



## Laura Alice Spong

February 20, 1926 - August 13, 2018

Laura Alice Miles Spong, the wife of the late Ernest Spong, Jr., after an extended illness has quietly passed away. Born in 1926, a native of Nashville, Tennessee and a graduate of Vanderbilt University Cum Laude. She was among South Carolina's most prominent non-objective abstract painters. A woman of lifelong Christian faith, she committed a part of each day to prayer and her relationship with God.

Laura once said her greatest achievement was not her artistic accomplishments, but her six children. Bennett Jared Spong (Sally), Blakeney DuBose Spong (Ellen), Katherine Spong Smith (Rick), Ernest Maye Spong III (Elizabeth), Thomas Miles Spong (Louise), and Joseph Kershaw Spong (Wanda) were the primary focus of her life.

Her artistic inclinations, even during the raising of her family, was a calling that constantly beckoned, but the responsibility of parenting afforded little opportunity to develop her art in full. With the maturing of her children she began the pursuit of her artistic career in earnest. In 2017, she was presented the Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Governor's Award for Lifetime Achievement. She was included in *Abstract Art in South Carolina 1949-2012*, the South Carolina State Museum's historic overview of abstract art in South Carolina. In recent years, she has had solo exhibitions at the Spartanburg Museum of Art, and with Carl Blair at the Florence Museum of Art. She was awarded the Jasper Master of Art Award in 2015 and on September 5, 2017 the City of Columbia proclaimed Laura Sprong Day. Since her 80th birthday exhibition in 2006 and under guidance and encouragement of IF Art and Wim Roefs, she has blossomed with multiple solo exhibitions throughout the state, including a retrospective at the University of South Carolina. She was also represented in many group shows throughout Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Her paintings were chosen to decorate the film set of "Drop Dead Diva" and were once displayed in Times Square. Laura was a woman of great determination and conviction; she never painted to please, but to express what she felt within herself. She has been described by an art critic as the, "Lost sister of abstract expressionism."

She inspired many young artists to believe in their art and work hard, to stay loyal to themselves, and never to compromise simply for flattery or gain. Laura supported equal

rights for women, including spearheading more than three community art projects in the midlands geared towards raising awareness of domestic violence against women.

Laura Sprong was an artist of great integrity and it was this integrity that released her immense talent. She will be greatly missed by her large and extended family and her many friends, particularly her dear friends at Stormwaters Studios.

Laura is survived by her children, Bennett Jared Sprong (Sally), Blakeney DuBose Sprong (Ellen), Katherine Sprong Smith (Rick), Ernest Maye Sprong, III (Elizabeth), Thomas Miles Sprong (Louise) and Joseph Kershaw Sprong (Wanda); along with 14 grandchildren, Will Smith (Lauren), Jared Smith (Ashley), Katie Smith, Josiah Sprong, Jacob Sprong, Samuel Sprong, Blakeney Sprong, Pelham Sprong Lange (Gus), Shelby Sprong, Miles Sprong (Jodi), Shannon Sprong LaCroix (Steven), Katherine Sprong Winstead (Matt), Julia Sprong, and Anna Sprong; as well as her nine great grandchildren, Charlotte Smith, Elizabeth Smith, William Smith, Emma Smith, Avery Smith, Aaela Sprong, Thomas Sprong, Mile LaCroix, and Pelham Lange.

#### Quotes from fellow artists

1. "Laura Sprong is now recognized as one of SC's most prominent painters and the state's premier abstract expressionist." - Lynn Robertson
2. "She is a grande dame. The role model extraordinaire of the visual arts in SC. – Heidi Harr-Hope
3. Laura Sprong has become an iconic painter in SC and all by herself, a destination for art lovers and artists from across SC, NC, and GA. Art lovers make their way to Columbia...to see and buy her work." – Wim Roefs
4. "Laura's connection to our struggling art community is profound! Her influence not only from her work, but from her determined and focused activity to paint, exhibit, and collaborate is a tremendous force that inspires and binds more than one generation of artists and art lovers." – Clark Ellefson
5. "Thank you for being a stalwart beacon of creativity and artistic success for other artists (present and future) here in Columbia." – Lee Snelgrove
6. "She is a creative powerhouse. She touched and motivated others to care more, give more, and use their gifts to make a difference. This is a powerful thing when Laura comes to you saying she has an idea, you might as well just sit down and listen, and it is usually a good one. She doesn't paint to finish a painting. She paints to paint. She is the artist. She is my grand mentor. She is my role model." – Eileen Blyth

