



James Darsie Armstrong

March 11, 1937 - January 5, 2014

Born in Pasadena March 11, 1937, James Darsie Armstrong passed on to his new life early Sunday morning, January 5, 2014. He leaves behind four wonderful children, eleven grandchildren, his ex-wife Michele Armstrong, his brother, Peter Armstrong, sister, Mary Perry Hudson, his elder brother's wife, Ingrid Armstrong, many other close relations, and his wife Lynn Conrad Armstrong. We will miss his unique approach to life - his amazing capacity to keep it exciting and enriching, and most of all, the endless depth of his mind and character. A month before he died he wrote down the points about his life he wanted mentioned in his obituary. They pertain to his extensive career in the art world - his all-consuming passion in life. After graduating from S. B. High School, he attended the L.A. Art Center, traveled through Europe for many months and then plunged into a dizzying schedule of art-related activities. They include founding the S.B. Art Institute in 1964 with Douglas Parshall, Joe Knowles, Ray Strong. During this time he was also a staff Sergeant with the Calif. National Guard. From 1973 to 2013 he was an art instructor with S. B. City College Adult Education. He truly enjoyed the time spent with his many students - some attending his classes for over thirty-five years. From 1966 to 1984 he was Curator at Gallery de Silva while also doing all the background sketches for the Mary Worth comic strip. He painted several hours almost every day of his life and had 17 one man shows in professional galleries from Calif. to Texas, four awards with Calif. Watercolor Society. And, most importantly, he loved his work with the Santa Barbara Art Association. (Past President 1972-3) Our gratitude to Hospice is immeasurable. Jim requested there be no memorial service, just remembrance to Hospice for their saintly dedication to the ill and dying amongst us.

Comments



“ Jim Armstrong, thank you to dedicate your time to people that love the art and to be creative...Thank you for you liked my art in Shott Center and speciality at "The Santa Barbara Arts & Festival, 2006"... my best reward in this Country, always I will remember, because you was the jury and you appreciated my picture "Desconcert". Thank you to you for all. I`m so sorry to you family, because all I will meet you, but we know that now are painting angels at the sky with God...

Sincerely, Clara V. Martinez
"Claryarts"
SBAA



Clara V. Martínez - February 01, 2014 at 04:00 AM



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Bob Rowley - January 13, 2014 at 05:59 PM



“ I was so pleased to find this watercolor of Jim's for sale a few years ago. Bob Rowley

Bob Rowley - January 13, 2014 at 06:00 PM



“ Jim Armstrong was a rare and wonderful art instructor and mentor. It was amazing to watch him work with 20-30 students crowded into his Thursday classes. He would move from 1 student to the next helping each of us improve whatever we were working on. One student might be painting a colorful abstract in oil, the next a child's portrait in watercolor, then a pastel landscape, then a collage - and each piece of art was approached with a fresh eye - never allowing his response to one piece to color his response to the next piece. It was an inspiring talent.

Jim was patient, very gentle and encouraging with beginners, but once he got to know you he would push you to exceed your own expectations. For those of us who were in his classes for a while his comments could be sharp-edged and funny without ever being discouraging.

"What's this elephant doing? (it was supposed to be a rock), why are there sheep in the sky? (clouds), why is this tree here? (you'd better not say 'because it was there in the scene' - a feature should only be included if it helps the composition), He would push us to not let any part of a painting become so 'precious' that it distorted the overall composition, and to not include unneeded busy-ness; edit things out! Many of his comments to those of us whom he felt comfortable in joking with could be caustically funny, and we would listen for them as he moved through the class: "looks like rats crossing a stream (boulders), "lose the stump!", "put it away-that's as good as its going to get", "got some gesso?", "I'd be hesitant to sign that if I were you", "it looks like bouillabaisse". But after any of these comments (delivered with a glint in his eye), he would then help us to improve, or learn from, the piece we were working on. Thus the classroom was often filled with laughter. He took us seriously, but he kept us from taking ourselves too seriously and this made us more open to new ways of painting and creating.

If one of us disagreed and wanted to retain some feature Jim thought should be removed, he would just have us 'soften' or 'lighten' the feature - again and again and again - until it was gone; at which point we usually realized he had been right all along.

One thing Jim did not do - he never taught any of us to paint like he did. With most instructors students end up painting like the teacher. Jim helped each student improve along the path the student had chosen. Most of us rarely even saw Jim's finished works. If there was a direction he moved us, it was to become looser and more comfortable in our painting. Over time our brushes got larger and we spent less time on small details.

Jim was a strong proponent for art in our community for many years. He taught in the Adult Ed program of SBAA for nearly the entire time it existed. Calmly and quietly helping many, many students improve.

As president of the Santa Barbara Art Association in 1966-1967 Jim pushed through a policy that required the SBAA to use outside, independent jurors. Prior to that the SBAA board had done the jurying for shows. The policy Jim pushed through changed the SBAA into a more professional group, but also caused hard feelings among many members who did not fare as well under independent jurying. Jim told me he had to change his telephone number because of the number of angry phone calls he received!

