

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

CARLEY CRAIG, ARTIST

SPRING VALLEY ROAD, N. W. (521)

Atlanta, Georgia
Area Code 404-355-6058

From a kaleidescopic collection of careers in costume design and art, Atlanta artist Carley Craig has found a lasting commitment to creative art as a way of life.

Her decision to become a professional, full-time painter launched her as one of Atlanta's most popular and sought-after artists. She has shown widely in the city and throughout the state and her paintings now hang in collections all over the country.

Mrs. Craig began her career as a free-lance sketch artist, and later as a fashion designer in Hollywood for Paramount, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Warner Brothers, Universal and First National Studios---for a period covering 25 years. Between motion picture assignments she designed wholesale and custom dress lines and an occasional nightclub revue in addition to Sonia Henie ice revues.

During World War II, in the days before the drip dry era, the artist designed and manufactured a line of children's wear from an expandable and iron-flat innovation she had developed for her own small daughter. The designs were distributed nationally and an international contract was signed with a British firm to manufacture the line for distribution in 26 foreign countries.

Later, as a designer in her own shop, Mrs. Craig adapted styles of the Pueblo Indians into gay, colorful clothes for a custom clientele in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The artist began her fine arts training under S. MacDonald Wright at the old Art Students League in Los Angeles. To Mr. Wright she attributes much of the influence which now shows up as flowing, contra-puntal movement in many of Carley Craig's paintings---noticeably in the new dancer series.

Some of the graceful lilting lines; haunting, shadowy effects, and subtle excitement of colors in her paintings still reflect Mrs. Craig's artistic lineage which started with a theatrical designer's flair for the dramatic.

Perhaps from a series of fashion caricatures which Mrs. Craig did for the Los Angeles Times and later other publications comes the whimsy, quick incisive introspection, the occasional satirical touch or gentle chiding of human foibles, often revealed in her paintings.

In 1951, Mrs. Craig moved to Atlanta when her husband, Jim Craig, became re-associated with the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation. It was this move that decided the future course her career was to take.

Her first years in Georgia were spent studying composition, life drawing, watercolor and experimental painting under Joel Reeves, Ben Shute, and George Beattie, nationally-known artists.

Her own teaching and the ready sale of her early watercolors financed painting materials and further study. By then her distinctive personal style began to emerge. She launched a series of one-man and group shows which established her reputation.

A special 1963 Craig show at the Bradley Museum of Art in Columbus drew this spontaneous comment from the museum director:

"Mrs. Craig has been featured in a large and successful one-man exhibition in this museum which proved to be most popular with our public, as it is original in conception and of technical proficiency." Her work has shown at the Atlanta Art Association Museum and proved to be among the most popular with patrons of the old Browse-Borrow-Buy Gallery at the Museum.

Mrs. Craig was honored by the Quinlan Art Center in Gainesville, Ga. when they chose her as a featured artist for the dedication exhibit opening the museum at Gainesville in 1964.

Later in 1964, Mrs. Craig returned briefly to theatrical design when Hildegarde Tornow, as guest choreographer for the Decatur Civic Ballet, persuaded her that costuming a ballet was like making a three-dimensional painting with movement. The costumes were as artistic success and the experience with the dancers launched Mrs. Craig into her dramatic series of paintings on the dance. However, painting dancers in movement too quick for the eye to follow, involved a knowledge of body movements unfamiliar to anyone uninitiated in the dance. So Carley Craig took up the study of modern dance. After studying modern dance techniques she sketched and painted dancers in movement. She found one vocabulary of movement in modern dance---another in jazz dancing and another in ballet. Determined to master the idioms of the dance so she could capture them on canvas, Mrs. Craig, at an age when most people have long retired from such activities, finds herself with nine dance classes a week divided fairly evenly among the various dance groups of Atlanta. She spends an

equal number of hours each week sketching the various dancers in response to a principle taught her by dancing---that constant daily practice in the use of the body, the eye, the rhythmic sense, the muscle memory, is as important to the artist as to the dancer or musician.

It is the daily sketching of dancers, children, the outdoors in its many moods, and some abstract brainstorming that has given an added verve and freedom to the now familiar Craig style.

A one-woman exhibit at the Art Fair Gallery in Decatur displayed Mrs. Craig's new versatility of style, in 1965. Specially chosen for the show were paintings which emphasized a new technique inspired by a trip to Europe in 1963. These included collages, scraffittos, caseins, egg temperas, and mixtures of all of them, painted to catch the time-faded and weathered textures, colors, and moods impressed upon the artist by her wanderings in Europe. Also in the show were lyric and happy paintings from the "At Home" series painted by the artist in and around the small creek and rustic hillside of her Atlanta home.

Mrs. Craig is much in demand as a stimulating lecturer on art and her painting demonstrations are particularly popular. She has had to discontinue both, however, for the time being. She is active in many civic and cultural projects which profit both from her philosophy of life and her talent as an artist. She has taught painting at the Milledgeville State Hospital and is an ardent supporter of the Vocational Rehabilitation Homes established in Atlanta as a stepping stone to bring the mentally ill back to society.

Mrs. Craig won the popular vote award for the art show in Lenox Square last fall, presented to the artist whose paintings won the largest popular vote from people attending the show. She also won an Award of Merit from the judging panel of the Lenox Show.

A recent one-woman show in Dalton, Georgia, broke all records both in dollar sales and in number of paintings sold for the Creative Arts Guild, sponsor of the show and later the artist attracted wide attention in Anniston, Alabama, where her works were shown.

Mrs. Craig is a member of the Atlanta Art Association, the Association of Georgia Artists, The Atlanta Artists Club (for which she served two years as one of the first presidents) and the Arts Festival of Atlanta, for which she served as one of the first members of the Board of Directors. She was co-founder of the Browse-Borrow-Buy Gallery, the forerunner of the Atlanta Art Association's Sales Gallery.

Katherine Skogstad
Atlanta, Georgia
March, 1966

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A PHILOSOPHY OF CREATIVITY

by Carley Craig

One of the wisest of all mankind said in a verse from Proverbs: "I applied mine heart to know...and to search...and to seek out wisdom and the meaning of things."

The inner search is a challenge and a victory felt by many, but expressed by few. It is this inner search that I struggle to show through my work.

When I throw lines and paint on a gesso surface to capture a dancer in action, I am not making record of a particular dance movement or of a particular dancer. I search to express the very essence of all movement---the inner joy that motivates a free outward expression.

When I sketch children, I sketch not a photographic record of one child, but I seek out the universal child quality which keeps a world forever new.

For some, verbal communication is a halting gift. It is a great and grateful wonder to be able to articulate through the visual medium which can reach almost all people---to be able to express feelings and ideas and to get a sympathetic, appreciative response from those around you. It is a joy immeasurable to find that occasional people are eager to hear or see what I have found in my search for the meaning of things ...to find that my feelings about "seeking and searching for an understanding and the meaning of things" strikes a responsive note in other people's minds and perhaps even inspires their own search.

It is this which makes one's work meaningful and gives him the satisfaction of feeling that he is a contributing member of society.