

A L D E R N

THE ROBERT J. ALDERN RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION 1957-1997

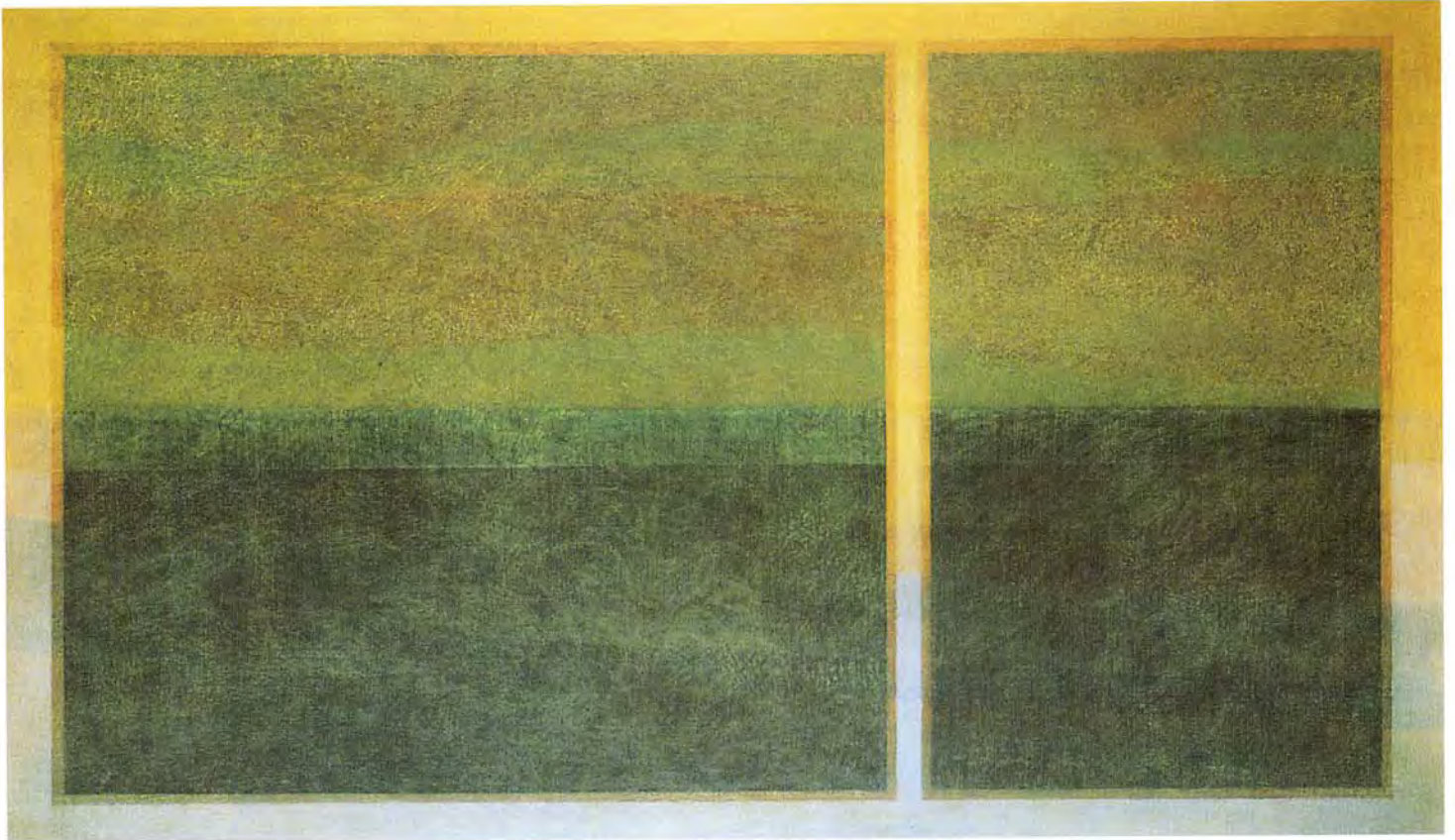


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Organizing Sponsors

Eide-Dalrymple Gallery • Augustana College • Sioux Falls, South Dakota
Civic Fine Arts Center • Sioux Falls, South Dakota
South Dakota Art Museum • Brookings, South Dakota
University Art Galleries • University of South Dakota • Vermillion, South Dakota



Newly Plowed Alfalfa 1992 oil on masonite 30" x 48"

The organizers of the Robert J. Aldern Retrospective Exhibition wish gratefully to acknowledge the following major supporters of this project:

Architecture Incorporated, Sioux Falls, South Dakota
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Exhibition Sites

September 8 - 28, 1997

University Art Galleries, University of South Dakota, Vermillion, South Dakota

October 7 - November 16, 1997

Shared Exhibition in Sioux Falls, South Dakota
Eide-Dalrymple Gallery, Augustana College and Civic Fine Arts Center

January 20 - February 18, 1998

Northern Galleries, Northern State University, Aberdeen, South Dakota

April 20 - May 31, 1998

Oscar Howe Art Center, Mitchell, South Dakota

Spring, 1999

South Dakota Art Museum, Brookings, South Dakota

May 20 - July 6, 1999

Dahl Fine Arts Center, Rapid City, South Dakota

The exhibition will also tour to selected out-of-state sites.

INTRODUCTION

Retrospective exhibitions assess an artist's development and context. Typically, such evaluation comes after the subject is defined through sustained effort evident in a large body of work. Retrospectives signal artistic maturity and significant achievement.

Such projects are not undertaken lightly by sponsors because of the investment in time, expertise, and resources required. Organizers rightly are highly conscious of their obligation to the artist since retrospectives are critical to the assessment of an individual's contributions and place in art history. To mount a retrospective, there must be the will and the integrity to do it as thoroughly, as sensitively, and as well as possible.

There can be little doubt that Robert Aldern's artistic career richly deserves to be recognized and celebrated. The project comes at a time when South Dakota is only beginning to delineate its art history, and the assessment of major artists such as Aldern will play an important role in extending our grasp of the character and uniqueness of our state's cultural identity.

True to South Dakota's traditions, the Robert J. Aldern Retrospective Exhibition is a cooperative effort combining the perspectives, resources, talents, and energy of people and arts institutions across the state. It is a measure of Bob's own broad-ranging impact that his retrospective occasions the coming together of the South Dakota Art Museum, Augustana College, the Sioux Falls Civic Fine Arts Center, and the University of South Dakota as partners in this project. This retrospective celebrates not only the achievements of a special artist but also the growing maturity and consciousness of the state's arts community as a whole.

We who organized the Robert J. Aldern Retrospective Exhibition thank the sponsoring institutions for their enthusiastic support for this project. We also wish to express our gratitude to the artist and his family for their gracious cooperation and active assistance over the two years of preparation of the exhibition. In particular, we

recognize the central role played by Bob Aldern in helping to curate the exhibit and by his wife, Joey, for providing photos and biographical information as well as insightful suggestions throughout the process.

Appreciation is also extended to the people and institutions that have lent works to the exhibition. Without this cooperation, the retrospective would have fallen short of achieving the full scope and richness warranted by Bob's forty-year career. Lending works to a two-year long tour requires a truly generous spirit, for it separates collectors from very special treasures that have become central parts of their daily lives.

We also thank Carla Fauske and Mark Derby for their creative efforts in producing the video which accompanies the exhibition. Their work provides an intimate look at Bob and places him firmly within his South Dakota artistic community.

Finally, we especially acknowledge the major patrons of the Robert J. Aldern Retrospective Exhibition:

Architecture Incorporated
Koch Hazard Baltzer, Ltd.
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Spitznagel, Incorporated

It is with confidence in the power of his work that we proudly offer you the Robert J. Aldern Retrospective Exhibition.

Adrien Hannus
Augustana College

Paul Groeneveld
Civic Fine Arts Center

Lynda Clark Crabtree
South Dakota Art Museum

John A. Day
University of South Dakota



March Pine 1957 48" x 30" oil on masonite

ROBERT J. ALDERN: A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Dr. Arthur R. Huseboe, Executive Director, Center for Western Studies, Augustana College

Born in a prairie town on the edge of the Great Plains, Bob Aldern draws much of his inspiration from this land of subtle horizons and spiritual people. Much of his recent work is epitomized in the soaring reredos that he created in 1984 for the Chapel of Reconciliation at Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. When an interviewer in 1993 asked him about the fourteen stained oak panels rising cross-wise above the altar wall, he said:

“When you look at each panel, you see that it is Christ and the Land. We have here a long agrarian heritage; we are farmers at heart. If we consider the simple things of our faith, when we kneel to prayer, whether it be on a kneeler in church or on a carpet in our bedrooms, we are kneeling on the earth; we kneel on earth to ask forgiveness and to accept grace.” And above the altar, the fields and fallows of the prairies stretch out in delicately delineated planes below and behind the human figures that people the stories borne by the panels.

At age two-and-a-half, Bob moved with his parents and older brothers, John and Joe, and younger brother, Deane, from Sioux Falls to a farm near Roslyn, where the family lived from 1932 to 1936—in the heart of the Depression and the Dust Bowl. Bob recalls many powerful scenes from those four years on the farm—the exaggerated greens and blues of the out-of-doors, when viewed through the beveled glass of their living room windows—and the patterns, the ruts and tracks, in the mud and dust of the farmyard. They are the earth colors that he still discovers in his art.