Finally, it must be remembered that we have not only lost a great teacher and advocate for good art. We have lost a good friend. The more time we spent with him, the more we realized how caring he was (because he was not overtly a touchy-feely

individual) and how much we cared about him.

On behalf of many of Jim's students, Bob Rowley, John Coie, Ann Sanders, Gerry Winant and B.J.Stapen

Bob Rowley - January 13, 2014 at 05:40 PM



“ Extremely perceptive, well thought, and absolutely accurate description of an amazing teacher, Jim Armstrong!

JH - January 14, 2014 at 11:16 PM



“ I was so saddened to hear of Jim's passing, and will miss his straight-forward approach to art and life. I have only taken his classes for a few years, and loved the way he could look at a painting for a couple of seconds and immediately know what it needed. He was bright and confident in his field, yet humble and humorous at the same time. So sorry for your loss, Julie Michealsen

Julie Michealsen - January 13, 2014 at 11:24 AM



“ Lynn,

Joan and I were devastated to learn of Jim's death. We were entirely unaware of his illness, and we are sorry that we were not with you and Jim during this ordeal. We are confident he is in the arms of God and that you two (indeed all of us) will be with him in a happy time of joy and rejoicing. When you can, let us know, and we will come to you.

With our love,
Dick & Joan Jones

Dick Jones - January 11, 2014 at 06:54 PM



“As a fairly recent student, I had only 2 classes with Jim. But in that short time I could see the many artists coming to his classes, who obviously enjoyed Jim's critique, sense of humor, and his inept ability to "read" his students (those who needed a little more assurance and those who needed "the truth") and above all, his ability to guide us, through his ability to see through our eyes, to express what it was we wanted to "say". He will be immensely missed as our teacher.

I would like to express my heartfelt sympathy to his caring family. Obviously Jim left a huge cavity in the lives of all who knew him. Please accept my condolences and also those of the many members of the GVAA Association. Over the years many of us were privileged to be a part of his classes. Thank you for sharing him with us.

Janet Hart"

Janet Hart - January 10, 2014 at 10:53 PM



“ Obviously the work "inept" is completely inept! I meant to say "innane". Forgive me ! JH

Janet Hart - January 12, 2014 at 07:54 PM



“ Jim you will be very missed by so many of your students. You had a wonderful way of knowing just what a painting needed to make it work and when to say it's "done". I benefited greatly from your sage advice in the 5 years I attended your classes. Miss you!

Kee Flynn

Kee Flynn - January 10, 2014 at 12:01 PM



“ I shall never forget Jim's generosity. I was enrolled in his "painting outdoor" class in adult education in 1982. When I had to drop out after just one semester, in order to return to full-time teaching at UCSB. Jim wanted me to keep painting and offered me free critiques if I just went to his gallery on weekends. Alas, I was unable to do so due to heavy teach-and-research work at the university. I was lucky enough to resume learning from him after my retirement in 2004. Dear Jim we shall meet again, because you have so much to give us.

Alan Liu

Alan Liu - January 09, 2014 at 11:01 PM



“ Meeting Jim at adult ed painting class around 9 years ago, I gained a lovely friend (as well as his invaluable critical input into my art). It was very fun to see him weekly, jest and verbally spar a bit, and seriously discuss painting and art. So intelligent, yet not prideful in displaying it, we all enjoyed and appreciated him so much, as evidenced by his 25+ year returning students.

It was wonderful to know he had paired up with Lynn, and enjoyed those wonderful years. May you be comforted now, Lynn, by family, friends and God.

Linda Ryan

linda ryan - January 08, 2014 at 08:57 PM



“ I feel so blessed to have known Jim. I enjoyed his gentle, wise, honest, sometimes caustic, always incredible perceptions in SB Adult Ed classes. He touched lives. He gave of himself. Because of the time he burst out with "What's that spaceship in the sky?", referring to a large dark cloud I had painted, I will think of him forever cruising over us, like a space ship with surveillance cameras, helping us all journey onwards. May the image of him cruising along, in the altitude, and now completely at peace, bring a measure of comfort to all of you who are family and long time friends.

allison wells

Allison Wells - January 08, 2014 at 08:20 PM



“ Jim was old school, one of a kind. Sadly, his generation & their values are never to be seen again in this high tech world. I am so pleased he had a lovely angel in his life, Lynn Conrad Armstrong. I know Jim's transgression went as it should have & I'm sure we'll meet again.

Loved by so many.

maureen murphy fisher - January 08, 2014 at 07:06 PM



“ Jim,
You were an absolutely amazing gentleman. So very kind, magnificently talented and very smart about the ways of this world. You will be truly missed!
Gary Simpson

Gary Simpson - January 08, 2014 at 06:31 PM



“ Karin lit a candle in memory of James Darsie Armstrong



Karin - January 08, 2014 at 08:21 AM