

Applause

Feb 19, 2009



Lionel Kabel, the 2002 Arts Council of Livingston Parish Artist of the Year, died Saturday after a long fight with cancer. Many friends in the art community, recall him with an admiration prevented from becoming awe by Kabel's modesty and uncommon generosity.

Carol Blanchard ran into Kabel at the first Denham Springs Fine Art Association meeting she attended and remembered him from their frequent contacts when he did free-lance work for the Baton Rouge advertising company she worked for.

"That was about 40 years ago," Blanchard said, "but when we met again, we must have talked 40 minutes. After that, whenever I had a problem with a painting, I could go to him. He might also have a book or a photo to help me. He was just such a giving person. I'll always miss him."

Another close artist friend, Bonnie Smith Williams, said, "Lionel was an honest, kind man. His friendship was an honor and blessing to me. _ He was a master artist, the best of all of us. The last time I spoke with him he was telling me that he thought he was all done with painting, but thought he would go and sketch some men gathering oysters._ Margaret (his wife) told me last night (at the wake) that he did go out to the studio and sketch the scene, but he never got any farther."_

Kabel did, however, recently complete a lighthouse painting. When he told his wife, they'd have to sell it, she told him 'no,' she was going to keep this one.

Williams' husband David, who formed his own friendship with Kabel, said, "We have lost a generous, decent person ... who thought he was never worthy of praise, but deserved it more than any other."

Betty Core, another frequent visitor in recent months, brought Kabel her vegetable beef soup, trying unsuccessfully to drop it off at the door so as not to disturb him. But, she said, "He would make me come in and we would talk, and he was always so cheerful, could always look at the sunny side. I brought him some homemade blueberry wine after Christmas, and he said he hadn't had any since he was 16 and we talked about that. He didn't talk about his cancer until the last two weeks and then he said he wasn't afraid, but he hated to leave Margaret."

Mike Avant said, "Lionel had a real zest for life. He loved what he did, was very meticulous in the research and took a lot of pride in it. And it shows."

Bob Mellon shared a 2006 show with Kabel at Merging of the Arts Gallery where Mellon was billed as "witty," Bill Rice as "wise" and Kabel as "wondrous." During Kabel's 18-month illness, Mellon was a frequent visitor.

"Lionel was the most generous friend you could ever want," Mellon said. "To me he was the best artist in town. Of course, he would shake his head and laugh whenever I said that. His style was that of almost pin-point realism, and yet his generous spirit extended to a warm appreciation of my own work which is fully abstract. We enjoyed an exchange of ideas that was rewarding to both of us as artists. But beyond that, we were just real buddies. I'm among many who will really miss the encouragement and positive energy that came along with being Lionel's friend."

Rice said, "He was one of the finest men I ever met - a wonderful person - a talented, great artist. I just could go on ... I just loved him. We're going to miss him."

Michelle Conques, who put the "wise, witty and wondrous" men together in the show at her gallery, MOTA, said, "I can honestly say that Lionel Kabel was the most selfless and encouraging man I ever met. He will be missed by all of us."

She added a quote, from I Corinthians 5: "Love never seeks its own way."

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