



Lois VanLiew

April 29, 1938 - February 11, 2026

Lois VanLiew, Painter and Multidisciplinary Creative Artist, Dies at 87.

Lois VanLiew, a devoted artist whose work captured the quiet poetry of everyday life, passed away peacefully on the morning of February 11, 2026. She was 87.

Born in Atchison, Kansas, on April 29, 1938, Lois often shared a cherished early memory of sitting in church at four years old, drawing with a silver pencil her mother had given her to keep her occupied during the sermons. That simple act marked the beginning of a lifelong devotion to art, a calling she would nurture and pursue throughout her life.

Lois graduated from the University of Kansas with a Bachelor of Arts in Art Education and began teaching at Turner High School in Kansas City, Kansas. After marrying Dr. Gordon S. Leonard, she and her husband moved to Austin, Texas, where she served as Director of Art for the Bureau of Business Research at the University of Texas. During this time, she maintained an active painting studio and held her first solo exhibition, establishing herself not only as an art professional but as a committed practicing artist.

After moving to Milwaukee and starting a family, Lois continued her vibrant and evolving art career. She worked and exhibited from her shared studio in

Grafton, Wisconsin, remaining deeply engaged in creative exploration. While acrylic painting was her primary passion, she also excelled in handmade paper, silk painting, figure drawing, and ice sculpting.

In 2004, Lois returned to her home state of Kansas, where she became an active member of the NOTO Arts District in Topeka. Over the years, Lois received numerous awards and recognitions for her artistic achievements and for her meaningful contributions to every art community she joined.

Lois was preceded in death by her parents, Annie Laurie Cummings VanLiew and Marshall Benedict VanLiew; her brother, Roy H. VanLiew; and her former husband, Dr. Gordon S. Leonard.

She is survived by her daughters, Michele Anne Leonard and Dr. Valerie L. Leonard Quest; Michele's special friend, Steve Vonnahme; Dr. Quest's long-time partner, Jean Pierre Salazar and his loving family; her sister-in-law, Vicky VanLiew; and many extended family members and dear friends.

Visitation will be from 1 to 2 p.m. with memorial service to follow at 2 p.m. on Saturday, March 7, 2026, at Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home, 2801 SW Urish Road, Topeka, Kansas, 66614. Per Lois's wishes, a private graveside service will be held at a later date.

Memorial contributions may be made to Helping Hands Humane Society or ArtsConnect, in care of the funeral home.

Condolences may be sent online at www.kevinbrennanfamily.com

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 7. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home
2801 SW Urish Road
Topeka, KS 66614
(785) 272-7888
info@kevinbrennanfamily.com

Memorial Service

MAR 7. 2:00 PM (CT)

Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home
2801 SW Urish Road
Topeka, KS 66614
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info@kevinbrennanfamily.com

Tribute Wall



“ Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Lois VanLiew



Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home - February 26 at 09:20 AM

BB

*Michele's and Val, I'm so sorry that you've lost your mother. It's been many years since I last saw your mom, but I remember the first time I went to your house when I was a child in the 1970's and I saw your mom's paintings. I fell in love with her sensitive use of color and the way she painted soft forms. I was also quite taken with the idea of being an artist. I am an artist today and your mother had always been an inspiration in that she was always actively painting and showing her work through the decades. I was also wowed by visiting her Cedarburg studio for group shows-I thought it would be fantastic to be an artist! I decided on that day that I saw her paintings for the first time-I was probably 8 yrs old-that someday I'd own one of her paintings. I got my wish when she gave me a painting of sunflowers for a wedding present. It was perfect because my husband and I had planted a wall of sunflowers in our backyard for our wedding. We were married with the backdrop of sunflowers. Then she sent me a painting after my husband died suddenly. It's a beautiful landscape with prairie flowers in the foreground and I see it every day in my living room. I remember your mom as being a person who smiled often and she was warm and kind. Wishing you and your family peace today and always.
Beth Blahut, New Glarus, Wisconsin*

Beth Blahut - February 27 at 12:43 PM

PO

“ Poca planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Lois VanLiew.