Back in Sioux Falls in 1936, Bob attended grade school at Longfellow, and his first art commission was executed there, he avers. Miss Smith selected him to decorate one square of the blackboard in colored chalk for Christmas: he chose shepherds and children sliding, with a little Bethlehem in the background. In summers, he recalls, he and his three brothers explored and swam in the Sioux River south of their house on the southern edge of town.



While a student at Washington High School from 1943 to 1947, Bob was influenced by geometry and by his art teacher, Miss Vera Koch. Her work in watercolors impressed him, he remembers, and the fact that she was glad to have a paying job that enabled her “to feed her habit of art.”

At Augustana College, Bob fell under the influence of two of the state’s most admired art instructors—Palmer Eide and Ogden Dalrymple. As a student, Bob was allowed to help Dalrymple complete a piece of sculpture, and the young artist took note of the fact that Eide was executing a number of commissions for the noted architect, Harold Spitznagel, and that other of Eide’s students were

at work in the Sioux Falls community. A few years later, when he was studying at the Hartford School of Art at the University of Hartford, in Hartford, Connecticut, Bob determined to return to South Dakota, where art was needed and where a living might be made by fulfilling that need.

Bob’s first commission on his return was to be an unanticipated triumph. Although employed at the outset as

a draughtsman for architects and engineers, he was invited in 1959 by Harold Spitznagel to assist in completing the interior of St. Mary's Catholic Church. He designed and executed a gold-leaf-on-plaster sound baffle over the pulpit. Spitznagel submitted the piece to the New York Architectural League, and it won the silver medal. With that award, Bob's long artistic career as a liturgical artist began, resulting over the course of forty years in a procession of large and small commissioned works for churches all across South Dakota and in Florida, Minnesota, Washington, Michigan, and Texas as well.

The following is a selected list of the principal church commissions and others for schools and businesses, executed between 1959 and 1997: chancel wall (1959) and chapel wall, oil on brick (1972), Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls. Doors and mosaic and design on sound baffle, St. Mary's Catholic Church, 1959. Chancel wall, Grace Lutheran, Sturgis, 1960. Home Federal Savings and Loan, Sioux Falls, mural, oil-on-red oak, 1960. Western Surety, Sioux Falls, vinyl fabric mural, 1960. Good Shepherd Episcopal Church, Sioux Falls, oil portrait of Bishop Roberts, 1961. Large reredos, International Lutheran Youth Convention, Miami Beach, 1961; Detroit, 1965; and Dallas and Seattle, 1968. Stations of the Cross, Christ the King Catholic Church, Sioux Falls, 1964. Three mosaic tile murals, School of Mines, Rapid City, 1965. Sanctuary wall, First Lutheran Church, St. Peter, Minnesota, 1965. Lobby wall, Vermillion High School, 1966. Stained wood panel, First Congregational Church, Rapid City, 1967. Stations of the Cross, Catholic Newman Center, University of South Dakota, 1968. Lutheran Student Center, Vermillion, oil-on-red oak panel, 1974. Sanctuary furnishings, St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Montrose, 1976. Lobby wall, oil-on-canvas, Central Plains Clinic, Sioux Falls, 1976. Artistic consultant, design of furniture for St. Michael's Catholic Church, Sioux Falls, 1980. Reredos paintings for Augustana College Chapel, Sioux Falls, 1984. Wood-stain painting for St. Michael's



Catholic Church, Sioux Falls, 1985. Sanctuary wall, gold-leaf-on-wood, King of Glory Lutheran Church, Dallas, Texas, 1986. Liturgical artist-consultant for Gloria Dei Lutheran Mission Church, Sioux Falls, 1988. Artistic consultant, Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Sioux Falls, 1989. Mural, Sioux Valley Hospital, Sioux Falls, oil-stained red oak, 1990. Two paintings, Joe Foss Air Terminal, Sioux Falls, oil-on-masonite, 1991. Four South Dakota landscapes for Commercial Bank, Mitchell, 1992. Triptych, Good Samaritan Corporate Offices, Sioux Falls, oil on red oak, 1993. Two paintings, Norwest Bank, Sioux Falls, oil on masonite, 1992. Stained-wood panel, lobby of McKennan Hospital, Sioux Falls, 1994. Artistic consultant, furniture and reredos for blessed sacrament and choir screen, Christ the King Catholic Church, Sioux Falls, 1995-1996. Design of furniture, Southern Hills United Methodist Church, Sioux Falls, 1995. Painting, Trinity Lutheran Church, Arlington, 1996. Artistic consultant and design of sixteen large paintings, Gloria Dei Lutheran Mission Church, Sioux Falls, 1997. Artistic consultant and design of stained glass window, Messiah New Hope Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, 1996. Triptych, oil-on-red oak, St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, Groton, 1997. Four paintings for Sioux Valley Hospital, Sioux Falls (in progress).

In addition to these representative examples of his commissions, Bob's work is held in many private collections and has been seen in a number of exhibitions: Connecticut Academy Show; Art USA Show, Madison Square Garden, New York City; Norwest National Bank Invitational, Sioux Falls; Salzburg Biennial, Salzburg, Austria; National Small Painting Show, Omaha University; Museum of American Craft, New York City, and numerous regional exhibitions and traveling exhibitions. His work is represented in collections of the South Dakota Memorial Art Center, Brookings; Civic Fine Arts Center, Sioux Falls; Sioux City Art Center; the Vincent Price collection; and, many private collections.

Beyond these exhibitions, Bob's work has won local and national recognition: an Alumni Achievement Award in 1977 from Augustana College, a South Dakota Arts Council grant for \$5,000 in 1983, a \$3,000 College Faculty Purchase Award from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America National Assembly in 1995, the South Dakota Governor's Award in the Arts for Distinction in Creative Achievement in 1997, and the Spitznagel Award Medal for Achievement in Art in 1997.

Throughout most of his career as a liturgical artist, Bob has been a teacher, whether in the classroom, in the studio, or on-site. One of his colleagues, Bob Child, himself a long-time commercial artist who has assisted Bob in a number of his endeavors, calls him "always a dedicated teacher. Even today, when he is working on one of his large commissions for a hospital, church, or business, he will always take time to patiently explain to visitors—who are often students and community leaders—the various steps in the process and willingly answers all questions."

After seven years as a draughtsman from 1954 to 1961, Aldern served as director of the Sioux Falls Civic Fine Arts Center until 1964, when he taught art for a year at Augustana while Palmer Eide was abroad on a Fulbright Fellowship. From 1966 to 1968 he was artist-in-residence at South Dakota State University; served as art professor and department chair at the University of South Dakota, 1968-1980; professor and department chair at Augustana College 1980-1991; and, artist-in-residence and director of the Center for Liturgical Art at Augustana, 1991-present.

In 1997, Bob Aldern stands at the pinnacle of his creative life, director of the Center for Liturgical Art at Augustana College, and one of its principal artists. He recalls that Augustana professors, Ogden Dalrymple and Palmer Eide, were responsible for setting him on the course that he follows today. In a recent interview, Bob credited the two

men "for first alerting him to the value of negative spaces, the spaces around the object." From them Bob learned that "the artist cannot pay attention just to the details of the object he or she is drawing; the artist must pay attention to the whole composition." Also influential in Aldern's use of space is the work of Piet Mondrian. Bob says that Mondrian "is like an early minimalist, breaking up space into horizontals, rectangles, verticals, with the line functioning as a container, an accent, a delineator, composition itself." In his reredos for the International Youth Convention in 1961, Aldern says, he first expressed

the influence of Mondrian—"proportioning space with lines, balance, scale, movement, and rhythm."

It was Eide and Dalrymple, too, who had early envisioned a center where liturgical and architectural forms could be realized in stained glass, sculptures, altars, and the like. With the assistance of Professor Carl Grupp, whom he calls "an incredible influence" in his life, Bob has brought that idea to realization as a reference center for liturgical art, where architects, artisans, pastors, rabbis, priests, and artists and art historians can find resources to help them in their work. Bob and Professor Grupp

give credit to Augustana College's past president, Sidney Rand, for approving the proposal. Dr. Rand acknowledged that the college ought to extend itself through liturgical art into the community and even the region, having caught from Bob the vision of a center where the theme of the reredos in the Augustana College chapel could be expressed in mortar and metal: "All the hands of the earth encourage us to be bountiful, to work for Christ, our society, and on our preservation."

Bob Aldern and his wife, Joey, whom he met at Augustana, are the parents of four children: Brad, born 1952 (deceased); Marlys, born 1955; Noreen, born 1956; and Jared, born 1959. The couple make their home in Sioux Falls.



ROBERT J. ALDERN: A SOUTH DAKOTA ARTIST

John A. Day, Director, University Art Galleries, University of South Dakota

While it may seem somewhat inflated to speak of an art history for South Dakota in the academic sense, it is clear that art has developed here in a unique context worthy of discussion. The fact that such discussion is only now beginning to form and as yet lacks cohesion, simply attests to the need for retrospective assessments of the lives, production, and impact of significant South Dakota artists of the stature of Robert J. Aldern.

Anyone who writes about the history of the visual arts in South Dakota must acknowledge Dr. Arthur R. Huseboe's landmark work, "An Illustrated History of the Arts in South Dakota," published in 1989. It is to this seminal work that one should be referred for a sense of the overall development of the art community on which Bob Aldern has built.

For the purposes of this catalogue and the exhibition it supports, we focus on understanding the cultural matrix that helps define Bob Aldern's contributions. It is appropriate to begin by recognizing that South Dakota, as a frontier territory, had little of the time and even fewer of the resources necessary to spawn a serious professional arts community.

