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J. Jay McVicker

(American 1911-2005)

Jesse Jay McVicker, known professionally as J. Jay McVicker, was an American artist. Although best known for his printmaking - particularly his early aquatints and his experimental use of intaglio techniques - McVicker was equally proficient as a painter and sculptor throughout his career. McVicker was born October 18, 1911, one of five children born to Jesse Allen and Clara Mae (Hendrick) McVicker, and from childhood was known as J. Jay. In 1915, the family moved to Berlin, Oklahoma, a small rural community northwest of Oklahoma City.

He attended school in the nearby town of Weatherford, Oklahoma, and became a championship wrestler. He enrolled at the Southwestern Institute of Technology (now Southwestern Oklahoma State University), also in Weatherford, from 1930 to 1932. In 1938, he married Laura Beth Paul (1909–1993), while he was a student at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Oklahoma State University).

A student of Ella Jack and Doel Reed at Oklahoma State University, McVicker showed early promise as a Regionalist watercolorist and printmaker, and received both a BA (1940) and an MA (1941) from the school. Because the university didn't offer a Master of Fine Arts degree at the time, McVicker wrote an art history thesis that surveyed the use of color in European painting from the Renaissance through the early twentieth century. After graduation, McVicker joined the faculty at OSU. He became head of the Art Department in 1959, and retired on May 31, 1977.

By the time the United States joined the Second World War, McVicker was well-known for his Regionalist prints and watercolors. During the 1940s McVicker produced black and white aquatints depicting his native Oklahoma landscape as well as industrialscapes in a very representational style. In the late 1940s and early 1950s he introduced color to his images in aquatint as well as silkscreen. It was during this time that he began shifting his style towards cubism and abstraction, and even non-objectivity in all media.

Apart from a couple of years in California and in the U.S. Navy, McVicker spent his entire life in Oklahoma. His work, however, was exhibited widely, including at the Museum of Non-Objective Painting and the Downtown Gallery in New York City, and the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles in Paris, France.

McVicker passed away in Stillwater, Oklahoma, in 2004.

His exhibits included San Francisco Museum of Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Seattle Museum of Art, Museum of Non----Objective Painting, New York, Chicago Art Institute, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, Denver Art Museum, William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, National Academy of Design, Downtown Gallery, New York, Pasadena Art Institute, Oakland Art Gallery, Isaac Delgado Museum of Art, New Orleans, Library of Congress, United States National Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Carnegie Institute, The Print Club of Philadelphia, Joslyn Memorial Art Museum, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Salon Des Realites Nouvelles, Paris, Galleria Origine, Rome, Whitney Museum of American Art and Momentum Mid----Continental, Chicago.

He is included in the following collections: Library of Congress, Stephen F. Austin State Teachers College, Texas, Springfield Art Museum, Missouri, Seattle Art Museum (Northwest Printmaking Collection), Brooks Memorial Art Gallery, Memphis, Tenn., Birmingham Public Library, Chapman Collection, Society of American Etchers Collection, California Water Color Society Collection, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, Wichita Art Association, Chicago Society of Etchers Collection, Philbrook Art Center, Laguna Beach Art Association, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Joslyn Art Museum, numerous private collections and United States National Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

He has had exhibits in group shows of prints abroad including Istanbul, Athens, Cairo, Manila, London, Brussels, Lyon, Rome, Vienna, Belgrade, Madrid, Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo, Mexico, Norway, Casablanca, Saigon, Paris, Bordighera, Lima, Panama and Germany.

He is included in "Who''s Who in American Art", "Who''s Who in America" and "Who''s Who in the World."