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California Artist Donates Oil Paintings Valued at \$1.7 Million to Cal Poly Graphic Communication Department

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Well-known Northern California artist and humanitarian Duane Armstrong recently donated 59 oil paintings valued at over \$1.7 million to Cal Poly's Graphic Communication Department.

"Armstrong is one of America's most published painters and is no newcomer to the world of contemporary fine art," said Pat Waters, a 1973 Graphic Communication graduate who helped arrange the donation. "During the 1970s, the popularity of Armstrong's paintings catapulted him into the top five print sales in the nation."

"This is an outstanding gift and a tremendous investment," said Harvey Levenson, head of Cal Poly's Graphic Communication Department. "Other types of investments are on the decline but art tends to appreciate. There are no strings attached to the gift; we may keep the paintings, display them, sell them, rent them, lend them to galleries or produce limited-edition prints. We plan to do some of each," Levenson said.

Some of the donated paintings are by Armstrong's wife, Annie Armstrong, who specializes in shells and floral images. The paintings have been appraised by an independent art appraiser and the values range from about \$6,500 to \$87,000 each. Anyone who buys a painting will receive an appraisal.



The oil paintings, some with 70 coats of paint, range in size from a few square feet to approximately 7 ft. x 7 ft. for large wall space in homes and corporate lobbies, offices, and conference rooms.

During his four decades as an artist, Armstrong, who was raised in San Luis Obispo, has created over 7,000 fine art paintings and has influenced countless young artists. His work has been reproduced and distributed by Heritage Publications, Illinois Moulding Co., Windsor Art Co., Turner Art Company, Continental Art Company, and Art Market International. Reproductions of his "Fields of Grass" and other paintings have been sold in department store chains worldwide.

Armstrong has been honored with two retrospective fine art shows. The first, at Les Cuisins Gallery in Concord in 1980 and the second at Stanford University in 2003

His paintings are in collections of people from all walks of life as well as some of the largest corporations and banks in America. Over the years, Armstrong's artwork has been displayed at numerous galleries throughout the United States.

Although often thought of as a painter of "enchanted fields," Armstrong is also well known for his "Abstract Studies," "Lord Of The Rings," "Sand Dunes," "Ladybug In Peril," "Pueblo Series," "Ladybug In Grass," "Lightfall Series," "Hot

Air Balloons” and the “Sunrise At The Beach” series.

Art historian Dina Scoppettone said, “With brilliant shocks of color boldly presented on giant canvases in an abstract manner of visual messaging, clues to the nature of Armstrong's whimsy are not only found in the oil paint on canvas, but also in the title of each work. ‘Vladimir's Black Hole Compressor’ is one example that every viewer will confront with childish curiosity, as if it were a puzzle to be solved Armstrong's paintings beckon the viewer to look deeply at the details that program each work, large scale or otherwise.”

Armstrong is now at work on a series of large abstract oil paintings, “that are awe-inspiring with their piercing colors, vast size and profound meaning,” Levenson said.

Much of the proceeds from sales of Armstrong's work go to nonprofit organizations, according to Levenson. Armstrong supports charities that help children, including Hands of Hope, which provides food, clothing, shelter and education to children who have been orphaned or otherwise abandoned because of the AIDS epidemic.

Images of the 59 pictures Armstrong donated to Cal Poly are online at <http://www.grc.calpoly.edu/armstrong>.

For more information on the Armstrong collection or on acquiring any of the paintings, contact Harvey Levenson at 805-756-6151, 805-756-1108 or hlevenso@calply.edu.

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