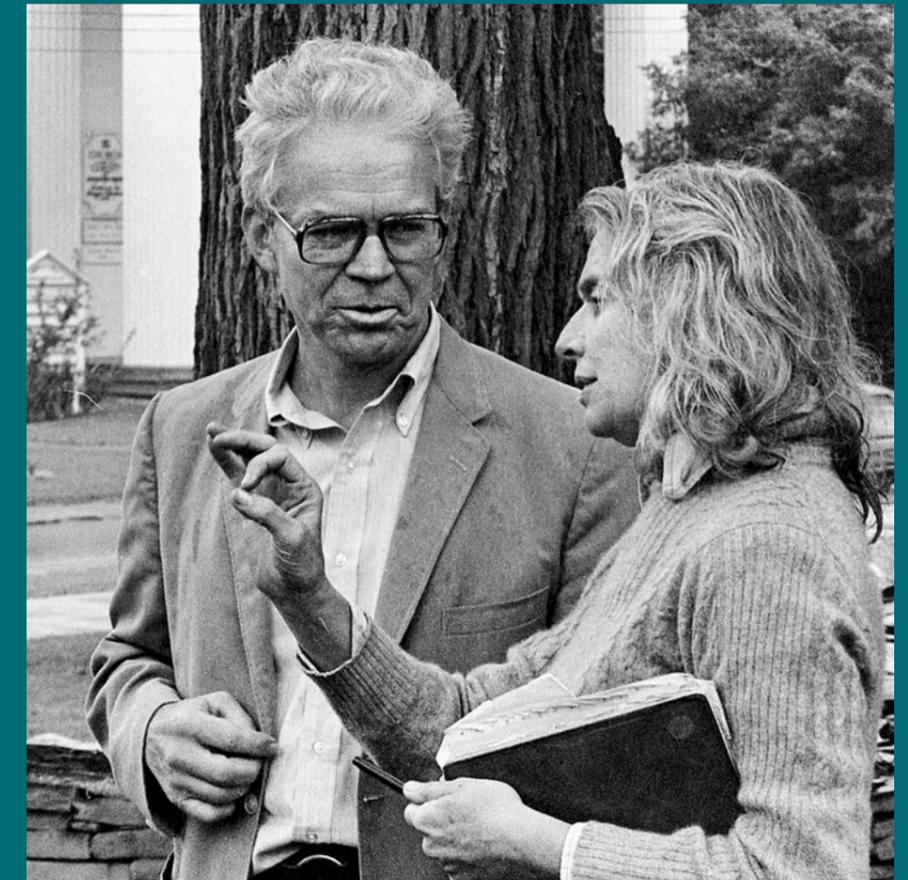
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Professor James Hornig on site with artist Beverly Pepper during *Thel*'s installation in 1977. Photo by Jeff Nintzel.

The ART of PUBLIC PLACEMAKING



Beverly Pepper, *Model for Thel*, 1975, painted steel, wood, and Astroturf. Gift of Jan and Ingeborg van der Marck; S.979.68.1. Photo by Jeff Nintzel.

Take a moment to think of your favorite place. Maybe it is your childhood backyard, the coffee shop down the street, or a neighbor's front porch. What makes this place meaningful to you? Perhaps it is the social interactions, fond memories, or simply that feel-good sensation you associate with this place. When people attach meaningful ideas and emotions to places, these places take on unique identities. They become a part of our lives and of us.

Placemaking is the process of making spaces meaningful to those who experience them. This can be done in small or large ways, by groups or by individuals. Placemaking might start with a new garden or a bench on your block, or it might start with new sidewalks, street trees, or a public market in your town or city. It might also start with public art.

Placemaking is most successful when it creates a strong sense of both place and community. Art can play an important part in exactly this sort of placemaking by creating dynamic places that

encourage conversation, reflection, and expression. Indeed, by designing places that energize and engage us in eloquent new ways, we can gain fresh perspectives on the world and our places in it.

This exhibition combines my passions for community building, placemaking, and art by exploring the critical role that public art plays in creating positive places and experiences that bring people together. By focusing on a story of successful public art making and placemaking on the Dartmouth campus, this exhibition aims to connect members of our community more closely to one another and to our built environment. It also offers our campus community a unique opportunity to engage with Beverly Pepper's sculpture *Thel* in new and meaningful ways.

The story of Beverly Pepper's *Thel* and the collaborative community art making process that brought it to campus exemplifies the influential role art can play in creating positive public places. Commissioned in 1975 and completed in 1977, this work was designed specifically for our community, an act of care and creativity meant to connect us. Located in front of the Fairchild Physical Sciences Center, *Thel* celebrates the strength, vision, and vitality of our campus community and the surrounding landscape.

Although Dartmouth has a stunning collection of more than two dozen works of public art, *Thel* stands out. This piece is one of the only site-specific works in the College's public art collection. The artist traveled to campus on multiple occasions to study the sculpture's site and to talk to members of our campus community before finalizing her design. Pepper's completed work reflects her insights from these conversations and her careful consideration of the sculpture's surroundings.

Thel is also a unique part of our public art collection because it is literally a part of the landscape. It is woven into our everyday lives through Pepper's creative use of earth and grass to complete her forms, a series of triangular Cor-Ten steel structures that rise out of a gently rolling lawn. By blending the organic and inorganic, Pepper highlights art's ability to express the complexity of our relationships with the natural and built environments that surround us.

The scale of this sculpture is both intriguing and inviting. It successfully engages us and draws us in without intimidating us. It is human-scaled in a world that often is not. The work's situation and scale make us feel welcome to interact with and explore it, just as Pepper intended.

As evidenced by its scale and open design as well as Pepper's comments in the College newspaper, *The Dartmouth*, Pepper wanted this work to be enjoyed experientially, not just visually. Pepper wanted *Thel* to spark conversations between individuals, and she wanted the sculpture to create a place—a place where students and community members rested, studied, and played, a place where people wanted to be. Early photographs of the piece show students climbing up and down the work sporting their fashionable seventies clothing. And today students weave among the sculpture's parts on their way across campus, often stopping to relax in its shade. Over the years, *Thel* has become a recognizable icon of the Fairchild Physical Sciences Center and an important part of the landscape.

As a Hood intern, I have truly enjoyed piecing together this story over the last few months. I have met countless community members, retired professors, department chairs, art enthusiasts, and artists who were involved in the installation of Beverly Pepper's *Thel*. I have visited their studios, talked on the phone, and explored the sculpture with them. I have worked with the College's special collections librarians and a local photographer to uncover the photos and files from the piece's installation and dedication. I even interviewed Beverly Pepper herself. And let me tell you, this woman has gusto! Her passion, energy, and enthusiasm for public art, and for *Thel* in particular, are truly inspiring.

In all these ways, and so many more, *Thel* continues to build community on campus to this day. I hope that by exploring the meaning and making of *Thel*, this exhibition helps you to look at this work in a new light, and encourages you to think about the stories and people behind public art on our campus and in every community you visit.

Julia McElhinney '14
Class of 1954 Intern

Julia McElhinney '14 with Beverly Pepper's *Thel* (1977). Photo by Alison Palizzolo.

