

In Memoriam: Leszek Forczek 1946-2019

by Casse Waldman Forczek

West Coast “Illuminism” master watercolor artist, lecturer and teacher, writer-poet; director and movie producer, Leszek Waladyslaw Forczek, crossed the threshold on May 20, 2019, after struggling with health challenges over the past 15 years. He had resided in the United States in Lake County, Northern California since 2003. Leszek Forczek is survived by his wife Casse Waldman Forczek, her son Kyle James Corbetta; his daughter, Alaura of Klammath Falls, Oregon; his first son, Roman Forczek, sisters Teresa (Keith) Flaig of Medicine Hat, B.C and Angela (Brad) Falez of Calgary, Canada; as well as many nieces, nephews, cousins in Poland, and friends throughout the world.

Leszek’s unique artwork, prints, posters, giclees, and fine lithographs are placed in both public and private collections and can be seen in numerous institutions and museums throughout North America. His works are now shared on the internet with students, friends and strangers alike, some of whom had the pleasure of visiting his studio on Kelsey Creek, or participating in his classes. People often commented on the unusual beauty and spiritual impact of his luminous, colorful and flowing paintings.

The founder of the Illuminism School of Painting, Forczek’s career spanned more than fifty years. His past exhibits, workshops, awards and feature articles are lengthy and impressive. *Southwest Art Magazine* and *Art in America* are among many publications that published feature cover articles on Forczek’s watercolor paintings. In the Spring of 2014, his figural painting “The Blue Pieta” (circa 1981) was the cover for the international and online Nashville-based magazine *Upper Room*, reaching over 100 countries in 35 languages. Forczek’s subjects ranged from crystals (ruby, topaz, Easter emerald); landscapes (sand & stone to the aurora borealis); pottery; butterflies; animals; florals, and figural/spiritual themes such as the Washing of the Feet, Parcival, Archangels, Miracle of Deseret, etc. Forczek often donated his paintings and images for fundraising events to benefit schools, universities, and major charitable institutions such as the March of Dimes.

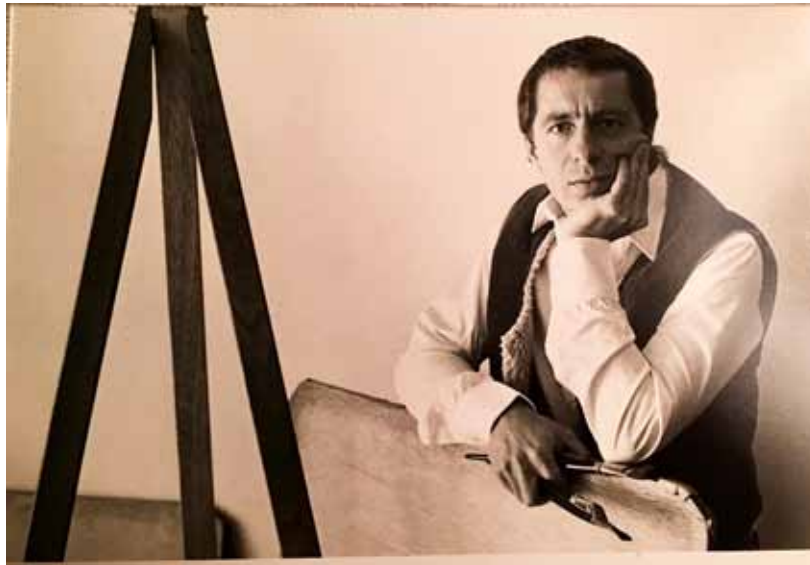
Leszek’s lively paintings are characterized by their unique sense

of luminosity, space, and movement, harmonizing the inner and outer aspects of light, color and darkness. This balance of inner and outer is in its essence, beauty, art and humanity. The technique is largely based on a ‘veil’ painting technique using transparent, fluid layers of superimposed color in which the movement of color supercedes the element of form. However, it is not only a style and technique for him, but an enduring philosophy of painting, which harmonizes perception, reason, and intuition. It is relevant not only to fine arts, but also to filming, art therapy, lazure wall painting, education, and inner development.



He was born to a Polish mother, a Holocaust survivor, Genovefa (Jean) Rejer; his father Walter was captured to work as a mechanic to repair landing gear for a major German airplane company. Thankfully, Leszek’s mother was rescued by an American airborne soldier as she lay unconscious on the ground. She was then placed in a refugee camp where she met Walter. Forczek was born in Wendorf, Germany on July 3, 1946. Soon after, he and his parents traveled to Canada through Ellis Island to settle in the small prairie town of Brooks in Alberta, where he worked in his father’s machine shop and grew up with three sisters, Linda, Teresa, and Angela.