The earliest professional South Dakota artists were painters like Nicolas Brewer, who came and went serving the territory's emerging desire for symbols of its identity. The example of these itinerants encouraged residents to pursue the arts and produced a generation of "amateurs," in the best sense of the term, who took up brush, pencil, and chisel with modest professional aspirations. At the turn of the century, painters like Louis Janousek and Charles Greener set the artistic standard in the state and broadened the base for working artists, but neither could realistically expect to support themselves through their art.

Flushed with the achievement of statehood in 1889, South Dakota sought to give form to its values and ambitions. Much of this hope was based in the new state's young colleges and universities where art programs emerged as early as the 1880s. Artist-educators such as Margaret

Maynard at the University of South Dakota and Ada Caldwell at South Dakota State University brought solid academic artistic training to the state and expanded appreciation for the arts at the same time they nurtured native talents of students such as Harvey Dunn and Gilbert Risvold, inspiring them to pursue careers in art. It was, however, necessary for these aspirants to leave the state to realize their dreams.

On the considerable foundation of these dedicated art educators, a new generation of South Dakota artists was built. Of these, Palmer Eide, a Baltic, South Dakota, native, stands as the "grand old man," a representative of a more professional South Dakota community of visual artists. Eide, who taught and chaired the art department at Augustana College from 1931 to 1971, is our principle link to Bob Aldern and helps us understand Bob's sustaining values. Like Eide, Aldern was born in South Dakota and both shared a strong connection to its land and peoples. While it is difficult to ascribe direct influences, it can safely be said that Palmer Eide, at the very least, offered Aldern a powerful role model. As such, it was Eide and his colleague at Augustana, Ogden Dalrymple, who gave Aldern the confidence to pursue a full-time career in art. As a student, Aldern assisted both men on commission projects and credits this experience with setting his conviction that artists must engage their community as active, contributing professionals.

A second important influence on Robert J. Aldern's career as a South Dakota artist came from another major cultural force in the state, architect Harold Spitznagel. Spitznagel, born in 1894, was a native South Dakotan who studied at the Art Institute of Chicago and received his bachelor's degree in architecture from the University of Pennsylvania. Spitznagel returned to Sioux Falls in 1930 and was firmly established as one of the state's leading architects by the end of the decade. To his undying credit, Spitznagel sought out talented artists to enhance his architecture with significant works of art. It is he who gave Bob Aldern his first major commission in 1958—the sound baffle for St. Mary's Catholic Church in Sioux Falls—a confidence that

was richly justified when the project won the New York Architectural League's silver medal for design. Now, after completing over one-hundred commission projects, Aldern still credits Harold Spitznagel's artistic vision as a significant influence on his career.

An essay like this must also touch upon Bob Aldern's role as a "limner" of the essential environment that is South Dakota. As such, the artist fits into a well-established South Dakota tradition that includes artists like John Banrad and Grace French, painters who have for over a century sought to capture the elusive light and colors essential to the Great Plains. Bob Aldern has devoted the largest part of his personal creative statement to this end, with the result that he has added considerably to the definition of the landscape genre in our state.

At the age of 68, Robert J. Aldern has achieved an enviable reputation as a South Dakota artist. He is clearly the state's leading commission artist and dominates the liturgical art scene. This stature is, however, only the tip of the iceberg. Bob Aldern's full contribution to the state of the arts in South Dakota is much richer and more profound. He is, in the broadest sense of the word, a teacher both directly and indirectly. Surely, those students who have profited by his philosophy and wisdom at Augustana, USD, and SDSU are much richer for the experience. However, all South Dakota artists owe him a debt for he has been largely responsible for demonstrating that our state needs and can support professional fine artists who give form to the largely ineffable concepts that define this great state and its peoples.



Haunched 1993 compressed charcoal 18" x 24"

ROBERT J. ALDERN: AN AMERICAN ARTIST

Lynda Clark Crabtree, Director, South Dakota Art Museum.

Robert Aldern has the good fortune to live in interesting times and, drawing from his experience of those times, has created an exceptional and authentic body of work. Aldern was born January 16, 1929, into a world on the verge of radical change. The decade of the 1920s, its economy stimulated by the industrial production of World War I, was an extraordinarily prosperous time in America. The prosperity ended abruptly with the stock market crash in October of 1929.

In many ways the Depression years of the 1930s set the stage for the development of visual art that was uniquely American in concept and execution. At the beginning of the decade, American painters still deferred to Europe as the source of all that was excellent in the visual arts. By the end of the 1930s, American painters were beginning to develop an attitude and voice that was a distillation of their own influences and experiences.

American democratic ideals, coupled with a pragmatic attitude, resulted in the popularity of genre painting and other styles based on realism during the 1930s. For example, artists such as Grant Wood and Thomas Hart Benton chose as subjects the landscape, the labor of farmers, the unpretentious buildings of small towns, and other scenes from common life. While these paintings depicted ordinary subjects in a representational style, they also celebrated American life and imparted an air of nobility to humble people going about their labors. The Social Realists, including Ivan Albright, William Gropper and Ben Shahn, portrayed the unjust results of a corrupt legal system, self-serving politicians, and a failed economy. Edward Hopper is perhaps the best-known of the artists who used a realistic style to visually define the alienation of modern urban life.

The reaction against the influence of the European avant-garde in American art was so strong that Marsden Hartley, Andrew Dasburg, Joseph Stella, Max Weber, Alfred Maurer, and others abandoned abstraction to paint in a representational style in the 1930s. During the same period, there

were other American artists who felt that art should transcend the every day. Jackson Pollack, Mark Tobey, Adolph Gottlieb, Arshile Gorky, and Mark Rothko were actively exploring the use of symbol, metaphor, and abstraction as a means of expressing and communicating the metaphysical.

As the war spread in Europe during the 1930s, artists fled to the United States for refuge. The presence of European immigrant artists created an excitement, especially in New York, that stimulated American artists to explore new ways of looking at and making art. Hans Hofmann, Piet Mondrian, Henri Matisse, Joan Miró, Fernand Leger, Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, and André Masson, among others, were either living in or visiting the United States in the 1930s and 1940s.

Another group of influential European immigrants were members of the Bauhaus, a German institute for art founded shortly after World War I which was closed by Hitler in 1933 for political reasons. The artists and architects associated with the Bauhaus viewed architecture as the supreme art form and advocated the unity of art and craft. New materials and technical possibilities, combined with the Bauhaus maxims "less is more" and "form follows function," resulted in beautifully designed, functional buildings and objects. Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, Josef and Anni Albers, Lazlo Maholy-Nagy, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and others brought the Bauhaus philosophy to America.

The early Depression years were desperate ones for American artists; some were literally starving while others stopped making art altogether. There had never been a great demand for the work of American artists and, without a market for their art work, few artists could afford to paint full-time even before the Depression years.

In 1935, the United States government instituted the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which was expanded to include the arts under the Federal Art Project

(FAP). Well over 10,000 artists were employed in New Deal art projects at one time or another.

The most immediate and obvious result of these government-sponsored programs was the production of art work. More than 4,000 murals and innumerable other works of sculpture, easel painting, graphic art, photography, and craft were created. The WPA art project had many positive consequences, such as allowing artists to work full-time at their art and encouraging them to think in terms of large spaces. It was also the first time American artists were officially recognized as professionals.

WPA artists had to pass an examination that certified their training and skill, then they were often assigned to execute murals in various public places like bus and train stations, post offices, banks, schools, and radio stations. The realist painters like Thomas Hart Benton, George Biddle, John Steuart Curry, Rockwell Kent, Reginald Marsh, Maurice Sterne, and Grant Wood were favored for mural projects.

The artists whose styles were not considered suitable for murals were generally assigned to the easel painting project. Paid approximately \$95 a month, painters like Arshile Gorky, Willem de Kooning, Ad Reinhardt, Mark Rothko, Adolph Gottlieb, David Smith, and Jackson Pollock were able to work at their art full-time. The freedom to focus their energies on art and to experiment with different styles was crucial to the development of American painting, especially the New York School, also known as Abstract Expressionism.

Another important result of the Federal Art Project was an increase in opportunities for Americans to see original art work without traveling to New York or another large city. Nearly 100 community art centers were established across the country with the purpose of integrating art into the daily lives of the people. Traveling exhibitions were organized and toured to areas where original art had never been seen.

The 1940s began with a war raging in Europe and ended with the uncertainty of shifting national boundaries in a "cold" war that shaped American national policy and consciousness for decades. For artists in America, the 1940s were a time of transition during which they developed a way of making and thinking about art that thrust America into a new role as the originator of the latest and best in the visual arts.

Social Realism and Regionalism were still the dominant styles of painting when America entered World War II in 1942. The brutality and drama of the war set the stage for post-war soul searching and led to the popularity of the Existentialist philosophy embraced by many artists and writers during the 1940s and 1950s. The New York School, or Abstract Expressionism, was not so much a style as an idea. Reduced to its essence, the central idea embraced by the New York School painters is that a painting should be the spontaneous expression of the individual. In spite of their individuality, they shared certain influences and philosophies that brought them together and provided a basis for agreement about the art they created in the 1940s.

