

Renowned painter Helen Lucas, best known for paintings of flowers, passes away

By Mark Pavilons

Painting is all Helen Lucas ever wanted to do.

The renowned painter passed away November 27. She was 92.

Helen was a huge presence in the lives of all who knew her. Her legacy is one of kindness, grace, generosity, authenticity, and advocacy for the well-being of others.

She had the heart and passion of an artist, as expressed in her joyous floral paintings.

The no-holds-barred artist painted for more than half a century, pushing the envelope and breaking the rules along the way.

Lucas's distinguished career, spanning over six decades, produced deeply personal art ? from the darker earlier works of her formative years, to her glorious floral paintings.

The transition of her work was chronicled in an award-winning film by Donna Davey, *Helen Lucas: Her Journey ? Our Journey*. The film included an interview with her friend, Margaret Laurence, who made this observation: ?The affirmation of life, in the midst of pain is the story of your art, my beloved friend.?

In addition to delivering lectures on women in the arts, and co-founding one of the first Women's Studies programs in Canada, the King City artist frequently appeared on radio and TV?from the 1970s to the 1990s.

Throughout her career she has been awarded numerous awards, including the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal as well as an Honorary Doctor of Letters from York University.

Her paintings can be seen in countless private, corporate, and public collections including The Canadian War Museum, The King City Municipal Offices, Sick Kids Hospital, and The Sunnybrook Odette Cancer Centre. York University has the largest collection of her artworks, as well as her archive.

Why did she paint flowers?

?I will always be drawn to the beauty and the courage of the flower,??she once said.??I am captivated by it. Flowers, more than anything else, are so life-enforcing.?

Helen was as genuine and authentic as they come.

?Helen will always stay with us,? said long-time friend and King artist Ernestine Tahedl. ?Her art will be appreciated, loved and cherished. A lasting document of Helen's wonderful gift to all. Her love to paint, generosity, enjoyment of beauty in life and nature are the things I remember most about her and I am deeply grateful that I could call her a friend! Helen was truly an inspiration!?

Helen is survived by her daughter Michelle, her sister Mary and brother-in-law Jeff, sons-in-law Frank and Alan, and numerous grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nephews and cousins; she is predeceased by her parents, husband Derek, sister Diane and brother-in-law William and, in 2014, her beloved daughter Andrea.

A private funeral will take place and visitation will be on Thursday, December 7 between 4 and 6 p.m. at the Roadhouse & Rose Funeral Home ? 157 Main Street South, Newmarket Ontario, L3Y 3Y9.

In lieu of flowers kindly make donations to The Alzheimer Society.