

Graham Campbell, Professor Emeritus of Fine Arts, died peacefully on May 7th, 2024 at the age of 78.

Graham was born in Kent, England in 1946. His childhood was marked by the postwar and reconstruction experience. He attended Birmingham College of Art graduating in 1969. Graham served as assistant head of the Art Department at Rowlinson School in England for six years after which he enrolled at Yale University, earning an MFA in 1978. After teaching on the faculty at Yale, Graham joined the Brandeis faculty in 1981 as assistant professor of fine arts on the tenure track, receiving tenure at Brandeis in 1987. His work was exhibited in the UK and in the US. Graham received a number of prestigious grants including the Painter's Award from the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1975, Lois Comfort Tiffany Award in 1986 and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1996, among others.

Graham was a painter's painter. His commitment to the advancement of his work led him to different modes of representation throughout his career. His early exposure to what he described as "the particular sensibility of American painting" gave him the structure to combine his love of the English landscape and his concern for the human condition into a language that was both profound and visually potent. Graham's own sensibility led him to adopt an abstract painting language that was in dialogue with the real world. He loved Turner, the English landscape painter, often referring to Turner's ability to capture the ethereal, the formless – air, light – something he very much wanted to do in his work. Graham believed in the power of painting to transform one's lived experience into a universal language that reflected the mysterious aspects of life.

All of these concerns he brought to the classroom. Graham shared his love for painting and art with all of his students. Upon his arrival at Brandeis, he, along with other faculty, set out to turn the student experience into an ambitious and rigorous studio practice. He played a fundamental role in creating and nurturing the Post Baccalaureate program which launched in 1993 giving hundreds of students the opportunity to develop as artists. Paraphrasing the words of Pedro Barbeito, a former undergraduate and Post Bacc student at Brandeis, who said about Graham: "He convinced me to buy my first art book – a book of self-portraits by Rembrandt [...] the conversations I had with Graham my sophomore and junior year resulted in my major in Art even though my family threaten to disown me for this [...] And so, I want to thank Graham for inspiring me to be an artist, a profession I've loved since, I want to thank him for the time and devotion to all his students, and for his creative spirit that has been passed on to all of us who had him in our lives." Graham retired from Brandeis in 2015. As he had done throughout his life he kept a vigorous studio practice punctuated by curiosity, intellectual rigor and delicate sensitivity.

Graham was an avid guitarist and loved to fish. Museums were his sanctuary. Looking at painting alongside Graham was a transformative experience. He took the time. He was also my studio neighbor for the last 17 years. One day he came by my studio and gave me a handwritten quote by John Constable, the “other” English landscape painter. It read “There is room enough for a natural painture. The great vice of the present day is bravura, an attempt to do something beyond the truth. In endeavoring to do something better than well, they do what in reality is good for nothing. Fashion always had, and will have, its day — but truth (in all things) only will last, and can only have just claims on posterity.” After giving it to me he said “that’s what I am trying to do, I am looking for the truth”.

Graham is survived by his three children and his loving family and friends.