

Program Proposal: *OLLIs and American Art*

Program Description

OLLIs and American Art will connect, engage, and inspire adult learners at OLLI sites all over the country with art that tells America's stories through *highly interactive*, object-driven videoconferences. Leveraging the Museum's tremendous digitized collection, online assets, and strong scholarship, OLLIs and Smithsonian American Art Museum study group leaders will work together to uncover and discuss a variety of topics explored by artists throughout American history.

The Smithsonian American Art Museum has a long history of offering interactive, videoconference-based learning. Since 2000, the Museum has used this technology to connect our corps of volunteer videoconference presenters to learners of all ages. Using our videoconferencing bridge, OLLI members should seamlessly connect with the Museum, maximizing their time for discussion and minimizing technical issues.

American Art Museum study group leaders are a corps of seasoned volunteer videoconference presenters deeply familiar with the Museum's collections and facilitation of object-based discussions. Their previous professional experience, paired with Museum-provided training, has prepared them to be responsive to OLLI interests and facile leaders of discussion.

Program Experience

The Museum will provide a menu of offerings that may be tailored to the interests of individual OLLI sites. Two single session programs and one three part short course is available, with all three options providing the opportunity to explore a topic through a variety of lenses in discussion with American Art Museum study group leaders. In either the single session or short course scenario, the interests and locations of each OLLI will be used to tailor the selection of artworks and themes.

At the request of OLLI members, the Museum is prepared to recommend optional at-home reading or research projects to supplement in-session learning. At-the-ready resources include notes created by our team of researchers, streaming interviews with artists and curators, and suggested readings.

Menu of Offerings

To See is To Think: OLLI members will learn the language of art and consider the many choices artists make when creating their works. This *single session* will focus on the analysis, interpretation, and critique of artworks, including debate on contemporary works.

The 1930s and the War Era: In 1934, against the backdrop of the Great Depression, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration created the Public Works of Art Project—the first federal

government program to support the arts nationally. When WWII shook the globe, American artists were called to action again, creating works that captured the hopes and motivations of their countrymen at home. This ***single session*** will focus on the interplay of art and national sentiment during times of crisis.

Picturing America: Artists give us a unique window on American life, reflecting the cultural, social, and political climate of the time in which they work. What can we learn about America through its art? OLLI members will examine America through the eyes of artists in ***three sessions***, each focused on a separate era:

- ***Early America:*** Made as Americans transformed themselves from colonists to citizens of a new nation, early American art tells the story of national ambitions, territorial expansion, and the beginnings of industry. OLLI members will explore the historical context of the creation of our nation, as well as the resulting political infrastructure and economic development through artworks from colonial to Jacksonian America.
- ***Wars At Home and Abroad:*** Beginning with the Civil War and stretching through WWII, artists' depictions of America during troubled times reflect a changing national identity. Themes may include the effect of the Civil War on soldiers, families, and African Americans; the ideals and debate related to plans to reconstruct America; the Great Depression and WPA programs; and the World War II home front experience.
- ***Contemporary Life:*** Americans entering the post-War era experienced a boom time colored by global uncertainty. Artists grappled with how to reflect America's changing social and political landscape: some raised questions about the value of art and history, while others confronted issues of race and gender inequality. Themes may include works made in response to various movements (Civil Rights, social justice movements like the Farm Workers boycotts, the feminist movement), the role of technology in modern life, and works that ask us: "What is an American today?"

Preferred Program Format

The Museum would like to offer videoconference-based programming *free of charge* to OLLIs across the nation June 2 through September 26, 2014. Interactive sessions might run between 60 and 90 minutes long, Tuesday through Thursday between the hours of 9:00AM and 5:00PM Eastern.

In order to participate, OLLI sites must have access to 1) appropriate technology (either H.323 protocol videoconferencing equipment or a desktop/laptop computer that uses a webcam and external microphone to send and receive quality audio and visuals in real-time) and 2) must have successfully completed a test call with the Museum.

The Museum requests a minimum of 5 OLLI members at the OLLI site and prefers a maximum of 30 OLLI members. The maximum, however, is flexible.

Contact Becky Fulcher (202-633-8537 or FulcherR@si.edu) for more information and to schedule a videoconference.