



Carl Solway

January 12, 1935 - June 25, 2020

CINCINNATI – Carl E. Solway, gallerist and champion of Cincinnati's arts community, died at his home on June 25, 2020. He was 85.

Solway established his first art gallery in downtown Cincinnati in 1962, called Flair, which began by selling work by local artists and editioned prints by Modern masters. In the late 1960s, however, Solway was introduced to the avant-garde composer John Cage, who inspired him to seek out living artists of his own generation.

Solway worked with Cage to create the composer's first visual artwork, a series of printed Plexiglas panels based on the I-Ching, "Not Wanting to Say Anything about Marcel" (1969). The Plexigrams, as they are now known, led Solway deeper into the international art world. "That was a life-transformative experience for me, both in terms of my personal life and in terms of my career," he said in a 2010 interview.

Flair Gallery became The Carl Solway Gallery in 1970, and Solway began to seek out other internationally known figures with whom to collaborate. He developed a friendship with architect and inventor Buckminster Fuller, and together they created many art objects and editions, including a printed portfolio of Fuller's most famous inventions, as well as a large-scale color silkscreen of his "Dymaxion Air-Ocean World Map" (1980).

In the mid-1980s, Solway brought Korean-born, New York based artist Nam June Paik – now known as the grandfather of video art - to Cincinnati, hiring a crew to help Paik create dozens of large and monumental video art sculptures. Mark Patsfall, artist and master-printer behind Clay Street Press in Over-the-Rhine, led the crew and traveled the world with Solway and Paik installing the complicated objects. Recently, Patsfall called Solway “a joy to work with... He would try to get the most and the best out of you, but for me, it was always as much fun as it was work.”

In 1993 The Solway Gallery re-located to its permanent home – an industrial warehouse on Findlay Street in the West End. There, it hosted up to twelve exhibitions a year, as well as events with dancers, writers, and musicians, and brought museum-quality contemporary art to the Midwest for decades.

“Carl Solway’s generosity and relationships with artists, art-making processes, museums and the community indelibly raised Cincinnati’s place in 20th century contemporary art discourse,” wrote Cincinnati Art Museum curator Kristin Spangenberg for the museum’s 2016 exhibition, “Not in New York: Carl Solway and Cincinnati,” which traced the gallery’s fifty-year history.

Solway helped build public and private collections by supporting artists first, often providing materials, connections, or simply an unrestricted space to create. Jay Bolotin, a Cincinnati-based artist championed by Solway, called him “perhaps the last of a certain breed - a gallery owner involved in the production of art, willing to help finance a project, interested in visiting the studio multiple times to see progress.”

Ann Hamilton, an artist with whom Solway often collaborated, took over his booth at the Art Dealers Association of America (ADAA) fair in New York City

in 2014. “Carl took delight in all of it,” Hamilton said in an email. “He loved the unpredictable. He was up for any game. He believed making art and making money for artists should both be fun. With him, it was.”

Solway made a conscious effort to support and exhibit female artists. MacArthur winner Joan Snyder recalled meeting Solway early in her career in New York in the mid-1970s, when he showed her paintings and even bought a few, which, she said, “was unheard of” for a dealer. “He was strong in his beliefs, smart, kind, sensitive... willing and even very excited to show my work, to show women's work... which at the time was not a particularly popular move.”

Solway was steadfast in his advocacy of Public Art in Cincinnati. In the 1970s he led the Urban Walls program, inviting local artists to paint murals on building facades downtown long before the term Street Art was coined. He worked with the Contemporary Arts Center to commission “Metrobot” (1988), Paik’s 27-foot-tall outdoor sculpture that even now greets CAC visitors from its home on Seventh Street. Julian Stanczak’s “Additional” (2007), the block-long Op Art mural on the Fifth Third Bank parking lot, also owes its conception to Solway, who suggested Stanczak to the bank, which later commissioned the project.

Raphaela Platow, Director of the Contemporary Arts Center, said of Solway, “he inspired us to be more open-minded, thoughtful, and passionate about the lives we live and the communities we wish to create. Art was Carl's medium, catalyst, and facilitator, but his curious intellect, warm heart, and wise spirit left us and our beloved city changed for the better.”

Carl Solway Gallery has been a member of the Art Dealers Association of America, since 1968 and the International Fine Print Dealers Association,

since 2008.

Solway's relationships changed the landscape of art in Cincinnati and made his gallery a regular presence in the international art world, from the first Art Basel fair in 1970 to his most recent booth at the ADAA. Evidence of Solway's visionary career can be found all around Cincinnati - including at his namesake gallery, now run by his son Michael – and in museums, galleries and public spaces throughout the world.

Carl Ellis Solway was born in Chicago on January 12, 1935, the son of Arthur and Sylvia Maltz. He relocated to Cincinnati with his mother at age five, after the death of Mr. Maltz. He graduated from Walnut Hills High School and the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business returning to Cincinnati in 1956 to take over his stepfather Harry Solway's furniture store in Findlay Market after his death.

He is survived by his beloved wife of 42 years, Elizabeth Musser Solway; sons Arthur (Wen Hai Jun), Michael (Angela Jones), and Ned (Ellen); grandchildren David (Mayuko Otaki), Rex, Maxwell, and Shao Wen Xuan (Frances); great-grandchild Shion Otaki Solway (Reece); sisters Barbara (Leonard) Cohan, Tamara Kramer, and Ethel Peal; former wife and friend Gail Forberg (mother of his sons); and many cherished artists, collectors, and friends.

A private graveside service will be held, and a celebration of life will follow at a later date. Memorial contributions may be sent to The Contemporary Arts Center, 44 E 6TH St., Cincinnati, OH 45202; The Cincinnati Art Museum, 953 Eden Park Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45202; Wave Pool, 2940 Colerain Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45225; or Hospice of Cincinnati, 4360 Cooper Rd., Cincinnati, OH 45242.