In secondary school Forczek was inspired by a book on Michelangelo given to him by his art teacher, Loren Meyer. Leszek always remained after school to draw and paint – and art became his passion and life’s work. In 1963, his metal sculpture “Bantam Rooster,” constructed out of metal from his father’s machine shop, won the Mascot Contest for Brooks High School and stands proudly in the school lobby to this day. Several one-of-a-kind fossils, found near the Canadian Tar Pits when Forczek was a teenager, were placed in Museums throughout Canada.



Leszek Forczek, Studio Portrait ca.1976

In 1965 Forczek attended Lethbridge College in Alberta; then Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, where the Dean, after seeing his artwork, insisted that he change his major from Internal Medicine to a Master in Fine Arts. Forczek then ventured to Europe, where he stumbled upon an art exhibition in Colmar, France, with paintings by master anthroposophic watercolor artist and art therapist, Liane Collot d’Herbois. This was a turning point in his life. He studied with Collot in Holland for

nearly seven years, and was ultimately encouraged to develop the artistic side of the work on light, color, and darkness. Forczek was inspired to apply his scientific and artistic genius to a lifelong pursuit to develop “Illuminism” as an artistic and spiritual path.

Throughout his life, Forczek held Liane Collot d’Herbois — and Rudolf Steiner — with the highest respect and reverence. Painters such as Rembrandt, Turner, Blake, and Cotman, contributed to the development of the Illuminism School of Painting. Forczek wrote: “Although ILLUMINISM stands on the shoulders of many great artists of the past, it was Rudolf Steiner Ph.D., the founder of Anthroposophy, who must be credited with most of its current development. Dr. Steiner was active during the time of great influx of Eastern spiritual influences in the West. He actively responded to the request of artists such as Kandinsky and Mondrian who were searching for a spiritual meaning in painting, during a time of chaos and crisis. Today, spiritual eclecticism along with transpersonal psychology, are commonplace. Dr. Steiner was exceptional amongst the avant-garde leaders in this compelling search for universal, global spiritual-social reform.

“... [Steiner] especially made the correlation between light, color and darkness with thinking, feeling, and willing. This understanding of color as integral to the evolution of the human being, both cosmic and physical, was able to endow Art with a healing and spiritual property which appears to have a long future ahead of it.

“... Steiner’s voluminous teachings contain countless references to light, color and darkness. Despite this, the School of ‘Illuminism’ is created in the spirit of independent thinking to which Dr. Steiner devoted his life.”



Leszek Forczek Arctic Ice Landscape 1984

From 1982 to 1984, Leszek was commissioned to observe and



Leszek Forczek The Blue Pietá 1981

paint the landscape on the West Coast of the United States from the Baja desert of Mexico, to the northern ice, glaciers and lakes of Alaska. These paintings remain a part of his private collection, and resulted in a video “West-Coast Metamorphosis” narrated by Forczek, and accompanied by the music of Vangelis



Leszek Forczek Magenta-Winter Landscape 3012

and Paul Winter. This project was an outward expression of his great concern for the preservation of the landscape and to save extinct species of arctic wildlife such as the nar whale.

Color is at the heart of Forczek’s engaging, elegant and thought-

ful sensibility. Forczek once wrote:

“A calm, pensive approach to painting ‘changes the way in which we see.’ My images are characterized by their mysterious and meaningful sense of movement, space and luminosity. This way of painting reveals harmony between the inner and outer aspects of light, color and darkness.

“Light and darkness are the underlying realities of Nature, the Cosmos and the individual soul. One way of thinking about Painting is to see it in six aspects. The first three are objects, form, and color. The second three are light, space and movement. The latter three—light, space and movement – comprise the inner and invisible aspect of painting. Strictly speaking, we do not see light, space and movement. In this sense, objects (matter), color, and form are the outer dimensions and manifestation. Color links the inner and outer.”

Forczek’s School of Illuminism from the mid-90’s to 2007 was inspired by the profound and joyous union of the natural world with the inner spiritual world: “As above, so below.” He

founded and conducted the Illuminism Workshop Series (IWS) consisting of multi-year seasonal programs, which inspired several hundred participants throughout the U.S. and Canada over a span of nearly twenty years. His last workshop was held May 20-22, 2016, in Buckingham, Lake County, California, with 17 participants – two of whom traveled from as far as New Zealand.

