

The Don Nice Foundation

The Don Nice Foundation is dedicated to preserving and advancing the legacy of Don Nice, an artist renowned for his innovative exploration of the intersection between nature, consumerism, and art.

The Rose Sculpture Project

The Don Nice Foundation is dedicated to bringing to fruition a public art installation that the late artist Don Nice had envisioned and developed over many years. This project, known as the Rose Project, seeks to realize one of Nice's most significant artistic dreams: a monumental field of 40 large, seven foot, rose sculptures. We are currently seeking a grant and partnership to assist with the placement and fabrication costs of this important work.



The rose held immense significance in Nice's work for decades, symbolizing various elements, including the tragic loss of his brother, Hubert Nice. In 1969, Nice moved his family from Brooklyn to Garrison, New York, where he lived for 50 years, overlooking the Hudson River.



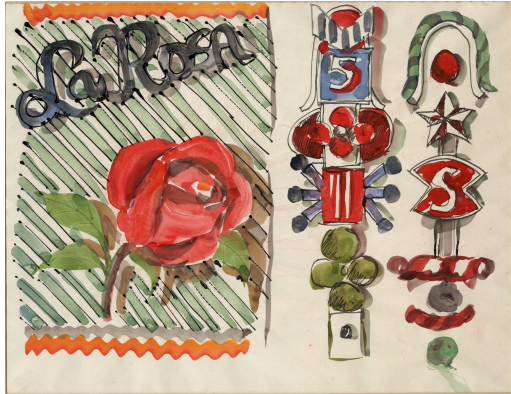
Shortly after his move, Hubert's unexpected death at the age of 40 deeply affected Nice. Hubert, a botanist with a deep love of nature, managed a research nursery and died from inhaling insecticides while working with his beloved hybrid roses. His death profoundly impacted Nice, shaping his environmental consciousness and artistic vision.



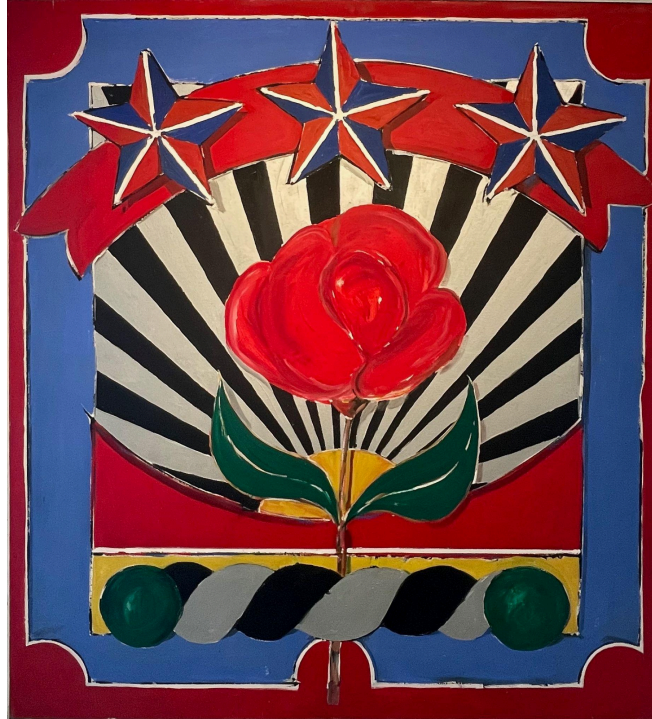
"The death of my brother really brought home to me the idea that the ecosystem is fragile and we are a vulnerable part of it; we depend on it. Hubert was two years older than me and we had grown up together. We were close."

Nice saw the rose as a multifaceted symbol, representing both personal loss and the broader theme of environmental stewardship. Nice's work often explored the intersection of nature and human impact, reflecting his concerns about pollution and environmental degradation. He believed that art could serve as a powerful metaphor for these issues, drawing on personal experiences and broader environmental themes.

Solo exhibition at the Richard Feign Gallery, Chicago



La Rosa 1963 Watercolor & Ink 14" x 10.5"



American Red Rose 1963 Oil on Canvas 66" x 60"

In the early stages of Nice's career, the rose was a bold, singular image influenced by his upbringing in Three Rivers, California. Growing up, Nice was immersed in the visual spectacle of the Rose Bowl Parade, large floats, billboards, and packing labels he encountered while his father worked at a citrus grove office.



Zig Zag Cornucopia 1981 Oil on Canvas 108" x 92"

Solo Exhibition at the Albany Institute of History and Art

In the late 1970's and 1980's, Nice rediscovered and reinvented the predella format, traditionally seen in Renaissance altarpieces he studied while in Italy in the 1950's . His contemporary predellas, horizontal compositions with multiple individual images beneath a larger painting, became cultural altarpieces of the modern era. The rose in "Zig Zag Cornucopia" ties back to Nice's personal and artistic journey, symbolizing both beauty and the fragility of life in the context of environmental consciousness.

In his innovative approach to portraiture, Nice sought to move beyond the limitations of traditional representation. He developed a unique style of portrait predella, where he captured the essence of an individual not through a realistic likeness, but by symbolically depicting personal and significant objects. As Nice himself explained, "To give a new dimension to portrait painting, rather than put down a realist likeness of a person, I use in these predellas objects that are significant and personal for an individual... These objects are... painted in a row on a neutral ground to represent the person symbolically. For me, it tells more about the person than a traditional portrait." This method allowed Nice to explore deeper layers of identity, revealing more about the subject's inner life and personal history.



Don Nice Self-Portrait 1984 watercolor 8" x 20"

In his later years, Nice's use of the rose evolved further as he delved deeper into environmental preservation and awareness, influenced significantly by James Lovelock's Gaia theory. Lovelock's book *The Ages of Gaia: A Biography of Our Living Earth* posits that Earth functions as a self-regulating organism. Nice, inspired by this concept, began to use the rose to symbolize **FIRE**—a critical element in the Gaia theory, representing transformation and renewal within the ecosystem.



Earthscape 109, 1999 Watercolor on Paper, 40" x 40"

Received the William Patron Prize for watercolor at the National Academy of Design in 2000



Rose - Earth Predella 2004 Anodized Aluminum 23" x 15.5" x 1"



Fire-Earth Predella 2004 Anodized Aluminum 22" x 24" x 1"



Untitled 2012 Watercolor Collage 46" diameter

Like many of Nice's emblematic images, the rose had evolved and transformed in both context and meaning..



Don Nice and Dick Polich at the Tallix Foundry in 2016 discussing the Rose Sculpture.



The Rose Project of the Don Nice Foundation aims to create a transformative experience for the public, awakening a sense of environmental consciousness and fostering a shared responsibility to protect and preserve our planet for future generations. We believe that this installation will not only honor Nice's artistic legacy but also inspire a deeper connection to the environment.

Leslie Nice, President
Don Nice Foundation

