

Cecile Elstein MA, MAFA (1938–2025)

Sculptor, Printmaker, Environmental Artist

Biography Overview

Born in Cape Town, South Africa in 1938, Cecile Elstein (née Hoberman) emigrated to the UK in 1961 with her husband Max Elstein to escape the apartheid regime. She lived and worked in London and Southampton before settling in Manchester in 1977. A studio pupil of surrealist artist Catherine Yarrow and a long-term collaborator with master printmaker Kip Gresham, Elstein developed a prolific and multifaceted practice across sculpture, print, environmental installation, and portraiture. She died in 2025.

Education

- 1959–1961: Studied portraiture with Nel Kaye, Cape Town and Stellenbosch, South Africa
 - 1974–1977: Sculpture and Printmaking, West Surrey College of Art and Design (incomplete due to relocation)
 - 1996: MA, Manchester Metropolitan University (*Art as Environment: Empathy in Design Education*)
 - Studio pupil of Catherine Yarrow (1965–1969)
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Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 1979: Selective Eye Gallery, St Helier, Jersey
 - 1981: Derwent College, University of York
 - 1981: Netherbow Arts Centre, Edinburgh
 - 1982: Alsager Gallery, Alsager College, Crewe
 - 1984–1985: Pitcairn Gallery, Knutsford
 - 1988: Clare Hall Gallery, Cambridge
 - 1988: Casabella Gallery, Manchester
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Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1974: Bolderwood Gallery, Southampton
- 1975: Loggia Gallery, Free Painters Society, London

- 1976: Hiscock Gallery, Portsmouth
 - 1980: *Notation*, Manchester ORT, Manchester Cathedral
 - 1980: Southampton Art Gallery
 - 1980: Trends, Free Painters Society, London
 - 1980s: Manchester Academy of Fine Art, Society of Portrait Sculptors, Hampstead Artists, Tufts Collection (UK/USA)
 - 1985: Royal Academy Summer Exhibition
 - 1988: Portico Library and Gallery (Jewish Artists), Manchester / Ben Uri Gallery, London
 - 1991: *A Printmaking Partnership* Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester
 - 2000: Christie-Wild International, Broadway, Manhattan, New York
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Major Projects & Public Commissions

- 1976: Play Structure for Treloar School for Physically Disabled Children, Hampshire
 - 1981: *Everlasting Light (Ner Tamid)*, Menorah Synagogue, Gatley, Manchester
 - 1986: *Mandarah*, inflatable installation, Singapore Festival of Arts (Arts Council Bursary)
 - 1996: *Together with Tangents*, site-specific installation, Wimpole Hall Gardens, Cambridgeshire
 - 2005: Bronze Portrait of Michael Kennedy CBE, RNCM, Manchester
 - 2010: Sundial, Marie Louise Gardens, Didsbury (with Tam Giles)
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Selected Print Series

- 1979–1980: *The Sisyphus Suite* (8 screen prints)
 - 1981: *Phases of Di* (folio based on life drawings)
 - 1984–1986: *Morning, Noon, and Evening Meetings* (screen prints)
 - 2011: *Of Being and Place of Light and Air* (screen prints)
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Portrait Commissions (selected)

- 1958: Gerald Hoberman (photographer, South Africa)
- 1965: Pinchas Lavon (Israeli politician, War Museum, Tel Aviv)
- 1968: Prof. Bernadette Modell (geneticist)
- 1971: Prof. David Millar (University Hospital Southampton)
- 1983: Prof. Isobel Braidman & children
- 1995: Mr John Garfield (surgeon & author)
- 2005: Michael Kennedy CBE (RNCM)
- 2008–2019: *Paul's People* (series of 9 pastel/charcoal portraits)
- 2013–2019: Portraits of Sita Williams, Dr Lynn Norbury, Sheila Hunter, and others

Teaching & Workshops

- 1980–1982: Pottery classes for families of children with disabilities (invitation)
- 1982–1984: Drawing workshops for mental health support groups (invitation)
- 1980–1986: Private studio pupils, Didsbury
- 1983: Talk, Ain Shams University, Cairo, on inclusive arts practice
- 1986: Artist Talk at Manchester City Art Gallery on experimental printmaking technique
- 2001–2021: *Didsbury Drawing* life workshop, co-facilitated with Margaret Crowther
- 2009–2023: Open Studio Events, Didsbury Arts Festival

Awards & Recognition

- 1983–1985: Arts Council Bursary Award (Mandarah project)
- 1986: Sericol Colour Prize, 9th British International Print Biennale, Bradford
- 1986: Represented Britain, Singapore Festival of Arts

Selected Publications & Mentions

- 1988: *Arts Review*, 21 Oct, p. 272
- 1995: John Garfield, *Another Pygmalion* in *Impressions II*, pp. 70–72
- 1997: Sarah Hyde, *Exhibiting Gender*, Manchester University Press
- 2004–2005: *Manchester Memoirs*, Lit & Phil Society, Vol. 143
- 2006: Judy Rose & Wendy J Levy, *A Colourful Canvas*
- 2011: Hedwig Brenner, *Jüdische Frauen in der bildenden Kunst IV*, pp. 49–50
- 2014: Melissa Sutherland, *Frank Spears: The Painter*, pp. 57–58

Archival & Estate Information

- Full CV, artworks, and retrospective materials curated in collaboration with Maureen Kendal and Dreamstudio.io (2018–2025)
- Archive of Didsbury Drawing and project documentation:
<https://dreamstudio.io/cecile-elstein/>

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