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## Studio art teacher to discuss her work at DIA

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

In a series of paintings by Special Lecturer of Art and Art History Sally Schluter Tardella, she depicts small objects such as a teacup, old union badge or necklace held loosely in the outstretched palm of a hand. They're everyday items you might see in a box at a rummage sale. But while they may have no special meaning in such an environment, Tardella presents them as offerings representing the spiritual side of modern life.

"I'm interested in the meaning an object has for someone and how it can reveal something beyond a physical presence," said Tardella, who teaches studio art and introductory art history courses at OU. "In some works, the hand holds incidental nonsense, such as tweezers or a saw blade. Some objects have meaning while others have no meaning at all. I wanted to have that kind of ambiguity. They become almost spiritual symbols. What I'm painting are examples of contemporary allegory."

Tardella will deliver a slide presentation of her paintings on Saturday, April 17, at 1:30 and 3 p.m. at the **Detroit Institute of Arts** as part of its Artist's Choice series. She also will discuss the relationship between her work and the DIA's "**Virgin of the Rose Garden**" by the Master of the Saint Lucy Legend, a late 15<sup>th</sup>-century Flemish painter who has influenced allegory in her own work.

"Flemish painting is very allegorical. If someone holds a lily in a painting, it's meant to represent the purity of the virgin," Tardella said. "Flemish painting has always intrigued me in part because it's so attentive to detail. It has a certain kind of preciousness – every stroke has a reason for being. In my talk, I'll be discussing contemporary allegory in my work. It's not religious, per se, but spiritual."

When working on the "Hands Series," Tardella asked her friends to provide handheld objects of some importance to them. The teacup came from a woman who adopted a child from Asia, and it was the only item left to them by the birth mother. Another woman provided a 30-year-old union badge that belonged to her deceased father. Interestingly, the paintings themselves measure five inches by five inches, which are small enough to be held in the hand.

"These are everyday objects, but for the people who provide them, those objects have meaning," Tardella said. "I want to present the object as an offering, just as the lily is an offering in Flemish painting. And as the hand holds the object, the hand holds the painting. The paintings are made to reflect that intimacy."

For more information on Tardella's upcoming lecture, visit the events calendar page on the **Detroit Institute of Arts** Web site or contact the DIA at (313) 833-7900. Suggested museum admission is \$4 per adult and \$1 per child. Tardella's lecture is free.

### SUMMARY

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