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SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO REMEMBERS ALUMNUS LEROY NEIMAN

Chicago, IL—The community of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) mourns the passing of its distinguished alumnus LeRoy Neiman (1947–50, honorary doctorate 2006), a painter and illustrator whose impressionistic sketches and paintings of sporting events and what he called “the good life” made him one of the most popular artists in the United States. Neiman passed away Wednesday in New York. He was 91 years old.

After completing his SAIC studies, Neiman immediately became an instructor at the school, teaching classes on figure drawing and fashion illustration for a decade at SAIC and Ox-Bow, its affiliated school and artists’ residency in Saugatuck, Michigan. His involvement in the SAIC community continued as his professional career took off. He did freelance fashion illustration for the Carson Pirie Scott department store in the early 1950s and began working with Playboy magazine in 1953, contributing regularly to the “Man at His Leisure” feature. Neiman cultivated an amazing entrepreneurial spirit, exercising creativity in his professional practices and relationships as well as his art. His teaching proved to be just the beginning of his support for SAIC.

"LeRoy Neiman’s engagement with his alma mater began early and lasted for more than 60 years," says Cary McMillan, Chairman of the SAIC Board of Governors. "His and Janet Neiman’s gifts to SAIC and our affiliated Michigan-based school Ox-Bow collectively total $9 million, making him the most generous alumnus in SAIC’s nearly 150-year history. But most importantly, LeRoy was extremely giving of his personal time and remarkable energy. We will always be extremely fortunate to be a part of his legacy."

"LeRoy Neiman was part of a remarkably inclusive artistic moment in Chicago at the start of his career, and he carried on that legacy here and elsewhere with incredible diligence," says SAIC President Dr. Walter E. Massey. "He was emphatic that the young students in his master classes come from within the city and have the opportunity to study regardless of any economic challenges."

In 2005, Neiman donated $3 million to SAIC’s scholarship fund to increase support for both need-based and merit scholarships. Following that gift, he also taught master classes for talented Chicago high school students selected through SAIC’s Early College Program. Those classes were held both on the SAIC campus and across the city at the Hawthorne Race Track, Chicago Mercantile Exchange, Windy City Boxing Gym, and other locations. In 2010, the LeRoy Neiman Foundation donated an additional $1 million to support scholarships at Ox-Bow.

In May of 2011, Neiman and his wife Janet Byrne Neiman, who also studied at SAIC, donated $5 million to fund the construction of a community campus center for SAIC students, faculty, staff, and alumni. The 17,800-square-foot LeRoy Neiman Center opened less than a year later, six weeks ago, on May 7. Today, the largest mural ever created by the artist—Summertime Along the Indiana Dunes, a 56-foot-wide, 448-square-foot piece co-signed by the artist’s wife and completed in 1965—hangs in the
lobby outside the center. Located in SAIC’s historic John B. and Alice R. Sharp Building on the northeast corner of Wabash and Monroe, the LeRoy Neiman Center houses amenities for students that include street-level gallery space, a café and lounge, and meeting areas for student government and other student-led organizations. It is the first dedicated campus center in the school’s history, and the light-filled, two-story space will serve as a lasting example of Neiman’s passion for supporting young artists.

Douglas Druick, President and Eloise W. Martin Director of the Art Institute of Chicago, says, "LeRoy Neiman was an artist with a longstanding connection to Chicago and specifically to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Neiman learned and honed his craft in this city beginning in the 1950s and joins a lineage of artists who have found inspiration and instruction in the museum of the Art Institute of Chicago. He has left an indelible mark on both fine art and popular culture, and we in Chicago are grateful for his contributions to the visual arts here."

SAIC Chancellor Emeritus Tony Jones says, "LeRoy was one of the finest people I’ve ever known, a hardworking professional artist who ‘lived by the brush.’ His gifts to the School of the Art Institute show another side to LeRoy—a caring man who never forgot his roots. A great public character and flamboyant personality, the private LeRoy was a quite modest and very thoughtful man who cared deeply and passionately for the practice of art, and continuously supported artists of the next generation, wanting to give back in recognition of the support he’d himself received."

About the School of the Art Institute of Chicago
A leader in educating artists, designers, and scholars since 1866, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) offers nationally accredited undergraduate and graduate degrees, and post-baccalaureate programs to nearly 3,200 students from around the globe. Located in the heart of Chicago, SAIC has an educational philosophy built upon an interdisciplinary approach to art and design, giving students unparalleled opportunities to develop their creative and critical abilities, while working with renowned faculty who include many of the leading practitioners in their fields. SAIC’s resources include the Art Institute of Chicago and its new Modern Wing; numerous special collections and programming venues provide students with exceptional exhibitions, screenings, lectures, and performances. For more information, please visit saic.edu.