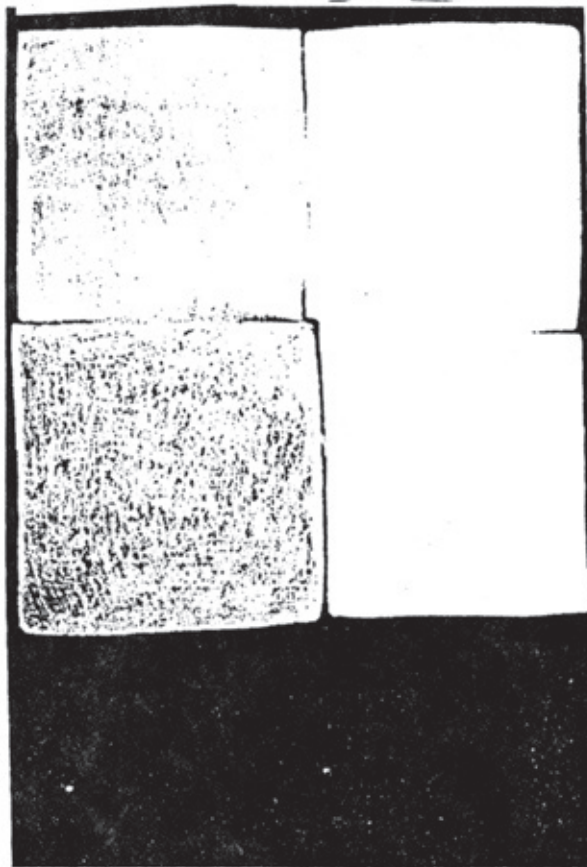


**ELEANORE BERMAN**  
**Press Packet**

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3. "Beverly Hills Artist Eleanore Berman: Garden Paintings," *Beverly Hills Magazine*, April 1991
4. "Contemplations and Interpretations at Ariel Gallery," *Artspeak*, New York, NY, May 1991
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6. Christensen, Judith. "Eleanore Berman," *ArtScene*, June 2003, Vol. 22, No. 10
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# ARTWEEK

September 30, 1978 / Volume 9, Number 32



**ELEANORE LAZAROF: CANTO II, 1975, etching on Arches paper, 40''x 30'', at the Riverside Art Center and Museum.**

Los Angeles artist Eleanore Lazarof shows twenty-six works at the Riverside Art Center and Museum through October 6. The paintings, prints and pastels, characterized by abstracted, organic shapes, range from the large, bold oil on canvas *Canto Triptych* of 1960 to the delicate embossed intaglios *Falling Forms I-IV* of 1977. Lazarof's motifs derive from natural forms and are meditative studies concerned with pattern, structure and quality of light.

Eight pastels included from the *Encounter* series, executed during Lazarof's stay in West Berlin and exhibited there at the *Amerika Haus* in 1972, indicate Lazarof's endless manipulation and variation of vertical lines originally based on observation of birch trees. Through the placement of the pastels, the viewer can discern a tonal vocabulary from the rhythm of the shapes. This subtle modulation is carried to the canvases in the oil series *Foresquare* which evokes the monumentality and solidity of form reminiscent of Georgia O'Keeffe.

The exhibit, which will travel the United States, has a spacious quality enhanced by the sparse installation and cavernous lighting which complements and intensifies the works. Accompanying the show is a catalog with a critical essay by Mary Stofflet and an artist's profile by guest curator Kirk deGooyer.

— Katherine V. Coy

# NEW YORK ARTS JOURNAL

## A NATURAL CIRCUMSTANCE

By VALERIE NATSIOS

Nature has always been the artist's most common model perhaps because it is inescapably pervasive. More definitely it is because within natural surrounds the conjunction of microscopic detailing and macroscopic overallness is, in its dynamic contrasts, a continual source of creativity for many of them.

