Contemporary Realism

Mimesis, or the attempt to represent the appearance of an external, tangible reality, has been a concern of Western artists since the Renaissance, as it had been earlier in antiquity. However, since the advent of modernism in the mid-19th century, many progressive artists have abandoned representational illusionism while focusing on styles such as abstraction, surrealism, minimalism, and conceptualism. Nevertheless, many other artists have insisted on creating work that is both contemporary and rooted in mimesis. These artists are the focus of Contemporary Realism, the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art’s winter 2003 exhibition.

The exhibition, drawn entirely from the Museum’s permanent collection, will feature paintings, drawings, prints, and sculpture. It will be organized according to subject matter: under the categories of people, objects, interiors, the city, and nature.

The show’s diverse group of artists, most of whom were schooled in modernism, will include Steven Assael, John Baeder, Robert Cottingham, Don Eddy, Juan Gonzalez, Phillip Pearlstein, Joseph Piccillo, Larry Rivers, Neil Welliver, and others. Several artists from Oklahoma who have become major figures in contemporary realism will be represented. They include OU graduates Carolyn Brady and Charles Bell, as well as Otto Duecker and Dennis Martin, whose drawing Diana is featured on the newsletter’s cover.

Many of the artists in the exhibition are associated with Photorealism, a movement that emerged in the late 1960s in which artists mimic the detail and smooth surfaces of impersonal photographs. Photorealists

Exhibitions

artists usually base their art on photographs, which places their art at two removes, at least, from their ultimate source in reality. Photorealist works, such as Richard McLean’s 1981 watercolor *Still Life with Hanging Harness* (reproduced on opposite page), often astonish with their technical virtuosity and ability to fool the eye.

The Museum will present 30-minute focus tours at noon on February 5, February 19, and March 5 to explore further some of the artists associated with contemporary realism. Call the Museum for specific topic information.

An opening reception for *Contemporary Realism* will be held from 7 to 9 p.m., Friday, January 17. The exhibition will be on view through March 16.