

ARTIST PROFILE

SAM GRUBER

1907–1996



Sam Gruber owned and operated an employment agency in Manhattan for many years. He finally sold it in 1967, when he was 60. He had begun playing the cello when he was 40 and was glad to be able to devote more time to his music during this period of his life. But, according to May (his widow), Sam felt like he could never “catch up” with other musicians, because he had begun playing so late.

He tried joining various amateur groups, but was not terribly successful. Being the resourceful man he was, he decided to start his own group in 1972—a kind of music camp for adults. He and May hired a director and staff, first-rate players, and they slated a time period to play and perform during a two-week period at New Hampshire’s Saint Anselms College.

On the first day of rehearsal, Sam approached the hired director and asked where he might be placed to play his cello with the group. The director’s reply greatly disappointed him: “Well, we’re putting the wives and those who have accompanied the musicians in an art studio with a teacher, Seena Donneson, so why don’t you go over there?”

He reluctantly parked his cello in a corner of the studio and went to the class, where he began to draw with pastels, per Seena’s instruction. Pleased with what Sam created, she encouraged him to draw. Over the years, Sam drew and painted with passion, showed his work, and sold a number of pieces to raise money for the many causes he cared about.

During the 1980s, when Sam was still drawing as well as painting, his nephew, Jeffrey Gruber, visited him during a family gathering. Jeffrey, a painter, recalls Sam talking about his work: “You are trying to achieve some artistic goal in your painting, to prove something, but I don’t do that or have that goal in mind. My artwork comes from spontaneous feeling and love of the process.”

Sam’s drawings are indeed testimony to his sensitivity, innate talent, and joy in producing the work (figures 14 and 15). His abstract compositions, created spontaneously and without concern about “success,” flow with ease, like the music he longed to perfect.

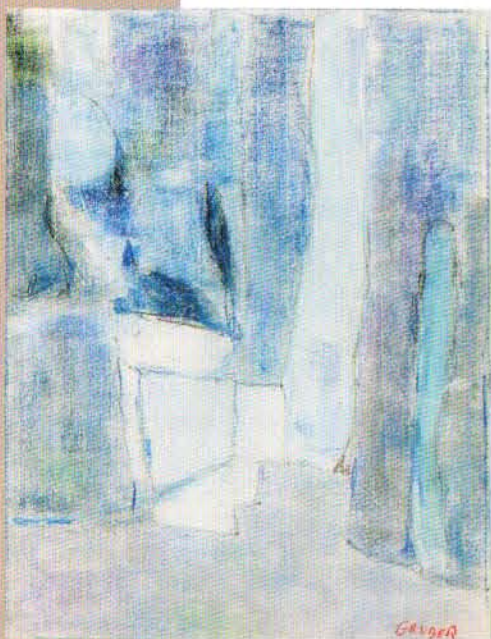


figure 14

Sam Gruber
Untitled
Pastel

17 1/2 x 23 inches
(44.5 x 58 cm)

Courtesy of the Artist’s Estate

— Katherine Aimone

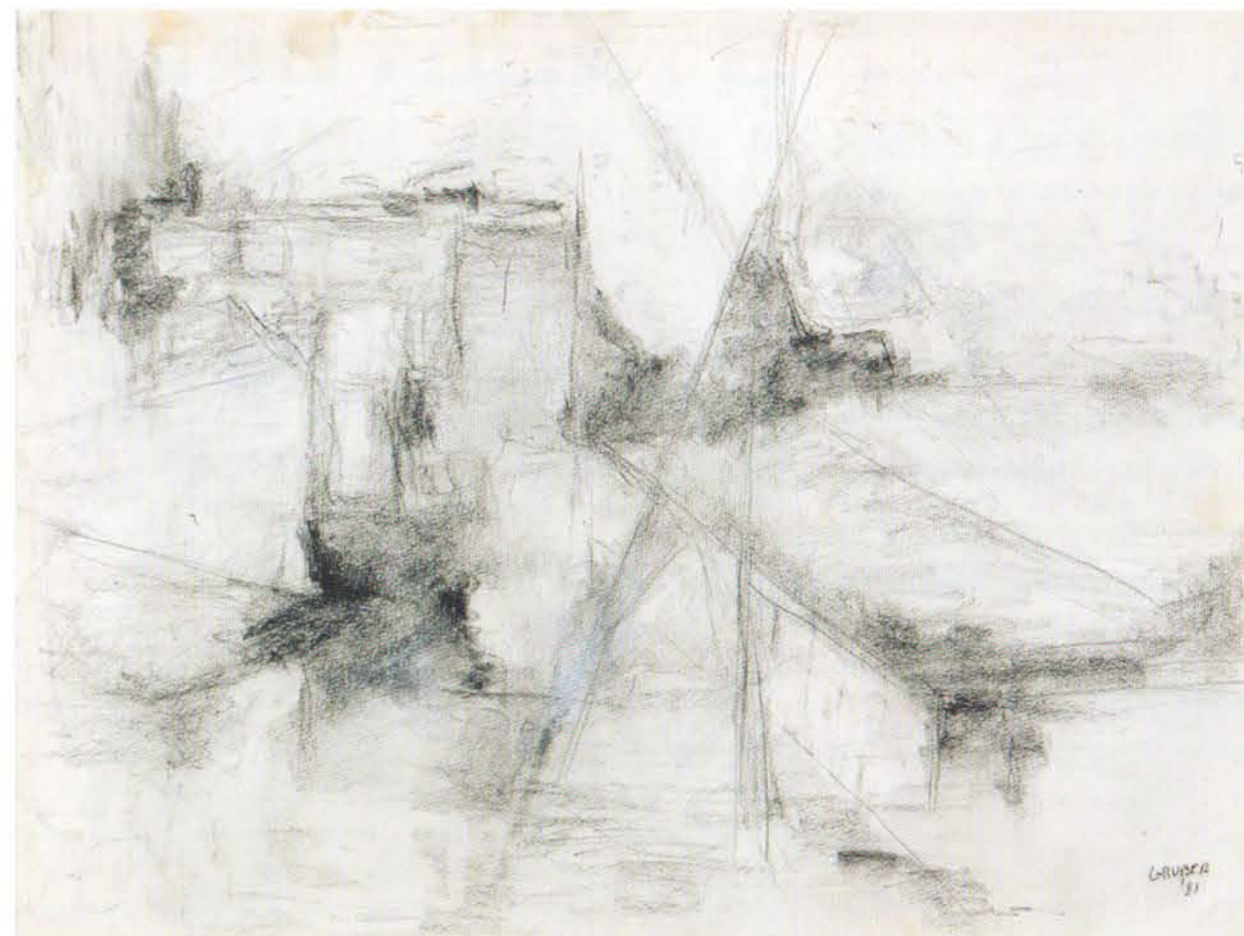


figure 15

Sam Gruber
Untitled
Pencil drawing

17 x 23 inches
(43 x 58 cm)

Courtesy of the Artist’s Estate