
Theлма Chait



Theлма CHAIT Beloved wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and artist passed away peacefully on Wednesday, September 2, 2009, at the age of 91 at Virginia Mason hospital in Seattle. Theлма touched countless lives around the world with her art and her unique spirit. She was known and will be remembered for her boundless warmth and humanity. Born April 10, 1918, in Bloemfontein, South Africa, to Heschel and Etta Daitsh - both immigrants from Eastern Europe - Theлма was raised along with her brother Abe and sister Enid in the small village of Parow where her parents owned and ran a general store. Theлма studied architecture at the University of Cape Town and was one of the first female graduates in the department. It was during this time that she met her future husband, Jack Chait, a doctor in residency. The two were married on January 4, 1942, and had three sons, Alan, Gordon and Brian. While bringing up her children, Theлма studied art at Michaelis School in Cape Town. In the early 1960s, she began to concentrate on the pen-and-ink drawings for which she would become known. At first her carefully composed works made up of thousands of individual lines were done in black and white, but soon she fell in love with colored inks. Theлма used vibrant color and simple forms to pursue what she called "a search for meaning." Her exhibits drew positive attention - as did her 1968 book Hello Up There - and she became a prominent figure in the South African arts scene. Over the following decades, Theлма saw her sons start their own families and establish new lives in the UK, Canada, and ultimately the US. She and Jack remained wonderfully close to their children and grandchildren, visiting often and eventually, in 1988, relocating themselves to Seattle. Theлма continued to draw and exhibit and today her work hangs in homes around the world. The themes she explored in her art - communication, technology, and the brotherhood of man - are more relevant than ever. Theлма is the author of Hello Up There, Julius and His Friend the Computer, and Call of Africa, as well as numerous unpublished books many of which she wrote about her grandchildren and other family members. Theлма is survived by her husband of 67 years, Jack Chait, and their sons, Alan (Sandra), Gordon (Nancy), and Brian (Jocelyn). She was adored by her grandchildren and great-grandchildren and by all her dear friends and family. A private graveside service was held by Theлма's family at Bikur Cholim Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests contributions in Theлма's memory to Ryan House (ryanhouse.org), an organization that was close to her heart after the passing of her grandson Paul.

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