

Short Biography for Dr. Alessandra Comini



Alessandra Comini is University Distinguished Professor of Art History Emerita at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. She received her B. A. degree from Barnard College, her M. A. from the University of California at Berkeley, and her Ph. D. "with distinction" from Columbia University where she taught for ten years. She has also taught at the University of California, Berkeley, Yale University, served as the Alfred Hodder Resident Humanist at Princeton University, and been named Distinguished Visiting Lecturer at Oxford University's European Humanities Research Centre (1996). Voted "outstanding professor" by her students fourteen times, she has been extended the Distinguished Teaching Prize of the Meadows School of the Arts and the United Methodist Church Scholar/Teacher of the Year Award (1996). An undergraduate and a graduate scholarship in her name have been established by former students, one a professor of surgical oncology in Little Rock, Arkansas; the other, founder and co-owner of an international antiques business in Dallas.

The author of many reviews, essays, and articles for national and international publications and a regular contributor to Stagebill (with Internet redistribution), Professor Comini has published seven books, of which one, *Egon Schiele's Portraits* (1974, reissued in paperback, 1990), was nominated for the National Book Award and received the College Art Association's Charles Rufus Morey Book Award. Her other books are: *Schiele in Prison* (1973), *Gustav Klimt* (1975, with French, German, and Dutch editions; reissued 1986, 1990, 1994, 2001), *Egon Schiele* (1976, with Italian, French, German, and Dutch editions; reissued 1986, 1994, 2001), *The Fantastic Art of Vienna* (1978), *The Changing Image of Beethoven: A Study in Mythmaking* (1987), and *Egon Schiele Nudes* (1994). She contributed the chapter on Scandinavian artists to the 1990 book *World Impressionism*, essays for the Washington National Gallery's 1992 catalogue and exhibition of *Käthe Kollwitz* (German edition, 1993) and 1994 catalogue and traveling exhibition of *Egon Schiele*, as well as an eponymous essay for the 1994 book on *La Traviata, Violetta and Her Sisters* and one for the 1996 English National Opera booklet, *Salome*. A major essay on the visual Wagner appears in the 1997 book *The Threat to the Cosmos*, two on Mahler in the Dutch periodical *Muziek & Wetenschap*, 1996 and in Montpellier's symposium proceedings, *Gustav Mahler et l'ironie*, 2001, and one on Beethoven in *Beethoven and His World*, 2000, as well as one on allegory in *Klimt und die Frauen*, 2000. The Cleveland Psychoanalytic Society commissioned a lecture "Toys in Freud's Attic" for 2000, published in *Between Rousseau and Freud* in 2001, and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra has commissioned annual lectures from her since 2000, as has the Santa Fe Opera for 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, and again in 2006.

A featured speaker at the Leipzig Gewandhaus Symposia under conductor Kurt Masur, Professor Comini, who is also an amateur flutist, has participated in many congresses and symposia from Helsinki, Stockholm, Amsterdam, London, Dublin, and Oxford to Montpellier, Hamburg, Graz, Vienna, Budapest, and St. Petersburg in her special field of musical iconography. In recognition of her contributions to Germanic culture she was awarded the *Grand Decoration of Honor* in 1990 by the Republic of Austria. Her lively revisionist work in the history of women artists was acknowledged in 1995 by the Women's Caucus for Art with the coveted *Lifetime Achievement Award*. Dr. Comini was nominated to the *2002 Texas Women's Hall of Fame*, a nomination acknowledged by a certificate signed by Texas Governor Rick Perry. In recognition of her 40-year legacy of innovative scholarship and vital lecture style, Southern Methodist University's Division of Art History established in 2005 an annual *Comini Lecture Series in Art History*.

Her eighth book, an art history autobiography *In Passionate Pursuit*, commissioned by the New York publisher George Braziller, was published in September of 2004 and favorably reviewed in *The Christian Science Monitor* and *Booklist*, which characterized it as an "erudite self-portrait [that] charts the making of an art historian and professional 'seer,' whose passion and wit enabled her to become a noted teacher and scholar."

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