

## Andy Wing: Spirituality and Reverence for Nature



*Sourcery*

A decade after Jackson Pollack poured paint onto his canvasses in his Long Island studio, Andy Wing threw and splattered paint onto canvases in his Laguna Beach garden. Unable to afford a studio, Andy took advantage of the temperate So Cal climate by working outdoors, gradually evolving his own style of nature-based abstract expressionism, which he called “lyric expressionism.”

During Andy’s five decades (1957-2004) living and painting in Laguna, he built a reputation as a notorious character who would never compromise his art in favor of commercial interests. At 6’ 5” tall, with a wiry frame, bushy hair and beard, enormous hands and feet, he endeared (and sometimes alienated) himself to the town’s artists and art lovers. They still talk about his endless creativity, spirituality, love of nature, sense of humor, and particularly about his left-leaning political, social and environmental opinions. Through his public writings and political activism, he helped save his bucolic community from encroaching development.

The artist, who made many thousands of artworks, exhibited at Laguna’s Festival of the Arts, at the Laguna Art Museum, and in galleries in Laguna and in greater Orange and Los Angeles Counties. With the 2011 the advent of a Pacific Standard Time, Miriam Smith of Art Resource Group, Newport Beach, seized the opportunity to revive interest in the late artist, creating the exhibition, “Andy Wing: Works from 1954-1997.”

Andy dedicated his central aesthetic purpose to immersing his most personal self in the creative process and merging both with nature. Smith wrote in the catalog, accompanying the 2011 exhibition, "His art, his causes, his friends and his lifestyle were at once reflections of him and the agents that shaped him as an artist and a person, allowing every aspect of his being, the wind, and the sun to exert an influence on the paint as it expanded onto his visceral compositions." (At Wing's March, 2004 memorial service, Bolton Colburn, former Laguna Art Museum director, remarked, "The only voice he consistently listened to was that of nature.")

The 16 works in the exhibition, from 14-inch diameter to 91-inch wide shaped canvasses and a few sculptures, are examples of his "lyric expressionism." (Wing borrowed this term from musician Béla Bartók.) Though related to and influenced by abstract expressionism, the show traced how he went beyond this style with his intuitive involvement of body and spirit. Using large amounts of paints in pastels and earth tones, colors echoing the southwestern art he admired as a young man, he built fluid paintings and sculptures. These take on organic, biomorphic shapes and fields, with no figuration, landscape or horizon lines.

Working outdoors, he often incorporated the leaves, dirt and branches that fell onto the canvasses - "gifts," he called them, from his Henri Rousseau-style garden, fertilized with organic compost. In his "Environmental Paintings and Murals" (1959-1986), he threw paint and sometimes his body onto the canvasses he had hung from Eucalyptus trees. To these, he added plaster for depth and shape, fiberglass dust, tiles, marbles, dice, bits of mirrors, pottery shards, woods chips and more, additions that add assemblage aspects to the works.

Andy also incorporated the newest artistic techniques and materials of the sixties and seventies, including plastics and acrylic resin/polymer emulsion paint, making hybrid paintings/sculptures that often take on semi-transparent finishes from the resins. He researched Titian and the Venetian masters' use of grounds and glazes, and collected his own pigment powders from around the world.

The prism through which Andy Wing created was his deeply rooted spirituality and reverence for nature.