In October 1942, Peggy Guggenheim opened Art of This Century, a New York gallery where she exhibited both European and American non-realist art. The paintings Guggenheim displayed by Klee, Kandinsky, Arp, Masson, Miró, Ernst, and others demonstrated an exuberant, physical style of painting that was appealing to American artists. Guggenheim was married to the Surrealist painter, Max Ernst, and her gallery became a center of activity for displaced European Surrealists, thus providing a point of contact with Surrealism for American artists. "Biomorphic paintings," an early phase of the New York School, was clearly influenced by the Surrealist view of dreams and the unconscious as rich sources of artistic imagery.

Hans Hofmann, the German immigrant who established the Provincetown Art School in 1934, encouraged painting with free and intuitive methods that depended largely on the gestural energy of the artist. He also added "drip" painting, brilliant color, and the aesthetic of the controlled accident to the American artists' repertoire during this time.

The post-war years of the 1950s, often touted as a time of peace and economic prosperity, was the decade of the Korean "conflict," the expansion of Communism into the Western Hemisphere via Fidel Castro in Cuba, and the beginnings of American involvement in Vietnam. The censorship of McCarthyism, the Civil Rights Movement, and America's entry into the "space race" were other defining elements of the 1950s. Against this background of transition, the New York School matured into a full-fledged art movement, *the* art movement of the 1950s.

Yet, toward the end of the 1950s, new styles and new voices were preparing to burst on the American scene. The pursuit of individual vision insisted upon by the New York School painters resulted in ways of dealing with the painted surface that pushed painting on canvas to the very limits. Commercial house paint and brushes, aluminum paint, sponge mops, and wall-painting rollers were all used to apply paint at various times. Pollock, of course, took the most direct route by pouring paint directly from the can.

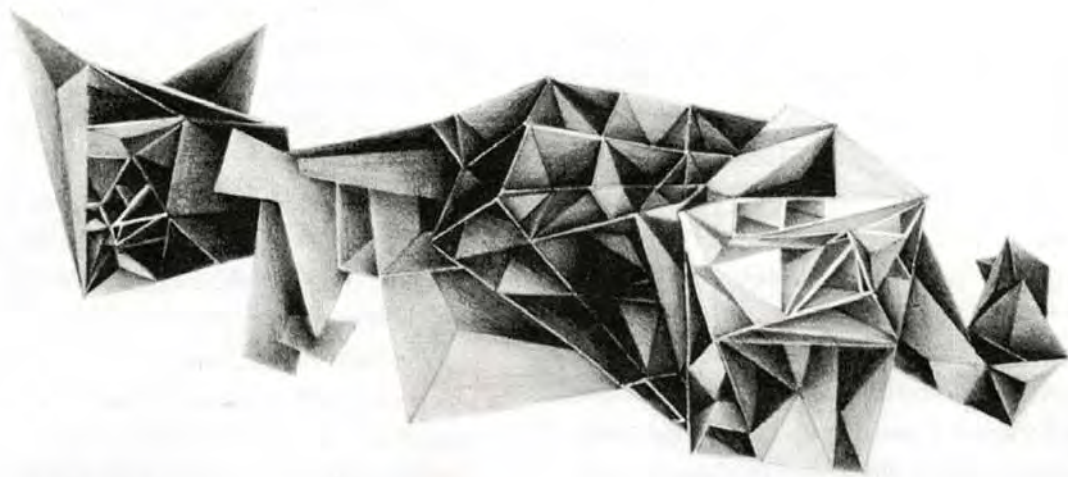
It has been said that by the time the 1960s arrived, artists were willing to have descendants, but not ancestors. The pressure to be on the cutting edge led to claims by artists that their art was without precedent. Younger artists, looking for a way to be original, began to say that nothing “new” could be done with paint on canvas.

The response to this notion was a rapid succession of “movements” celebrated in the media as both new and original—some fairly enduring, others a mere blip on the screen, none as dominant as the New York School. Since the early 1960s, assemblage, pop art, op art, kinetic art, environments, minimal art, earthworks, conceptual art, super realism, performance, video art, neo-expressionism, post-modernism, identity art, and more, have been embraced, combined, abandoned, and revisited against the backdrop of unprecedented social and political change on a global scale.

By the 1980s, a combination of the pursuit of individual vision in one’s art and the effort to capture a slice of the booming art market resulted in “pluralism” in American art. There is no one prevailing style or movement in art at this time, no single standard against which artists are judged. Artists now enjoy extraordinary freedom from the constraint of academic standards, critical judgment, and moral attitudes—in spite of the extreme political right. Any object, any medium, any subject, may be considered for use in a work of art.

Another significant development is that New York is no longer the only place to see good art in the United States, or the only place for an American artist to live. Although New York still has the largest, most readily accessible number of artists, art galleries, publications and museums in the country, Chicago, Los Angeles, Atlanta, and other cities have developed a strong cultural identity and support the work of regional artists.

Because of the acceptance of a wide variety of styles in art and the strengthening of regional centers of art, there is new appreciation for the work of artists that have chosen a path that has left them free of the incessant chase for the latest hot trend. Many of these artists, like Robert Aldern, have been working steadily, away from the hype and pretense, to produce works of integrity and substance that genuinely reflect their individual artistic vision.



Crippled Kitty Looking Hungry

R. Aldern '69

Crippled Kitty Looking Hungry 1969 pencil 10" x 13"

ROBERT J. ALDERN: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

John A. Day, Director, University Art Galleries, University of South Dakota

As properly noted in Lynda Clark Crabtree's essay, Robert Aldern's art developed away from the New York art world that defined the direction of American modernism in the late 1950s. This is, however, not to say that Aldern was unaffected by the theories debated and promulgated by New York's avant-garde.

As with all artists, Bob Aldern's aesthetic is based firmly in those personal traits, perhaps in-born, that define one's approach to life and predestine the way an individual organizes their perceptions of the world. The over-arching principle of Aldern's aesthetic is classicism in the sense of the term that refers to apprehending structure. Above all, he is an artist who organizes and who communicates structure through line and shape and value. It is not surprising then to note that his early artistic response favored artists such as Jan Vermeer. As Aldern pursued the study of art, his penchant for the formal found reinforcement through influences like Paul Cézanne and Piet Mondrian.

Most academically trained artists find that one of the chief benefits of art school is the opportunity the experience affords to sort through competing theories and define a personal direction by standing on the shoulders of contemporary artists with whom one shares essential beliefs. To a large extent, the nature of this defining experience depends on time and place. For Bob Aldern, this confirmation came at an east coast school in the mid-1950s where circumstances connected him to the ideas of the New York School.

Of special importance to Bob Aldern at this time were the ideas of the artist-educator, Hans Hofmann, a highly influential spokesman for abstract art and "art for art's sake." Hofmann was not alone in this advocacy; New York after WWII boasted numerous avant-garde groups which included artists of the rank of Ad Reinhardt, Josef Albers, Mark Rothko, Arshile Gorky, Stuart Davis, and Jackson Pollock. Together these modernist innovators gave birth to Abstract Expressionism and witnessed the shift of the

epicenter of world art from Paris to New York City. These were heady times, and in the 1950s American modernism was mature enough to begin transmitting into refined variations typified by action painters like Pollack and color field exponents such as Morris Louis.

Bob Aldern followed the developments in New York; he read the critical and philosophical writings of its leading intellectual commentators, Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg. That he was not personally immersed in the warfare of the New York School allowed Aldern to pick and choose theories that fit his unique approach to modernism.

Aldern's aesthetic freedom was reinforced when he returned to South Dakota in 1957, a knowledgeable contemporary artist who elected to work in "the Provinces." What he found here was predictable, and part of his decision to return home was a commitment to help stimulate an aesthetic revolution in South Dakota. To do so meant localizing the artistic beliefs he had developed. Localizing his beliefs did not mean watering them down to fit, but presenting them to the community through advocacy and application.

Bob Aldern took several tracks in his quest to promote modernism in South Dakota. He did so as a teacher and through his commissions, but it is mainly via the example of his paintings that he consistently advocated modernism. It is in the paintings that we find Aldern's manifesto of his deep-seated belief that creativity is how we express our being and the imperative that one must take chances to be creative.

Bob's early paintings in this exhibit, e.g. "Brad's Third Birthday," 1955 and "Summer Heat," 1956 may seem to contradict the assertion of his New York influence. They are clearly products of the academic environment that favors the fairly conservative experimentation that equips students for the more adventurous discoveries that will come later for those artists who persevere. By the time he painted "March Pine" in 1957, Aldern was demonstrating what would be a hallmark of his painting—a modernist approach to the landscape without abandoning

representation. There is in this work not only a reference to Cézanne but something inspired by the “all-over” approach of the Abstract Expressionist and even a suggestion of the techniques of action painting.

By the mid 1960s, Aldern’s work has become markedly abstract. With “The Bluffs” in 1970, we see the essential Aldern style that reaches full maturity in the 1980s in works like “South of Roslyn,” 1983. By this time, we see the lessons of the color field, hard edge, and post-painterly abstractionist painters incorporated into a unique personal style. Hans Hofmann’s concept of “purity” with its emphasis on the integrity of the surface is clearly present. Yet, while the ultimate integrity of the picture plane is respected both in composition and technique, there is a sense of order and structure to the works that fits with Gestalt psychology. This synthesis continues as Aldern pushes abstraction more and more in his paintings in the 1990s until works like “Dakota Sky and Land,” 1997 take on a simplicity and richness reminiscent of Mark Rothko.