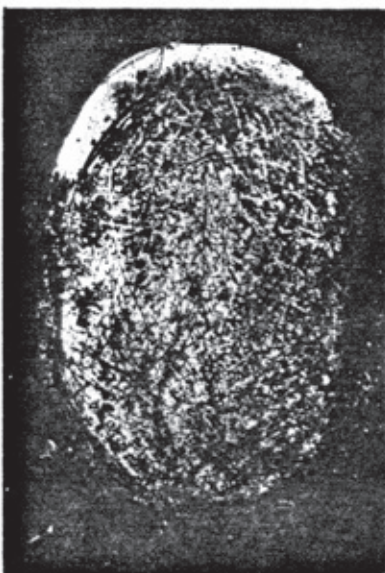
The artist who studies nature and understands that inherent in this conjunction is that contrasting, never static symmetry, is one who has surely discovered a rich field of play. The artist who is subsequently capable of infusing this understanding with a direction incorporating historical awareness and personal integrity, who reinterprets and repositions the self within the novel framework, then ably reveals its unique position through the skillful manipulation of a chosen medium, is the artist who has more than succeeded in fulfilling a laudatory goal.

Eleanore Berman-Lazarof is targeting herself toward this end. Her background in the biological sciences trained her eye to observe and appreciate the richness of her natural environment, while her equally early introduction to painting—under masters such as Albers, Feininger and Leger—allowed her to begin translating that environment as it filtered through her idiosyncratic artistic and philosophical tastes. Travel to Paris, Jerusalem and Berlin, among other locales, exposed her to a wide scope of direct cultural experiences, as well as to culture as it was paraphrased by their museums. The osmotic quality of her relationship with the external world is only partially evident in Berman-Lazarof's recent show of intaglio work at Elaine Starkman.

A schematic overview of the rest of her oeuvre reveals the production of what overtly seem to be aesthetically simple abstractions. Yet there is energy exuded not only by the work's visual appeal, but by the tacit agreement of the units to discuss what occurs as they join the visual whole.

In the "Canto Tryptich," for example, the artist has observed rocks from the Wailing Wall, then formed them into three separate images. Her oil painting has the smokey consistence of charcoal; the smooth white stones, overlapped and weighty above the black void, are suspended within the canvas, and suspended, too, within the religious and historical context implied by their origin and the tryptich format.

The "Canto" series initiates a formal motif repeated in the "Foursquare" one. Now,



however, the artist has pulled four stones close up to the picture plane and abstracted them by giving them a shallower dimensionality. The planar focus emphasizes the "stones" unique characteristics—surface texture (whether of paint or paper), color interplay and transformation, the dynamic relationship each square has to the other. It is the barest of overlap, the hair-thin line of separation between forms, the color that is transmuted by the light, the white embossing that rises up to the surface, which are the true flux of the pieces. The natural, thus distilled, is somehow more intimate and approachable in its abstraction.

Yet in "Lodestar" where four squares are replaced by one, more rounded, organic form, a form expanded to envelop almost the entire background, a form cocoon-like and starlit night sky-like simultaneously, our guiding principle becomes the ambiguity in reading solids where voids are, in reading the cell and the universe in the same optical impulse.

If an initially religious impetus has been translated into the weight and placement of stones, and stones abstracted into the idea of squareness and design, and design into dynamic symmetry's ambiguousness, then Berman-Lazarof's theme has come full circle when it returns to the more earthly record of daily observation: the private ritual of walking along her flagstone path, watching the patterning of stones beneath her feet. As the walk provides a constant reminder of abstraction, it also results in delightful naturalistic pastel sketches of the path itself and the flora around it.

Berman-Lazarof's current work-in-progress is the "Annunciation" sequence, and oil, pastel and intaglio are again used to investigate abstraction. But now her theme has broken away from the rigidity of design, and features expressionistic, semi-parallel lines falling from the upper left hand corner down to the bottom right one. A simple scheme, perhaps, but one whose content is laden with reverence, miracle, light and generations of mystery. Appropriately, there is much gold, and much vibrancy of other equally rich color, and a mystical, Byzantine-icon effect is achieved by her formal and coloristic manipulations.

