



Helene Fesenmaier was a world-renowned artist whose brilliance shines on years after her death. She leaves behind a rich tapestry of art that spans the globe; works that are part of collections in New York City, Brisbane, London, and many more. Born in 1937, she used her education in New Ulm to become a teacher, painter, and sculptor. Though she lived on the other side of the globe, one can clearly see the positive influence her time in New Ulm had on her life.

Helene appreciated what New Ulm had to offer and dedicated herself to the town, both in high school and adulthood. During her high school years she was incredibly active as editor of the school newspaper and was a member of the Girl's Athletic Association, Debate, Declamation, and Discussion Club, student council, Madrigals, choir, glee club, and honor roll. Although she was busy at school, Helene still found time to explore and paint. She would walk through the woods around New Ulm hunting for mushrooms and absorb what nature had to offer her. These walks served as inspiration later in her career, mushrooms being a recurring theme in her work.

Helene graduated from high school in 1955 and went on to Smith College to study art. She graduated from Smith in 1959 and attended Yale University School of Art and Architecture, earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree. After Helene left Yale, she went on to work in New York City. While there, Helene co-founded the New York Studio School of Drawing, Painting, and Sculpture. This school is still in existence today and was where Helene developed her great love for teaching. In the coming years, she taught at multiple colleges and served on educational committees for schools in England.

In 1969, Helene left New York and moved to Caracas, Venezuela. She did not have access to the models she was accustomed to working with, so she created her own out of wood. This was a turning point in her career. She began to focus more on sculpting but still incorporated paint into her sculptures and even made sculptures part of some of her canvases.

In 1970, Helene moved to London, England where she lived for the remainder of her life and where she created one of her most famous works, *The Open and Closed Book*. This work was on display at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Helene continued to travel to the United States with students and to hold exhibitions. One of these exhibitions was in New Ulm in 1999. She was thrilled to be back and stated, "a show in New York is just a show, but when you do a show in New Ulm, it's so much more than that."

Helene was a gifted individual, generous with her time, true to herself and to her artistic vision, and passionate about her work. We choose to honor her and recognize her accomplishments not only so we can remember her unique legacy but also so we can provide inspiration for the next generation. New Ulm played a part in making Helene the innovative artist she was. We can be thankful for the work she left behind that continues to influence the world of art.

