

Joseph Alexander Cain

Joseph Alexander Cain (27 May 1920 - 8 September 1980) was an American artist, educator, and art critic.^{[1][2][3]} He led a combat art team during the Korean War, received degrees from the University of California at Berkeley, and was recognized for his art at the local, state, national, and international levels, being elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in London.^{[1][2][3][4][5]} Cain served the art community as educator, originator of the National Drawing and Small Sculpture Show at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi, Texas, and art critic.^{[1][3][4]} Personal and professional documents are included in the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution.^[6]

Artist

Joseph Alexander Cain was an American painter and mosaicist who was born in Henderson, Tennessee, on 27 May 1920, and died on 8 September 1980, in Corpus Christi, Texas.^{[1][3][4][7]} Cain attained the rank of colonel in the United States Marine Corps, having served in World War II and the Korean War when he led a combat art team for the USMC in Korea in 1951.^{[1][3][4]} Cain received his bachelor's degree in art in 1947 and a master's degree in art in 1948 from the University of California at Berkeley and moved to Corpus Christi, Texas, in 1948.^{[1][2][3][4]}

He had 150 one-person exhibitions, had 250 awards, and participated in local, state, national, and international exhibits.^{[1][3][7]} His art is found in the Witte Museum, Springfield Museum, Tyler Museum, George Segal Collection, and Marisol Escobar Collection among others, and his works toured with the Old Bergin Art Guild, the National Society of Painters in Casein and Acrylic, and the Grumbacher Company and have been displayed in Mexico, France, Canada, and Japan.^{[1][3][4][7]} Joseph G. Butler, director of the Butler Institute of American Art, observed that *Homage to a Harlequin*, Cain's top prize-winning painting at the Butler Institute of American Art, "stirred in me a deep fascination for its unusual and seemingly reckless application of paint while retaining a boldly conceived design."^[2] Reflecting on Cain's top award-winning watercolor, *Search for New Images No. 7*, in the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine

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Arts Exhibition in Philadelphia, Albert Christ-Janer of the Pratt Institute spoke of Cain's "[t]echnical competence, which I always like in a watercolor. Strong design, which is good anywhere at any time."^[2]

Cain was active in his community with the South Texas Art League, Texas Watercolor Society, Texas Fine Arts Association, Corpus Christi Art Foundation, Corpus Christi Municipal Arts Commission, and Board of Trustees for the Art Museum of South Texas.^{[1][3][7]} He executed a mosaic mural at Christus Spohn

Hospital Corpus Christi-Shoreline and other murals in Corpus Christi.^[1] Amy Smith Kight in *Legacy: A History of the Art Museum of South Texas*, wrote, "Perhaps no artist's name occurs with more frequency and reverence in the recollections of Corpus Christi artists and collectors than that of Joseph A. Cain. . . .

With his understanding of current movements in modern art and his experimentations with various styles and materials, Cain served as a model for Corpus Christi artists."^[3] He was listed in *Who's Who in America*, *Who's Who in American Art*, *Who's Who in the South and Southwest*, and *Who's Who in 1American Education* and elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in London in 1964.^{[1][2][3][5][7]}

Educator

Cain taught at Corpus Christi High School, W. B. Ray High School, and Del Mar College where he served as a professor and chairperson of the art department and began the National Drawing and Small Sculpture Show at Del Mar College in 1966.^{[1][3][4][7][8]} After his death, the top award of the show was

named for him, and the gallery where the exhibit is held annually was named the Joseph A. Cain Memorial Art Gallery.^[3] Explaining Cain's motivation to begin this show, Eddie Lambert, professor emeritus of art at Del Mar College, wrote, "Joseph Cain's original intention was to bring noteworthy people from the art world so that students and community could benefit from the experience."^[4]

Students and the community were exposed to such renowned jurors as Charles Umlauf, George Segal, Frank Gallo, Peter Voukos, Duane Hanson, Seymour Lipton, Marisol Escobar, Mel Ramos, John Chamberlain, James Surls, Jesus Bautista Moroles, and many others since the inception of the show.^[4]

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Art critic

Cain was also an art critic for the *Caller Times* newspaper in Corpus Christi from 1955-1974.^{[3][4][7]}

Additionally, he published articles in *The Southern Artist*, *Ford Times*, *Texas Trends*, *Art Voices South*, and *Texas Artist*, and his art “appeared frequently on the covers of AMT [*The American Music Teacher* magazine].”^{[4][7][8]} After his passing, personal and professional papers were added to the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution; such documents include correspondence, a manuscript on painting, photographs, recordings of lectures, and art reviews.^[6]

References

1. *Who's Who in America*. 40th ed. (1978-79), Vol. 1, Marquis Who's Who, 1978, pp. 500-01. ISBN 0-8379-0140-5.
2. Harold, Margaret, editor. *Prize-Winning Art, Book 6: Paintings, Graphics, Watercolors, Sculpture*. Allied Publications, 1966, p. WC-3. LCCN 65-23508.
3. Kight, Amy Smith, Alan Lessoff, William G. Otton, and Marilyn A. Smith. *Legacy: A History of the Art Museum of South Texas*. Art Museum of South Texas, 1997, p. 22. ISBN 1-888581-01-8.
4. Perkins, Cynthia O. *A Short History of the National Drawing and Small Sculpture Show*. Biblio Publishing, 2016, pp. 1, 54. ISBN 978-1-62249-304-3.
5. “Meeting of Council.” *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, vol. 112, no. 5092, Mar. 1964, pp. 209-11. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41369321>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2022.
6. Joseph Cain papers, 1955-1984. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/joseph-cain-papers-10049#overview>. Accessed 6 Apr. 2022.
7. Hill, Mary, editor. “Joseph Cain Dies in Corpus Christi.” *The Southwestern Watercolor Society Scene*, Nov. 1980, p. 3.

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8. Ulrich, Homer, editor. "Obituary: Joseph A. Cain." *The American Music Teacher*, vol. 30, no. 2, Nov.-Dec. 1980, p. 1.

External Links

"Cain Art Gallery." Del Mar College, <https://www.delmar.edu/offices/art/gallery.html>.

Eddleman, Melinda. "DMC Art Program's Fall 2020 Virtual Exhibit Featuring Late Joseph A. Cain's Works." Del Mar College, 23 Sept. 2020, <https://vikingnews.delmar.edu/dmc-art-programs-fall-2020-virtual-exhibit-featuring-late-joseph-a-cains-works/>.

"Joseph A. Cain: Artist, Teacher, Writer, Marine." *YouTube*, Del Mar College, 10 Sept. 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pNf023iRYdc>.

Mabe, Allison, director. "Joseph Cain: Artist, Teacher, Writer, Marine (Long-Form)." *YouTube*, Del Mar College, 22 Sept. 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xE_FuVhcfc.