One can only look forward to seeing this particular series *in toto*, as one can only look forward to seeing all of Berman-Lazarof's ensuing work. •



CLAY POT AND PATH Oil on Canvas 34" X 40" 1990

## Beverly Hills Artist Eleanore Berman: Garden Paintings

Longtime Beverly Hills resident and artist Eleanore Berman (formerly Eleanore Lazaroff) paints lush allegorical scenes from her extensive English garden. Her works are informed with a silent, enigmatic presence that seem arrested for a moment in an ever-shifting world of complex energies. Whereas much recent landscape painting presents the natural world as problematic - distant, lost, alien or artificial, Ms. Berman's ephemeral outdoor series hints at the possibility of a dialogue between man and his surroundings. These are

impulses which translate nature into slightly abstract motifs without obliterating their source, emphasizing the play of light on living sculptural forms. The artist's palette is kept limited, with greater emphasis placed on varied brush-handling which balances a vigorous energy with a stately calm.

Eleanore Berman studied with Fernand Leger in Paris and with Josef Albers and Lyonel Feininger at the famous Black Mountain College. She also studied with the great printmakers Adja Yunkers and Chaim Gross at the New School for Social Research in New York, where she still maintains a studio. A prolific painter, Ms. Berman has had 23 solo exhibitions and has participated in more than 50 group shows nationally and internationally since 1961. In Los Angeles she is represented exclusively by Boritzer/Gary Gallery at 3110 Main Street in Santa Monica (213)392-8399. The Gallery recently had a successful exhibition of Ms. Berman's works and maintains a

good selection of paintings on premises.

ArtScene critic Merle Schipper writes of Eleanore Berman's work: "Nature as a metaphor for life is translated into Berman's paintings in terms of light. Light as the source and support for life includes those luminous shadows which are themselves other levels of light. In the recent "Garden" paintings, she amplifies an already rich vocabulary to expand this theme."

At the time of her exhibition in Brussels, critic Jacque Meuris wrote: "Berman's work is essentially romantic, sometimes lyrical, attaining a certain mysticism. It navigates between an impressionist revival in style and a mobilization of felt scents, shadows and intonations."

Eleanore Berman's works have a formal and mannered Edwardian style as opposed to the Victorian age's fin-de-siecle decadence. The unharried viewer will slowly uncover that something very powerful and beautiful unfolds in these pictures.

# Contemplations and interpretations at Ariel Gallery

## "Interpretations of Nature"

In the second show, "Interpretations of Nature," Diana Lucas Hinde is represented by hand-pulled limited edition color wood-block prints, remarkable for their subtle colors and strong compositions. Hinde's vigorous formal shorthand merges mountains, clouds, and other natural forms in graceful rhythmic patterns.

Mercedes Vidal is a fantasist in watercolor with a magical imagination. This talented artist, born in the Dominican Republic, employs a flowing line and luminous color areas to explore undersea scenes and other whimsical subjects.

Finally, there is Eleanore Berman, who extracts mysterious meanings from commonplace sights in her powerful painterly oils of hedges and bushes with the solid, somewhat ominous, presence of large boulders. These are New Image paintings in the best sense of the term, for Berman imbues the familiar with an unsettling sense of otherness, making us perceive reality from a new perspective.

Like the other artists in these two intriguing shows, Eleanore Berman has evolved a strong personal style.

## **INTERPRETATIONS OF NATURE**

**through  
April 13**

**ELEANORE BERMAN  
MERCEDES VIDAL  
DIANA LUCAS HINDES**

**ARIEL** 76 Greene St., Soho  
**GALLERY** (212) 966-3097  
Wed.-Sat. 12-6

# Eleanore Berman

## Exploring the Depths of Shadows

by Marilyn Becker



Eleanore Berman, *Pond Grasses and Carp*, oil on canvas, 40" x 60".

