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Nicholas Krushenick, 70, Abstract and Pop Artist

By ROBERTA SMITH

Nicholas Krushenick, a New York painter whose bold, posterlike paintings were often called abstract Pop, died Friday at Mount Sinai Medical Center in Manhattan. He was 70 and lived in Manhattan.

The cause was liver cancer, his family said.

Mr. Krushenick was born in New York in 1929 and attended DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx. He studied painting at the Art Students League and at the informal painting school overseen by the Abstract Expressionist Hans Hofmann, whose theory of "push-pull" promoted the use of bright, contrasting colors to activate a painting's space.

During the 1950's Mr. Krushenick made collages of somewhat geometric figures, and he had his first solo show at the Camino Gallery in 1957. The next year he quit his job in the frame shop of the Museum of Modern Art and, with his brother John, founded the Brata Gallery, an early 10th Street artists' cooperative. The artists who showed at Brata included Al Held, Ronald Bladen, George Sugarman and Yayoi Kusama. Like Mr. Krushenick, they were all seeking more straightforward, hard-edged alternatives to the emotionalism of Abstract Expressionism.

By the early 1960's, Mr. Krushenick had solidified the geometric aspect of his work into simple abstract motifs sometimes suggestive of landscapes, sometimes of billboards, whose shapes were outlined in heavy black lines. Although similar to the paintings based on cartoons that Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol were making, Mr. Krushenick's paintings kept their distance from the images of commercial art.

In 1962, Mr. Krushenick began to show in uptown galleries, including Graham, Fischbach and Pace (now Pace Wildenstein), where he had three shows between 1967 and 1972. His most recent New York exhibition was at the Mitchell Algus Gallery in 1997. He was a visiting artist at many art schools and universities and taught from 1977 to 1991 at the University of Maryland.

Mr. Krushenick's work is represented in many public collections in the United States and Europe, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, and the Stedelijk in Amsterdam.

He is survived by his wife, Julia, and a son, Shawn, both of Manhattan.
