IN MEMORIAM

LOREN MOZLEY

Loren Mozley, who died in Austin on September 21, 1989, was born in Brockport, Illinois, on October 2, 1905, the second of three sons of Dr. and Mrs. Mozley. Before he was one year old the family moved to New Mexico, where his father practiced as a country physician - in the Sacramentoos, at the San Pedro mine, at lumber camps in the Zunis or in the Jemez mountains, and at the pueblo of Laguna, where one of his patients introduced the 11-year-old Loren to the materials of oil painting. Through his high school years in Albuquerque, reading and sports, especially hunting and fishing, competed with painting for his time.

He attended the University of New Mexico from 1923 through 1926 and was president of the student body in his third and last year at the school. Always a person of strong convictions - and the courage to stand behind them - he led the successful student protest that culminated in the resignation of the university's president.

At the end of that school year, the lure of a full-time commitment to painting caused young Mozley to depart the university and head for Taos, which had been established as an artists' colony in the late 1800's and was now a mecca for famous artists and writers. (Mabel Dodge had enticed to Taos such luminaries from the East Coast as D.H. Lawrence, Dorothy Brett, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Marsden Hartley.)

Mozley supported himself with various jobs. For a time he was Mabel Dodge's secretary-typist; at another time he worked as night clerk at a Taos hotel, keeping a loaded revolver behind the desk and out of sight, in case of trouble. This last job enabled him to paint during the day.

For the next several years young Mozley lived and painted in New Mexico and developed lasting friendships with artists working in the art colonies of Taos and Santa Fe in the 1920's
and 1930's. One of those friends was Andrew Dasburg, who was a leader in what became known as the "Modern Movement" in American art. Loren Mozley was also a long-time friend of such first-rank artists as Georgia O'Keeffe and John Marin. A tangible memento of his friendship with Georgia O'Keeffe is a set of deer antlers she gave him in the 70's and which, from that time, decorated his mantelpiece.

In 1929 Loren Mozley sailed for France to seek, if not his fortune, then wisdom and a focus for his painting. While in Paris he studied at the academies of the Grande Chaumiere and Colarossi. He also profited from the time he spent copying paintings in the Louvre. There were as well side trips to Italy. In 1931, wiser and more focused, but with only a few coins in the pants pocket of his only suit of clothes, he boarded a freighter on the French coast (fare courtesy of the American Embassy in Paris) and set sail for Hoboken, New Jersey.

When he disembarked, he decided to visit his friend, John Marin, who lived about 20 miles away. Using Shanks' mare, the only transportation available to him at that moment, he arrived at Marin's house in the middle of the night and, despite this, received a warm welcome from his "copan."

The next five years were spent in New York City, where he supported himself with a job in a commercial engraver's shop and continued to draw and paint. There he met Diego Rivera and Freda Kahlo. In later years he was fond of recalling that he once "gave the bride away" at a mock wedding of Rivera and Kahlo.

1935 was an eventful year for Loren Mozley: he married his beautiful wife, Wilma, and his alma mater, harboring no negative feelings about his role in the departure of its president in 1926, summoned him to teach painting and art history on its campus. He did this as well as serving on the board of directors of the Harwood Foundation of the University of New Mexico for two years, during the second of which he was also the director of the University of New Mexico Field School in Taos.
In May of 1937, the College of Fine Arts of the University of Texas, comprised of the Departments of Art, Drama, and Music, was created by an act of the legislature. For the Art Department, Ward Lockwood was hired first, to be the chair. Thereupon he contacted his friend and fellow painter, Loren Mozley, and invited him to come on down to Austin to help get things going.

Thus it was that in August of 1938 Loren and Wilma arrived in Austin in an open Ford roadster on a day that Mozley described as "hot as hell." He went on to say, in an unusually even-handed way, that though the heat of the Texas summer made him feel rather sorry he’d come, he found "the community friendly."

Even though initially the physical facilities for art classes were "miserable," Mr. Mozley said that "We had exhibitions from the beginning." Some of those exhibitions were held in the Main Building's stately, carpeted Academic Room 212, where Regents held their meetings.

Mozley recalled that during this time Dr. J. W. Battle, professor of classics, reportedly had complained to John W. Calhoun, U.T.'s ad interim president, that the "carpets were taking a beating" from those attending the exhibitions. According to Mozley, Chairman Lockwood told Dr. Battle the only way to solve the problem was to put the paintings on the floor and hang the carpets on the wall.

