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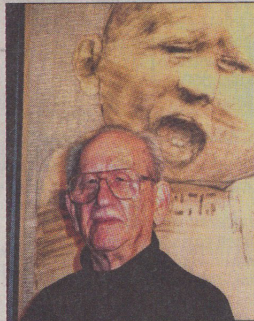
Lasansky pushed medium, was printmaking pioneer

By Diane Heldt
 The Gazette

IOWA CITY — Mauricio Lasansky established one of the country's premier printmaking departments at the University of Iowa and pioneered new techniques in the medium, pushing printmaking to become as varied and respected as painting and sculpture, friends and others in the art community said this week after Lasansky's death.

The Buenos Aires, Argentina, native came to the United States in 1943 on a Guggenheim fellowship in New York and joined the UI two years later, establishing the printmaking workshop in the School of Art and Art History in 1945.

Lasansky had a major impact on the field of printmaking, say many who knew and worked with him, both through his own artistic works and also through his training of students who spread around the coun-



Lasansky studio photo

Mauricio Lasansky stands in front of one of his famous "Nazi Drawings," a collection that examines the brutality of Nazi Germany. Lasansky, a former University of Iowa professor, died Monday in Iowa City at age 97.

try like seeds to teach in other printmaking departments.

Lasansky, a UI professor from 1945 to 1984, died at his Iowa City home Monday. He was 97. A

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Lasansky/Work in C.R.

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private funeral will be held in Iowa City.

"Lasansky's lifelong achievement is that he really did bring an incredibly innovative sensibility to printmaking as a medium, and that can't be minimized," said Priscilla Steele, who came to the UI for graduate study the year after Lasansky retired and is now with the Campbell Steele Gallery in Marion. "He has an incredible, unmatched legacy in the field of printmaking."

The legacy Lasansky left is his work seen in major museums around the country, including a large collection at the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, said his son, Phillip Lasansky of Iowa City. But Lasansky had equal love for teaching, and he took pride in both aspects of his career, his son said.

"He was one of those people who had the heart of a racehorse and the vitality of two to three people. He was never a quitter," Phillip Lasansky said. "If the work spoke to people, for him, he felt it was a success."

Lasansky's best-known work, "The Nazi Drawings," is a collection of 30 pieces and one triptych that examines the brutality of Nazi Germany.

Lane Wyrick, a filmmaker and former Iowa City resident, won awards for his 2000 documentary about those works.

Wyrick interviewed Lasansky several times during the two years he spent filming "The Nazi

Drawings."

Lasansky told Wyrick he wanted people to look directly at the atrocities of the Holocaust through his drawings, to feel how awful it was.

"The first time I saw the drawings I was very disturbed by what I saw," Wyrick said. "Then I realized after talking to him, that's exactly what he wanted from them. He wanted to reach people, hit them in the gut basically with the scenes, the atrocities. It's supposed to be powerful and disturbing."

Lasansky combined imagination with great technical inventiveness, said Terry Pitts, executive director of the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, home to a Lasansky gallery with more than 200 prints and drawings.

That vision as an artist, combined with technical wizardry and a desire to push the medium of printmaking to new levels, is what made Lasansky so special and important, Pitts said.

"He changed the printmaking process itself in some pretty dramatic ways, making it possible to make larger, more complicated prints than people had ever attempted before," Pitts said.

"Everyone knows how important Grant Wood was and still is as a legacy. I think Mauricio is the other artist who has the same kind of national and international reputation and that will just continue to grow."

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