

SUSAN RATHER

BIOGRAPHY AND PROJECT SYNOPSIS



Susan Rather is a tenured member of the art history faculty in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Texas, Austin. There since 1986, she has taught and supervised students ranging from beginning undergraduates to doctoral candidates. Her administrative responsibilities have included turns as graduate advisor in a program with 100 students and as assistant chair for art history, a division of 23 faculty. As a scholar, Rather first specialized in early twentieth-century sculpture, culminating in the publication of *Archaism, Modernism and the Art of Paulanship* (University of Texas Press, 1993). Since then, her focus has been the status of artists during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, work supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Winterthur Museum, the American Council of Learned Societies, Yale Center for British Art, Massachusetts Historical Society, and the University of Texas. Resulting articles on John Singleton Copley, Benjamin West, Gilbert Stuart, and others have appeared in such leading journals as *Art Bulletin*, *American Art*, *William and Mary Quarterly*, and *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, and in collected volumes of essays.

As a Tyson Scholar at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Susan Rather will complete her manuscript for *The American School: Artistry and Identity in the Late Colonial and Early National Era*. What did it mean to be an American artist during the defining period in our nation's history? In proposing answers to this question, Rather's study interweaves nuanced analysis of well-known artists, paintings, and texts with accounts of non-elite painters, ephemeral texts and images (such as sign painting and advertisements), and overlooked contemporaneous popular writings about artists in newspapers and magazines. Recurring themes across the book include artisanry and professionalism; practice and theory; regional, colonial, and national identities; the democratization of art and portrait painting as a political metaphor; artistic nationalism and naturalism as a presumed American idiom; and the nascent history of American art.

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