

Italo Scanga, 69, an Artist Inspired by Found Objects

by Holland Cotteraug Aug. 3, 2001



Italo Scanga, a sculptor and painter who fashioned much of his work from found objects in a style that blended Cubist and folk influences, died on **July 27, 2001** at his studio in Pacific Beach, Calif. He was 69. The cause was a heart attack, said Winifred Cox, a spokeswoman for the University of California at San Diego, where Mr. Scanga taught.

Mr. Scanga's materials included natural objects like branches and seashells, as well as kitsch figurines, castoff musical instruments and decorative trinkets salvaged from flea markets and thrift shops. He combined these ingredients into free-standing assemblages, which he then painted. Although visually ebullient, the results sometimes referred to gruesome episodes from Greek mythology or the lives and deaths of martyred saints.

He worked in many media, including printmaking, ceramics and glass, and considered his artistic influences to be sweepingly pan-cultural, from African sculpture to Giorgio de Chirico. He often collaborated with the sculptor Dale Chihuly, who was a close friend.

Mr. Scanga was **born in 1932** in **Lago** (Cosenza), a small town in the Calabria region of Italy, and in **1947**, at 14 **immigrated** to the United States with his family after World War II. Living in Detroit, he worked on the General Motors assembly line and served in the United States Army before attending Michigan State University, where he received a bachelor's degree in 1960 and a master's degree in sculpture a year later.

He had one-person shows at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Art, Boston, and the Museo Rufino Tamayo in Mexico City. His work is in the collection of many museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Art Institute of Chicago.

Mr. Scanga taught art at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, the Rhode Island School of Design and the Tyler School of Art at Temple University in Philadelphia before becoming a visiting professor at the University of California in San Diego in 1976. He joined the faculty there in 1978.

He is survived by his companion, Su-Mei Yu; two daughters, **Katherine** Scanga of Riverside, R.I., and **Sarah** Scanga of Charlottesville, Va.; three sons, **Anthony** of Glenside, Pa., **Joseph** of San Francisco and **William** of New York; and four grandchildren.