



Jack L. Squier

February 27, 1927 – December 31, 2015

Jack Squier, an important sculptor and teacher died on December 31, 2016 in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. He was 88. Born in Indiana on February 27, 1927, and for 66 years was the beloved husband of Jane, who survives him.

Professor Squier had a uniquely distinguished career as an artist and teacher as a member of the faculty of Cornell's Department of Art for over 47 years. His association with Cornell was even longer as he received only the second MFA in Sculpture, awarded in 1952. He became Professor Emeritus in 2004.

Jack served in the United States Navy Air Corps Officer Training Program between 1944 and 1947.

As a boy growing up in Indiana he was fascinated with model airplanes. The focus and discipline needed to complete these challenging projects successfully would serve him well when enrolling in sculpture classes at Indiana University where he studied with Robert Laurent. It was also his first meeting with his future spouse, Jane and led to his subsequent love of art and career as a sculptor. His skill in design, composition and sensitive handling of materials led to his teaching in Ogunquit, Maine and subsequently, the MFA program at Cornell.

Upon graduating from Cornell Jack and Jane moved to New York City where he worked as a ceramic designer and account executive. All the while he continued to develop his work leading to being represented by the Downtown and Alan Galleries who, at the time, were also exhibiting the works of Arthur Dove, John Marin, Georgia O'Keefe and Ben Shahn.

The unique character of his work led to numerous one-person exhibitions in New York and group exhibitions nationally and

internationally. Through this early period in his career his work was collected by the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C. and the Whitney Museum in New York. His work is also in the private collections of Nelson Rockefeller and Eero Saarinen. While living in Greenwich Village he became friendly with David Hare, Franz Kline and Ibram Lassaw.

His beautifully crafted work is infused with a spirit of non-western art and culture. Serious explorations into African and pre-Colombian sculpture as well as the arts of Asia informed his development. Incorporating historical and cultural influences in a uniquely modern synthesis, Jack's work is entirely original while bridging vast gulfs of time, civilizations and world geography – a hallmark of an important strain of Modern art.

He was attracted to the prospect of teaching at Cornell as an opportunity for intellectual growth in the context of a community of creative minds. Jack was fond of saying that if he ever believed he was the smartest person in a particular place, he would find another place to go. Cornell offered continual nourishment.

Jack was devoted to his students, treating them as adults. His criticisms were to the point, speculative, cajoling and always suggestive but not directive – perfect vehicles for self-discovery. The open atmosphere of his studio classes was conducive to a collective discourse as well as one-on-one discussion. Jack's gregarious nature, breadth of knowledge and interest often led to free-wheeling seminars on art and life. Lasting lessons were taken away by all. He reveled in his students' successes – having his students as colleagues and peers thrilled him.

After his appointment to the Department of Art in 1958 Jack and Jane quickly became immersed in the academic, creative, educational and social life of Cornell.

Between 1959 and 1962 as curator of Sculpture for the A.D. White Museum (later the Herbert F. Johnson Museum) he was responsible for Cornell's acquisition of two major works of 20th century sculpture by Jacques Lipschitz; the "Song of the Vowels" sited near Uris Library and the "Bather" in Olin Library.

Jack's deep interest in cultures other than his own led to becoming a critical part of a university-wide, three-person faculty steering committee to organize and oversee the highly regarded and successful Latin American Year. In a collaboration between Cornell and the Guggenheim Museum, this comprised ten international conferences and a major exhibition of Latin American artists. His remarkable success through these years (1965-66) was acknowledged in his appointment by Lloyd Goodrich, Director of

the Whitney Museum, NYC, to the art division of UNESCO.

His extensive travels to other cultures an important historic monuments, and a brilliant instinct to create projects meaningful to his students, led to a remarkable student project resulting in the construction of large-scale (the tallest is twenty feet high) concrete sculptures sited at the Cornell Plantations. Spanning several years in the 1960's. These are pieces designed and constructed by his advanced students and are unique on an American campus. An article in Industrial Design Magazine, 1962, began "The sculpture shown on these six pages is the beginning of what may turn out to be one of the most exciting student design projects ever undertaken in the country".

Among so many significant accomplishments in art and creative life, one stands out – the house he designed for himself and Jane. Much like a sculpture – only larger and more complex- he saw the project through every step, from design through construction. Influenced primarily by the International Style and the work of Mies van der Rohe, with an undertone of Japanese architecture, the house is a crystal clear organization of beautiful, logical spaces for domestic living. With interior and exterior exhibition spaces, and exploiting the dramatic topography in which it sits, it functions simultaneously as a house, gallery and sculpture gardens.

Always deeply interested and involved as a member of the Department of Art, the College of Architecture, Art and Planning as well as the university at large he was called upon by then Dean William McMinn to help organize and initiate the AAP Program in Rome in 1986. Now celebrating its 30th anniversary, it would become a key experience for faculty and students over the following decades and continues to be a critical component of the curriculum in the college.

Roberto Bertoia, Alan Chimacoff (Cornell Alum) and Jane Squier

