Richard Joseph Ericson

Image:



Richard Joseph Ericson
1922-2010
This following biography was researched, compiled, and written by Geoffrey K. Fleming, Director, Southold Historical Society, Southold, NY.
Richard Joseph Ericson (b. October 22, 1922-d. November 21, 2010)
Painter, sculptor, printmaker, and teacher. Born in Chicago, Illinois. Son of Claire (b. 1899) and Arthur Ericson (b. 1899). His father was an accountant for a food products company and the family moved to Mount Vernon, Westchester County, New York, when he was a young child.
Ericson, a twin, first began to draw at age five and took up painting in oils at age twelve. He studied at the Art Students League in New York City in 1941, where he received an honorable mention during the annual scholarship competition held that year. During this period he worked as a commercial artist.
After America's entry in World War II Ericson enlisted in the Army in 1942, where he served as a warrant officer. He saw service in North Africa, France, and Germany. While overseas, he did many drawings of the places in which he was stationed. He eventually found himself guarding Italian prisoners of war who had been captured in Sicily and southern Italy. While performing his duties during 1943 and 1944 he found time to paint several important, large scale portraits of the prisoners who were happy to pose for him. As the war concluded he was able to visit Holland to study.
After nearly three years overseas, Ericson returned to America and traveled back to his home town of Chicago where he furthered his studies at the Art Institute of Chicago.
He married in 1948 and moved his young family to Mexico, where he attended Mexico City College. He studied art and exhibited while living there, receiving his Master of Arts degree, cum laude, in 1953.
For a time after his return to the United States he taught art in Dutchess County, New York, where he and his wife built their own house by hand. Eventually the family, which would come to include seven sons, settled in Hicksville, Long Island, New York. Ericson joined the staff of Hicksville High School as the art teacher in 1962, a position he would hold until his retirement in 1983.
As a teacher, Ericson was open to all fields and styles of art, constantly experimenting and experiencing new forms and styles. He had started printmaking in the late 1940's and continued to work in this medium for many years, producing mezzotints, etchings, and wood block prints. He also continued to paint, creating portraits, scenes in southern Dutchess County, and Long Island landscapes - for which he would become well known.
Ericson grew to love the area in which he lived, and depicted it quite often in his paintings. He became enamored with the historic village of Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, which was located

north of where he resided, and started painting there regularly. He was a prominent fixture in the community, so much so that he became the "unofficial" village artist, depicting nearly every corner, business, and home located nearby.
The paintings he created, both in oil and watercolor, sold easily and to every sort of resident and visitor alike. Included among those who acquired works for their collections was Franklin Delano Roosevelt Jr. (1914-1988) and Jimmy Dean (1928-2010).
During his long career he exhibited extensively, below are just a few of his recorded exhibitions: Art Students League, New York, New York, c. 1941; Scholastic Art Exhibition Competition at R. H. Macy & Company, New York, New York, 1941 (prize); Mexico City College, Mexico City, Mexico, 1949-1953; Galeria 'Arte Moderno,' Mexico City, Mexico, 1950 (solo); The Three Arts, Poughkeepsie, New York, 1960; Massapequa Symphony Society Guild Exhibition, Massapequa, New York, c. 1960 - 1963; Valley National Bank, Valley Stream, New York, 1964 (solo); Outdoor Art Exhibition for the benefit of the American Cancer Society, Long Island, New York, 1964; Adriance Memorial Museum, Poughquag, New York, 1969 (solo); Beekman Library Exhibition, Beekman Town Hall, New York, 1969 (solo); Hicksville Public Library, Hicksville, New York, 1970 (solo?); Cold Spring Harbor Arts Center, Cold Spring Harbor, New York, c. 1980s-2000s; Hicksville Public Schools, Hicksville, New York, 1982 (solo?); New York City Art Teachers Conference, Monticello, New York, 1982; Association of Retired Hicksville School Employees Exhibition, (no location given), 1999; Cold Spring Harbor Fine Arts & Crafts Show, Cold Spring Harbor, New York, 2001; Studio Art Group Exhibition, Hicksville, New York, (n. d.); Hicksville Library, Hicksville, New York, (n. d.).
Ericson's early works were primarily figurative, the artist using strong outlines and vibrant colors to define the shapes and forms in his paintings. These paintings were primarily large scale, often measuring greater than 20 x 30 inches in overall size. Subjects of these paintings varied and included quasi religious and genre scenes with a hint of the surreal. Later in his career his works became much tighter and far more representational, not surprising considering they often depicted identifiable locations. He signed works either fully, with initials and date, or with a small monogram and date.
At this time (2010) he continues to live on Long Island, but is no able longer to work due to illness. None of his works are known to be in any public collections, though a large number reside in private hands.
Richard Joseph Ericson passed on Sunday, November 21, 2010

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