



Alan Tompkins—Painter

FORMER HAS DIRECTOR'S EXHIBITION MARKS IMPORTANT MILESTONE

Alan Tompkins turns 100 in October, and the former director of the Hartford Art School strongly desires one thing: to be remembered for his art.

"I'm not a hobbyist, I'm not an educator," says the elegant Tompkins. "I want to be remembered as a painter."

Tompkins, who is still passionate about his craft, has produced thousands of paintings, many showing the influence of Cubism and abstract art, during a long and productive career. In July, Tompkins exhibited 45 paintings in the Hartford Art School's Silpe Gallery, his first show since 2001.

This exhibition marked the confluence of Tompkins's 100 years, the 130th anniversary of the Hartford Art School, and the 50th anniversary of the University of Hartford.

"I am grateful to the Hartford Art School, Power [HAS Dean Power Boothe], and the trustees who were willing to have an exhibition—even after this many years," he says.

Tompkins played a pivotal role in the formation of the University of Hartford. He was director of the Hartford Art School in 1957 when it merged with the original Hillyer College and the Hartt College of Music to become the University of Hartford. It was Tompkins who designed the new University's official seal. He served as director until 1969 and then taught art history and visual studies until his retirement in 1974.

Tompkins painted throughout his lifetime, supplementing his income with other work to support his wife and two children. A graduate of Columbia University and Yale Art School, he taught painting at John Herron Art School, Cooper Union, and Columbia University. Tompkins also worked as a book illustrator, muralist, portraitist, industrial designer, and lecturer.

Tompkins is an adamant proponent of "silent viewing," in which art patrons view and appreciate art without the distractions of background music, wine and hors d'oeuvres, and conversation. He hopes that museums will someday catch on to this idea.

"The art of painting is what happens to you when you view a canvas in silence," said Tompkins. "There's no use painting if you can say it." ■



Top: Alan Tompkins (right), former director of the Hartford Art School, chats with current HAS Dean Power Boothe at the opening reception for Tompkins's show in Silpe Gallery. Directly behind them is the artist's favorite painting, *Stony Field*; (above) *Man in Uniform*, by the artist.

A new book about the artist and his work, *Alan Tompkins—Painter*, written by Linda Powers Tomasso, is available at the University of Hartford bookstore for \$25. For more information, call the bookstore at 860.768.4801.