*Her shadows shift as quickly as the eye blinks acquiring the energy of the natural movement of the water.*

**E**leanore Berman's impressionistic technique and palette successfully combine the light and lushness of her outdoor settings. Her contemplative gardens, hedges and walks, were painted in a more formalist manner of dimensional space/shape relationships. The *Pond* series retains the translucency of her impressionist works but her brushwork is more defined.

*Pond Grasses and Carp*, as other works in Eleanore Berman's *Pond* series, extends her theme and exploration of the depth of shadows; the mysteriously darkened areas created by natural light. Formerly known as Eleanore Berman Lazarof, her pond series suggests a more fluid dimension than the garden paintings that established her reputation. In the current works, her shadows shift as quickly as the eye blinks acquiring the energy of the natural movement of water. The fluidity of dark/light patterns is heightened by a more deliberate focus on the forms that catch the light and the thrust of their reflections.

The raised middleground of *Pond Grasses and Carp* is snipped by the sharp parallel of the canvas in juxtaposition to the reflection which extends the foreground of the work. The reflective blues of the pond and the high yellows of the grasses play with the brilliant oranges of the carp that dart in and out of the shadows. As a theme it is more than an impressionist's view of a quiet place and suggests fleeting movement—a moment when light, color and place become a metaphor.

Ms. Berman holds a BA from UCLA. During her student years she spent a summer at Black Mountain College, NC, where she had the opportunity to work with masters, Josef Albers, Ossip Zadkine and Lyonel Feininger. After graduation she went to Paris where she attended classes at Fernand Leger's Atelier. Her proclivity to the natural environment has been enhanced by living in California and has remained her motif and the source of her imagery.

Exhibiting since the late 1960's, Ms. Berman has had 22 solo exhibitions of her work and has participated in group and solo shows in the

U.S. and Europe. Her corporate collectors include American Express Company, Citibank, Exxon International, I.B.M., Irving Trust Company, Universal and Paramount Studios, among others. Public collections include Achenbach Graphic Arts Foundation, San Francisco, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Milwaukee Art Center. Ms. Berman's major commissions include the Compri Hotels in California and Pennsylvania, the Doubletree Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia and the Hyatt in Long Beach, CA. A resident of Beverly Hills, CA, she maintains a studio in New York. Her work has been reviewed in the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Arts Journal* and featured in *Architectural Digest*. Listed in *Who's Who In American Art*, her work is represented by Boritzer/Gary Gallery at 3110 Main Street, Santa Monica, CA (213) 392-8399.

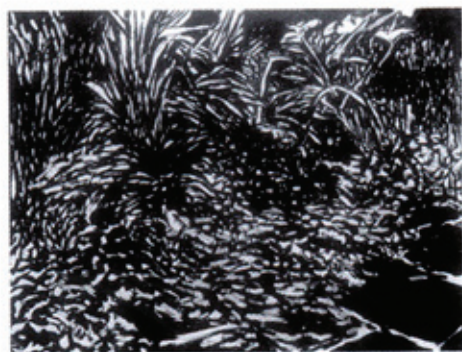
*For additional information contact Eleanore Berman, 718 N. Maple Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90210. (213) 273-2537.*

# ARTSCENE™

The Monthly Digest to Art in Southern California

## ELEANORE BERMAN

(Don O'Melveny Gallery, West  
Hollywood)



Eleanore Berman, "Garden," silkscreen, 40" x 60".

