



Lyle Frank Novinski
June 23, 1932 – April 28, 2023

Lyle Novinski, husband, father, artist, designer, and professor of art, passed away in his sleep on April 28. Lyle was a man of remarkable talents, warmth, insight, pluck, generosity, vision, body, heart, and soul. He wove all of these into a distinctive tapestry merging family, faith, and vocation into a lifetime devoted to creating visual beauty in a way that actively formed the communities that enjoyed his gifts, whether in the Novinski home, in classrooms, or in sacred spaces.

Lyle and Sybil built a household of future educators and artists in which having a camp director/artist/professor for a father meant that it would become impossible to draw lines between areas of faith, intellectual conversation, education, art projects, family chores, homework, vacations, student life, meals, and work experiences. Daily family activity was a blend between going to summer camp and serving as a counselor on the same camp staff, between classroom and hands-on learning of the most independent, unsupervised kind. Somehow, the Novinski children survived to adulthood, each working at times alongside their artist father. All, in some way, have been involved in education, raised to believe that a true education touches all facets of a person, and that the line between formative experiences and formal teaching should always be a bit blurry.

Lyle was born June 23, 1932, second son to Raymond and Dora Novinski, in Fennimore, Wisconsin. He grew up in the small town of Montfort and went to the University of Wisconsin-Platteville in 1950. The Korean War interrupted Lyle's studies (he was forever proud of serving, donning his uniform every Veteran's Day). The G.I. Bill and those years of service provided incredible opportunities for Lyle's broad education. He returned to Platteville with an even wider perspective on what it meant to be an artist and a strong appreciation for Asian art evident in the Japanese prints he collected for the rest of his life. Most wonderfully, this academic journey would connect him with Sybil Weber.

Lyle finished undergraduate degrees in Industrial Arts and English in 1956. After Platteville (where he was named a Distinguished Alumnus in 1995), he completed graduate degrees at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (M.S. in Art Education and M.F.A. in Painting). Lyle continued to spend his summers leading Scouting at Canyon Camp. A connection from camp led him to Marquette University (and eventually to Sybil) in the fall of 1958. At Marquette, many roads converged which foreshadowed the direction of both his and Sybil's life. Lyle had begun to recognize within himself a special desire to work as an artist within his faith. His G.I. Bill allowed him to "give a year to God", studying theology and philosophy at Marquette and also working in the theater and teaching Art History to the theater students. For Lyle, this total immersion in the arts, the intense dedication to the "project of the moment" on behalf of others was what all would come to know as his *modus operandi*. One of Lyle's theater students was Michael Weber, Sybil's younger brother. Michael invited Lyle's class to his sister's apartment in Chicago (Sybil had graduated from Marquette a year earlier) when the group was there visiting the Art Institute. Lyle and Sybil fell for each other immediately.

Soon after wedding Sybil in 1959, Lyle got a "long distance" call from Texas from a former classmate at Madison who was a Cistercian monk, to help start an Art Department at the newly founded University of Dallas. The newlyweds moved to Dallas in 1960 to join the Hungarian Cistercian refugees, the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, and a small lay faculty on about a thousand acres of empty pasture just across the Trinity River from Dallas. The connections with the Cistercians that started in Wisconsin deepened and extended when they reached Texas, as art, theology, and education were shared vocations. Moreover, a Wisconsin/Texas friendship triangle was completed by the Haggerty family, who provided the first art studio building, completed the Haggerty Arts Village and helped develop the new Cistercian Prep School across Hwy. 114.

The Novinskis were themselves instrumental in shaping UD. Lyle served as a professor and chair of the art department for decades, guiding young artists for well over fifty years. He was also an essential early driving force in establishing the University's Rome study-abroad program. This former Camp Director was always ready with a new project that could change a person's life while transforming the campus. Whether in working to adapt mundane spaces into sacred ones, or in building walls, paths, landscaping, and planting trees, Lyle worked alongside the students. He used his sense of space to redesign many paths on the UD campus, with special focus on entrances and exits to buildings and plazas, making "sense" of the land, buildings, and people.

Lyle Novinski's professional legacy as a prize-winning painter and sought-after designer of sacred spaces lives on throughout the University but also in the metroplex and beyond. He was a near constant writer – a published poet, also producing, essays, memoirs, and messages. He carried out dedicated and detailed correspondence with other colleagues and former students until his last days. A consummate intellectual without being consumed by intellectualism, his writing was about explaining and sharing, about connecting people and opening eyes.

Lyle was a founding Fellow of the Dallas Institute for Humanities and Culture and a voice for public art and art education in Irving and beyond along with many local art professors who were former students. Moreover, through designing and executing countless sacred spaces and furnishings, Lyle left a distinct mark on the liturgical art and culture of worship of the region and beyond. Examples include St. Rita, Holy Cross, Perkins Chapel and Neuhoff Catholic Student Center Chapel at SMU, and Holy Family Chapel at St. Joseph's Village retirement center.

The Novinskis' own house was also a semi-permanent project, hand-formed and filled with both art and conversation. Countless visitors can attest to its continual development and to the transformative spirit of welcoming conversation that continues to make the Novinski kitchen table and home a center of life and friendship. His was a life well-lived, echoing the ways that art is meant to be an echo of the Word that is the creative source of all life, that our own gifts find their meaning in use for others. Please consider leaving a [memory tribute](#) so that his family can see the many ways in which this man touched lives and institutions.

Lyle is survived by Sybil, his wife of 63 years; son, Michael and wife Lisa Yager; son, Gregory and wife Brenda; daughter, Sybil Sutton and husband Sean; son, Stefan and wife Donna Marquet; and son, David and wife Kristy; as well as by eighteen grandchildren and spouses, and two great-grand daughters. He was predeceased by his father, Raymond and his mother, Dora; his wife's parents, Maurice and Marie Weber; his brother, Dennis and wife Elizabeth; brother, Cletus; sister, Irene Murray; and brother-in-law, Reece Weber and wife Donna. He leaves behind their families as well as his brother, Clement and wife Susan; brother-in-law Kenneth Murray, sister-in-law Lynda (Cletus), brother-in-law, Michael Weber and wife, Nancy; and numerous beloved nieces and nephews and their families across the country.

In lieu of flowers, gifts remembering Lyle Novinski can be made to the [Novinski Art Endowment Fund](#) at the University of Dallas or to the Cistercian Preparatory School [Capital Campaign](#).

A Mass of Resurrection will be celebrated at 1:30 PM on Saturday, May 6, in the Holy Family Chapel of Christus St. Joseph's Village at 1201 E. Sandy Lake Rd., Coppell, Texas 75019.

**Following the service, all are invited to the Novinski home for an open house.
1101 Owenwood Drive, Irving, TX 75061, from 3:00 – 6:00 PM**