

Autopsy: Christian painter Thomas Kinkade died of accidental overdose

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c. 2012 Religion News Service (RNS) Christian painter Thomas Kinkade died of a drug and alcohol overdose, according to an autopsy report released Monday (May 7).

Kinkade's April 6 death was ruled accidental by the Santa Clara County Coroner's office, which found high levels of alcohol and the anti-anxiety medication Diazepam in his body, according to Reuters.

The artist had struggled with alcoholism, according to his family. Kinkade, 54 when he died, was one of the most commercially successful artists in history, selling millions of light-infused scenes of cozy cottages nestled in fairytale-like valleys.

Raised in the Church of the Nazarene, he called himself the "Painter of Light," and spent much of his career depicting churches and biblical themes. Critics panned his work as treacly kitsch. But Kinkade's artistic empire, which included a chain of national galleries and an association with Disney, made him a beloved figure in conservative Christian circles.

His brother Patrick Kinkade, a professor at Texas Christian University, told the San Jose Mercury news that the artist had been troubled in recent years by a separation from his wife, business problems and critics' low opinions of his work.

In 2010, the year he filed for bankruptcy, Thomas Kinkade was arrested for drunk driving.