

From the Albright-Knox Art Gallery

Dr. Irving Forman

May 15, 1921 – September 6, 2009

The Albright-Knox Art Gallery announces the passing of its great benefactor and friend, Dr. Irving Forman, on Sunday, September 6, in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The son of Russian and Polish parents, Irving Forman was born in Chicago in 1921. His father worked as a tailor, and his mother stayed at home to care for a large extended family. Dr. Forman attended the Illinois Institute of Technology, completing his pre-medical studies in three years, and then went on to the University of Illinois College of Medicine. He served in the Army after World War II and was assigned to duty in hospitals in Alaska, Hawaii, and Colorado. Thereafter, he practiced cardiology until 1985, when he and his wife Natalie retired and moved to Santa Fe.

It was in 1946 that Dr. Forman met Natalie Berg, beginning what Gallery Director Louis Grachos describes as “a lifetime of love and looking at art that gave rise to an outstanding collection of paintings, sculpture, and works on paper that now, through their generosity, is in

the Permanent Collection of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery.” The Formans knew early on that they shared a passion for art and began in the simplest way: they saved their money, took the Greyhound bus from Chicago to New York to visit art galleries, and made their purchases on a modest budget, sometimes even on installment plans. One of the first works they purchased was a sculpture by Pablo Picasso. However, they soon became interested in non-objective art and in 1968 became one of the first collectors to purchase a work by Robert Ryman, the prominent Minimalist and Conceptualist painter.

During their sixty-five years of marriage, the Formans formed three distinct art collections. Their last and brilliant collection of monochromatic art – comprising 161 paintings and sculpture and more than 300 works on paper – constitutes the Natalie and Irving Forman Collection at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. At the time of the gift in 2003, it was the largest donation of artworks in the history of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. The Formans also made the equally noteworthy gift of their art-related papers and original artists’ correspondence to the Albright-Knox Art Gallery Archives at the G. Robert Strauss, Jr., Memorial Library. Together, these rich resources make the Albright-Knox one of the most important repositories of monochromatic art in the country. The Gallery presented the Forman

gift in two major exhibitions: *The Natalie and Irving Forman Collection of Paintings and Sculpture* in 2005 and the *Natalie and Irving Forman Collection of Works on Paper* in 2008.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Mr. Grachos expressed the museum's gratitude for the extraordinary generosity of the Formans: "While Natalie and Irving did not have a direct tie to Buffalo and the Western New York region, they came to view the city – and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery – as their new home, one of great importance to them, for it now protects, cares for, and exhibits their great art collection for generations to come. We are enormously honored to have been chosen by the Formans for this important responsibility."

Dr. Forman is survived by his wife of sixty-five years, Natalie, two daughters, Lisa Forman Neall (George Neall) and Gabrielle Forman (Michael Plaut) and a grandson, Alec Rezanka.

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