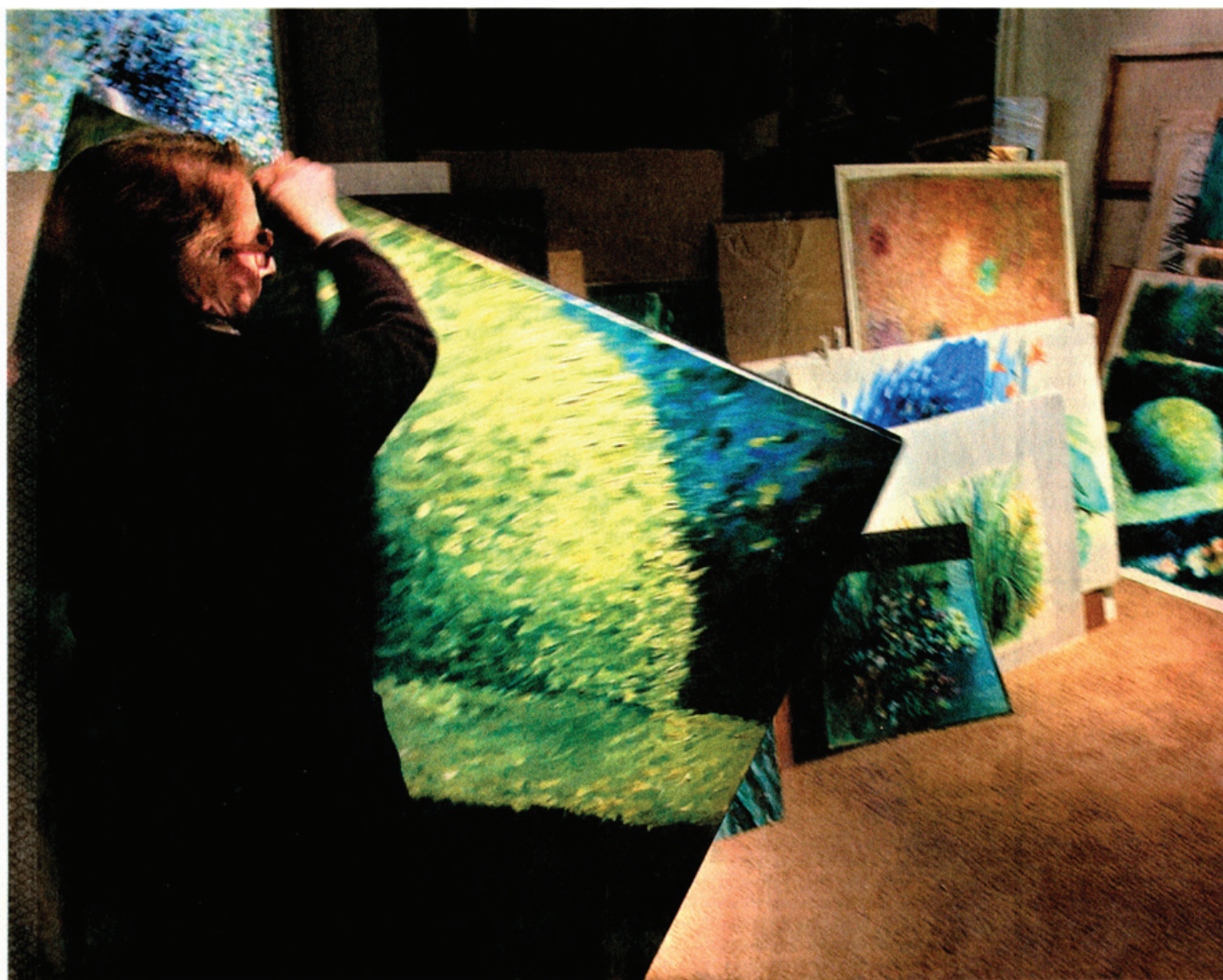
Also on display are recent works by Eleanore Berman. There is a tranquil composure to her nature images, as in the silkscreen *Garden*. Despite the active surface created by the short, juxtaposed lines, order and symmetry dominate. Beside a walkway, shorter plantings spill over one another. In the background, arching, sword-shaped leaves wall in the peaceful respite, protecting it from the world outside. But there is a more disturbing side to her work. In another series, large whirling rings disrupt the sense of calm. In some, a house-like shape is in the background. In others, leafless tree trunks stand tall in a misty green forest. As if they're spinning out of control, these asymmetrical rings dwarf the trees and houses. For Berman, nature, domesticity, and the order we attempt to impose on our world--all of this is but background to the chaos that surrounds us.

Judith Christensen

## THE CALIFORNIA GARDEN

# Artistically grounded

A backyard provides a palette that is personal and ever-changing. Eleanore Berman has drawn inspiration there for more than 40 years.



