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Profiles in Creative Aging: Art for Personal Reflection

In this five-workshop series, participants are invited to learn about the art of influential, long-lived, historical American artists and then to reflect on their own lives sparked by the art. A fresh and fun way to conduct a 'Life Review,' the life and works of these artists serve as a metaphor for learning about ourselves and inspiration for our own creative choices as we age.

Join us for this interactive, image-filled series. Each workshop can stand alone. Participating in the whole series will give you a chance to pull together your reflections into an art-inspired Life Review, building on the themes of:

- the journey of life with Thomas Cole
- work and family with Charles Willson Peale
- war and peace with Winslow Homer
- follow a tradition/break a tradition with Theresa Bernstein, and
- invention and reinvention with Georgia O'Keeffe.
- plus a bonus session, see page 8!

No knowledge of art or art history is needed--come prepared to look, see deeply, and think about your own life as a work of art.

Structure of the Program

This workshop series features five artists and their art sparking a thematic Life Review during each session. By the close of the series, participants can integrate all their reflections for a more complete portfolio of their experiences and legacy.



Thomas Cole. *The Voyage of Life - Youth*. 1842.

Each session features several interactive lecturettes and quiet reflection periods. Short lectures on themes of art are interspersed with questions that get participants looking closely.

Following each lecturette, several questions serve as prompts for personal reflection in a quiet period lasting about 2 to 3 minutes. This cycle will repeat at least 3 times each workshop.

A description of each workshop follows.

Workshop 1
Profiles in Creative Aging: Art for Personal Reflection
Thomas Cole and *The Voyage of Life*



Like any good hike or visit to a favorite park, landscape paintings open up the vast world of nature. But more than a pretty picture, Thomas Cole's paintings are coded with a plea for preserving wilderness while growing a country that coexists in harmony with the land. Influential today as well as 200 years ago, this 19th-century American painter became our first conservationist. He also recognized how important the vast expanses of land were for shaping American identity. His followers, forming the Hudson River School of landscape art, built on Cole's legacy and used their works for political persuasion.

Thomas Cole. *Kaaterskill Falls*. 1826.

After our introduction to Cole's landscape art, we take a close look at four paintings and turn our gaze inward. Becoming a wise elder involves looking through our life experiences, reflecting on lessons learned, and applying those as we move forward. Cole brought these reflections to the canvas, with his four-painting series *The Voyage of Life*.



Thomas Cole. *The Voyage of Life - Childhood*. 1842.

Now, you have the opportunity to examine your own voyage of life. Bring a journal or some paper and something to write with; be prepared for some quiet reflection. You will be thinking about your own life using the framework of Cole's four paintings. We build on the introduction to the artist by focusing on the specific symbols and meaning embedded in each painting--all to deepen your own thinking.

Come learn about Cole's painted arc of lived experience, and use his model to consider your own journey on the river of life.

Workshop 2

Profiles in Creative Aging: Art for Personal Reflection

Charles Willson Peale – Family and Work

In the second of this five-workshop series, participants are invited to learn about the art of influential, long-lived, historical American artists and then to reflect on their own lives sparked by the art. A fresh and fun way to conduct a 'Life Review,' the life and works of these artists serve as a metaphor for learning about ourselves and inspiration for our own creative choices as we age.

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Charles Willson Peale. *The Artist in His Museum*. 1822.

Perhaps America's first great Renaissance Man, Charles Willson Peale could do anything he set his mind to and presents an engaging model for creative aging. In this workshop, we will look at the broad sweep of Peale's life and the art created in each phase. Peale as a family man, a Revolutionary War veteran and friend of George Washington, and portrayer of the faces of a new nation. Peale as a scientist and explorer, the creator of the first American museum, and the gentleman farmer, as a cultivator of exotic crops. Talk about brain health!

With each artistic phase, you will be prompted to recall corresponding aspects of your own life through quiet reflection with the art as a starting point. Bring a journal or some paper and something to write with; be prepared for some quiet time, as well as a deep dive into Peale's art. You will be thinking about your own life using the framework of his paintings that reflect on his remarkable life, including his inventiveness as an elder. Leave aware of how remarkable your life is, too!

Workshop 3

Profiles in Creative Aging: Art for Personal Reflection **Winslow Homer – War and Peace**

In the third of this five-workshop series, participants are invited to learn about the art of influential, long-lived, historical American artists and then to reflect on their own lives sparked by the art. A fresh and fun way to conduct a 'Life Review,' the life and works of these artists serve as a metaphor for learning about ourselves and inspiration for our own creative choices as we age.

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Winslow Homer. *Veteran in a New Field*. 1865.

During the Civil War, ordinary Americans were more concerned about fathers, brothers, and sons fighting than in purchasing art for their homes. In what was otherwise a seeming dry spell in the art world, Winslow Homer got his start and made his reputation during the war years. Homer created both a subtle and clarion voice, teasing out the complexities of reconciling after the war and everyday life in a radically changing world. As he matured, his paintings offered compelling commentary about the shifting roles for women and for men, then elevated those insights into images of epic battles with nature.

