

January 16 through March 13, 2022

BackStory a **Sid Garrison** Retrospective

Biography and Statement

Sid Garrison (1954-2021) was a San Francisco and Kansas City artist whose work appeared in galleries throughout the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s. They are currently being shown at the Lori Austin Gallery in Healdsburg, California, and Pastine Projects in San Francisco. His drawings and other artwork have been shown in Australia, Canada, and Japan. He was historically represented by Limn Gallery (San Francisco 2004-2009) and Danese/Corey Gallery (New York 2010-2020); and shown by galleries across the U.S., including the Knoedler & Co. Project Space (New York), Gallery Joe (Philadelphia) and Sherry Frumkin Gallery (Santa Monica). In addition to private collections, Mr. Garrison's work is in the permanent collections of the Arkansas Arts Center, Philbrook Museum of Art, Frederick R. Weisman Art Foundation, and Wichita Art Museum.



February 28, 2015, colored pencil on paper, 8 x 8 inches

Garrison's early work embraced the challenge of creating wet-formed laminated leather vessels and wall hangings, incised and spray-painted with acrylics that subverted and transcended the material. Committed to abstraction, in the early 90s he left the process-intensive leather art behind to work exclusively with the most basic materials available – colored pencil on paper.

While his artistic practice took many different forms, the best of them have in common a look of method without formal composition. The measure he set for himself was to make each drawing unique, both in palette and complexity. Some drawings appear to have been worked from all four edges, making their orientation seem arbitrary. It is difficult to guess how much planning lies behind a given piece, but close inspection reveals the great amounts of time involved in making the small, repetitive lines that build up to form complex planes of color within each work. He made the speed of execution harder to estimate by burnishing or skiving shallow cuts into selected areas of his surfaces.

Sid Garrison's early inspiration came from Stuart Davis and Vasily Kandinsky. However, only occasionally do allusions crop up in Garrison's work, by chance or not. A viewer may think of Cezanne and early Cubist landscape, Arshile Gorky or Clyfford Still. But Garrison did not seek to borrow authority from these offhand affinities. His use of colored pencil put him in narrow, if not select, company among noted artists.

His drawings similarly dance close to a range of representational associations, to microphotography, maps and, in a few cases, the scarred surfaces of outdoor walls from which postings have peeled. The resulting bodies of work function like a collection of short stories ... linked by compositional decisions that may result in quiet with open spaces or bursting with stippling or a tangle of contours. His work really looks like no one else, and yet it changed continually by emphasizing lyrical and personal content, and by what he hoped was a unique approach to medium, color and form. For additional information visit www.sidgarrison.com.

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How I Came to Abstraction by Sid Garrison – June 6, 2011

Sometime back in ancient you asked, and I promised to answer, how I came to abstraction. I have drafted bits of this many times in my mind. Now that I am typing, it all goes blank. That might be the short answer to why abstraction is attractive to me. Seriously though, I will throw about a few random bits in the hope that they make some kind of sense.

Starting at the beginning. I had a neighbor who was in school for "commercial art" when I was four or five. That appealed to me and from around that time I self-identified as wanting to be an artist. I have memories of trying to write my name but the marks were more like abstract markings. I knew they weren't "right," but I was pleased with them.

I recently found report cards from kindergarten where the teacher made positive comments to my parents about my art and "creative ideas." I would give anything to know what she meant by that. I do know this; it was in her class that I first encountered finger painting. It blew my mind. A defining moment, I think. Probably was my first "abstraction."

My next related memory comes from second grade. Not only was the teacher kind, but she could actually draw. I specifically remember a large cow she drew on the blackboard, it was a real inspiration. There was a kid in my class that was smarter than everyone else. One day during art class he deliberately did a Pollock-like drip abstraction with watercolors. It had a high level of intent. Again, I was blown away.

The next year, our school had a "Fun Night" with games and the like. In one booth, a parent was making ceramic spin art plates with paint instead of glaze – a flat bisqueware saucer on a spinning potter's wheel that had paint squirted on it. Basically, small versions of Damien Hirst spin art – 30+ years before him. I was super-charged by those.

Sixth grade: My class was taken to a local art center to see an exhibit. On this trip I saw some of my first sizable abstract paintings. When we returned to school, I tried to draw an abstraction. It was terrible. That was my first inkling that abstraction was harder to pull off than many believe. In fact, I was very humbled by it. Pretty much the art I did the following three or four years would fall into conventional or design because I felt so challenged by abstraction.

In eleventh grade things changed. I had two very supportive art teachers who encouraged my work. One was Japanese (she married a serviceman during the occupation) who liked all kinds of art and had a real fondness for abstraction. She was an "okay" abstract expressionist painter and let us "in on" her work and works in progress. I learned a lot from her. She was hard, though. The first quarter I took several classes with her and she gave me C's. This really rocked my world. Until that point, I always pulled A's in art. She said I wasn't trying hard enough. It was the best thing she could have done. Served as a real wake up call. I only had three semesters with her, as I graduated early. Nonetheless, they served me extremely well.

After graduation, I would dabble with recognizable imagery, yet always returned to abstraction. In the mid-90s I decided to throw my hat fully into abstraction. I have been extremely content with that choice.



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Gallery Hours: Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, 1 to 5 p.m.