#### Quotes from Laura Sprong

1. "I paint because I love the process of painting, to me, it's exciting to throw a lot of paint on a clean canvas and then seek to solve the problem of creating order out of chaos. I like that with non-objective work, nothing is decided for you-no color, no design, no subject

matter. The search is wide open.”

2. “I love nothing better than to throw paint and lines on a canvas and then solve the problem I have created, the problem being how to pull a coherent painting out of chaos of lines, shapes and colors.”

3. “The way my paintings turn out...is influenced by what goes on in my life. Interacting with people, seeking other artists’ work, reading books and articles, taking in the news, experiencing what goes on around me influences my state of mind, which has an impact on my paintings.”

4. “My best work comes when I don’t think too much.”

5. “You have to let go of your supports if you want to get past barriers.”

6. “My hope is through my work a connection will be made between me and those on a similar journey. My vision is that everything is connected. All is part of a whole.”

The service will be held Saturday, Aug 18th at 2 o’clock at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, 1100 Sumter St., Columbia SC. The family will receive friends following the service in Satterlee Hall of Trinity Cathedral.

lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to St. Lawrence Place, 2400 Waites Road, Columbia, SC 29204 or by visiting [stlawrenceplace.org](http://stlawrenceplace.org).



# Comments

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“ Cathy and Ricky  
So sorry to hear about your Mom. You and your family are in our thoughts and prayers. I list my Mom in December, and my Dad just two weeks ago- it's tough. Would love to see you again.

Monty Laffitte - August 17, 2018 at 08:21 PM

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“ Dear Spong Family,  
I'm so sorry for your loss. Laura was a brilliant, talented and affable person. As my "backstreet neighbor," so to speak, we would occasionally converse on our morning walks. God bless you all.  
Sincerely,  
Carl A. Ellsworth

Carl Ellsworth - August 16, 2018 at 05:05 PM

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“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Laura Alice Spong.



August 16, 2018 at 01:36 PM

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“ Sincere condolences to the family. May fond memories and the support of others bring you comfort during this difficult time.

Lydia Eloff - August 16, 2018 at 11:41 AM

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“ By the blessing of my mother's marriage we got to call all these Spong's, and Smiths, family. Laura was the head of this amazing family and I was in awe of her loving skills as a mother and as an artist. Well done Laura Spong.  
Love to all the family.  
Mary Dunlap Snead

mary dunlap snead - August 15, 2018 at 03:04 PM



“ My late wife and artist Lynne Burgess called Laura the artist who inspired her the most to be a fulltime artist. Laura was a very sweet and kind person and had the ability to create spectacular artwork they gave people a "wow moment". A number of her pieces are proudly displayed on my walls.

**Blake Burgess** - August 15, 2018 at 01:58 PM

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“ Beautiful Dreams was purchased for the family of Laura Alice Spong.



August 15, 2018 at 09:33 AM

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“ Laura was a great friend and an inspiration to her fellow artists.

**Suzy Farrell** - August 15, 2018 at 09:30 AM

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“ 32 files added to the album Artwork



**Shives Funeral Home** - August 15, 2018 at 08:10 AM

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“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Laura Alice Spong.



August 14, 2018 at 10:48 PM



“ Laura was such a dear and lovely presence in our lives. One of her paintings has gone everywhere with me for nearly fifty years. A loss to everyone who knew her, especially, I knew, to those who were closest to her. Much love to you all.  
Bernie Dunlap

**Bernie Dunlap** - August 14, 2018 at 07:22 PM