Just as Homer was shaped by his formative experiences, you will have the opportunity to excavate the memorable phases of your life through quiet reflection. Interspersed with deep looks at Homer's works, you can be spurred by his visual vocabulary describing the complexities of day-to-day life.

Bring a journal or some paper and something to write with; be prepared for some quiet reflection. You will be thinking about your own life using the framework of Homer's art. Come be inspired by his resilience, as an artist refusing to suffer financially for his art, as a veteran of war trauma, and as a poet of aging.

Workshop 4

Profiles in Creative Aging: Art for Personal Reflection

Theresa Bernstein – Follow a Tradition, Break a Tradition

In the fourth of this five-workshop series, participants are invited to learn about the art of influential, long-lived, historical American artists and then to reflect on their own lives sparked by the art. A fresh and fun way to conduct a 'Life Review,' the life and works of these artists serve as a metaphor for learning about ourselves and inspiration for our own creative choices as we age.

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Technological innovations affected every aspect of life in America's exploding cities in the early 20th century.

Urban Realist artists like Theresa Bernstein worked to capture and describe these rapid changes. In her unprecedented long career, Bernstein showed how women experienced the new urban landscape of New York City.

Theresa Bernstein. *In the Elevated*. 1916.

Intimate, often deeply personal, her story and American women's lives often intertwined through the decades. Attracted to the big events of her day like Armistice and Suffrage parades, the mundane of unemployment offices, and cultural hubs such as the Metropolitan Opera and Carnegie Hall, Bernstein blended the energy and diversity of experiences of the modern city.

Her companionate marriage brought her personal world into the public eye. While her work reveals the struggles she and her artist husband faced during the upheavals of the 20th century, it also shows the centrality of her spiritual life and visions for the future.

With each artistic phase, you will be prompted to recall corresponding aspects of your own life through quiet reflection with the art as a starting point. Bring a journal or some paper and something to write to capture your thoughts. You will be considering your own life using the framework of Bernstein's art, creating a portfolio of your own experiences. As her works reveal resilience and determination, so, too, can you join her as a voice of the American spirit.

Workshop 5

Profiles in Creative Aging: Art for Personal Reflection **Georgia O’Keeffe – Invention and Reinvention**

In the final session of this five-workshop series, participants are invited to learn about the art of influential, long-lived, historical American artists and then to reflect on their own lives sparked by the art. A fresh and fun way to conduct a ‘Life Review,’ the life and works of these artists serve as a metaphor for learning about ourselves and inspiration for our own creative choices as we age.

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Georgia O’Keeffe. *Lake George*. 1921-22.

Georgia O’Keeffe was not swayed by fame, even as she carefully cultivated her image. Instead she lived life on her terms, seizing opportunities, driven by passion. O’Keeffe was also a master of reinventing herself – as a teacher, provocateur in the avant-garde, and into elderhood as a lyrical voice of place, space, and time.

Through the sweep of the artist’s life and with close looking at her masterworks, we will see that the radical shifts she made personally are reflected in her paintings.

Bring a journal or some paper and something to write with; be prepared for some quiet reflection. Now you have the chance to look at your own life through the lens of change, with O’Keeffe’s best loved paintings as your inspiration.

You can also look back over this workshop series at the Life-Reviews you have compiled. Note how you are a remarkable model for creative aging.

About Rena Tobey

Rena's greatest passion is making art accessible, invigorating, insightful, and fun. She has taught art history at NYU's School for Professional Studies and Southern Connecticut State University. Rena provides talks for New York Adventure Club and New York Public Library, as well as many community organizations. She conducts lively, interactive tours of museum collections, now via Zoom. Just for fun, she has created Artventures!® Game--a cheeky party game on the adventures of art and art history.

With "Profiles in Creative Aging," Rena combines her passion for art and artists with her PhD in Human and Organizational Studies and her work on personal integrity



Rena Tobey

Testimonials

On their way...!



Bonus session

Finding Her Way: American Women Artists 1840-1940
Art for Personal Reflection: From Bound to Choices

In the bonus session, participants are invited to learn about the art of influential, historical American artists and then to reflect on their own lives sparked by the art. A fresh and fun way to conduct a 'Life Review,' the life and works of these artists serve as a metaphor for learning about ourselves and inspiration for our own creative choices as we age.

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Lilly Martin Spencer. *Young Wife, First Stew*. 1854.

In an art world that historically treated men as the only true artistic geniuses, women struggled to find a place. Bound by tradition, women artists often engaged in gender-busting struggles to be taken seriously as professionals, while juggling the demands of their domestic lives.

We focus on several of these artists who were both popular and critically successful in their day, but now have fallen into obscurity. Each navigated gender constraints, changing social norms, and restricted career options to break through barriers that men never faced.

Considered together, their works reveal what life was historically like for middle-class, urban women.

These artworks and the artists' life stories invite us to consider when we have navigated difficult boundaries, pushed through undesirable choices, and moved forward toward more freedom. Understanding these moments in your life is enriched by this historical sweep and art that is eye-opening, often funny, completely relatable, and even sexy.

Bring paper and something to write with, as we let these women artists inspire our insights. Men are welcome, too. We'll celebrate our voices together!

Perfect for Women's History Month and Spring Celebrations of all types.