

<http://www.politicsdaily.com/2009/10/21/karen-laub-novaks-art-expressed-her-conservative-politics/>

WOMAN UP Karen Laub-Novak's Art Expressed Her Conservative Politics

Karen Laub-Novak, who passed away at 71 in August, was a well-known Washington artist and a conservative political activist. She was married for 46 years to conservative writer and Catholic theologian-philosopher Michael Novak.

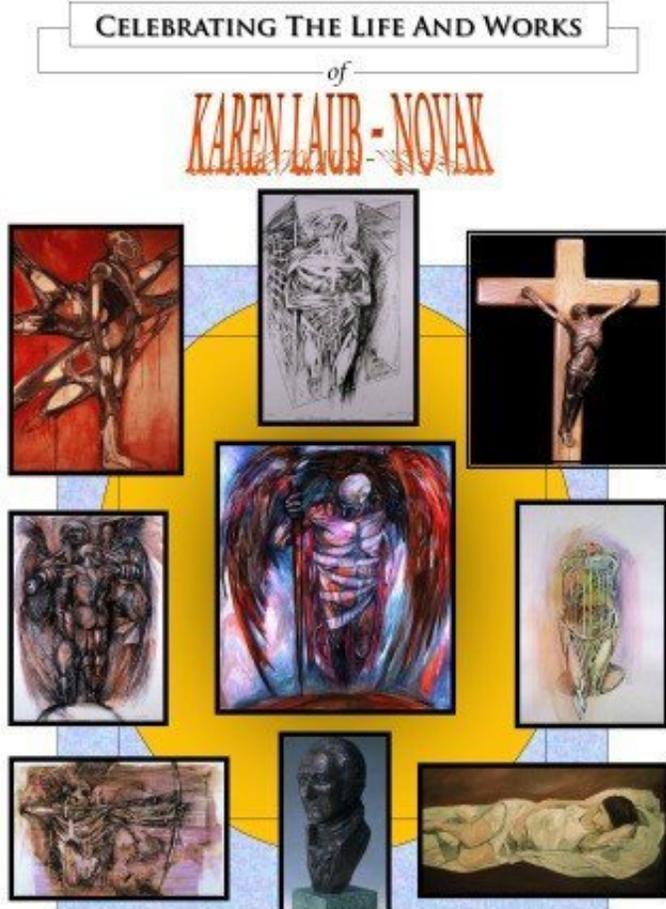
"My mom had a way of combining modern art and religion and realism," says Laub-Novak's daughter, Jana Novak. "I always used to joke that she was able to

represent in art conservative politics versus liberal politics."

Laub-Novak's sculptures, paintings and prints are currently on display at the John Paul II Cultural Center at Catholic University through Nov. 15. The special exhibit, "**Celebrating the Life and Works of Karen Laub-Novak**," shows how her art is unique in combining the traditions of the old masters with a modern style and her personal beliefs.

According to Laub-Novak's official biography, her paintings and prints have been displayed prominently in American government buildings. She was asked to do the official portrait of David Stockman, director of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget under Ronald Reagan. Laub-Novak's pen and ink drawing of him currently hangs in the OMB building. Ambassador Jeanne Kirkpatrick exhibited several of her works at the U.S. United Nations Mission in New York as part of an exhibit of new American painting. Other paintings were included in a similar exhibit sponsored by the Art in Embassy program in Iceland.

"Some 25 years ago, the Novak dinner table became a veritable salon of the free society," the Rev. Robert Sirico of the Acton Institute wrote of Karen Laub-Novak and Michael Novak, his mentor



Show poster, courtesy of the artist's family

and long-time collaborator.

“Here were the likes of Clare Booth Luce holding formidable court against Bill Bennett, Irving Kristol and his wife Gertrude Himmelfarb; Bob and Mary Ellen Bork would be conversing with the late Jack [Kemp] and Joanne Kemp or Charles and Robyn Krauthammer. Karen, an artist of note, had a natural ability in such an intellectually charged atmosphere to exude an infallible and gracious hospitality, making anyone who visited her domain feel fully at home,” Sirico wrote on the think tank’s Web site.

Of her paintings, Laub-Novak once said, “My primary concern is to express certain human emotions: Our attempt to find ourselves. Our struggles with hope and despair. Our moments of love and separation, sexuality, isolation, suffering, death. I am constantly excited and frustrated by tensions between verbal and non-verbal, mind and emotions, intellect and body, silence and communication, privacy and community.”

Her mother’s artwork, says daughter Jana, symbolizes the conservative ideals she embraced. She pointed me to the end of a 1971 commentary on her mother’s work, which she said “articulates the difference between liberals and conservatives. Liberals are always trying to live in a fantasy ‘perfect world,’ while conservatives are able to embrace the imperfections, the tensions, the darkness — the reality.”

Laub-Novak lived her life in the reality

and, after her death, her art lives on, showing her belief in this way: “Creativity touches the sources of suffering we share with all persons. Are we here to put in time? To live out our lives with diminishing insight and dignity?” Laub-Novak wrote in 1973.

“To face death with fear, frustration and the dissatisfaction of things undone? Hoping our children will fare better than we? For them only a better material life, the gifts of the Spirit forgotten?”

Click play below to watch a slide show of several Karen Laub-Novak work (click here for the full screen version), presented here courtesy of the artist’s family.

Follow on Twitter @EmilyMillerDC

Follow PoliticsDaily On Facebook and Twitter