In 1956, at the request of then-chairman Donald Weismann, Mozley submitted a resume of his professional activity. It is relevant to quote from that document as it pertains to the beginnings and early days of the department and the role that Loren Mozley played:

"Mr. Ward Lockwood requested my appointment when he was named Chairman of the Art Department in 1938, and I arrived in Austin in August of that year. At that time the Art Department consisted merely of a printed "catalog," a generous budget, and certain unpartitioned space in the Old Library Building. The next four years were full of hopes and hard work, elaborating curricula and preparing courses, buying equipment and seeking space, choosing staff and trying to establish plans and policies for the future - even including
several sets of building plans and ideal specifications! We worked free of precedent and tried hard not to foul ourselves up in unnecessary ways. One year of work was offered, and another was added each year as staff and equipment and experience accumulated. My share in these tasks is known to those who were here. I taught various laboratory classes, several for the first time that they were offered at Texas, and had a part in determining their content. I also filled in with a class in art history, pending appointment of a trained historian; this class improved as window shades, projector, slides, books, and colored reproductions were gradually acquired. I helped the local merchants set up basic inventories of art supplies. And I talked to all kinds of groups over the State, and, for two years, gave a more serious series of lectures at the Witte Museum, besides serving as jurymen for numerous regional exhibitions. I was made an Assistant Professor at the end of my first year at Texas.

"In order to establish our first Summer Session, I resigned as Director of the Field School at Taos, and afterwards served as Chairman for many summer terms. I helped interview our first students and served on the Registration Committee until about 1947, doing most of the degree counseling and transfer credit evaluation during this period. Faculty duties were lightened as the staff increased.

"During these years, I painted a number of pictures which were exhibited in good shows, and completed several mural sketches for which I was awarded a commission for the Alvin, Texas, Post Office.

"We participated in the first activities of the Institute of Latin American Studies, and I helped Adolfo Best-Maugard prepare a basic set of Mexican slides, a duplicate of which was until lately in use at the National University in Mexico.

"It fell my lot to serve as Acting Chairman during the war years (1942-45) when the faculty was disrupted, promotions were frozen, and many lives became uncertain. Enrollment did not drop as anticipated, so we did our best to hold things together at a normal level, to protect the positions of the colleagues who were in service, and to provide good instruction for the students in our classes. Meanwhile the University was embroiled in a bitter contest between Administration and Regents, a situation provoking lasting rancor and costing us the services of several of our best men. I served, throughout this controversy, on the Special Committee of Eleven which was charged with providing legislation which expressed the majority attitudes of the Faculty, a time-consuming and disheartening assignment.

"During the summers of 1943-45, I was a member of the Field School of the University of Texas at the National University of Mexico, designated there as "Professor Extraordinario," and teaching our course in Latin American Art, and collaborating with Professors Toussaint and Fernandes in special, assigned problems with advanced students. I was able to enlarge my Mexican acquaintance and to make various field trips in Mexico. I represented the President of the University at the Inauguration of the Mexican Courses in San Antonio in 1944 (?), and was a delegate of the University of Texas at the Latin American Conference at Albuquerque in 1946.
"During this same period I was a member of the Board of Directors of the University Cooperative Society (1943-47), Chairman in 1946-47 when the store was enlarged and management revised. I was a member of the first Faculty Council of the University (1944-1946), and of the Committee on Inter-American Relations.

"I painted whenever other duties permitted, winning First Prize in the Texas General Exhibition of 1946, two prizes for etching at the Dallas Museum, and participated in various group exhibitions. I spoke and served on juries at the museums in Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio, as well as lecturing to other groups.

"When Mr. Lockwood returned after the war and asked to be relieved as Chairman, I declined further appointment. A policy of rotating office was inaugurated with Mr. Goodall as Chairman. I was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor in July 1946; the letter of recommendation of the Budget Council generously summarizes my services up to that date."

Throughout his thirty-seven years of service to the University and beyond, Loren Mozley was that paragon of academics, one who not only genuinely cares about the seriousness of his subject and the teaching of that subject, but also, because of his lively intellect and high energy, is able to influence profoundly the direction and the quality of what comes to pass in his department. For all the time he was at U.T. he remained a major force.

Having helped to found the Art Department, he had almost a paternal feeling about its evolution. There is no doubt that his painting and drawing classes were a point of reference for all those students who wished to understand the traditional values underlying both painting and drawing.

Dr. Donald Goodall, who was for many years chairman of the Art Department and director of the U.T. art collections, said of Mozley that "no single figure connected with the art faculty has as much to do with its character, its continuity of directions, the character of its studio training."

"This artist-teacher," Goodall continued, "was impervious to pressures to jettison fundamental aspects of studio crafts. He made his students aware of the traditional skills in the
handling of materials, figurative analysis, work out-of-doors, or how to arrange color
sequences so that one might begin with something of one's own."

Beyond that he genuinely cared about the smooth and productive functioning of important
committees and gave generously of his time in this direction. Occasionally his wit was applied to
the art of the memorandum - to make constructive suggestions - as per this one, dated 15
January, 1964, to the departmental chair:

"I am sorry that I did not have an opportunity to sign the Departmental
budget before it was submitted. I have not seen it. I made a trip to the Dean's
office at lunch today at which time it was not available.

