

“Just Another Pretty Picture?”

Rosalyn Schwartz

OLLI, Spring 2018

This is an updated course that was originally presented in the Spring of 2018. For the Spring 2020 course however, while you may recognize a couple of images, the majority of this course will present new images and ideas to discuss. We will be looking at how and why painters, both past and present, continue to use certain subject matter in their work particularly flowers, portraits and abstractions. For the first three sessions I will be showing paintings by both well known and lesser-known artists. In addition to discussing the formal elements, i.e., composition, color, shape, etc., we will also discuss if certain subject matter, when seen over and over again, can become boring, just more of the same, even a cliché. Is making a painting of flowers today just too trite, “too cute,” even corny? And if so, who decides? We will look at works by such historical masters as Rembrandt, Gentileschi, Monet, O’Keefe, Redon and Matisse and compare their work to a number of contemporary painters who are currently exploring the very same subject matter but in completely new, unexpected and surprising ways. Another way to think about this might be “can paintings of flowers or abstractions be more than mere decoration, more than just another ‘pretty picture’ that goes perfectly over the couch?” For the fourth lecture, I will present an overview of a wide variety of contemporary art being made today that makes use of non-traditional and very eclectic materials including clay, glitter, mirrors, fabric, ballpoint pens, hair, artificial flowers, chocolate, and more. This course will both affirm and challenge some of your assumptions about what you have always thought of as “good art” and hopefully stimulate you to broaden your curiosity and

become more receptive to new and fresh ways of looking at art and the world.

Week 1: Portraits

Week 2: Flowers

Week 3: Abstraction

Week 4: Mixed Media/Collage

Instructor: Professor Emerita of Art Rosalyn Schwartz taught painting and drawing for twenty years at the University of Illinois. In May 2008, Ms. Schwartz took an early retirement so that she could devote herself full-time to working in her studio. She is the recipient of a number of prestigious grants including a Bush Foundation Fellowship, a McKnight Foundation Fellowship, and a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship. In 2010 she had a mid-career survey exhibition of her paintings at Gallery 210 on the campus of University of Missouri-St. Louis. In 2013 she had a solo exhibition at the McNay Museum of Art in San Antonio, Texas titled “Rosalyn Schwartz: A Brief History of Seduction” and in 2014 her work was included in a group exhibition titled “Beauty Reigns: A Baroque Sensibility in Recent Painting.” A catalogue was published for this exhibition with essays by noted art critics Lilly Wei and Stephen Westfall. She maintains an active studio practice and is currently developing a new body of work. Her OLLI courses on contemporary art have received strong evaluations for her insightful presentations and well-chosen examples.