

Paulina Peavy

1901 to 1999

In 1932, at age 31 and after a tumultuous divorce from her husband, Paulina Peavy attended a séance in Long Beach, California, where she lived. There, according to Peavy, she met a UFO named Lacamo, a spirit from another world. A university-trained artist, Peavy now alleged that when she painted she did not have control over her brush, that it moved on its own, and that it was a UFO named Lacamo who directed it. In order to better channel Lacamo's energies to her, Peavy began to wear a mask when she painted. For Peavy, Lacamo was her co-painter, and on occasion she signed her works with Lacamo's name in addition to hers, especially her watercolors after 1975.

Paulina Peavy was born Pauline Ellen White in Colorado City on August 24, 1901. She later moved to Portland Oregon where she completed her primary and secondary education. Just after graduating from Oregon State College (OSC) in 1923 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Vocational Education, Paulina married Bradley A. Peavy and moved to San Pedro, California. She completed her MA at the Chouinard School of Fine Art in Los Angeles. Following her divorce, Paulina raised her two sons alone. She worked as a high school art teacher in California and New York, and as a naval architect draftsman, an electrical engineering draftsman, and a mural painter. She never stopped painting.

Peavy described her philosophies and Lacamo in her 221 page book title '*Various Kinds of Dissertations*' (from January 1959 to June 1973) and 194 page book titled '*The Story of My Life with a "UFO"*'. Lacamo was more than just a co-artist for Peavy; she was Peavy's mentor in life. Peavy said she learned the secrets of the universe from her, secrets that became the subject matter of her art. Peavy's belief that the world evolved in 12,000-year cycles that are broken down into four 3,000-year periods formed the backbone of her Lacamo-derived belief system. Summer was "the peak age of pyramidal heights," a time populated by women who have no need of men to procreate and when life is perfect. Summer is followed by Autumn, the age of Lesbos, when women give way to an androgynous society where humans self-pollinate, a transitional period. Winter follows, a male-dominated period characterized by war, disease, famine, and evil. Winter is followed by a second androgynous period of Spring which like Autumn was peopled by self-pollinating androgynes she called Lesbos. Key to Peavy's philosophy is a belief in reincarnation, and after experiencing a 3,000-year Summer Age, the last of which occurred during the reign of the Egyptian pharaohs, people become spirits, or UFOs, inhabiting the universe as invisible atoms or electronic beams that can take on different forms when descending to Earth from the far reaches of the universe.

Peavy's entire life was dedicated to promoting her worldview. That cosmos is the sole subject of her art. The earlier oil paintings, which occasionally have figures, often embedded in a dense abstraction, are mysterious, spiritual, and otherworldly. They evoke a correspondence between the earthly and the universal. The later work, consisting largely of

works on paper and a painting series called *Phantasma*, is abstract, although Peavy's non-objective forms suggest energy beams, solar systems, and procreative organic shapes. Most importantly to her *Phantasma* series, these shapes signify genitalia, ova, fallopian tubes, sperm, and fetuses.

In the 1980s, Peavy added film to her artistic repertoire of painting, watercolor, sculpture, and masks. While the award-winning films often featured her art, the films were not about her art per se, nor were they necessarily designed to promote her art; instead they were about explaining her understanding of the world's ontology.

Peavy's art was displayed at the San Diego Museum; the Civic Center Museum of San Francisco; Gumps Gallery of San Francisco; Stanford University Gallery; Stendhal Gallery Los Angeles; and Palos Verdes Gallery. After her move to New York, Paulina's art was displayed at the Delphic Gallery; the Argent Gallery; Carnegie Hall; Staten Island Museum; Hartert Galleries of New York, Jurart Galleries; and The Roxy Theater.

Peavy exhibited her most famous work "Eternal Supper" (1939) for the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition. Painted at the same time as Diego Rivera's "Pan American Unity," Peavy's mural generated a good deal of controversy. Although prints of the mural still exist, the mural itself was over-painted by Peavy in subsequent years as her visionary critique evolved, and it was ultimately destroyed during an attempt to move it from Peavy's New York studio.

By roughly 1946, or shortly thereafter, Peavy seems to have turned her back on the art world and stopped exhibiting. It is not known if she ever made any sales in the handful of exhibitions she had in California, where she lived until 1942, nor after that when she lived in New York. She does not seem to have ever been part of the art world, nor to have traveled in any art circles or befriended any artists, dealers, or critics. Her focus was her philosophy, and art was merely a tool to express it, along with film, poetry, and essays. Peavy even refused to sell her art, especially later in life, since she considered it to be all interrelated and meant it to be kept together as one grand statement about the meaning of life.

Consequently, Peavy, despite living 98 years and being quite prolific, is today an unknown artist. Her dedication to her art as a medium to express her vision of the world makes her obscurity painfully ironic. Put bluntly, Peavy remains an enigma as an artist of her time and place. We know very little about her life, and the little bit that she tells us in her writing, films, and a single undated resume is filled with contradictions. By failing to date the bulk of her works, her oeuvre is difficult to understand in its developmental arc. We know that by the 1940s, if not earlier, she championed women while devaluing men, but she does not define her vision as feminist.

Andrew Peavy, Paulina Peavy's grandson, saved Peavy's art from being thrown away. In December 2014, Andrew's sister-in-law, Stephanie Hamilton displayed and sold some of

Peavy's paintings during her annual holiday sale at her home in Pacifica, California. Katharine Armstrong first saw Peavy's paintings at this art sale, and was drawn to them. Armstrong shared her discovery with a handful of art experts, all of whom shared her assessment and enthusiasm. Paulina Peavy was finally rediscovered.