



**50 Years of Painting in a Single Canvas:  
Roland Reiss's Floral Works**



The past 70 years have been a rollercoaster ride for painting in America. The abstract expressionist works of the early 1950s—marked by unique, fluid brushwork—were met with the constrained and hard-edged post-painterly abstraction movement in the latter part of the decade. Next came pop art, with its repetitions and cultural appropriations, and minimalism—all color, shape, and line. The beat has marched on through the worlds of pigment, collage, mixed media, and digital effects.



Los Angeles legend Roland Reiss has lived and worked through these many shifts, and his oeuvre reflects the profound formal and conceptual variety of painting in his era. Art critic Molly Enholm writes, “He has described his work as ‘an investigation of the contemporary,’ which, when taken in consideration, necessitates his continued evolution of form.” In other words, Reiss has always had his finger on the pulse. He began his career (which spans five decades and counting) making abstract paintings color fields, replacing oil with acrylic and gestural brushstrokes with tactile surfaces and undulating canvases. In the ’70s, Reiss began making his signature dioramas—detailed miniature tableaux that contain semiotic “clues,” signifying a narrative



## DIANE ROSENSTEIN

that changes depending on the viewer's personal context.

Since 2000, Reiss has synthesized the themes of his career in perhaps an unlikely place: floral paintings. "I wanted them to encompass my experiences in and with painting," Reiss says. "Everything I know about painting, I want in those paintings." Fifteen of these recent works, as well as a handful of miniatures, will be on view at Diane Rosenstein in Los Angeles through mid January.

The flower paintings reach back into art history, evoking Manet's late still lifes. They are (non-digitally) layered, and the middle grounds are often teeming with shapes that recall Matisse's organic forms. Up close, the brushwork in some of Reiss's solid backgrounds is thick and gestural. He uses the iridescent palette allowed for by acrylic paint. These works, he explains, are more about the history of painting—and the history of *his* painting—than about flowers. But they are also about the present moment—not only because their historical allusions mesh uniquely from the perspective of right now, but also because, in order for a communion with Reiss to take place, the viewer must take part in a conscious meditation that makes the past and future fall away.

—Emily Rappaport

