

Realizing the Surreal

Initiatives in Art & Culture presents another visionary conference that challenges limiting notions about art

May 7-10, 2025

Initiatives in Arts and Culture

29th Annual American Art Conference
Heritage Auctions
445 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10022
www.artinitiatives.com

Every year, New York-based Initiatives in Arts and Culture (IAC) curates two major multi-day events that rigorously explore an aspect of American art through a novel lens designed to expand and enrich the way we think about, and understand, art.

This year's *American Art Conference*, taking place in New York City May 7 through 10, and titled *Crafting the Dream*, is no exception. Loosely inspired



George E. Ohr (1857-1918), *Bowl*, ca. 1897-1900, made in Biloxi, Mississippi. Earthenware, 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of Robert A. Ellison Jr., 2018; 2018.294.164.



by the 100th year anniversary of the publication of André Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism*, IAC founder and president Lisa Koenigsberg has organized the 2025 conference around the relationship(s) between “the dream” and art-making, and all of the manifold ways we can think about both.

“All art, it can be argued, begins with a dream, whether of subject, stylistic approach, medium or message (or of all of these),” says Koenigsberg. “That dream can channel the unconscious or spring from the artist’s conscious probing of the

Joseph Cornell (1903-1972), *Rose Castle*, 1945. Assemblage, 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 14 $\frac{3}{16}$ in. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Kay Sage Tanguy Bequest. Rights and reproductions © The Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS).



Minnie Evans (1892-1987), design made at Airlie Gardens, 1967. Oil and mixed media on canvas mounted on paperboard, 19½ x 23¾ in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, gift of the artist; 1972.44.

self. It can be mimetic or interpretive, whether of nature, the built environment or the individual. It can be of iconoclasm or iconolatry. From that dream, the artist must turn to the concrete, to the hard task of realization of crafting that dream.

“There is no art without craft. Nor is there is craft without art,” she continues. “By viewing American art through the twin lenses of ‘dream’ and ‘craft’ and by acknowledging an incontrovertible connection between the two, we can derive a deeper, more nuanced understanding of American art in its many dimensions.”

An ambitious undertaking spanning more than a century of American art, Koenigsberg enlists an impressive roster of experts and scholars to approach,

unpack and penetrate the topic from as many angles as possible, and then helps connect the dots.

Among the keynote speakers is author and archivist Marie Diflippantonio, who will discuss art dealer’s Julien Levy’s legacy within the history of American surrealism. Author and professor Erika Doss will discuss Joseph Cornell’s constructions in relation to other American modernists who incorporated mixed media, like Arthur Dove. Contemporary landscapist Stephen Hannock will present examples of his luminous work and talk about his use of unconventional media.

Katie Jentleson, curator of folk and self-taught art at the High Museum of Art, will discuss her upcoming exhibition about the evolution of Minnie Evans’

drawing practice from their sparse beginnings to the vibrant, complex collages she made toward the end of her life. Writer/curator Larry List and surrealist scholar and collector Eugene Hecht, will bring their perspectives to the work of potter George Ohr.

Other subjects include Jeanne Reynal, whose largely abstract mosaics challenged expectations of the medium; and Julius LeBlanc Stewart, known for his idyllic paintings of high society during the Belle Epoque. Koenigsberg says, “Like the 28 *American Art Conferences* that have preceded it, *Crafting the Dream* will broaden the field of inquiry in American art and celebrate its richness, in all its complicated glory.” ■