

Ruth Root

Ruth Root's work combines geometry, color, pattern, and found imagery to create compositions that resist easy classification and actively engage the viewer. Her pieces operate as paintings that expand into space, asserting themselves as tangible presences. Each work begins with an irregular panel painted in acrylic and spray, suspended from a flexible structure that is sewn and covered with textiles designed by the artist herself. This configuration produces large-scale works charged with constant visual tension, challenging the limits of traditional painting.

Root incorporates images drawn from mass media, art history, and online searches, organizing them into complex patterns that function as visual systems rather than narratives. The works invite viewers to move around them, observe their details, and experience painting as an active field in dialogue with both space and spectator. Rather than conceiving painting as a closed surface, Root approaches it as a dynamic field where layering, tension, and imbalance are integral to its structure. Her works propose a rigorous yet open perceptual experience, capable of conveying the complexity of the visible world through color, form, and found imagery.

Ruth Root is an American artist with a well-established career in contemporary painting, developed between the United States and Europe. Active since the late 1990s, her practice is defined by sustained formal rigor and an expansion of painting into object and space, consistently engaging with key debates around contemporary abstraction. She studied at Brown University, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Art and Semiotics in 1990, and later completed a Master of Fine Arts at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1993. Her training was further enriched through prestigious programs and residencies, including the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (1994) and Yaddo (2003), both of which played a significant role in the development of her artistic language.

Throughout her career, she has received major awards and fellowships, including the National Endowment for the Arts Mid-Atlantic Grant in Painting and the New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Painting, both in 1996. In 2015, she was awarded the Arts and Letters Purchase Prize by the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She has presented numerous solo exhibitions at international museums and galleries, including the Carnegie Museum of Art (Pittsburgh), The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum (Ridgefield), 356 Mission (Los Angeles), Andrew Kreps Gallery (New York), Galería Marta Cervera (Madrid), Maureen Paley Gallery (London), Galerie Nikolaus Ruzicka (Salzburg), Galleria Franco Noero (Turin), Gallery Minmin (Tokyo), and The Suburban (Oak Park), among others.

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Her work has also been widely included in significant museum exhibitions and curatorial projects such as Forum at the Carnegie Museum of Art, Inherent Structure at the Wexner Center for the Arts, Surface/Depth at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York, New York Painting at the Kunstmuseum Bonn, Extreme Abstraction at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, and Greater New York at PS1 Contemporary Art Center. She has also participated extensively in group exhibitions at leading institutions and galleries including Tate St Ives, White Columns, Lisson Gallery, Luhring Augustine, Haunch of Venison, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, Greene Naftali Gallery, The Painting Center, and Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, among others across Europe, the United States, and Asia. Root's career has received significant critical attention in both specialized publications and mainstream media, including Artforum, The New York Times, Art in America, The New Yorker, Modern Painters, Flash Art, Hyperallergic, Studio International, The Brooklyn Rail, Time Out New York, and The Irish Times, consolidating her presence within the international critical discourse.

Her work has been featured in numerous catalogs and institutional publications, including monographs and exhibition catalogs from The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Seattle Art Museum, Kettle's Yard, and Dartmouth College. She has also participated in public programs and lectures such as Conversations with Contemporary Artists at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York.

Ruth Root's work is held in major public collections, including the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York), Hammer Museum (Los Angeles), Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (Washington, D.C.), Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Carnegie Museum of Art, Institute of Contemporary Art Boston, Bard College, and the Austin Museum of Art, confirming her significance within the contemporary art landscape.