

The Visionary Art of a Blind Man

"No need for sight when you have a vision."

Lex Gillette, three-time US Paralympic Silver Medalist

Alfredo Santiago (1948 – 2018), son of Ana Mercedes Santiago and Angel Santiago Montes, was of both Columbian and Puerto Rican decent. He was raised in Texas and California, and graduated from San Diego State University. After obtaining his degree in Fine Arts, Alfredo went in search of his career in New York City.

In 1990, Alfredo was diagnosed with glaucoma, and within a year he was legally blind. He had less than 17% acuity in only one eye and no vision in the other. Alfredo described his vision "as if I am looking through a straw." It was at this time Alfredo did something few people would think of doing; he chose to go back to his training and explore his passion for art.

In preparation for a life of potential dependency and limitation, Alfredo attended a therapeutic art class. A 25-pound bag of clay was placed in front of him and his new career as a sculptor began. With influence from the Greek, Roman, and Renaissance masters, Alfredo created over 25 pieces of sculpture.

Sculpting was not the only medium Alfredo explored; he also began to paint. His canvas work ranged from small still-life's, to large self-portraits and to even larger abstract work. When asked how he was able to accomplish these paintings, he would reply, with the help of visual aids, and the use of imagination.

Alfredo said, *"My limited vision is not an obstacle, but an opportunity to see clearly what I never had the ability to see before."*