



DEATHS

Sculptor behind Houston's police memorial dies in crash

By Molly Glentzer | June 16, 2015 | Updated: June 16, 2015 8:43pm



Photo: Tim Zielenbach, MBR



had been, since



15:23 AM
 Women
 Me... pool
 fight video
 denies use of
 racial slurs



Alarm fire at
 construction
 under
 construction



Houston gets
 lucky in stormy
 weather

Master sculptor Jesus Bautista Moroles, an internationally known giant of the Texas art scene, died Monday night in a car crash on Interstate 35 north of Austin, near Jarrell. He was 64.

Moroles' monumental "Houston Police Officers Memorial," his largest work, has been a landmark on Memorial Drive since 1991. Made of granite and earthen pyramids that rise from and retreat into the ground, the sculpture spans 120 feet by 120 feet.

Details of the accident were not available, but the Rockport Pilot reported that the artist died en route to Oklahoma on Monday night after spending the weekend delivering one of his works in Dallas and serving jury duty Monday in Rockport, his home.



Since May, Moroles had been the first artist in residence at the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, where he was also the primary designer of Coming Together Park, a new acre-wide installation that was due to be completed in August. The small liberal arts college is in Chickasha, about 35 miles southwest of Oklahoma City.

"It's a huge loss for the Texas art community," said Brad Bucher, chair of the Houston Arts Alliance's Civic Art Committee and a long-time collector and friend of the artist.

Made granite 'sing'

Moroles worked in the extremely difficult medium of granite, using large diamond saws to coax minimalistic, abstract poetry from the stone. While highly contemporary, his pieces also give off an ancient vibe. They range from tabletop works to massive outdoor sculptures in the form of steles, cubes, half-moons, spheres and cantilevered planes.

"His work is so natural. He was as good as I've ever seen," Bucher said.

Jed Morse, curator of the Nasher Sculpture Center, told the Dallas Morning News he was "incredibly saddened by the news of Jesús Moroles' tragic death. Jesús was a great sculptor and tireless arts advocate. He dedicated the majority of his career to a single material - granite - and made that material sing, often playing his abstract carved stone compositions like musical instruments."

Born in Corpus Christi, Moroles received his bachelor's degree in fine arts from the University of North Texas and apprenticed with the late sculptor Luis Jiménez before spending a year in Pietrasanta, Italy. Also influenced by Isamu Noguchi, he soon developed his signature style of cut granite.

Moroles established his studio in Rockport in 1981. Critical acclaim came quickly, and by 1983, the studio was a family effort involving his parents Jose and Maria Moroles, his brother, Hilario Moroles, his sister, Suzanna Moroles, and his brother-in-law, Kurt Kangas.

Moroles has been represented in Houston many years by Robert McClain Gallery. At the time of his death, he was planning an exhibition for the Arthur Roger Gallery in New Orleans.

Moroles received the National Medal of Arts in 2008 and was named a Texas State Artist in 2011. His work has been shown at museums around the world as well as the White House and the Smithsonian Institution.

'He never said no'

Among his masterpieces are the 64-ton, 22-foot "Lapstrake" for the E.F. Hutton, CBS Plaza in New York; the 22-foot sculpture fountain "Floating Mesa Fountain" at the Albuquerque Museum in New Mexico; an environmental installation of 45 sculptural elements and fountains for the Birmingham Botanical Gardens in Alabama; and a sculpture plaza for the Edwin A. Ulrich Museum in Wichita, Kan., whose "Granite Landscape" features terraced slabs forming a stone river-way, a 30-foot "Fountain Wall"

and a 30-foot "Granite Weaving" wall.

Aside from being a noted artist, Moroles was also exceptionally generous, Bucher said. "I can't tell you how many times he gave pieces to charity events. He never said no, and he also gave his time."

His survivors include his parents, Jose E. Moroles and Maria Moroles of Rockport; his daughter, Jessica Christian Moroles, who lives in Virginia; his brother, Hilario Moroles, who lives in Rockport; and his sisters, Suzanna Moroles, who lives in California; Diane Moroles, who lives in Sunnyvale, near Dallas; and Maria Christina Moroles, who lives in Arkansas.



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