In assessing Robert Aldern’s painting career, one is left with several strong impressions. First of all, there seems to be a linearity in his development that has a certain inevitability about it; the essential Bob Aldern is definable across forty

years of work. From his student days until now, and despite changing influences, the artist is a classicist who loves muted color and strong formal compositions. He is an artist who respects the painting’s surface and whose meticulous yet sparse technique results in economical but subtle rich planes of color. It is also obvious that for all of his commitment to abstraction Aldern is a representational artist who finds in his environment ample opportunity to explore formal associations without relinquishing an affection for nature.

In this later aspect, Robert Aldern’s work reminds us of the often observed connection between Abstract Expressionism and landscape. He shares with artists like Helen Frankenthaler a color field approach that still maintains a traditional composition with dominants and subordinants and ambiguous illusionism. The two artists also share a cool and detached execution that is somehow richly eloquent and deeply lyrical.

In the end, we are moved by Robert Aldern’s landscapes because of their integrity. While they tread dangerously near the decorative, they often achieve a deeper kind of beauty, one that hints at the transcendent beauty of nature without depicting it.



Reredos 1964 International Luther Convention, Detroit, Michigan

ROBERT J. ALDERN: DRAUGHTSMAN

Carl Grupp, Professor of Art, Augustana College

When one uses the word draughtsman nowadays, it conjures up different meanings It is used to define an artist who works with architects and draws out the plans for various buildings, or if one goes to the library one finds books like *Great Draughtsmen from Pisanello to Picasso* by Jakob Rosenberg. The dictionary says 1. One who draws plans and sketches. 2. One who draws legal documents or other writings. 3. An artist who excels in drawing. In Italian the word for drawing is *disegno*; I take that to mean to design with marks. Bob fits two of these categories: one who draws plans and sketches, and an artist who excels in drawing. One afternoon Bob will be designing and drawing out plans for liturgical furniture with the clarity and precision of an architect and a few hours later, he will be emotionally involved with drawing the human figure.

I must preface all this with some history. I have been fortunate enough to have met and become friends with Bob in 1959 or 1960. When I heard about this artist painting in a pig barn in what was then the southern part of Sioux Falls, I went out to meet who was to become one of my closest friends. Bob has gifted me with some of the best advice I have ever received in my artistic studies . . . "Don't try to make a masterpiece, just work. If a masterpiece comes, it will be the result of that effort." Bob is a living example of his own advice. Drawing, painting, designing, refining, and honing each work. His paintings are always in a state of flux, and to some degree, so are his drawings. After a drawing session with a model, Bob will take the drawings back into his studio and continue developing the form and volume. Our mutual good friend, Lloyd Menard, upon watching Bob draw remarked, "Gawd! You draw big feet." Bob is a consummate student of learning, and anyone who has studied drawing the human figure knows just how difficult it is to draw the hands and feet. Bob, I feel, has emphasized them in his attack to get them right—a lot of times sitting with an anatomy book in case he sees something he does not understand. It is this challenge to learn, to grow, that feeds Bob Aldern, not financial success

or fame but learning. I think about a gift of large sheets of paper Bob's daughter, Noreen, gave him. Bob, a very sharing person, gave me and some students a number of these sheets. This paper was beautiful but had a very strong tooth, so it would wear down or chew up whatever conte crayon or graphite you worked with. Bob chose to draw on it with the large sticks of compressed charcoal, a rather crude, soft medium, because he loved the fight and the challenge of creating form and volume of a tender nature with this defiant media. Out of these skirmishes came some exquisite figure drawings.



Triple Figure 1993 17.5" x 22" compressed charcoal



Jurors Deliberating 1973 pencil on paper 8" x 11"

ROBERT J. ALDERN: COMMISSION ARTIST

One of the most significant aspects of Bob Aldern's contributions to art has been his steadfast dedication to commission work. Schooled early in the opportunities afforded in public art by Palmer Eide and Ogden Dalrymple, his commitment to commission work was further fueled by contact with the internationally recognized mural artist, Jean Charlot, and the strong emphasis on design he acquired at the Hartford Art School. This emphasis on design led him to relish commission work for the way it engages the artist in community life. He has helped people visualize their ideals; he has served community pride; and, he has made life more beautiful. He has, however, also helped to make public art a part of our normal expectation, and he has been a powerful model of the successful artist for South Dakota.

Monsignor James Michael Doyle, pastor of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Sioux Falls, has known Bob Aldern well and worked with him on numerous commissions. He offers the following personal testimony entitled, Robert Aldern—An Artist and a Gentleman.

All of us are familiar with the film "An Officer and a Gentleman." It reminds me of Bob Aldern, who best fits the description of an "ARTIST and a Gentleman."

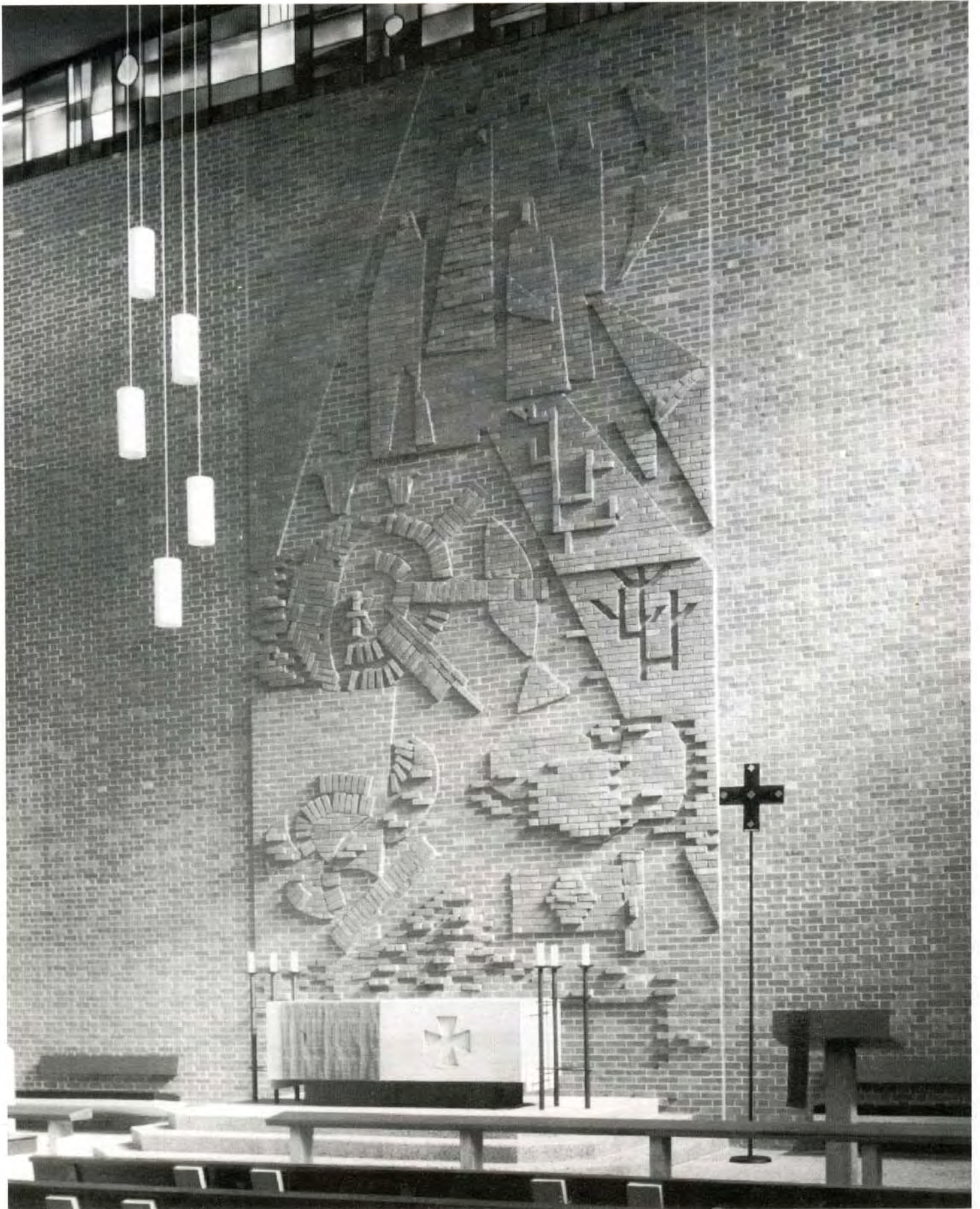
An inside joke among Catholic clergy is that the only difference between a terrorist and a liturgical artist is that you can negotiate with a terrorist. Not so, with this "Artist and Gentleman."

Under the watch of Lambert Anthony Hoch, fifth Catholic Bishop of Sioux Falls, the Second Vatican Council decreed that worship space in churches of East River, South Dakota, and throughout the world be renewed. Most pastors had been trained for churches that focused on personal devotion rather than on the action of the assembly in the communal worship of the Mass. Many had an aesthetic sense which gave them much reason to be modest about.

Professional guidance was urgent, and Bishop Hoch turned to a young Sioux Falls artist who earned the confidence of priests and bishops when assisting Robert Rambusch, a liturgical artist of national stature, in building and decorating St. Mary's



Central Plains Clinic (destroyed) 1976 36' x 19' Sioux Falls, South Dakota



Brick Relief 36' x 16' First Lutheran Church, St. Peter, Minnesota

Church in Sioux Falls. When it was dedicated, St. Mary's Church was singled out by the New York Times as being one of the most authentic and visionary churches of art built in modern times.

