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expressyourself

FRANCIS ROBERT KELLY. ARTIST BORN MAY 1, 1927. DIED OCTOBER 25, 2012. AGED 85



Saturday November 3, 2012

By Daily Express reporter

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THOUGH born in the US the artist, printmaker and art restorer Francis Kelly found common cause with British eccentricity.

He arrived in England in 1955 to study at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London and stayed nearly 60 years.

Besides exhibiting in London galleries Kelly became the first American-born president of the Serpentine Swimming

Francis Robert Kelly died of pneumonia after a long battle with Parkinson's disease

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Club (1983-1985).

For more than 20 years he was among those who braved the cold for a Christmas Day dip in the Hyde Park lake.

The son of a barber and a waitress, Kelly was born in Minnesota.

Serving in the US Navy from 1944 to 1948, he took part in Operation Crossroads, the atomic bomb tests on Bikini Atoll in the Pacific.

In 1949 he married Gail, a teacher he had met in a post office. Two years later they moved to Paris, where he gained a diploma from the Academie de la Grande Chaumière.

In 1953 he returned to the US to study at the University of Hawaii before working in Los Angeles for the noted printmaker John Paul Jones, then as a commercial illustrator with the Douglas Aircraft Company.

In 1955 a Fulbright bursary brought him to London, where he stayed for the rest of his life.

From his studio at the top of his Bayswater mews house he produced works that were acquired by galleries all over the world and by private collectors including Swedish royalty.

Having studied conservation at the Courtauld Institute, Kelly travelled to Florence in 1967 to restore paintings damaged when the River Arno burst its banks.

With this hands-on experience, he wrote Art Restoration, a seminal text on the subject.

Kelly died of pneumonia after a long battle with Parkinson's disease and vascular dementia.

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He is survived by his wife and their sons Sean, Duff and Jesse.

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