

Jacquelyn Delin McDonald

*Modeling Fame: A Closer look at the Sculptor Elisabet Ney*

My dissertation project approaches the “extraordinary” or “*außergewöhnlich*” German-American sculptor Elisabet Ney (1833-1907) from various analytical stances including ideas of nationalism, feminism, and her construction of a persona. At the same time, using the tools of aesthetic analysis, I investigate the visual evidence of her oeuvre to situate her work within the history of sculpture. While Elisabet Ney’s life and work is an interesting topic itself, the branching interdisciplinary analysis that I will apply to the artist and her work allow my research to become significant for discussion of other issues relevant to this period of rapid modernization. The dissertation begins by introducing the sculptor Elisabet Ney with a discussion of her background and training. Also within the introduction, I deal with the “sculptress phenomenon” that seems to be occurring in the middle of the nineteenth century in Europe and especially in the United States by looking to other subjects such as members of the “White Marmorean Flock.” The body of my dissertation comprises six chapters, each of which focuses on a category of sculpture with a brief history and a case study of a selected work or works that explore Ney’s particular engagement with each medium type. At the same time, each of the chapters allow for branching interdisciplinary analysis mentioned above. The dissertation concludes with a reappraisal of the artist, performed in part through comparison to her contemporaries including her Rauch studio colleagues, the numerous American woman sculptors working in Yankee territory, as well as her Texas rival Pompeo Copponi. Through my dissertation, I hope to open new perspectives on Ney that better consider her artwork during this ever-changing time period and in two very disparate art scenes.