



Artists Speak: Susan Rothenberg

Born
1945, Buffalo, NY

Education
BFA, Cornell University,
Ithaca, NY

Lives and Works
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Media & Materials
Painting & drawing

Biography
The first body of work for which Susan Rothenberg became known centered on life-sized images of horses. Rothenberg's paintings since the 1990s reflect her move from New York to New Mexico, her adoption of oil painting, and her new-found interest in using the memory of observed and experienced events as an armature for creating a painting. These scenes excerpted from daily life, whether highlighting an untoward event or a moment of remembrance, come to life through Rothenberg's thickly layered and nervous brushwork. A distinctive characteristic of these paintings is a tilted perspective in which the vantage point is located high above the ground. A common experience in the New Mexico landscape, this unexpected perspective invests the work with an eerily objective psychological edge.

"I had been looking at Matisse and reading a book about Picasso and the relationship of his paintings to his studio. And I thought (since I wasn't locked into any subject at this moment and I didn't want to enter a work stoppage and be sitting around here in an empty room), I'm going to try painting my studio, but I'm going to try painting it red à la Matisse."

"It's the second self-portrait or attempt at a self-portrait I've ever done. The other one had paper tabs as in a paper doll mask, and this one apparently has no neck or arms – just clothes and shoes. But I wanted to be in there in my studio. It's me barely present, me there - not working, not sitting down reading, not messing with the dogs. Just my presence, which is as much or as little physicality as that bare canvas in the background or that table or that stretcher bar. It's just me in my studio and a self-portrait. A presence of myself in here, where I always am."

Red Studio, 2003. Oil on canvas, 63 x 58 inches. Private Collection, Courtesy Sperone Westwater, New York.



Mares and Foals, 2002. Oil on canvas, 72 ½ x 114 ½ inches. Collection Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA. Courtesy Sperone Westwater, New York.

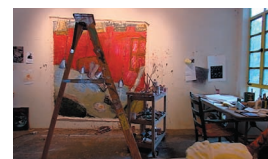
"The gesture of drawing—it's very different from painting, and I've tried to bridge the difference by working with paint on paper as well as charcoal and pencil and graphite. One drawing I did on my stomach, kneeling and crouching over this big piece of paper, so that I couldn't have any perspective and so that I didn't have that back-and-forth space between me, my arm, and the wall. And it turned out quite distorted, but it's interesting. But the other way I'd like to think about drawing is cradling a board in my hand and drawing, without trying to emulate these big gestures that painting takes."

"Let the mind do something! It doesn't all have to be painted out, or laid out. I'm not really a less-is-more person, but I figure that a hand on a table suggests a human being. But I don't feel like getting into who the human being is, what the dynamic is. And I don't, I don't want to get too literal about things, I just don't think I need to. I want the viewer to be able to do the work, too."

"I think I care about beauty, but I don't go for it. I hope it sometimes might be there. I think, maybe, more in terms of a beautiful moment than trying to figure out what beauty is or what people respond to. I hope that my paintings can be emotional moments for people."



Dominos-Hot, 2001-2002. Oil on canvas, 73 x 75 inches. Courtesy Sperone Westwater, New York.



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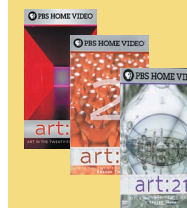


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