Carolyn Autry

Carolyn Autry, artist, printmaker, meticulous, and educator, died 12 minutes into the 12th day of December, 2011, her 71st birthday.

She had returned just over a month previous from an art-enriched sojourn abroad, visiting numerous museums. She was preparing to print her recently finished etched plate and attend to her most vulnerable outdoor plantings before the arrival of winter.

Both these intended pursuits demanded time, commitment, and diligence – traits she displayed throughout her life in a private, unobtrusive manner. Yet, despite her quiet demeanor, Carolyn's artistic and printmaking achievements did not go unnoticed. Throughout her full life she had become increasingly recognized in biographical publications such as Who's Who in American Art, Who's Who in American Women, Who's Who in America, Who's Who in The World, as well as in various publications of the International Biographical Centre, Cambridge, England.

She was also known as Carolyn Autry Elloian, beloved wife of Peter and mother of Cybele. Born in Dubuque, Iowa, the daughter of William and Vela (Laceman) Autry, Carolyn was raised in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma; Columbus, Nebraska; and Grinnell, Iowa.

A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Iowa, she was awarded an MFA in painting from that institution in 1965. Recipient of a Yale-Norfolk School of Art & Music fellowship in 1962, she earned a Ford Foundation grant (1961-1964), and upon graduation taught studio and art history at Baldwin Wallace College, Berea, Ohio (1965-1966).

That same year, shortly after marriage – an artistic coexistence lasting over 45 years – she and her husband moved to Toledo, where they were hired by the Toledo Museum of Art as instructors at the then-named School of Design. The school served as the art department for the then-named Toledo University. Her responsibilities included instructing students in art appreciation and art history.

Her personal artistic concerns remained steadfast throughout: drawing, painting, and printmaking. However, it was her activities in printmaking – in particular her etchings – that became preeminent, leading to many awards and to her works being included in national and international exhibitions.

In 1973 the arrival of a daughter, Cybele, teaching responsibilities, and maintaining a residence did nothing to derail Carolyn's creative pursuits. She was awarded two Ohio Arts Council grants for printmaking (1979, 1989), and granted a leave of absence from the Museum, which enabled her to accept a residency at the School of Arts in Lacoste, Provence, France (1984, 1987). It provided a most welcomed opportunity to experience life abroad and expand her artistic content and growth.

By this time Carolyn's prints were being exhibited in national and international group showings and included in numerous international exchange exhibitions in Europe and Asia.

In 1991, Carolyn's desire of moving to a residence with more surroundings grounds for planting and more studio space for printmaking became a reality. An older dwelling in Perrysburg required much renovation and consumed considerable time, commitment and labor, but eventually met her desired needs. Thereafter, one of her private pleasures was to witness the growth of her selected flowering shrubs and perennials.

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Her printmaking studio, now also more spacious, experienced its own flourishing of creative activity, resulting in recognition in the North American Women Artists of the Twentieth Century for her laudable achievements. A Biographical Dictionary edited by Jules Heller and Nancy G Heller, the book was published by Garland Publishing 1995. In it, Carolyn Autry was acknowledged as an internationally known intaglio printmaker, and a respected academic.

At the conclusion of 36 years of instructional responsibility, Carolyn relinquished her position as adjunct associate professor of art at the University of Toledo in 2001. Shortly thereafter in 2002, a desire for foreign travel, long kept dormant, emerged. The yearning to experience art, museums and monuments, at sites ancient and environs historical, became a meaningful adventure, an artistic pilgrimage.

Before engaging on each of what she hoped would be annual sojourns, Carolyn would compose a thorough and challenging itinerary. Then upon mutual agreement, we would travel independently, that is, without tour groups or guides. Upon my insistence, we would rent a reliable vehicle as our means of transportation, finding that to be the most enlightening and beneficial way to travel.

Without disappointment, these travels resulted in encounters exhaustingly exhilarating: France, Greece, Crete, Spain, Italy, Sicily.

The Balkan Peninsula and Germany did not escape our visitations, nor did Belgium and Holland – and to the last, we remained independent travelers, relying solely on car, bus and rail transport.

Most memorable were our various driving sojourns where I imagined myself an art student, chauffeuring an artist, guide, and historian upon her travels. Out we would journey from city centers, in search of sites and small museums, along with regional and provincial archeological museums in those remote locations we could access by automobile. What impressive objects, works we viewed, yet with hardly a visitor. The two of us, would delight in looking – without crowds of onlookers. Our only company: a guard or custodian trailing discretely behind us.

I remain the art student chauffeur, but lamentably without my passenger extra-ordinaire. – *Peter Elloian*