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Memorial Minute for Gary Niswonger
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I am uniquely qualified to speak about Gary Niswonger —He was both my printmaking instructor at Smith, then later my colleague in the department of art, and also additionally was my peer as a painter.

Gary was the kind of instructor, who might follow a most gutsy whim such a invite all of his printmaking classes for to a beach in Rhode Island to draw and then come back to Smith and make prints about this experience. Deedee, his beloved wife and their then young children in tow accompanied the experience. Or he might have set up a giant still life to draw, equipped with a life sized stuffed a deer—to stimulate and thrill us.

As a colleague, Gary he also was inventive—at one point he asked a number of us in the art department to draw self-portraits, an exercise usually reserved for students, and then discussed methods of critique. His critiques were both withering but of course utterly affirming. Noteworthy also about Gary, for all his love painting and drawing, he eagerly embraced the use of what was then new technology in his classes, most notably the newly burgeoning use of digital media as a crucial pedagogical tool.

As a fellow artist, Gary loved gathering us as a group; Once, Gary had this idea that all the painters he knew would paint the Oxbow, the view from on top of Skinner Mountain so famously portrayed by the 19th c painter, Thomas Cole.

But Gary in his indomitable spirit, didn't quite realize that we would all be venturing up the mountain the middle of winter. At one point I caught sight of him on top of the mountain painting with Deedee as sherpa bringing up his supplies.

In any event, we all painted the view from the mountain and then exhibited the finished paintings at an exhibition at The mount Holyoke art museum.

Whether it was painting a view or drawing portraits or having ambitious field trips, these adventures would always include a great meal, lively discussions and giving a profound sense of community. We all miss Gary very much.