Robert Malcomb Rucker

The following biography is submitted by George L. Montoto of Baton Rouge, a long- time collector of Louisiana Art. His source is "Knute Heldner and the Art Colony in Old New Orleans", copyright 2000, a catalog purchased in the Jean Bragg Gallery in New Orleans.

Robert Malcolm Rucker was born March 28, 1932 in New Orleans, Louisiana, and died March 7, 2001 in Mandeville, Louisiana. He was an oil painter who occasionally used watercolor, and his style combined realism and impressionism. He was primarily known for landscapes but also did many paintings of plantation homes, steamboats, and other aspects of Louisiana life and culture. Most of his life he lived in New Orleans.

Rucker is really the heir to the nineteenth-century Louisiana landscape school of painting. He has a great kinship with the romantic descriptive images of Richard Clague (1821-1873), William Henry Buck (1840-1888) and Marshall J. Smith (1854-1923).

Robert Rucker grew up in New Orleans during the Depression. His early
dabbling in paint led to him opening his own French Quarter gallery with the help of his mother. He was just 15 years old. He painted an average of five paintings a month from that time. When he was 17, he was stricken with polio. Because of this, The Louisiana Department of Education funded his education at the John McCrady School of Fine Arts in New Orleans.

His mature subjects recreate Louisiana in her golden past with amazing historical accuracy, in both detail and composition: sternwheelers steaming down the Mississippi (his father was a steamboat captain), colonial plantations set among cotton fields, rustic moonlit cabins, stands of old cypress in the bayous, and solitary live oaks garlanded with Spanish moss.

In his early career, Rucker taught painting in his own studio and courses in
art and ceramic for the New Orleans Recreation Department. He worked as a
textile designer and as a medical artist at Tulane University School of
Medicine. Rucker passed away on March 7, 2001 of a heart attack. His
beautiful work will remain with us forever.

SPECIAL AWARDS AND EXHIBITIONS:
Louisiana Legends Award - 1996
One-man shows in New Orleans at the Isaac Delgado Museum of Art, Royal
Orleans Hotel, Louisiana National Guard Convention and Trial Lawyer
Convention. His work is in the Baton Rouge at Louisiana State University's Library and Gerard Ruth's Gallery and at private galleries in St. Louis, Chicago and San Francisco.

**Robert Rucker**  was a native of New Orleans, and he opened his own gallery in the French Quarter at the age of sixteen. Immediately, Rucker found himself surrounded by fine artists of the New Orleans area, like Knute Heldner and Clarence Millet, two of his earliest influences. At the age of seventeen, he developed polio, an event that ironically became a blessing rather than a handicap.

    Because of his illness, the Louisiana Department of Education funded his schooling at the John McCrady School of Fine Arts in New Orleans. Rucker studied under McCrady for the next five years, developing a style that would later become synonymous with New Orleans and the surrounding countryside of the Mississippi Delta.

    Rucker’s most famous subject is perhaps the steamboat. His love of them came from his family, having two grandfathers who were steamboat captains. He produced many variations on the theme during his career. He is also well known for various bayou scenes and the south Louisiana countryside, themes that he eventually began to render in an impressionistic style and often with pastel tones during the late 1970’s and early 1980’s.
Rucker held exhibits in Baton Rouge and New Orleans as well as Chicago, San Francisco, St. Louis and Cleveland. In addition to being an art teacher at his own gallery, he was a textile designer, an art teacher for the City of New Orleans and a medical artist for Tulane Medical School. Robert Rucker died of a heart attack in 2001.