

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION  
VICTOR ARNAUTOFF  
1896-1979

Victor Arnautoff died March 22, 1979 in Leningrad, Russia. Mr. Arnautoff had returned to his homeland after his retirement from the faculty of the Stanford Art Department in 1963.

A former Cavalry Officer in the Imperial Army and recipient of the Cross of the Order of St. George for valor, Arnautoff escaped after the Bolshevik Revolution to Manchuria, where he met and married Lyda, the daughter of the Russian Consul General of Mukden.

He subsequently emigrated to Mexico where he studied mural painting and became an assistant to Diego Rivera in the late twenties. In 1931 he came to San Francisco and worked with Rivera on the mural commissioned for the San Francisco Art Institute. In 1934 the Work Projects Administration appointed Arnautoff technical director for the fresco mural project inside Coit Tower on Telegraph Hill. Forty-six artists, including Arnautoff, were awarded commissions to paint panels in the lobby and the spiral staircase inside the tower.

Mr. Arnautoff also executed murals for George Washington High School and the Presidio of San Francisco chapel and won commissions to do murals for Post Office buildings in several California and Texas cities.

His earliest fresco in California was that commissioned by Dr. Russell V. Lee for the Palo Alto Medical Clinic painted in 1932.

Victor Arnautoff came to Stanford at the recommendation of Daniel M. Mendelowitz who had been impressed with the quality of the young artist's work when they were fellow students at the San Francisco Art Institute. He was invited to accept a position in the Department of Art by Edward M. Farmer in 1939.

His powerful and vital line and unusual perception of anatomical volumes made Victor Arnautoff a master draughtsman and a particularly effective teacher of life drawing.

Gentle and courteous, Victor Arnautoff nevertheless demanded the highest standards of performance of his students. Those students and faculty came to know and respect him as a person of high distinction, quiet culture, and unflagging integrity as well as an artist of unusual power and skill.

After the death of his wife in 1961, Mr. Arnautoff returned to Russia in 1963 and began what he referred to as his "new career as a monumentalist" in mosaic murals. One of his last works, executed on a building in Zhdanov, Ukraine, is four stories high.

Victor Arnautoff's career at Stanford spanned the time of uncertain and deteriorating American-Soviet relations. It was perhaps inevitable that he should be considered politically controversial. His range of subjects ran from the life of George Washington to a controversial lithograph done in 1955 alluding to Richard Nixon's part in the McCarthy hearings and his prosecution of Alger Hiss.

The artist is survived by his second wife, Nona, of Leningrad, and three sons: Michael, of Redondo Beach; Vasily, of San Francisco; and Jacob, of Renton, Washington. Also surviving are five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. To them, the members of the Academic Council extend our deepest sympathy.

Daniel M. Mendelowitz, Chairman  
Lorenz Eitner  
John LaPlante