

SPOTLIGHT: James Rosenquist
Title of Piece: Untitled (Female & Flower Series)



El Presenter: Yvonne Manipon

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Year created: 1989

Artist: James Rosenquist

Five most essential aspects of this work of art:

1. The juxtaposition of unexpected elements drawn from popular culture and advertising.
2. There is a collage aspect to the painting because of the various photorealistic imagery of a woman's face overlapping and interwoven with flower imagery.
3. This is a large-scale oil on canvas painting.
4. Engaging use of color and composition.
5. The painting suggests a portrait of a female subject through the use of flowers and parts of a woman's face.

About the artist:

Rosenquist was born in Grand Forks, North Dakota and grew up as an only child. His parents, Louis and Ruth Rosenquist of Swedish descent, were amateur pilots and moved from town to town to look for work, finally settling in Minneapolis. His mother, who was also a painter, encouraged her son to have an artistic interest. In junior high school Rosenquist won a short-term scholarship to study at the Minneapolis School of Art and subsequently studied painting at the University of Minnesota from 1952 to 1954. In 1955, at the age of 21, he moved to New York City on scholarship to study at the Art Students League.

From 1957 to 1960, he earned his living as a billboard painter which was perfect training for an artist about to explode onto the pop art scene. Rosenquist deftly applied sign-painting techniques to the large-scale paintings he began creating in 1960. Like other pop artists, Rosenquist adapted the visual language of advertising and pop culture (often funny, vulgar, and outrageous) to the context of fine art. Rosenquist achieved international acclaim in 1965 with the room-scale painting F-111.

His specialty is taking fragmented, oddly disproportionate images and combining, overlapping and putting them on canvases to create visual stories. This can leave some viewers breathless yet others confused, making them consider even the most familiar objects (a U-Haul trailer, or a

box of Oxydol detergent) in more abstract and provocative ways.

Possible questions to use when discussing this piece with museum visitors:

1. What are we looking at? What is this painting about?
2. How did the artists use line, shape, and color in the painting?
3. What is the artist saying through this work of art?
4. What forms do the cut-out pieces of the female face look like to you? Do they suggest to you any message within the painting?
5. What is the relationship between the two subjects of the painting?