"I trust that, since my name is listed with the rest of the Budget Council,
failure to sign will not be interpreted as lack of interest or approval.
Loren Mozley"

In 1967 Professor Mozley was the chairman of the Lockwood Retrospective Exhibition
Committee. This important posthumous exhibition was shown in the Huntington Art Gallery at
The University of Texas at Austin, the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, the Department of
Art at the University of California, Berkeley, the Art Museum of the University of Kansas,
Lawrence, and the Art Museum of the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, in 1967-1968.
Mozley's dedicated efforts on behalf of his old friend and colleague were typical of the
seriousness with which he undertook all of his responsibilities.

Over the years his own work evolved in depth and resonance but essentially stayed the
same stylistically. As he said, he was a "child of the cubist order," and that way of looking at
landscape, still lifes and figures remained his touchstone. Looking at one of his oils or
watercolors, one could almost feel the facets of his mind shifting, analyzing, and synthesizing as
he worked. The results were always substantial and quietly poetic, perhaps not unlike the
essence of a fine chess game, a sport he relished and was very good at.
He wrote this about his March, 1967 one-man show at Valley House Gallery, Dallas:

"To me the world is confusing, but ordered and alive. I do not distort for fun, nor rearrange, so much as try to seek, and sometimes discover, something of an elusive rational order pervading the universe...I pray that at some fortunate moment I may be an artist. I try my level best every time I pick up my brush to be a decent and skillful craftsman, a painter."

In 1978, three years after his retirement, he was given a major retrospective exhibition, which filled the first floor of the Huntington Art Gallery on campus. The effect of seeing that many Mozley paintings was electrifying. The emphatic consistency of approach over the decades impressed one both with the passion of his convictions and the clarity of those convictions. In addition, his wonderful color sense, always at work in individual works but perhaps "upstaged" by the rigor and power of his form, resonated through the gallery. The show, in effect, was a grand summing up of all that Loren Mozley had done in his studio and passed on to his students over the years.

It is hard for those of us who have long toiled in the Art Department to imagine this university without its presence. It is equally hard for us to imagine this department without the presence - or at least the influence - of Loren Mozley. His acerbic wit, his challenging gaze, and his natty Brooks Brothers clothing all remain vivid recollections, along with the essence of the man: a sense of tradition, loyalty, and courage, coupled with a first-rate mind capable of skewering humbug, pretension, and other failures of imagination with ease and occasional high glee.

To quote again from the aforementioned Valley House Catalog: "I have elected...to spend my life among painters. I would like always to continue, in the resiny fragrance of the studios, among painters and students. I was not trained in the academies, but I must not claim to be self taught. I could not name all the artists living and dead who have been my formation. If you do not discover them in my painting, I will not point them out to you. I believe in tradition; otherwise, I would not teach."
While the Art Department has grown physically since his retirement and evolved to reflect changing art attitudes, the fundamental respect for the relevance and seriousness of art that Loren Mozley brought to everything he did in the department remains a reference point for all those whose lives he touched.

In 1978 the Art Department published a catalog for the annual faculty show. Professor Emeritus Mozley was represented in this show by a watercolor, "Near Zacatecas - Towards the Old Mines." It was typically spare and flinty. Each exhibiting artist had his page in the catalog, featuring a reproduction of a painting of his from the show, a photograph of the artist (in Loren Mozley's case the photograph, too, had somewhat of a spare and flinty feel) and a brief summary of his achievements. Fittingly we close this memorial resolution by quoting from that summary:

Teaching: The University of New Mexico; Field School of Art at Taos (Director); The University of Texas at Austin, 1938-1975; The University of Southern California and the Universidad Nacional de Mexico in summers.

Awards: Purchase prizes in San Antonio, Dallas, and "Texas Fine Arts Annual Exhibition." Prizes in the "Third La Tausca Competition" and "Pepsi Cola Exhibition," New York City; "Texas General Exhibition"; and in Corpus Christi, San Antonio, and Dallas, Texas.

Exhibitions: One-man and group shows including ones at Pan American Union Building, Washington, D.C.; Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, Colo.; Taos Heptagon Gallery, N.M.; Knoedler Galleries, New York City; Isaac Delgado Museum, New Orleans, La.; Denver Art Museum, Colo.; San Francisco Museum of Art and Los Angeles County Museum, Cal. (Loren Mozley was in two significant shows subsequent to 1978. In 1983 he was in an important show at the Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, The University of Texas at Austin, and another in 1986 at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas.)


This Memorial Resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Robert Levers (Chairman), John Guerin, and Ralph White.