



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
San Diego Public Library

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Noted San Diego Artist Edward Mix Dies at Age 90
Works Were Featured in San Diego Public Library Exhibitions

SAN DIEGO – One of San Diego’s most beloved artists, Edward “Ed” Mix, whose works were regularly exhibited through the Visual Arts Program of the San Diego Public Library, died Sunday, November 16, 2008 at the Veterans Administration Hospital in La Jolla. He was 90. The cause of death was colon cancer.

Mix’s last two major one-person shows, “Mastering the Gesture” in 2002 and “Ed Mix: Works on Paper” in 2005, were organized by the Visual Arts Program and exhibited in the Library’s flagship gallery located at the Pacific Beach/Taylor Branch Library. Over the years, Mix’s works were also shown in several Visual Arts Program group exhibitions, including the Annual Invitational Drawing Shows. Mix continued making art and attending weekly life drawing sessions with fellow artists until shortly before his death.

Mix was best known for graphically powerful and impeccably resolved works in which the human figure was abstracted and reduced to its gestural and linear essence. Manifesting a lifetime of observation, practice, and experimentation, Mix’s dynamic style evoked comparisons to abstract expressionist Franz Kline, but was unique enough to be instantly recognizable as his own.

Library Curator Mark-Elliott Lugo, who worked closely with Mix during the last years of the artist’s life, said this week, “Ed Mix will be greatly missed by San Diego’s art community and his legions of admirers among the general public. His drawings and paintings were beautifully resolved in every way and masterful in their elegance and simplicity. Ed’s dedication to his craft was unwavering and he never stopped pushing himself to perfect his technique and vision.”

Born in 1918 in De Pue, Illinois, Mix was one of eight children born to immigrant parents. When he was five years old, the Mix family moved to Chicago. Mix’s brother, Alexander (“Al”), remembers Mix as being “always industrious, as exemplified in his youth when he contributed

greatly to the support of a large and impoverished family.” At age 17, while taking art classes at Schurz Evening College, Mix met his first major artistic influence, WPA artist Andrene Kauffman (1905-1993). Kauffman, a well-known Oak Park painter, muralist, and sculptor, liked Mix’s abstract art and encouraged him. In 1941 the 23-year-old left Chicago and joined Al in San Diego. Like many artists of the period, Mix went to work for the Consolidated Aircraft Corporation where he designed and made fabric components for aircraft interiors such as B-24s and experimental planes. After less than a year, with the advent of World War II, Mix left Consolidated Aircraft to begin pilot training. Although he eventually joined the Air Force and became a pilot, the war ended before he could resume active duty.

After leaving service, Mix attended the Chinouard Art Institute, Los Angeles, in 1949, 1950, and 1951. At Chinouard, he received a broad-based art education, with courses ranging from architecture, textile design, and interior rendering, to watercolor, life drawing, and color theory. His favorite instructor was William “Bill” Moore, who Mix remembered as being an astute critic of abstract art. Mix characterized his time at Chinouard as “well spent,” but chafed somewhat under the regimentation of the classes.

After a brief marriage, and seeking a less restrictive artistic environment, Mix left town to join the famed La Esmeralda art school in Mexico City. During the one year and nine months Mix studied at La Esmeralda, he recalled painting many plein air landscapes and watercolors. He also made many lasting friendships, including artists who subsequently emerged as major figures of San Diego’s art scene such as William Gambini, “Mac” McClain, and Fred Holle.

Due to the illness of his mother, Mix was forced to return to San Diego. Soon after, the Rohr Aircraft Corporation hired Mix as a planning engineer, a position he held until he retired in 1971. Mix saw his tenure at Rohr as “a waste of time,” but his passion for artistic education and exploration never abated. While working at Rohr, he continued taking evening classes at the Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego and the Coronado School of Fine Arts, among others. His teachers and peers included such notables as Dan Dickey, Sheldon Kirby, and McClain.

Until his death, Mix lived in the same University Heights cottage he had purchased in 1960. Soft-spoken, shy, and unassuming, Mix led an unusually modest lifestyle, assiduously avoiding the art world spotlight and distaining the idea of self-promotion. However, many art world notables, including collector and philanthropist Barbara Walbridge, prize Mix’s works and his fellow artists regarded him as an inspiration.

The 2005 Taylor Library exhibition, Mix’s second one-man show with the San Diego Public Library’s Visual Arts Program, showcased 37 of his works. These ranged from austere, black ink-on-paper drawings to complex and handsome compositions incorporating color. Mix’s medium of choice was India ink brushed on 100% rag paper, although, on occasion, he used black acrylic paint. Color was added in the form of French fabric dyes, watercolor, colored inks, and acrylic paints. Works based on the figure were featured, but the exhibition also included non-objective and landscape oriented pieces.

Mix is survived by his brother Alexander and sister-in-law Kathryn of Rancho Bernardo; nephew Ronald Mix and his wife Marina of Weaverville, CA; nephew Jon Norvell, his wife Barbara, and their son Nicholaus, all of Lemon Grove; nephew Tim Mix and his wife Sandi of Chicago; nephew Paul Mix and his wife Barbara of Simi Valley, CA; and several nieces.

A memorial exhibition featuring a variety of Mix's works will open January 11, 2009 at the Taylor Library. A public memorial service will be held in conjunction with the exhibition. Details will be announced at a future date. The family suggests donations to the library's Visual Arts Program c/o The Friends of Central Library, 4275 Cass Street, San Diego, CA 92109.

NOTE TO EDITORS: High resolution digital color images of Mix and his art are available on request from the library curator.

The San Diego Public Library's Visual Arts Program is a nationally recognized series of exhibitions, lectures, a television program, and other art-related activities. The mission of the Program is to demonstrate the Library's role as a cultural institution embracing a broad range of disciplines, while assisting San Diego's mid-career and older professional artists in achieving wider local, regional, and national attention. Visual Arts Program exhibitions are made possible, in part, by contributions from individuals, volunteer efforts, and the Friends of Central Library. For more information about the forthcoming Ed Mix memorial exhibition or the Visual Arts Program, the public can contact the library curator at (619) 238-6627 or visit the Library's website at www.sandiegolibrary.org

Learn about other events at the San Diego Public Library's Central Library and 35 branches, find links to numerous additional resources, or search for materials in the Library's catalog online at www.sandiegolibrary.org

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