Photographs by WALLY SKALIZ *Los Angeles Times*

**WORLD TRAVELERS**

Eleanore Berman's works have circled the globe, but they started out in the same place: "I spend a lot of time in this garden. . . . I'm engaged in it, fascinated by it, stimulated by the light or dark."



By JANET EASTMAN  
Times Staff Writer

**E**LEANORE BERMAN knows her garden so well she can paint it in the dark. She has sketched its columns of bronzy bamboo, brick walls awash in red Virginia creeper and jade-colored hedges at night in her studio and even on cross-country trips.

Berman's backyard, which she has tended for more than four decades, has traveled the world in the form of at least 200 pieces it has inspired.

At an exhibit in Amsterdam, the U.S. cultural attaché announced to the opening-night crowd: "Welcome to Eleanor's garden." Her artwork is in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and UCLA Hammer Museum, galleries in London, Berlin and Amstelveen, Holland, and homes here and abroad.

In her Impressionist work, a black element in the background may look enigmatic, but it's really her garden gate. Dissolved mounds of soft sage are the way she sees shrubs.

One painting of egg-shaped stones from her path was reproduced on the cover of a psychology book because the publisher thought it represented the beginning of life.

"People ask me how I come up with ideas, and I tell them it's a mystery," says Berman, 70. "But I spend a lot of time in this garden that I love. I'm engaged in it, fascinated by it, stimulated by the light or dark, and I want to see it in a painting. Can you think of any greater gift nature has given us?"

Since 1967, she has lived in a Colonial Georgian in Beverly Hills, once owned by "Mrs. Miniver" producer Sidney Franklin.

"I fell in love with the house because it already had a studio and the bones of a great garden," Berman says. "I dig my hands into the ground, replace plants, prune roses. I even keep a compost heap in back, which is rare for a Beverly Hills lady."

Her backyard is a long rectangle, divided into sections. A jumble of pink daisies, bearded iris, sweet alyssum and lavender sways along the center flagstone path like crowds at a singalong. Standing guard are flowering cherry trees and clipped myrtle hedges. A thick mat of grass is on one side of the path, a pool area with a white marble sculpture from Italy on the other. Pink geraniums and red begonias bloom in terra-cotta pots.

Beyond the back gate is a formal garden, one with patterned brick walkways leading to manicured boxwoods and



**BEYOND NATURE:** Even the gate in Berman's backyard has appeared in her Impressionist work, as an enigmatic black element.

roses the size of pint-size paint cans. Her upstairs studio and gallery, separate from the house, benefits from this view.

For inspiration, she walks the slate paths, pinches off sprigs of lavender, inhales the scent and breathes it in. She observes spikes of new shoots, curves of clouds, blocks of moody shadows. Then she retreats to her studio and transfers the impressions nature has left with her onto canvas.

When Berman was growing up in New York City, she kept an easel in her bedroom and sketched lively expressions of Central Park — a flower, bridge or pond.

Later, she studied with modernist painter Josef Albers and sculptor Ossip Zadkine at the experimental Black Mountain College in North Carolina.

"We were fascinated by the European faculty, many from the Bauhaus [design school in Germany]," she says.

## Tips for budding garden artists

Eleanore Berman offers these tips for artists who want to paint their gardens:

**Take a good, long look.** Berman photographs her backyard first to study details of the way a leaf sprouts from a stem or the color of a petal. She also pores over botanical drawings.

**Take a drawing class.** Working with charcoal, pens and ink disciplines the hand, she says, adding, "People don't observe something until they have to put it down on paper."

**Watch the clock.** The best time to look at a garden is when there are light and dark contrasts, in the early morning and late afternoon.

**Have patience** and don't demand too much of yourself. "Stay loose enough to let the imagination guide the hand," she says. Doodles may not become a finished piece of art, but they may lead to an idea for one.

