



## Michael Mazur: A Tribute

ESSAY CHRISTINE TEMIN | PRINTS MICHAEL MAZUR

“Wakeby Day,” “Wakeby Night.” These 1983 works are among the masterful monotypes by Michael Mazur, an artist who, inspired and astonished by an exhibition of Degas monotypes at Harvard’s Fogg Art Museum, began to reinvent and reinvigorate that technique that has been dubbed, because of its lush imprecision, the “painterly print.”

Mazur, whom I regard as the greatest painter and printmaker that New England produced in the last half of the twentieth century, died of congestive heart failure at Mt. Auburn Hospital in Cambridge on August 18, 2009. He was seventy-three.

During many years of writing in the arts department of the *Boston Globe* I had the pleasure of following Mazur’s works. It was a constant challenge to decode them. I was always glad when there was a chair in the gallery, so I could sit and ponder them at length. It’s not that the individual subjects are difficult to identify. Mazur was superb at depicting trees and flowers and capturing the qualities of each. He even captured flowers’ postures — which stems are stiff and upright and which bow with the suppleness of a dancer. It is interpreting the relationship of one species to others occupying the same space, and peeling apart the various layers of the composition, that takes time and thought. The layering extended to his self-scrutinizing self-portraits, unforgiving images. It peaked in a 1992 work, “Memory and Distance,” that features landscapes overlaid with what appear to be paintings of landscapes, only perhaps they’re not. It’s hard to tell. There’s an easel in the midst of all this, a reminder that art and nature, however close they come, are not the same thing.

Photos: Courtesy of Mary Ryan Gallery, New York.