

## Roy De Forest, 77, Painter Of Colorful, Comic Scenes

By **ROBERTA SMITH**

Roy De Forest, a Bay Area artist whose paintings depicted a comical, crowded frontier land of people and animals in patchworks of scorched, textured color, died on Friday in Vallejo, Calif. He was 77 and lived in nearby Port Costa.

His death was confirmed by George Adams, his New York dealer, who said the cause had not been determined.

Mr. De Forest belonged to a group of Bay Area individualists who included Robert Arneson, Joan Brown, William T. Wiley and Peter Saul. They were often grouped under the heading of Funk, a term Mr. De Forest disliked; the New York art world tended to lump them together as regionalists.

Most were versed in Abstract Expressionism but gradually turned its formal lessons to narrative, nonabstract ends. Mr. De Forest's abstractions morphed into crusty maplike expanses teeming with odd textures, cartoon details, little folk-art silhouettes and swarming dots.

He was a lover of dogs, rarely owning fewer than two. By the mid-1960s he had developed a sardonic Americana of guys and dogs, overlapping with other animals, birds and sometimes imaginary beings in flattened landscapes, whose hallucinatory colors and a down-home woodsiness presaged the nascent counterculture. The dots developed into coarse pointillism, becoming something of a

trademark; the little dollops of paint resembled chocolate chips (or for some, LSD tabs).

The son of migrant farm workers, Mr. De Forest was born in North Platte, Neb., in 1930 and grew up mostly in Yakima, Wash., where he attended junior college. He studied on a scholarship at the San Francisco Art Institute, where his teachers included the prominent local artists Hassel Smith, Elmer Bischoff and David Park, and later earned bachelor's and master's degrees from San Francisco State College. He taught at

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### *Counterculture folk art, populated by beasts and humans.*

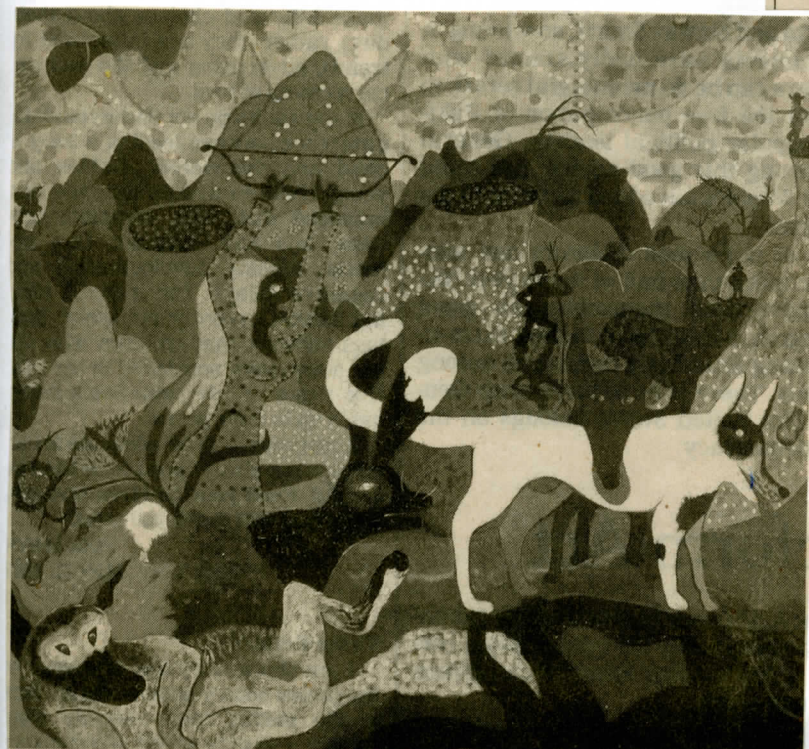
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the University of California, Davis, from 1965 to 1992.

He is survived by his wife, Gloria; a daughter, Oriana, and a son, Pascal, both of Concord, Calif.; and three sisters, also of California: Beth Jacobs of San Leandro, Beverly Lagiss of Livermore and Lynn Robie of Sacramento.

His first solo show was at the East & West Gallery in San Francisco in 1955. Starting in 1966, he exhibited regularly at the Allan Frumkin Gallery in New York. A retrospective organized by San Francisco Museum of Modern Art came to the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1975.

In that show's catalog, Mr. De Forest identified himself as an "obscure visual constructor of mechanical delights" and quoted a talking dog, named Samuel Johnson, who said, "What is current taste but old desires made palatable by present boredom."



George Adams Gallery

"A Slow Time in Arcadia," a 1977 acrylic by Roy De Forest.