

Artist Thomas Kinkade dead at age 54

By Mike Rosenberg, San Jose Mercury News

Thomas Kinkade, the “Painter of Light” and one of the most popular artists in America, died suddenly Friday at his Los Gatos home. He was 54.

His family said in a statement that his death appeared to be from natural causes.



Thomas Kinkade

“Thom provided a wonderful life for his family,” his wife, Nanette, said in a statement. “We are shocked and saddened by his death.”

His paintings are hanging in an estimated one of every 20 homes in the United States. Fans cite the warm, familiar feeling of his mass-produced works of art, while it has become fashionable for art critics to dismiss his pieces as tacky. In any event, his prints of idyllic cottages and bucolic garden gates helped establish a brand – famed for their painted highlights – not commonly seen in the art world.

“I’m a warrior for light,” Kinkade told the Mercury News in 2002, alluding not just to his technical skill at creating light on canvas but to the medieval practice of using light to symbolize the divine. “With whatever talent and resources I

have, I'm trying to bring light to penetrate the darkness many people feel."

His Media Arts Group company surged to success, taking in \$32 million per quarter from 4,500 dealers across the country 10 years ago, before it went private in the middle of the past decade. The cost of his paintings range from hundreds of dollars to more than \$10,000.

The Placerville native, who also leaves behind a brother and sister, was known to dress up like Santa Claus on Christmas, ride a Harley-Davidson and go on painting trips around the world. He would visit studio executives but also got to know all the homeless people in Los Gatos. He read classic books but also enjoyed shooting and blowing up things on his ranch.

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