

Exploring a Century of Realism

Museum exhibit traces shifting boundaries between reality, imagination

The Nassau County Museum of Art is showcasing “Real, Surreal, Photoreal” through March 8, an exhibition that surveys the evolution of realism in its various forms — from the Ashcan School to contemporary Photorealism — through 122 works by 80 artists.

The museum invites visitors into a world where reality becomes unstable, dreams take form and the line between fact and imagination blurs. The exhibition, curated by Franklin Hill Perrell, the museum’s chief curator, and Alex C. Maccaro, its associate curator, showcases everything from dreamlike landscapes and uncanny portraits to images rendered with such precision that they resemble photographs, challenging viewers’ perceptions of what is real.

Before abstraction took hold in the mid-20th century, American art was defined primarily by Realism — artists depicting the world as they saw it. Even as abstraction rose, Realism persisted and continued to evolve. Often overlooked in traditional narratives of the century’s artistic progression, Realism takes center stage in this exhibition, which explores how generations of artists have reinterpreted “the real” in diverse and compelling ways.

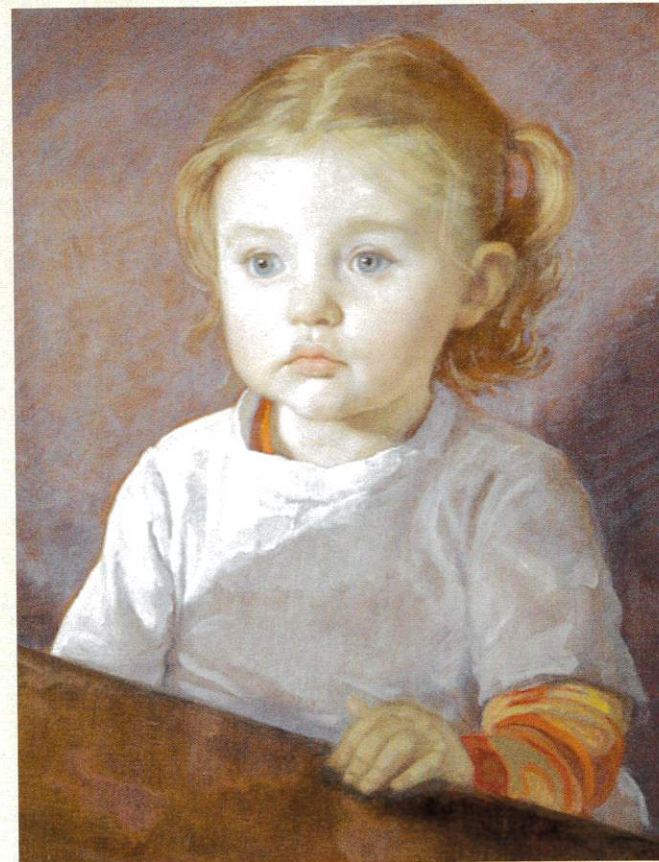
Spanning more than a century of representational innovation, the exhibition ranges from the urban grit of The Eight and the Ashcan School to the imaginative distortions of Surrealism and the extreme precision of Photorealism. Visitors will encounter Magic Realism, Dream Surrealism,

Pop, Hyperrealism and fool-the-eye painting.

“These modes have enabled artists to engage the world, documenting the visual specifics of everyday life with unforgettable images,” Perrell said. “While their motives and results differ widely, their works communicate a poignant commentary on the times, delivering insight and understanding into the world around us.”

“Real, Surreal, Photoreal” features American and European artists, including portraits by notable Realists such as John Currin, Edward Hopper, Reginald Marsh and Fairfield Porter; rare tapestries and works on paper by Surrealist masters Salvador Dalí and Man Ray; vibrant paintings by Alex Katz, Roy Lichtenstein, John French Sloan and William James Glackens; a screenprint self-portrait by Chuck Close; still lifes by Janet Fish and Jane Freilicher; and sculptures by John Grande and Long Island native Carole A. Feuerman.

“The show reveals how these artists and many others have reflected their perceptions of the real world around them,” said Beth Horn, the museum’s executive director. “Real, Surreal, Photoreal invites visitors to look closely at the relationship between art and reality.”

