

CUMING, Beatrice Lavis - Biography

Biographical Information: A native of Brooklyn, New York, Beatrice Lavis Cuming studied at the Pratt Institute Art School before departing for Paris to attend the Academie Colarossi. Within two years, she was back in New York working as an illustrator and attending classes at the Art Students League in 1928-29. Following a four-year sojourn to France and North Africa, Cuming again returned to New York where she came under the influence of Charles Burchfield, Charles Sheeler and Charles Demuth.

In 1934, Cuming moved to New London, Connecticut, where she remained for the balance of her career, participating in the Public Works of Art and WPA Federal Art Projects, teaching art classes and directing the Young People's Art Program at the Lyman Allen Museum from 1937 through 1967. She also offered art classes to children and adults at her New London Studio, and taught in New London public schools from 1936 until 1940. New London and its environs provided her with subject matter which she found powerful and beautiful. Smoke stacks, submarine, locomotives and street scenes were the inspiration for her paintings. She was commissioned to paint the construction of a submarine at the nearby Groton submarine plant.

She exhibited widely, including solo exhibitions in New York City at the Guy Mayer Gallery (1942) and Contemporary Artists Gallery (1946) as well as various Connecticut venues culminating in retrospectives at the Lyman Allen Museum in 1968 and 1990.

In 1934 Cuming joined the Public Works of Art Project, and then the WPA Federal Arts Project, under which she completed 150 paintings. The paintings and murals were located in various institutions in Connecticut, including Norwich State Hospital, Connecticut State Collection, Fairfield State Hospital, Internal Revenue Office, and many others. As part of her WPA projects, she assisted Aldis B. Browne in the execution of a mural for the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

Beatrice Cuming was a prominent regional artist who was active in art organizations, was nationally exhibited, and received many prizes for her work. Cumings was a founding member of the Mystic Art Association, which is now the Mystic Art Museum. The Mystic museum collection includes a number of paintings by Cuming. She was also a member of the Essex Art Association, the Connecticut Watercolor Society, American Watercolor Society; Allied Artists and the National Association of Women Artists. She received many fellowships to The MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, NH; The Yaddo Foundation, Saratoga Springs NY; The Huntington Hartford Foundation, California; The Bok Foundation, Florida.

Her paintings and etchings are included in many private collections and in the collections of the Mattatuck Museum of Art, Waterbury CT; Georgia Museum of Art, Athens GA; Lyman Allyn Museum, New London CT; Mystic Art Museum, Mystic CT; Portland Art Museum, Portland OR; New Britain Museum of Art, New Britain CT; General Services Administration, Washington DC.; General Dynamics, Electric Boat Division, New London CT. and others.

Exhibitions include: National Academy of Design, New York City; Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago IL; Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia PA; Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn NY; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC; Springfield Museum of Art, Springfield MA; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City; Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford CT; Guy Mayer Gallery, New York City; Essex Art Association, Essex CT., Peabody Essex Museum, Salem MA; Connecticut River Museum, Essex CT. Connecticut State Library, and others. In 1991, Cuming's work was included an exhibition at the Lyman Allyn Museum in New London titled *The Artist Sees New London*. Her colorful and lively painting, *Saturday Night: New London*, depicting figures in downtown New London, was a focal point of the exhibition.

Cecile Tyl, an undergraduate at the University of Connecticut, Avery Point, Groton, campus, researched the work of Beatrice Cuming, and co-curated an exhibition of works at the Lyman Allyn Museum in 1990. In the accompanying catalog, Ms. Tyl stated: "Some of the artist's original work for the industrial commissions had apparently been lost; many of the paintings left in her estate had been sold; and no records kept of the new owners...With the help of Bea Cuming's friends....Mrs. Tyl secured the promised loans of dozens of paintings, drawings and prints" for the exhibition.

Mrs. Tyl's research papers, documents, letters and photographs were donated to the archives of the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. During the 1940s, Peter A. Juley & Son, fine art photographers, photographed works of artists active at the Mystic Art Association. The collection was given to the Photo Archives Division, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, and contains 23 photographs of works by Beatrice L. Cuming.