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***Jordi Calvera – A lifetime of artworks comes on the market***

By Gerri Young

The road from Jordi Calvera’s birthplace in Barcelona, Spain, to Blacksburg, Va., was filled with chance and challenges.

He was a child in war torn Spain, worked in a textile factory at age 12, and started painting using a cheap box of paints from his uncle. By age 27, Jordi moved to Venezuela in 1955 for a better life. There, he worked jobs from floor sweeper to lamp designer to graphic design for labels and book covers.

He met his future wife, Elizabeth, in 1964. A graduate of Carnegie Mellon University, Elizabeth was on an 18-month assignment to do community development work with a privately funded organization in the Venezuelan slums. By chance, she was housed in the same boarding house in which Jordi lived.

Though he did not like her at first, they later married and moved in 1979 to Blacksburg. “I spoke fluent Spanish and really liked big city living in South America,” recalls Elizabeth, known as Libby among her friends. “A friend doing graduate work at Virginia Tech told me Blacksburg. I knew Jordi wanted someplace small and peaceful to live so, in 1977, we headed there to see.

“Our first day driving down I-81, Jordi declared, ‘This is where I want to die!’ He had not even seen Blacksburg yet!” Thirty-nine years later, Oct. 24, 2016, he got his wish.

During their years together in the Hethwood section of Blacksburg, they enjoyed a cozy townhouse. Libby worked at Virginia Tech for 33 years as a Spanish instructor and Jordi painted landscapes, mostly of his beautiful Virginia.

His serious painting career had begun years before. “During a down time for Jordi in Venezuela, I challenged him to stay home and paint for a year,” said Libby. “I thought he needed to find his style, to prove he could really be a painter. He was in his mid 40’s and, in one year, had several shows, sold many paintings and discovered this was what he was meant to do.” For Jordi “painting was like breathing. It is necessary for my life,” he once said.

Libby challenged Jordi yet again when he wanted to live in Blacksburg. She had no intention of moving to the U.S. so challenged Jordi to live in Blacksburg for one year alone to see if he could make it. Jordi succeeded despite speaking no English and having never seen snow. In 1980, Libby joined him in the townhouse she still calls home. While Libby left for work each day, Jordi painted.

Nearly every room of their home soon was filled with his masterpieces. His love for the area showed through locations like the Cascades waterfall, the Riner buffalo farm, the New River, and many of the charming farms around the area. While landscapes of Virginia dominate his collection, other paintings feature Venezuela, Spain and New Mexico. Abstracts, still life and mystical scenes fill out the space.

When the walls were full, the paintings were cataloged and stored. Boxes and boxes of them. Meticulously, Jordi wrote the particulars of each painting on the back of the canvases. He framed many of them and did occasional shows, but was easily discouraged when it came to the business of selling them. He just wanted to paint.

After his unexpected death in 2016, Libby was faced with what to do with over 200 oil paintings. First, she had to deal with the personal loss before she could decide what to do about them. She took it slowly. She gave Jordi’s hand-built easel to a good artist friend and contacted that friend for guidance.

This year, on Oct. 23-24, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., the entire collection will be offered for public sale in [the German Club](http://vtgc.net/) ballroom at 711 Southgate Drive, Blacksburg. All paintings will be offered at 50 cents per square inch, framed or unframed. The largest piece in the collection is $600 and the smallest $40. The most plentiful size is 16x20 at $140. All interested parties are welcome. Cash, check and credit card will be accepted. More information and samples of his work can be found at [www.blacksburgart.org](http://www.blacksburgart.org/).

Jordi was a member of the Blacksburg Regional Art Association (BRAA) for years. Libby continued the membership and will donate part of the proceeds to that organization. Fellow artists and friends who knew Jordi, will work the sale from beginning to end.

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