

Downey, Sally A. "Charles C. Fahlen, 70, Moore College teacher, sculptor." *Philadelphia Inquirer*. August 15, 2010.

## The Philadelphia Inquirer

### Charles C. Fahlen, 70, Moore College teacher, sculptor

By Sally A. Downey  
Inquirer Staff Writer

Charles "Chuck" Cuthbert Fahlen, 70, a sculptor who taught for 33 years at Moore College of Art and Design, died of pancreatic cancer Wednesday, July 28, at his home in Guerneville, Calif.

When he retired from Moore in 2000, Mr. Fahlen exhibited work assembled from construction materials at Gallery Joe in Old City. In his review, *Inquirer* art critic Edward Sozanski wrote: "Fahlen has combined elements to contrast shape, color, and texture. . . . Fahlen's transformations reflect a formalist attitude rooted in the earliest collages - that all materials, no matter how humble, have aesthetic potential that can be liberated by a sensitive eye."

Sozanski concluded that "these sculptures remain vigorous years after they were made."

Mr. Fahlen's sculptures and wall hangings used wire, cable, wood, paint, concrete, resin, latex, felt, and metal fittings from a hardware store.

"Materials are those readily available and anonymous, easily worked and minimally modified," he wrote in a news release for his first one-man show in Philadelphia in 1973 at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

Mr. Fahlen exhibited in numerous galleries and received commissions for indoor and outdoor sculptures in New York, Washington state, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Philadelphia. In 1993, his metallic Bozo, shaped like an inflatable stand-up punching bag, adorned the lobby of the new Convention Center. In 1985, he used weathered statuary he had found in a Fairmount Park dustbin and a gazebo constructed of old park benches in a sculpture for the Municipal Services Building plaza across from City Hall.

A native of San Francisco, Mr. Fahlen earned a bachelor's degree from San Francisco State College, where he met his future wife, Noelle Bekker. He earned a master's degree in fine arts from the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles. He then studied in France and the Netherlands and for a year at the Slade School of Fine Art at University

College London on a Fulbright-Hayes Fellowship.

He joined the faculty at Moore in 1967. For his last decade there, he served as chair of the department of fine arts: three dimensional.

Paul R. Hubbard, who succeeded Mr. Fahlen as chair, wrote in a tribute: "Chuck Fahlen was a highly respected post-minimal sculptor. The death of a man of his stature is a sad and deeply lamentable loss."

In the 1970s, Mr. Fahlen and his wife, a teacher at St. Peter's School in Society Hill, renovated a rowhouse in Queen Village and then converted an industrial building in Northern Liberties into a studio on the first floor and living space for their family on the second floor.

After moving back to California in 2000, they designed a home and studio in Guerneville. Mr. Fahlen spent time improving the property and worked with his children on their California homes. His son, Christian, lives in San Rafael and his daughter, Eden Belov, in Petaluma.

He and his wife enjoyed travel, especially to explore Mayan ruins

in Central America.

Mr. Fahlen continued to create art in California. For a 2008 show at Steven Wolf Fine Arts in San Francisco, he fashioned celestial-themed wall hangings from link chain, wire rope, and pigmented spheres of epoxy that gallery owner Wolf described as "miniature surrogates of the cosmos."

Mr. Fahlen wrote in the catalog that he had been inspired by the starry nights of Northern California. In Philadelphia, ambient light obscured the stars, he said, but in Guerneville, "the sky felt like a totally different place."

In addition to his wife of 46 years and children, Mr. Fahlen is survived by a brother; a sister; and four grandchildren.

Memorial services will be held on Saturday, Sept. 11, in Guerneville and at 2 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 25, at the Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, 1616 Walnut St.



Charles C. Fahlen with sculptures at the Institute for Contemporary Art Exhibit in 1991.