

# PROVINCETOWN

## A R T S

VOLUME 14  
ANNUAL ISSUE  
1999

US: \$10 • CANADA: \$14

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS  
AS AN ART COLONY  
1899 - 1999

"The fishermen were much respected—they were real, and artists tend to have a tropism toward the real.

Besides, those Portuguese fishermen had no small reputation as lovers."

—Norman Mailer

1999 C-94833-42-0  
1516 1004-5012  
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# Al DiLauro: A Collage Portrait

by Lynne Burns



AL DI LAURO: COURTESY OF CIRO AND SAL'S RESTAURANT, PHOTOS BY LYNNE BURNS

In 1977 at *Ciro and Sal's* bar. Originally from Philadelphia, he had moved to New York City in the 1960s and around that time, also began spending summers in Provincetown. When we met, he was in his mid 60s, **handsome, and flirtatious.** He had classic Italian features, wavy silver hair, kind eyes, and a great smile.

He introduced himself as a "painter and photographer." The year before he had co-written, with Gerald Sakin, a book entitled *Dirty Movies: An Illustrated History of the Stag Film, 1915-1970*, and made a compilation of stag films called *Old, Borrowed and Stag.*



PHOTO BY LYNNE BURNS, COURTESY OF AL DI LAURO

In a series of Al's collages called *The Artificial Daffodil*, **daffodils appear in strange places.** *Artforum* magazine wrote that the series was "anomaly in its ability to face the viewer. People have wandered into a show of mine and left thinking they've seen photographs," DiLauro notes with irony.



Al also did a series on people, including Martin Luther King, Jr., JFK, Norman Mailer, and *Ciro Coon*. (If you are in *Ciro and Sal's* restaurant this summer, you can see it hanging upstairs.)

Al attended *Wheaton Art Memorial* from 1948 to 1950 and *Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts* from 1963 to 1967. On the Cape, he studied with Henry Henche.

The November 1974 issue of *Cheraphonian* magazine did an article on whether or not men like women to chase them. Twenty six "attractive and eligible bachelors," including Sen. Vevens, Joe McNath, Don Armat, Jr., and Al, were asked: "Do men love bold girls who make the first move?" Al's answer: "If a girl calls, I ask her, 'Do you want to make it or do you want to get married?'" Since no one has ever admitted to the second, I invite them all to my studio. First, though, I warn them I haven't worn a tie in years."

Al was a ladies man and there were always women around him. In the old world tradition, he never spoke about them. But he would introduce them to each other. At his funeral I sat behind a row of women; none seemed surprised that each had a different night of the week they spent with him.



Al was working on *The Sicilian Cookbook* when he died. Here is **his recipe for Elephant Stew:** Bone and cut one elephant (or three rhinoceroses) into mouth-size pieces. This should take about three weeks. Add two cans of Del Monte dried peas and carrots, 60 cents worth pigskin, and enough brown gravy to cover. Simmer for two months over a low flame. Yield: 3600 servings. If more guests are expected, two rabbits may be added. Do this only if necessary, as most people do not like to find hare in their food.



Al once told me that he had never been married, never lived with a woman, and never owned a plant. I bought him the hardest plant I could find. In his last years, the plant became the subject of a series of paintings.

## PROVINCETOWN OTHER



In 1980, Al published the *Provincetown Other*, a parody of Provincetown's only other newspaper of the time.

In the fall of 1985 Patty and Cro Croci visited their old friend Angelo Ippolito in upstate New York. It's that time when leaves change color, days are warm, and nights are chilly. They shared delicious home-cooked Italian dinners and when they left, promised to do it again sometime. A few days later, Cro called Angelo to tell him that Al had died. Every year since then, Cro and Patty visit Angelo on October 30th, the anniversary of Al's death. **At dinner they set a place for Al, pour him a glass of wine, and all drink from it.** They tell all the old stories and for a night, Al is with them again.

## Gone But Not Forgotten . . .

Alfred DiLauro was born in Philadelphia, PA on July 3, 1890 in the home of his immigrant parents, Domenico and Carmela. He grew up in South Philly where everyone was Italian, so his parents never spoke English. Al never spoke Italian. They understood each other then responded in their own language.

—JACK ALANO-YOUNG (Al's son)

I remember him saying repeatedly that he never drank tomato juice, never went to Bloomingdale's, and prior to my moving from downtown to the Upper West Side, that he'd never been above 14th Street. —MIL ROSSA

Al was the only Italian we ever met who was allergic to tomatoes. "If women were tomatoes, Al would be in trouble," Mudge used to say. "Where does he get all those thousands of little bits and pieces of paper for his collages?" was a question Mudge and I used to ask around when conversation ran thin. "And with what does he affix the paper to his canvas?" was another. "Affix" was one of our better words. "Hey Al, affix me another drink!" —JACOB LAMMER

"My Party's Angel" Al Dies always kept an eye out for the specialty when I'm mopey around forgotten to swing with every previous moment, whispering his cool old reminder to "Have Fun!" —ANN CHASSIN

Cro Croci, Mel Bossa, and I, three of Al's closest friends, were at the funeral. Sadly, one said to the others, "I can't believe this, we should be here for Al's wedding, not his funeral." I looked up at the other two. "Who are we kidding? Al'd rather be dead than married!" —ALANO BROOKS

On October 20, 1985, Al DiLauro died. It was a heart attack, and mercifully quick. I was with him. I first met Al through Lyrrne Burns. It was at one of her carnival gatherings that I became really aware of him because he suddenly (why?) told me a truth about myself, looking at me with his clear, compelling, artist's eyes. I felt the strength of his character and his kindness, for it was said without consideration. Who could resist Al? He had the gift, the power, of compassionate understanding. Once Al was your friend, it was for life. —BARBARA GIBBARD LAMMER

*Al DiLauro's collages and paintings will be shown from May 22 to September 11 at Corner Appearances in New York and his collages in August at "254" Gallery at Hamrah in Welles.*

*Lyrrne Burns is a photographer who has lived in New York City and on the Lower Cape since the 1970s. She and her partner, Baxter Albin, own Corner Appearances, a gallery and retrospective store in the East Village.*