

Don Lent

Dana Professor Emeritus of Art Donald R. Lent died June 22, 2020, at age 86.

A native of Marblehead, Mass., Don served in the U.S. Army as a Russian translator in Germany, then earned a bachelor's degree from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and B.F.A. and M.F.A. degrees from Yale University. He taught at UCSB before joining the Bates faculty as Dana Professor of Art in 1970. He retired in 1999.

His arrival as the college's first tenured professor of art marked the birth of the modern visual arts program at Bates. "When Professor Lent arrived, there was no sustained major in art, no museum, no systematic courses in painting, drawing, printmaking, ceramics, or photography," said then-President Donald Harward in 2000. "Few students even had studio experiences, for there weren't any studios. Professor Lent was the primary architect of those opportunities. He brought together the students, the faculty, the spaces, and the programs." As the college's first cohort of art majors were set to graduate in 1973, Don created for them the Senior Thesis Exhibition, now an annual and "vital testimony to Professor Lent's contribution to Bates," said Harward.

Don taught painting, drawing, and printmaking at Bates and served as department chair. Upon his arrival, he began to forge the department's culture through engagement with the campus, Lewiston, and Maine communities. During Short Term in 1971, he and his students created a mural on Lisbon Street depicting the world of the pedestrian. Later, Don painted *Scenes from the Canterbury Tales*, a 5-foot by 40-foot mural in Chase Hall that for decades greeted students as they entered Memorial Commons. His models for the project included family, faculty, students, friends, and other colleagues in Maine. (The mural is now preserved in storage.)

He created sets and costumes for Bates theater productions; wrote for the progressive weekly *Maine Times*; illustrated *Heat Lightning*, a collection of

poems by Alan Stephens published in 1967; and published numerous book reviews. In the early 1980s, he designed the commemorative medal presented to recipients of the college's Benjamin Elijah Mays Award honoring outstanding alumni accomplishment.

As an artist, Don created paintings, etchings, and drawings on a broad range of subjects from still life to farm animals to architectural forms. Notably, his series of paintings of bridges became a recurring theme, inspired by the geometric patterns he observed during commutes and travels to and from Bates over various river bridges. He exhibited throughout the world, including solo exhibitions at the Esther Bear Gallery in Santa Barbara; Maine Coast Artists in Rockport; University of Maine; State University of New York, Binghamton; Bowdoin College Museum of Art; and Bates College Museum of Art. His group exhibitions included shows at the Grolier Society, New York; the Barone Gallery, New York; Harvard University; New York Public Library; Long Beach (Calif.) State College; Martin Village Gallery, London; and, with Bates art colleagues Robert Feintuch, Paul Heroux, Joseph Nicoletti, the 1989 exhibition *New Visions* at the Bates museum, which has a number of his works in its collection.

In retirement, Don lived in Dover, N.H., maintained studios in the area, and exhibited widely in local galleries. He served two terms in the New Hampshire House of Representatives.

Survivors include his wife, Robin Lent; children Michael Lent, Jennifer Lent, Jesse Lent, Charlotte Lent, and Lucy Lent Barretto; stepdaughters Katherine Torriero and Abigail Davis; four grandchildren; and their families. A memorial service will be held at a later date.

To view the complete obituary for Donald Lent, please visit: <https://bit.ly/donald-lent> To view a Bates News story about Donald Lent, please visit: <https://www.bates.edu/news/2020/07/09/dana-professor-emeritus-of-art-donald-lent-dies-at-age-86/>