From 2009 to 2014, Forczek collaborated with his partner, Casse Waldman Forczek, on a DVD movie inspired

by the volcano, Mount Konocti, whose base stretches along the shores of ancient Clear Lake. “*Topaz Mountain*” is a unique chromatic animation of landscape paintings, a moving testimony accompanied by compelling poetry and music. In his “*Notes toward Topaz Mountain*” booklet, Leszek stated: “*Once mastered, veiling and its variations enhance the luminosity, spaciousness and movement of color attributes that greatly enliven the expressive capacity of color. The multi-layered method is likely*



Leszek Forczek Tourmaline 1990s



Leszek Forczek Washing of the Feet 1995

the most challenging as well as the most rewarding of watercolor techniques and styles. This is especially true when the veil technique is used in a “freestyle” manner, i.e., without the preconceived support of drawn objects. To this day the technique and philosophy of painting with superimposed veils continues to evolve, largely due to its chromatic diversity. However masterly or clever technique may become, it can also lead to empty stylization. Consummate technique and sophisticated design theory are only justifiable to the extent that they serve to express genuine human sentiments and core values, which constitute the spiritual dimension of Art.”

Forczek’s artwork had not been publicly displayed in California since his 2002 show at the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco – until after his death in May 2019. A posthumous art show (still open through September) and reception was held in August at the Main Street Gallery in Lakeport, California resulting in a front-page feature article published by the local *Record-Bee* both in print and online..

A two-hour Memorial Celebration, Art Exhibit and Reception was held in Lake County, California on July 3, 2019, which would have been Leszek’s 73rd birthday. The event was attended by many friends from near and far. An edited DVD of the Celebration is in progress, which will include guest comments, back-scene rehearsals, short videos of Leszek discussing technique, student demos, and studio conversations. We look forward to posting this on YouTube and

creating a DVD, which will be made available by the Fall of 2019.

For information, including links to tributes; press coverage; articles; art shows; an outstanding video slide show, and many other aspects of Forczek’s life, please visit www.forczekmemorial.com; you can also email cassestar@icloud.com, or call 707-279-8886 or text to 707-349-4042. Casse’s mailing address is PO Box 32, Kelseyville, California 95451 USA.



Leszek Forczek Topaz Mountain–Turquoise Lake Violet Mountain 2010



Leszek Forczek Topaz Mountain–BlueWhite Glacier Lake 2010

a blessing. During the period of the 12th Century, Europe was blessed with a kind of innocence, sincerity and joy. Icons were loved and believed to carry protective power, healing power and other gifts. They hung – not only in churches and houses, but in



Leszek Forczek Valley Rose Flame Painted as a healing picture after a devastating local wildfire

At the time of his last workshop in 2016 Leszek shared some recollections and thoughts about his meetings with Lian Collot d'Herbois:

“During my last meeting with Ms. Collot d’Herbois, the conversation veered in the direction of the 12th and 13th Century icon painters (Russian/Slavic Painters/Christian icon painters) She felt her work was related to their work. She told a story about a Russian icon. She spoke of how and why icon painters were chosen by the clergy elders; that these candidates were selected, not because of documented talent or personal ambition, but because of their piety, humility and willingness to learn and serve. Completed icons prior to being placed in a church were submitted to the church officials passing through a ritual, ending with



Leszek Forczek Sunset Rose (excerpt) Princess Diana, England’s Rose 1997

fields, along roads, in forests, hospitals, barns and so on.”



Leszek Forczek working on the Topaz Mountain paintings

He added further thoughts on spiritual science and artistic technique:

“Although in some ways the laws of light and darkness may stand on their own, it is most likely that, when the techniques and color theory are applied in the light of Spiritual Science, that their greatest potential can be attained. That involves earnest study, prayer and meditation so that the artist may, to some

degree, be able to advance that “Mind of Christ, the Light of the World”. Liane referred to a biblical quotation that, if practiced over the years, is capable of purifying/spiritualizing the human heart (apathia). Dr. Steiner referred to the Gospel of John in particular. Of course, the Lord’s Prayer, the Beatitudes, and so on, also apply. It is only that the regularity and patience is necessary. Understanding and practice of the inner or spiritual work is what actually makes the work spiritual.”

[Photo credits: (c) Illuminism-Aquarelle.com]



Leszek Forczek The Being of the Arts 2003



Leszek Forczek Soulmates-Blossom and Butterfly 1992



Leszek Forczek Easter Emerald 1990s



*Leszek Forczek
East-West Bloom,
Peony*