

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

**ON THE DEATH OF EMERITUS PROFESSOR SANTOS ZINGALE**

Santos Zingale, age 91, died on October 4, 1999 at St. Mary's Care Center in Madison. He was born in Milwaukee on April 17, 1908, the son of Vincent and Teresa Corso Zingale. He attended Lincoln High School and went on to the Milwaukee State Teachers' College, now the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where he played football and received his art training, graduating in 1930 with a degree in art education. After spending some time in New York to participate in the art scene, he returned to Milwaukee and married Olga Cogan, who preceded him in death in 1970. They had a daughter, Zoya. He married Joan N. Huber on May 20, 1971.

Santos attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison and graduated with his masters in education in 1943. As part of the degree, he painted a mural for the library in the School of Education. While attending school he was the graduate assistant to American regionalist painter and Artist-in-Residence John Steuart Curry.

He enlisted in the U. S. Navy in 1944 where he made hundreds of drawings of Navy life aboard ship. Several of these works were presented by the Wisconsin Veterans' Museum in Madison in 1994 as an exhibition honoring the artist and are now part of the museum's permanent collection.

Professor Zingale joined the Art Department of the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1946 where he taught painting and drawing until his retirement in 1978. He was awarded the title of professor emeritus upon retirement.

Over the years Santos Zingale followed his own intuition and developed his personal aesthetic direction. Linked to tradition but firmly a part of his own time, he persistently resisted the pressures to conform to changes of style and fashion in art while asserting his own imagery. His paintings seemed more closely related to the sensibility of European painting than to American. Only in his early work is there the brashness or literalism of American art of the time. His work reflected a sensitive adaptation of many of the formal and conceptual developments of twentieth century art that Europeans of a similar age experienced. Perhaps Santos' closeness to Europe through his Italian heritage and his several stays abroad accounts for this.

Professor Zingale's works are representations of subjects of the figure, the city, the landscape. His works are not realistic, but are expressions of thought and vision. Over the years his work changed from scenes clearly tied to the visual facts of urban realism painted in colors emphasizing strong contrasts of light and dark, to colorful paintings where fact and fantasy exists side by side. His work begins with observable reality and through a process of heightened perception and imagining, transforms the observable into the imagined. Often a Zingale painting presents a façade of recognizable shapes and forms that upon closer inspection undergo a metamorphosis into fanciful shapes and figures related to one another by playful form-making.

In the 1930s, Professor Zingale's paintings expressed social and political themes. His subjects ranged from the conditions of African-American life to emigrants fleeing air raids of the Spanish Civil War. He opposed Fascism and social thugs, and his themes reflected his disdain for political oppression. Santos felt obliged to express visually his feeling for the dispossessed, and for the victims of social, military viciousness. He also had a concern about urban destruction of the old neighborhoods of Milwaukee and documented the people, streets, and buildings of his family neighborhood before World War II in starkly contrasting, strongly felt, emotive, social images.

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During the depression he was part of the WPA Federal Arts Project, painting murals of social scenes for the Post Office in Sturgeon Bay, the Henry Mitchell High School Library in Racine, and many other locations in the state. The arts projects encouraged experimentation in painting and provided for more chemically sound materials and an aesthetically broader range of potentials. He stressed these lessons to his students during his long academic career.

Gradually, Santos moved away from painting political statements to things that he had seen, and often drawn during his travels: urban architecture, Roman ruins and views of Italy, canyons and cliffs in the Southwest desert, fragments from his daily life such as still life objects in his studio, uprooted trees or the chairs and tables on the Memorial Union Terrace. In all these subjects, he finds or invents the common factors of design, pattern and color. The real subject of Zingale's painting is the process of painting itself.

In a discussion about his development as an artist of his generation, he described, "With my early work I used thematic ideas as form and content. Eventually, the form became more important. Back in the '30s the issue of form versus content was liberally discussed, more so than now, because it started in the art schools and carried on through our professional careers.

"To me form always takes priority. I'm not abstract at all. I would never knock abstract art, you understand, but I like to relate to something in pictorial form. Something I can grasp and play with in terms of color and form. Something to which I can lend my own interpretation, my own reactions.

"I guess if I had to shove myself into a niche, I'd choose to be called a romantic painter. A lot of that is reflected in my landscapes of the Southwest."

Santos Zingale's art work spanned some seventy years, showing his dedication to the painter's task, the consistency of effort, the devotion to the craft that makes him a "painter's painter." His paintings, drawings and prints are included in museum and private collections throughout the United States.

A devoted teacher, Professor Zingale was an inspiration to several generations of students. He loved teaching and the enjoyment of students and his fellow faculty colleagues. He especially loved teaching introductory painting to encourage people to follow their dreams and live a creative life. His passion for painting was a way of life, a part of his everyday existence like breathing and eating.

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