

NEW YORK : JUNE 10, 1966

FEELEY OBIT

PAUL FEELEY, a leading avant-garde artist, died today at Memorial Hospital of acute leukemia. His age was 56.

Though Feeley's paintings, and more recently his sculptures, were the subject of controversy, he was universally recognized as a brilliant and thoroughly original artist. His influence on the younger generation, both through his ~~work~~^{art} and his teaching at Bennington College, was ~~xxx~~ subtle and far-reaching. He was known primarily as a painter ~~of~~ who employed simple, abstract forms, smoothly laid colors and symmetrically organized formats. His cool, classical approach stood in direct opposition to the painterly, expressionistic styles developed in some modern art.

The artist's first ^{important} one-man exhibition in New York was held at the Tibor de Nagy gallery in 1955., though he had shown at the New School for ^{Scien} Research in 1948, ~~and~~ at the Santa Barbara Museum ~~xxx~~ in 1950 and at The San Francisco Museum of Fine Arts in 1951. In 1954 he was included by the well-known critic, Clement Greenberg, in an exhibition entitled, "Emerging Talent", at the Kootz gallery. Like Feeley, a number of artists from the Greenberg show, which included Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland and Helen Frankenthaler, have since become known as the successors to the famous Abstract Expressionist movement of the first post-World War II period. He exhibited at the de Nagy gallery again in 1957 and 1958, and at the Betty Parsons gallery in 1960, 1962, 1963, 1964 and 1965. An exhibition at the Kasmin gallery in London in 1964 brought forth both laudatory and virulent criticism.

Slightly older than some of the artists with whom his work has been associated, Feeley's career was interrupted by the four and one-half years he spent in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II. A volunteer at the outset, he served as a sergeant in the island-hopping campaigns in the South Pacific, finally arriving in Japan, whose art and culture he had long admired.

From his visual experiences in Japan, Spain, Greece and North Africa he gathered the power to create abstract forms of universal significance, forms quite independent of ~~the~~ purely western traditions based on naturalism or geometry. The resultant exotic character of these forms, often described as dumbbell or baluster-like, painted in clear, non-relational colors, gave his paintings and his recent sculptures, an air of mystery even while the pictures remained cool and disciplined.

The artist's struggle, Feeley believed, was to get away from the personal, everyday kind of self-involvement he considered common^{place}. His own style from 1947 on went through a series of changes toward that end. One critic pointed out that though he had painted some fine pictures in the Abstract Expressionist manner he seemed to be uncomfortable with its ~~excessive~~ demands for obvious personal exhibitionism. Feeley was described as having a "classical turn of mind".

In an interview with Lawrence Alloway, curator of the Guggenheim Museum, Feeley pointed out that his "fight with Abstract Expressionism had to do with deciding that all that dynamic stuff was more than the ever-loving world could stand. Man's nutty enough. What he really needs is something to allow him to ease off."

He wanted his art to provide a sense of ~~the~~ serenity and objectivity. He struggled with the elements of his ^{art} to bring this about, and in recent years was credited with having achieved his ~~xxx~~ aim.

Gene Baro, the London critic, writing about the sculpture ~~xxxx~~ in the artist's last show at Betty Parsons gallery in December, said that he knew of "no sculpture of the present or past that uses color so intimately with structure. It is as if the pieces were contrived of color itself." It was evident in the new sculpture that the artist had succeeded in creating forms which could be transferred from the two-dimensionality of painting to the three-dimensional ~~xxx~~ requirements of sculpture without a loss of power to either means of expression. A number of sketches for an even further extension of his sculptural imagination ~~xxx~~ exist and are reputed to be under construction by technicians.

Feeley was born in Des Moines, Iowa ~~in 1913~~ on July 27, 1910, and grew up in Palo Alto, California. He became involved in art at an early age. Some of his drawings were sent by a friend to Cecilia Beaux, the famous French-American painter, who insisted that he come to New York and study with her. Later he studied with Thomas Hart Benton and George Bridgman and at the Beaux Arts Institute of Design.

He began teaching at ~~he taught at~~ Cooper Union Art School ~~in~~ in 1932, ~~1939~~ heading the Department of Industrial Design there from 1937 until he went to Bennington College in Bennington, Vermont, in 1939. He was a member of that ~~Bennington~~ faculty at the time of his death.

At Bennington he was not only instrumental in the development of college educational policy, but also in forming one of the most vital art departments in ^{the} academic world. He attracted to

Consistent with his beliefs that the student should be exposed to the newest and the best on the contemporary scene, he was responsible for organizing some of the earliest comprehensive exhibitions of the work of such artists as David Smith, Jackson Pollock and Hans Hofmann.

Mr. Feeley is survived by his wife, Helen Webster Feeley, his daughters, Gillian and Jennifer, his mother, Mrs. John T. Feeley, ~~xxxxxx~~ and his brother, Daniel, both of Palo Alto, California, and another brother, Jerome W. of Los Altos, California. The remains will be cremated and returned to California. A memorial service will be held at a later date. Friends who wish to, may make a gift ~~xxxxxxx~~ to the Cancer Fund. ~~xxxxxxx~~