

Eleanore Berman, 75; Drew on Garden for Artistic Inspiration

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SEPTEMBER 4, 2004

Eleanore Berman, who paired her talents for art and for horticulture to enshrine her Beverly Hills garden in impressionistic paintings, has died. She was 75.

Berman died Sunday in her Beverly Hills home of cancer.

Although she was educated as an artist and exhibited her paintings in galleries and museums around the world, her artistic expertise also bloomed brightly in the garden she cultivated for four decades behind the Colonial Georgian house she called home.

"Take a drawing class," she advised other gardeners, sharing her gardening wisdom in a Times article about her in February. Working with artistic tools -- charcoal, pen, ink -- disciplines the hand and trains the thinking about what and where to plant, she said.

"I fell in love with the house," she said of her residence since 1967, "because it already had a studio and the bones of a great garden. I dig my hands into the ground, replace plants, prune roses. I even keep a compost heap in back, which is rare for a Beverly Hills lady."

Berman's carefully organized garden included a formal section with patterned brick walkways and manicured boxwoods and roses, and an area of greater profusion -- daisies, bearded iris, sweet alyssum, lavender, geraniums, begonias, cherry trees and myrtle hedges.

The garden and its gate were captured in about 200 paintings and other pieces of art shown as far away as Amsterdam and represented in the [Los Angeles County Museum of Art](#) and the UCLA Hammer Museum. One painting Berman did of egg-shaped stones from her path was reproduced on the cover of a psychology book because the publisher thought it represented the beginning of life.

"I spend a lot of time in this garden, I'm fascinated by it, stimulated by it."

Born in New York City, Berman lived in Beverly Hills and Hollywood Park.

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She studied with Modernist painter Josef Albers and sculptor Ossip Zadkine at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, earned a bachelor's degree at UCLA and was tutored in Paris by Cubist painter Fernand Leger and in New York by painter Manfred Schwartz and printmaker Robert Blackburn.

During one of her many Southern California exhibits, at Beverly Hills' Janus Gallery in 1975, Berman's work was reviewed by a Times art critic who commented:

"There is a strange dichotomy in [her] paintings between the fluidity of some and the solidity of others. What gives them common ground and provides credence to this artist's idiom is their desire to abstract and extract from nature in a highly personal manner. It seems as if in the best of her work, she tries -- in an essentially romantic, sometimes lyrical manner -- to penetrate to the core of visual experience. "

Berman's marriages to arts patron Frederick M. Nicholas of Beverly Hills and Henri Lazarof of Bel-Air both ended in divorce.

She is survived by four children, Deborah Nicholas of Berkeley; Jan Nicholas of Capitola, Calif.; Anthony E. Nicholas of Beverly Hills; and David Lazarof of Los Angeles; five grandchildren; and one step-grandchild.

The family has asked that any memorial contributions be sent to the Eleanore Berman Art Foundation, 5440 McConnell Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90066.

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