She practiced her art in the Paris atelier of French Cubist painter Fernand Léger and in New York with painter Manfred Schwartz and printmaker Robert Blackburn before marrying and moving to the Pacific Palisades.

Raising her four children became her priority, but Berman found a spare bedroom and time to paint, and she began to exhibit her work in Los Angeles.

Her realistic paintings were often of the sea, rock formations and people. When she moved to this home, however, she, like a garden, was renewed.

"I used to do defined forms, but here I started looking at the body and not the outline," she says. "It's as if I took a camera and enlarged a detail."

Her most recent series of large paintings of hedges and garden paths is done in energetic, loose brushstrokes daubed with salubrious colors. She swirls brushes through puddles of yellow, pink and pumpkin to make succulent round petals. Thin slashes of gray, plum and cream imitate rain falling on stone.

"Perhaps I paint these paths as symbols of the journey we are all on," she says.

"And I, as the keeper of this garden, know this path well."



WALLY SKALIZ Los Angeles Times

### ELEANORE BERMAN

*The impressionistic paintings she created of her carefully organized Beverly Hills garden have been exhibited around the world.*

## Eleanore Berman, 75; Drew on Garden for Artistic Inspiration

By MYRNA OLIVER  
Times Staff Writer

Eleanore Berman, who paired her talents for art and for horticulture to enshrine her Beverly Hills garden in impressionistic paintings, has died. She was 75.

Berman died Sunday in her Beverly Hills home of cancer.

Although she was educated as an artist and exhibited her paintings in galleries and museums around the world, her artistic expertise also bloomed brightly in the garden she cultivated for four decades behind the Colonial Georgian house she called home.

"Take a drawing class," she advised other gardeners, sharing her gardening wisdom in a Times article about her in February. Working with artistic tools — charcoal, pen, ink — disciplines the hand and trains the thinking about what and where to plant, she said.

"I fell in love with the house," she said of her residence since 1967, "because I already had a studio and the bones of a great garden. I did my hands into the ground, replace plants, prune roses. I even keep a compost heap in back, which is rare for a Beverly Hills lady."

Berman's carefully organized garden included a formal section with pat-

terned brick walkways and manicured boxwoods and roses, and an area of greater profusion — daisies, bearded iris, sweet alyssum, lavender, geraniums, begonias, cherry trees and myrtle hedges.

The garden and its gate were captured in about 200 paintings and other pieces of art shown as far away as Amsterdam and represented in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the UCLA Hammer Museum. One painting Berman did of egg-shaped stones from her path was reproduced on the cover of a psychology book because the publisher thought it represented the beginning of life.

"I spend a lot of time in this garden that I love," she told The Times in February. "I'm engaged in it, fascinated by it, stimulated by the light or dark, and I want to see it in a painting."

Born in New York City, Berman as a child began sketching the flowers, bridges and ponds of Central Park.

She studied with Modernist painter Josef Albers and sculptor Ossip Zadkine at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, earned a bachelor's degree at UCLA and was tutored in Paris by Cubist painter Fernand Leger and in New York by painter Manfred Schwartz

and printmaker Robert Blackburn.

During one of her many Southern California exhibits, at Beverly Hills' Janus Gallery in 1975, Berman's work was reviewed by a Times art critic who commented:

"There is a strange dichotomy in [her] paintings between the fluidity of some and the solidity of others. What gives them common ground and provides credence to this artist's idiom is their desire to abstract and extract from nature in a highly personal manner. It seems as if in the best of her work, she tries — in an essentially romantic, sometimes lyrical manner — to penetrate to the core of visual experience."

Berman's marriages to arts patron Frederick M. Nicholas of Beverly Hills and Henri Lazarof of Bel-Air both ended in divorce.

She is survived by four children, Deborah Nicholas of Berkeley; Jan Nicholas of Capitola, Calif.; Anthony E. Nicholas of Beverly Hills; and David Lazarof of Los Angeles; five grandchildren; and one step-grandchild.

The family has asked that any memorial contributions be sent to the Eleanore Berman Art Foundation, 5440 McConnell Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90066.