

KLAUS VON NICHTSSAGEND GALLERY



Irwin Kremen 1925 - 2020

We are very saddened by the loss of Irwin Kremen. Krem, as he was known to all, passed away on Wednesday morning in Durham, North Carolina at the age of 94. We at the gallery - Rob, Ingrid and Sam - have felt extraordinarily lucky to have been able to collaborate with Krem on exhibitions in recent years, taking part in his remarkable career as an artist, and having the good fortune to show works from his 50+ years of exquisite collages and sculptures. He will be missed dearly.



Irwin Kremen, *Red sauf Blue*, 1984/1986, paper, 4 1/8 x 10 5/8 inches

Born in 1925 in Chicago, Kremen had an early interest in politics, and seemed on a path to work within the political machinations of the city. However, taking a different route, he attended Black Mountain College in the 1940s, studying literature with the poet MC Richards. Black Mountain College at the time was a place of great experimentation in the arts, and Kremen crossed paths with numerous avant garde artists who summered there, including John Cage and Merce Cunningham, who became lifelong friends. Later, meeting up anew with Richards in New York in the 50s, Kremen met his wife Barbara at a David Tudor concert in the Village. That evening formed a bond that has lasted through 65 years of marriage.

Taking another path again, Kremen and Barbara (a poet and novelist) left their artist friends in New York for Kremen to work on his PhD in psychology at Harvard. They eventually landed in Durham, with Kremen taking a job as a clinical psychology professor at Duke University and the couple raising two children, Adam and Claire. Their friendships with artists were central to their lives even away from Downtown New York; in Durham, Kremen brought artist visitors to speak in his class "Art and Its Making."

Kremen took to making his own artwork late in life (at age 41), at the encouragement of MC Richards and later, the painter and collage artist Italo Valenti. On a summer trip to Europe with his family, Kremen began collecting 'found' papers and assembling his own collages, and brought the practice back to the States with a newfound determination and passion. He largely kept these artworks to himself, showing them only to friends and family. But the secret could not be kept forever, and his first exhibition was mounted at the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, traveling to the National Collection of Fine Arts (now the Smithsonian Institution) in 1978. Since then, his work

has been shown in numerous museums and public institutions in the US and abroad, and has been acquired by collections including the Museum of Modern Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Yale University Art Gallery, and many more.

After seeing an exhibition in 2017 of Irwin Kremen collages at the Berkeley Art Museum (BAMPFA) curated by Larry Rinder, we began visiting Kremen and Barbara in North Carolina. Klaus Gallery mounted its first exhibition of Kremen's work in 2018, and followed up with a solo presentation at the Independent Art Fair in 2019. An exhibition of work at the gallery in New York was being assembled with Kremen at the time of his death, and will go on as he wished, with an opening reception on May 15, 2020.

We will miss our lively conversations with Kremen, his intellect and humor, and his deep understanding of and appreciation for art. We are all lucky that his own art will endure.



installation view of *Irwin Kremen* in the front gallery at Klaus von Nichtssagend, March 2018

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