From that time until the present, this deeply dedicated Lutheran artist and gentleman served as liturgical consultant for countless Catholic churches in new structures and remodelings. And he has always done so with unique skills, reverence, gentle persistence, and respect for the integrity of the artistry and the materials used.

At this writing, I am marking forty years of priesthood. As I reflect upon these years, I am suddenly conscious that Bob Aldern, honored artist and dear friend, has been interwoven in three-fourths of them.

In 1967, I was given the charge to build a new Catholic church in Centerville, South Dakota. Bob Aldern was my liturgical artist and helped recruit other South Dakota artists who crafted all of the furniture and executed the religious design. The next year, I was made Chair of the Department of Religious Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of South Dakota. That same year, Robert Aldern was appointed Chair of the Art Department at the University in the College of Fine Arts.

I had the luxury of having Bob not only as a friend but also as a colleague. I met many artists through Bob and Joey Aldern, and all remain close friends. (I wonder if faculty parties of the Fine Arts folks remain now as interesting as they were then . . . ?) The USD Newman Center's chapel is surrounded by Aldern art.

When I ended my tenure at USD in 1979 and was assigned to organize and build a new Catholic parish in the western heights of Sioux Falls, so did Bob end his USD tenure and move to Sioux Falls. The timing was perfect. Resisting the temptation to build a new parish center and worship area before coming to an awareness of who this new community of people really was, and what were their needs that should be addressed in the new construction, we spent over a year in planning before hiring an architect. Each Tuesday evening was blacked out on my calendar that entire winter of 1979-80 to meet with a core committee of parishioners. Bob Aldern was always part of that meeting. And Aldern coordinated the architects and the artists through each

phase of planning and construction for the new St. Michael's Church that opened in 1981. Even today, it remains a showpiece of South Dakota artists in action, including woodwork, sculpture, paintings, weavings, and design. Bob also created several art pieces there.

Following St. Michael's dedication, the next new Catholic parish of Holy Spirit on the southeast side of Sioux Falls also employed Bob as liturgical consultant. My next assignment in Brookings was just the same; the art of Aldern surrounded me at the college and the Pius XII Newman Center. And now, coming full circle to St. Mary's Parish in Sioux Falls, works of artist Aldern which were created at the beginning of his brilliant career inspire me each day.

The presence of artist and dear friend Robert Aldern is now, and forever shall be, a treasured, special Grace in my life and career. He is a blessing to our East River Diocese, to South Dakota academia, and countless artists. *Te Deum Laudamus!*

Selected List of Commission Works

- 1959 Sound baffle design
St. Mary's Catholic Church, Sioux Falls, South Dakota
- 1959 Chancel wall and chapel wall (1972)
Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, South Dakota
- 1961 Reredos panels
International Lutheran Youth Convention, Miami, Florida
- 1965 Tile murals
School of Mines and Technology, Rapid City, South Dakota
- 1965 Sanctuary wall
First Lutheran Church, St. Peter, Minnesota
- 1976 Lobby wall, 36' h x 19' w (destroyed)
Central Plains Clinic, Sioux Falls, South Dakota
- 1984 Reredos paintings and design
Augustana College Chapel, Sioux Falls, South Dakota
- 1986 Sanctuary wall
King of Glory Lutheran Church, Dallas, Texas
- 1990 Mural
Sioux Valley Hospital, Sioux Falls, South Dakota
- 1993 Triptych
Good Samaritan Corporate Offices,
Sioux Falls, South Dakota
- 1994 Lobby panel
McKenna Hospital, Sioux Falls, South Dakota
- 1995-96 Choir screen on Eucharistic panel
Christ the King Catholic Church,
Sioux Falls, South Dakota
- 1996 The Holy Trinity
Trinity Lutheran Church, Arlington, South Dakota
- 1996 Reredos painting
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, South Dakota
- 1997 Triptych
St. John's Catholic Church, Groton, South Dakota

ROBERT J. ALDERN: AN ARTIST'S VIEW

Milton J. Kudlacek, Professor of Art, Emeritus, Dakota Wesleyan University

In the month of August, 1957, I was driving down Eighteenth Street in Sioux Falls on my way to my parents' house on Fourth Avenue when I spotted Bob Aldern sitting on the porch of his parents' house. I had not seen Bob since 1951 when he entered the Air Force upon finishing his senior year at Augustana College. I had just completed my graduate work at the University of Iowa and my Nash Ambassador was packed with my Iowa paintings. Bob had just received his BFA from Hartford School of Design and was surrounded on that porch with his Hartford paintings. We had a grand reunion comparing our paintings and sharing our post-graduate experiences. Four of those paintings which I first saw on that porch in Sioux Falls are the earliest of his works in his current retrospective. Forty years later they still retain their freshness and appeal, and they demonstrate an artistic maturity which belies the youthfulness of the artist who produced them. It is to Bob's credit that he has never lost that youthful appeal in either his work or his personality and yet has continued to build on that maturity of artistic expression.

Bob and I go back a long way. We grew up in the same neighborhood in Sioux Falls. Bob was a year ahead of me in Longfellow Elementary School, Washington High School, and Augustana College. Our educational backgrounds and experiences are uniquely similar. Bob fondly recalls many of the teachers and professors who had a profound influence on his life. At Longfellow, among a number of others, there was a fifth grade reading teacher, Mrs. Slater. Neither of us can remember her first name now, but to us young students, teachers didn't have first names. They were universally "Miss or Mrs. So-and-So" or an occasional "Mr. So and So" who was usually the manual training teacher. Mrs. Slater was stern but fair and instilled a love of learning in her students. An inspiring and lasting influence on both our lives was Longfellow music teacher, Marie McMurchie. Bob recalls how Miss McMurchie made him cover his head with his arms, put it down on his desk, and listen to classical music or excerpts from opera. That was not only the beginning of a life-long love of music but also an appreciation of creative expression and a development of an

aesthetic sensitivity which became a part of his own dedication as an artist. In the marble halls of old Washington High School, Bob had the blessing of many wonderful and underpaid teachers; among them: art teachers, Vera Koch and Edward Plunkett, geometry teacher, Lynn Zenner, and mechanical drawing teacher, Clark Close. Each, in his or her own way, developed the foundations of Bob's life-long intellectual, artistic, and moral integrity.

And, of course, there were the years at Augustana. In the years immediately after World War II, Augie was filled with veterans on the GI Bill who had been through hell and back on the battlefields of Europe and the Pacific. They brought a campus which had been dormant during the war years to an exuberant awakening with their love of learning and life and their ability to reach a healthy balance between their serious studies and their penchant for boisterous partying. The arrogant confidence of these veterans threatened, challenged, and at the same time, enriched Augustana's Scandinavian Lutheran traditions. Bob Aldern, the young freshman, became a part of this exciting atmosphere in 1947 and promptly rose to the challenges of higher education.

In the art department, Professors Palmer Eide and Ogden Dalrymple complemented each others' teaching methods and philosophies of art in the converted cafeteria in the basement of Ladies Hall, the old girls' dormitory. "Polly" and "Dal" not only managed to bring art to life in those somewhat crowded quarters but created an atmosphere in which students could congregate at all hours and share ideas, philosophies, and create art in the studios while engaging in conversations both esoteric and pedestrian.

Outside of the art department, Augustana's long-time and lovable Author-in-Residence, Herbert Krause, impressed Bob with his scholarship and his knowledge of literature, broadening Bob's love of reading. Theatre director, Bob Snook, brought a professionalism and in intense creativity to his productions in the tiny Augie Little Theatre.

Students had the opportunity to work with visiting professional actors from Broadway and London. Bob took advantage of this opportunity. I remember Bob's sterling performance in "An Inspector Calls" in which he stole the show with his flawless English accent and his spirited acting. President Lawrence Stavig's wife, Cora, reached out to students of all kinds at Augustana and Bob remembers her caring support and encouragement of his student efforts on numerous occasions.

Two visiting artists at Augustana helped to shape Bob's artistic future. Internationally-known muralist, Jean Charlot, presented a fresco workshop and Ralston Crawford brought a then contemporary freshness to the department with his lectures on conjectural painting. That experience with Charlot resulted in that famous summer motorcycle trip west with his friend and fellow art major, Darrell Erickson, to study with Charlot. That introduction to the muralist tradition enhanced Bob's interest in architectural art and helped him to hone his future skills in developing ecclesiastical and commercial commissions. In his senior year, Bob and three fellow senior art majors, Darrell Erickson, Helen Schrader, and Danny O'Boyle, together completed a mural done in the traditional fresco technique in the lounge of what was then the science building. This was their cooperative senior project. Danny O'Boyle, a devout Catholic, with an intense love of philosophy and theology, believed that through art he could reach an ultimate expression of his faith. Danny's devotion and faith had a profound effect on Bob, and he and Danny are close friends to this day. This also resulted in Bob's ecumenical attitude through which his own faith was able to cross sectarian barriers in the execution of his many liturgical commissions.

Of course, all of us in the Augie art department in those days received persistent but gentle guidance from Palmer Eide's philosophy of art and more robust guidance from Ogden Dalrymple's enthusiasm for artistic form as volume and substance. In fact, Polly's art history survey course bore the title "Philosophy of Art." We all received a healthy dose of Ananda Coomarswamy's "Christian and Oriental or True Philosophy of Art." So, along with the traditional survey of art history such phrases as "An artist is not a special kind of person but every person is a special kind of artist," and, "There is more ultimate reality in the painting

of an apple by Cézanne or a tree by Van Gogh than in a painting of Jesus Christ by Salmon" were imbedded into our young minds. (I have taken the liberty to paraphrase slightly).