Poca - March 06 at 06:21 PM

PO

“ Poca purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Lois VanLiew.



Poca - March 06 at 06:21 PM

CP

“ Chanda, Heather, Julie & Peedy purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Lois VanLiew.



Chanda, Heather, Julie & Peedy - March 05 at 11:48 AM

DJ

“ Denise, Jean Marie, JP, Elena & Jeanne purchased the Treasured Lilies Spray for the family of Lois VanLiew.



Denise, Jean Marie, JP, Elena & Jeanne - March 05 at 11:27 AM



“ *Blue Caribbean Bouquet was purchased for the family of Lois VanLiew.*



March 04 at 11:03 AM



“ *Sanjay and Erin Walia and family purchased the Be My Love Bouquet with Red Roses for the family of Lois VanLiew.*



Sanjay and Erin Walia and family - March 04 at 08:53 AM



“ *Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Lois VanLiew.*



March 03 at 03:36 PM



“ *A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Lois VanLiew.*

March 03 at 03:36 PM

MG

“Lois was a talented artist and a high school classmate with whom I recently rekindled a friendship. I will greatly miss the things we planned to do together.

Marsha Henry Goff

Marsha Henry Goff - February 22 at 01:59 AM

MG

“Loving mother, loving grandmother, loving beautiful person inside and out.

michele galliano - February 21 at 12:04 PM

JB

“Lois was one of my best friends in Topeka. She was a superstar of a woman. One to be emulated for her kindness, always thinking of others, quiet manners and voice, artistic ideas and showering her community with lovely paintings. We often talked by phone about how we felt of many happenings in life. I always felt energized afterward. I greatly miss her and her smile. Janet Bailey

Janet Bailey - February 19 at 11:15 AM

PD

“Lois helped me acclimate to my first paint out. She was SO generous and patient with me!
I will miss her Christmas cards & family “doings”.
What a wonderful woman whom I’ve been honored to call “friend” I will miss her.

Paula Dalton - February 18 at 11:41 AM

KB

“Lois was my neighbor in Tallgrass until I moved 6 years ago. She was also part of my artist "tribe." She is a beautiful soul and will live in my heart. Her art will live on for the enjoyment of all. May she rest in the arms of her Savior. ❤️

Kelly Burke - February 18 at 03:21 AM

SM

“Lois, was such a dear soul!!! I have been her hair stylist for many years.. I always enjoyed our conversations during her salon visits. I will truly miss her but will cherish our memories of our times together! Thoughts and prayers are with the family at this difficult time!

Shirley Majeroni

Shirley Majeroni - February 17 at 08:27 PM

SD

“When Lois and I rented our studio in Grafton, WI, she was about 45. I remember her commenting that she figured she had ten good years for producing art. And, although I am very sad to learn of her passing, I can't help but wanting to shout, "way to go girl", because she had over forty good years. What an accomplishment!

sally duback - February 17 at 07:40 PM

JL

“Lois was a local celebrity in our neighborhood. We had seen many of her art works at Topeka galleries. When the Tallgrass HOA remodeled its clubhouse, Lois generously gave prints of her Kansas prairie paintings to decorate its wall. She will live on in all the works she has created as well as in the hearts and minds of those who knew her.

Jerry & Anna Marie Lammers - February 17 at 06:32 PM

CK

Always enjoyed talking with Lois in the mornings when I was walking and she was walking Teddy. Such a sweet person.

Carol Shannon, Topeka KS - February 17 at 07:29 PM

LJ

Our family was close friends and neighbors with the VanLiew/Leonard family in Thiensville throughout the 80s and we are so sorry to hear of Lois' passing! She was such a kind and talented person. She painted a beautiful painting of a flowering tree that used to be in our yard there that our mom still has hanging in her home. She will be missed but long remembered by her wonderful legacy of beauty through her work and her lovely family. Peace and love to you all.

Lori Janies - February 18 at 11:49 AM