

Mauricio Lasansky: 1914-2012



Printmaker Mauricio Lasansky is shown here in his early years. SPECIAL TO THE PRESS-CITIZEN

‘He learned from the students even as the students learned from him.’

World-renowned printmaker and Iowa City artist dies

By **Stephanie Wise**
Iowa City Press-Citizen

Mauricio Lasansky, a famed Iowa City artist known for establishing one of the world's leading printmaking departments at the University of Iowa, has died.

The artist of the internationally renowned "Nazi Drawings" died Monday at his home surrounded by family, son Phil Lasansky said. He was 97.

"(Lasansky) had an enormous impact within his profession, upon our campus, throughout our community and truly across the globe," UI spokesman Tom Moore said Wednesday. "All of us mourn the loss of a remarkable artist and educator."

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» To see more photos of Mauricio Lasansky and his work, go to www.press-citizen.com.

Born in 1914 in Argentina, Lasansky left the country in 1943 to come to the United States after receiving the first of five Guggenheim Fellowships. He was recruited to UI by then-UI president Virgil M. Hancher, in part to establish the school's printmaking program.

In his more than 65 years working primarily in the intaglio printmaking medium — 39 of those years as a professor of art at UI — Lasansky developed the model for printmaking pro-

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grams everywhere, establishing what now is considered one of the finest printmaking departments in the U.S., Phil Lasansky said. Several of his former students now lead printmaking departments at major universities.

Virginia Myers, a UI professor who came to work in the printmaking department in 1955, said studying with Lasansky and working as his research assistant for three years was pivotal to her own career as an artist.

"My point of view is looking at how essential working with Lasansky was to my development, not just as a printmaker, but the teaching and how important teaching was in that man's life," she said. "He learned from the students even as the students learned from him."

"Lasansky believed in his heart and soul that what he was doing was his life's work, and indeed it was that," she said.

Lasansky was best known for his "Nazi Drawings," a series of 30 individual pieces and one triptych created in 1966 to examine the horrific reign of Nazi Germany. Like many of his works, the drawings have been exhibited in many prominent art museums, including the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City, where it was one of the first exhibitions installed.

Of his masterwork, Lasansky wrote: "Dignity is not a symbol bestowed on man, nor does the word itself possess force. Man's dignity is a force and the only *modus vivendi* by which man and his history survive."

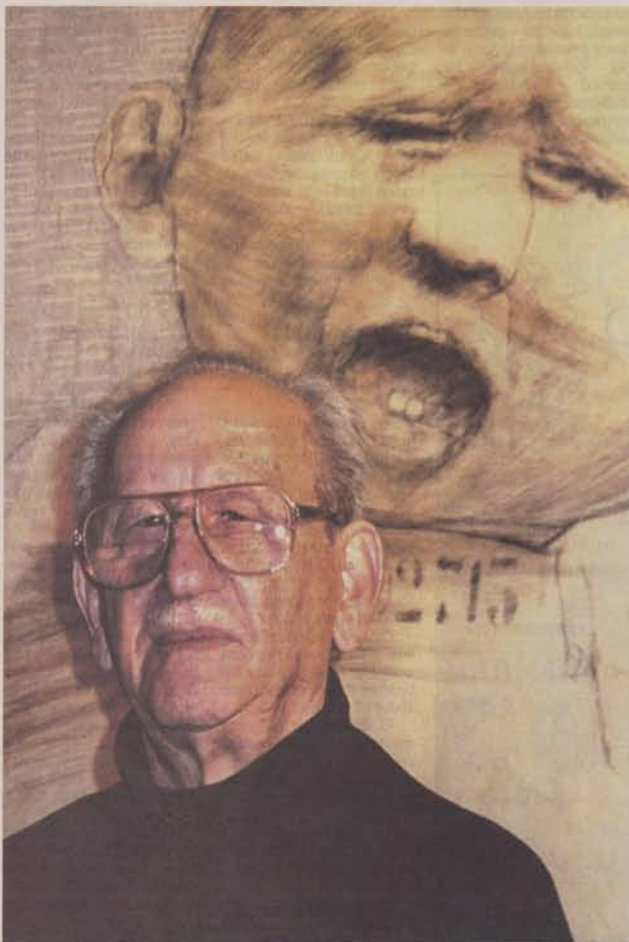
Local filmmaker Lane Wyrick, who documented Lasansky and his drawings for his 2000 film, "The Nazi Drawings," said he was grateful to get to know the man whose "integrity as an artist is something I will always remember."

"He created the 'Nazi Drawings' at a time when most people were doing pop art and didn't delve deep (into the issues)," Wyrick said. "Just to do something that is so dark and yet so meaningful, that's the importance of the drawings."

In his lifetime, Lasansky had more than 250 one-man shows in the U.S. and 35 countries, according to the Lasansky Art website. His work can be seen in more than 140 museums nationwide and in Europe and Latin America, Phil Lasansky said. He received more than 175 awards in his career, including the Iowa Award in 2000, the state's most prestigious honor for citizenship.

Phil Lasansky, president of the Lasansky Corp., said his father has a "bifurcated legacy," one in his work in private collections and the other in what he did at the university.

"The students that came out of that department spanned across this country over a 40-year time and taught in institutions of



Printmaker Mauricio Lasansky is shown with one of "The Nazi Drawings" prints. SPECIAL TO THE PRESS-CITIZEN



Shown here is one of four Lasansky prints in his collection, "For An Eye An Eye," which will be on display starting April 13 at Wartburg College in Waverly. SPECIAL TO THE P-C

higher education," Phil Lasansky said. At one point in his retirement, Phil said, his father did the research and estimated that between his students and students of students, his impact spread to "close to 500 institutions of higher education."

"That's the kind of legacy he left," Phil Lasansky said. "It's not a hope, it's just a fact."

As a father of six children — including artist Tomas Lasansky — with his wife, Emilia, who preceded him in death, Mauricio Lasansky had the same impact on his family that "any father would have on any

child," Phil Lasansky said. "We were brought up in a fairly liberal household ... with not very much censorship (so as) to observe and take in everything and be open — to be humanist, basically."

Of his life in Iowa, Mauricio Lasansky said in 2000: "This is where my family and I have lived for over 50 years. I could have went anywhere. I had offers from all over, but I chose to stay here."

Phil Lasansky said a pri-

Lasansky works on display at Wartburg

Four prints by Mauricio Lasansky will be installed April 13 at Wartburg College in Waverly in the Vogel Library.

Lasansky's Holocaust-themed copper printmaking series, "For An Eye An Eye," donated by Waverly native and University of Iowa graduate William Fruehling, will be installed at a ceremony at 4:30 p.m. on the library's third floor. Fruehling, Phil Lasansky, Wartburg president Darrel Colson and art department chair Barbara Fedeler will participate in the public dedication.

The installation, from Fruehling's personal collection of more than 30 Lasansky prints, is part of the college's efforts to increase accessibility and visibility of its existing art collection, which currently includes a Rembrandt and student works.

"It's long been my desire to share the collection with others, and what better community to introduce and share it with than the students and visitors at Wartburg?" Fruehling said in a news release.

A private funeral is planned. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be directed to the University of Iowa Foundation, 1 W. Park Road, Iowa City, IA 52242, for the Mauricio Lasansky Scholarship Fund, Printmaking Department.

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