After our meeting on the Aldern porch in 1957, Bob drew on his background in mechanical and engineering drawing from high school, college, and the Air Force to gain employment as a draughtsman in the architectural offices of Harold Spitznagel. This allowed Bob the means to support his young family by doing routine drafting in one of the most creative environments in Sioux Falls. Spitz had long been an advocate for incorporating art into many of his buildings and was the source of a number of welcome commissions for area and national artists. Spitz also had a close relationship with Palmer Eide and Augustana College; he had already designed three major buildings at Augustana. It was not long before Bob received commissions for projects in Spitznagel buildings, notably St. Mary's Catholic Church and Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, and a major commission from the Luther League for a liturgical backdrop for its national convention. Bob had established his career as an outstanding liturgical artist.

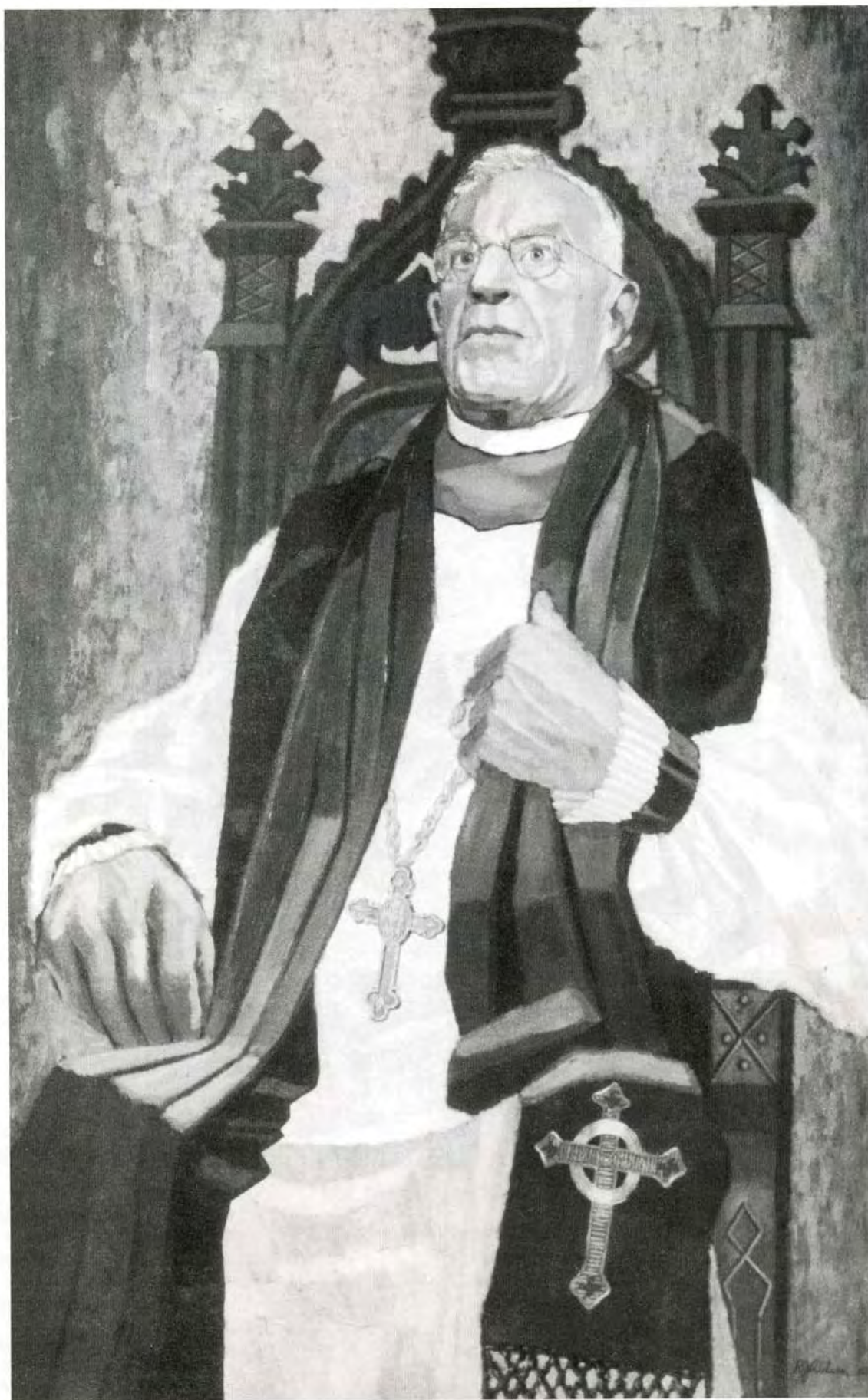
So what can I say about Robert J. Aldern? He is a man who wears many hats: husband, father, friend, educator, liturgical artist, painter. To all of these we can add superlative modifiers. He and his wife, Joey, have raised a wonderful family. Whatever remarkable success Bob has had, he must share with Joey for all her love, support, and partnership through these many years. Bob has been a wonderful friend. My late wife, Lil, and I always have considered Bob and Joey among our most loved and best friends. As a teacher, he has left an indelible mark on the archives of South Dakota higher education. As Artist-in-Residence at South Dakota State University, as chairman of the art departments at the University of South Dakota and Augustana College, he has enriched countless students with his insights, wit, and intellectual and artistic integrity. As a liturgical artist, as well as in his other commercial and public commissions, Bob has created a unique and immediately recognizable style and technique. In his works in oil stains on wooden panels he combines his skills as a consummate draughtsman with his innate sense of color and design. The results are works of architectural art which are rooted in historic traditions, combine narrative and

symbolism, and yet have a contemporary freshness, an aesthetic integrity, and a universal appeal. In his wonderful South Dakota landscapes, he captures the vastness of the prairie. Land and sky come together and make us a part of a magic and mysterious universe. Sometimes the colors are muted, subtle, and gently soothing and sometimes brilliant blues and reds excite our soul and awaken us to a universe filled with promise and excitement. Whereas the compositions for Aldern's architectural commissions are dominated by the human figure in what is almost the spirit

of the high renaissance, his landscapes diminish the significance of the human presence in the universe and present us with a view of nature which is both bucolic and sublime. The last landscape Bob completed for his current retrospective represents a South Dakota sunset. Shades of brilliant reds and oranges dominate a western sky. Shortly after 7:00 p.m. on September 12 during the opening of Bob's show at the University of South Dakota a passing rainstorm in Vermillion left the clearing western sky filled with brilliant reds and oranges. Nature imitating art?



Clear Vessels and Spoons 1986 felt tip drawing 11.5" x 17"



The Rt. Rev. William Blair 1961 oil on masonite 48" x 30"

ROBERT ALDERN CHRONOLOGY

1929 Born on January 16 in Sioux Falls, South Dakota

1932-37 Lived on family farm between Roslyn and Webster, South Dakota

1937-43 Attended Longfellow Grade School in Sioux Falls

1943-47 Attended Washington High School in Sioux Falls

1947-51 Attended Augustana College, Sioux Falls

1950 Summer study with noted french muralist, Jean Charlot, in San Diego, California

1951-54 Served in the United States Air Force

1955-57 Attended Hartford Art School at the University of Hartford, Hartford, Connecticut, receiving his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. Worked as a draftsman for H.B. Van Zelm engineering firm

1957 Returned to Sioux Falls and established Aldern Art Studio

1957-61 Worked as a draftsman for Harold Spitznagel Associates, Architects

1958 Designed sound baffle for St. Mary's Catholic Church, Sioux Falls (first major commission piece)

1959 Awarded Silver medal by the New York Architectural League for design on sound baffle at St. Mary's Catholic Church

1961 Executed series of panels for the International Luther League Convention in Miami, Florida (later displayed in Salzburg, Austria)

1963-66 Director of Civic Fine Arts Center, Sioux Falls

1964-65 Taught art at Augustana College, Sioux Falls

1964 Appointed Artistic Consultant to Catholic Diocese of Eastern South Dakota

1966-68 Artist-in-residence at South Dakota State University, Brookings



South of Roslyn 1983 oil on masonite 48" x 36"

1968-80 Taught art at the University of South Dakota, Vermillion

Served as Chair of Art Department 1968-73

Associate Professor of Art 1968-70

Professor of Art 1970-1980

1977 Received Alumni Achievement Award from Augustana College

1980-91 Professor of Art at Augustana College

Chair of Art Department 1980-1987

1985 Received South Dakota Arts Council Senior Artis Fellowship

1994-present First Director of Center for Liturgical Art at Augustana College

Artist-in-Residence Augustana College

1997 Recipient of South Dakota Governor's Award in the Arts for Creative Achievement

Recipient of Spitznagel Award for Artistic Achievement

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

Drawings:

Campus Slaughter, 1963
pencil 15.8" x 18.5"
Collection of the artist

Crippled Kitty Looking Hungry, 1969
pencil 10" x 13"
Collection of the artist

Mini-sub, 1969
pencil 10" x 13"
Collection of the artist

Sun Room, 1971
colored pencil and turpentine 12.5" x 13.5"
Collection of the artist