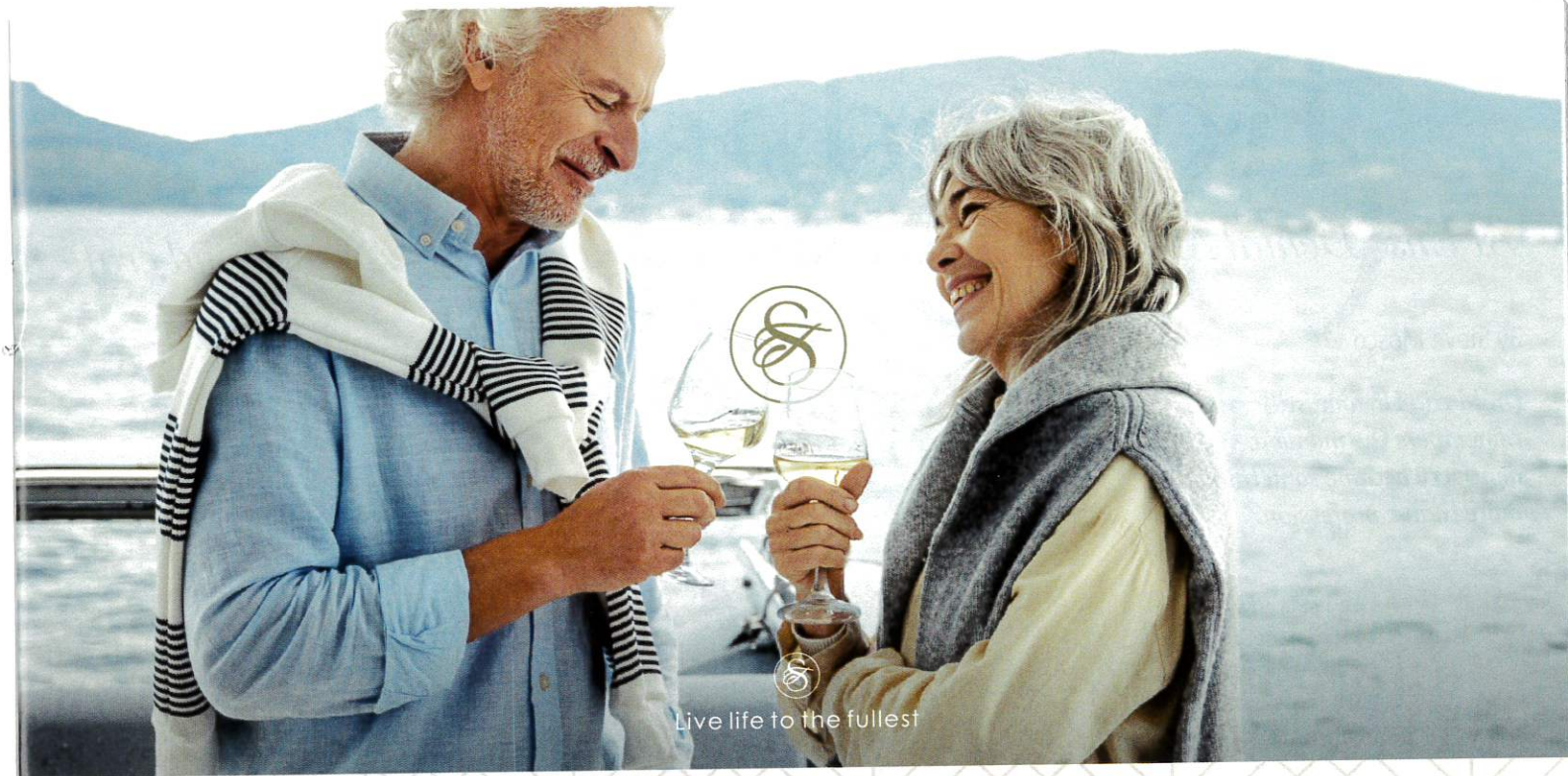


A 2011 painting by John Currin and Flora Currin on display in the exhibit “Real, Surreal, Photoreal.”

Photo provided by Nassau County Museum of Art

The Nassau County Museum of Art is located in and around a historic Gold Coast mansion on the former Frick family estate. The 145-acre property includes a sculpture garden with 43 major works, formal gardens, a 100-year-old pinetum and miles of wooded walking trails. Also on the property is the Manes Center for Art Education, which offers year-round studio classes and workshops for all ages and skill levels.

The museum, at One Museum Drive off Northern Boulevard in Roslyn Harbor, is open Tuesday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Admission is \$15 for adults, \$10 for seniors 62 and older and \$5 for students and children ages 4 to 12. Docent-led tours of the exhibition are offered daily at 2 p.m., and mansion tours take place at 1 p.m. each Saturday. Both are free with admission. Access to the grounds is free.



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