Jurors In Court On Break, 1973
pencil 8" x 11"
Collection of the artist

Jurors Deliberating, 1973
pencil 8" x 11"
Collection of the artist

Night Herd, 1973
felt tip pen 19.5" x 19.5"
Collection of the artist

North of Union County, 1975
felt tip pen 15" x 19"
Collection of the artist

Reclining Figure, 1985
compressed charcoal 23" x 35"
Collection of the artist

One Knee Down, 1985
compressed charcoal 18" x 23.5"
Collection of the artist

Figure in Overstuffed Chair, 1985
compressed charcoal 19" x 25"
Collection of the artist

Figure Seated on Chair, 1985
compressed charcoal 18" x 23.5"
Collection of the artist

Vase and Pouring Pitcher, 1986
colored pens (FP) 11.5" x 17.5"
Collection of the artist

Clear Vessels and Spoons, 1986
colored pens (FP) 11.5" x 17"
Collection of the artist

Eve, 1987
pencil 12" x 22.5"
Collection of Noreen and Robert Groethe

Adam, 1987
pencil 13" x 22.5"
Collection of Noreen and Robert Groethe

Figure on Floor with Chair, 1993
compressed charcoal 19" x 22"
Collection of the artist

Triple Figure, 1993
compressed charcoal 17.5" x 22"
Collection of the artist

Haunched, 1993
compressed charcoal 18" x 24"
Collection of the artist

Commission Works:
Design on Sound Baffle, 1958
gold leaf on plaster
St. Mary's Catholic Church
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

The Ascension 1959
oil on brick 36' x 16'
Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Descent from the Cross, c. 1961
oil on masonite 34 1/4" x 94 1/2"
Paul Rodness Memorial
Augustana College, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Prodigal Son, 1961
oil on masonite 114" x 36 3/4"
Paul Rodness Memorial
Augustana College, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Sanctuary Wall, 1968
(scaled model) relief brick 36' x 16'
Duane Van De Stoe, Bricklayer
First Lutheran Church, St. Peter, Minnesota

Reredos Paintings, 1983
oil on red oak 16' x 24'
Photograph of Augustana College Chapel
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Whatever you would do unto others, you would also do unto me, 1973
oil on red oak 10' x 12'
Luther Center, Vermillion, South Dakota

The Last Supper, 1996
oil on red oak 7.6' x 16'
Photograph of Christ the King Church, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Paintings:
Portrait of Mrs. J. J. Johnson, c. 1957
oil on masonite 48" x 30"
Collection of the artist

March Pine, 1957
oil on masonite 48" x 30"
Collection of Janet Sutherland Aronson

Brad's Third Birthday, 1955
oil on masonite 48" x 38"
Collection of Marlys and Anthony Solbach

Summer Heat, 1956
oil on masonite 48" x 30"
Collection of Marlys and Anthony Solbach

Still Life, c. 1965
oil on masonite 7 1/2" x 28 1/2"
Collection of Ruth and Rodney Jones

Descent from the Cross, c. 1961
opaque watercolor and ink 14" x 18"
Collection of Robert and Mary Child

The Rt. Rev. William Blair Roberts (deceased), 1961
Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota
oil on masonite 48" x 30"
Church of the Good Shepherd, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Nativity over Field of Cows, c. 1965
oil on masonite top 10" x 24" lower 18" x 24"
Collection of the artist

The Bluffs, c. 1970
oil on masonite 36" x 48"
South Dakota Art Museum, Brookings, South Dakota

Memories, 1974
oil on masonite 36" x 48"
Collection of the artist

Night Cattle, c. 1974
oil on masonite 36" x 48"
Collection of Lawrence Piersol

East of Sioux Falls, 1983
oil on masonite 36" x 48"
Collection of Noreen and Robert Groethe

South of Roslyn, c. 1983
oil on masonite 48" x 36"
Collection of the artist

South Dakota Strata, 1985
oil on masonite 48" x 36"
Civic Fine Arts Center, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Both Sides of the River, c. 1989
oil on masonite 36" x 48"
Collection of the artist

East River, c. 1990
oil on masonite 48" x 60"
Norwest Bank, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

West River, c. 1990
oil on masonite 48" x 60"
Norwest Bank, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Summer/Winter Dirt Blizzard "Snirt", 1990-1997
oil on masonite 48" x 30"
Collection of the artist

Clay Lake Bed, 1992
oil on masonite 48" x 36"
Collection of the artist

Landscape (North of Watertown), 1992
oil on masonite 24" x 30"
Collection of Lawrence Piersol

Sacrificial Earth, 1992
oil on masonite 36" x 48"
Collection of Mary and Robert Child

Newly Plowed Alfalfa, c. 1992
oil on masonite 30" x 48"
Collection of the artist

Sun Drenched Hay, 1993
oil on masonite 36" x 48"
Collection of the artist

Dakota Sky and Land, 1997
oil on masonite 48" x 60"
Collection of Carla Fauske and Peter Lieberman

Just South of Vermillion, 1997
oil on masonite 15" x 24"
Collection of the artist

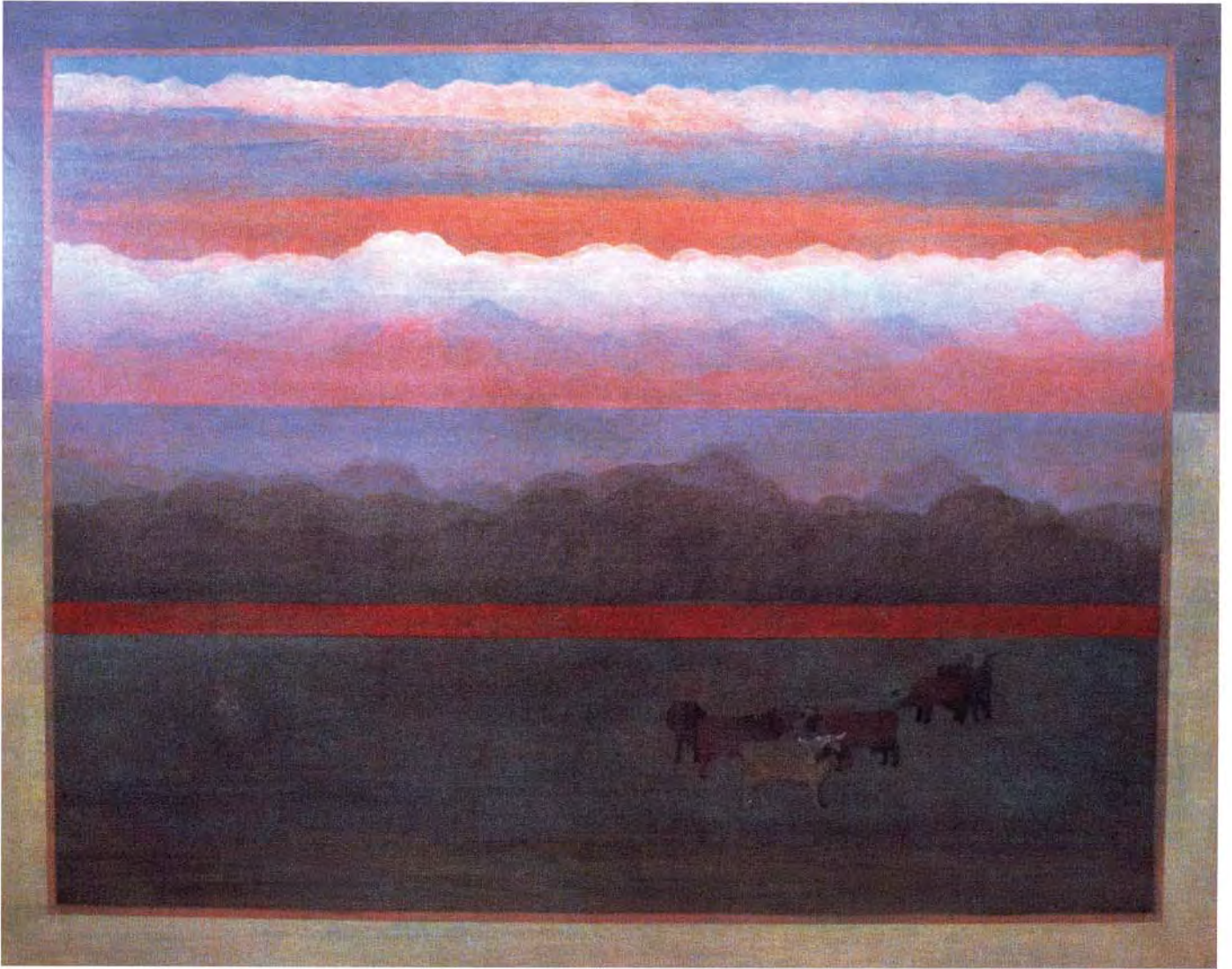
North of Brookings, 1997
oil on masonite 15" x 18"
Collection of the artist

Looking Towards North Dakota, 1997
oil on masonite 48" x 36"
Collection of the artist

East of Sioux Falls, 1997
oil on masonite 15" x 18"
Collection of Ruth and Art Olsen

East of Kakoka, 1997
oil on masonite 14" x 18"
Collection of Mary and Robert Child

South of Canton, 1997
oil on masonite 15" x 18"
Collection of Mary and Robert Child



West River 1990 oil on masonite 48" x 60"



East River 1990 48" x 60" oil on masonite

Cover: *East of Kadoka*, 1997 14" x 18" oil on masonite

Back Cover: *Sun Drenched Hay* 1993 36" x 48" oil on masonite

Title Page: *Descent from the Cross* 1961 Paul Rodness Memorial, Augustana College 34 1/4" x 94 1/2" oil on masonite Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Page 5 photo by Bernie Hunhoff

