

New fund is designed to help emerging artists

taosnews.com/stories/new-fund-is-designed-to-help-emerging-artists,61786



Contemporary artist Larry Bell, who turned 80 in December, has been an iconic figure in the Taos art world since the 1970s.

Courtesy Eric Schwartz

By Laura Bulkin
tempo@taosnews.com

When artist Larry Bell turned 80 years of age on Dec. 6, 2019, his friends, fans and collectors took the occasion to show their love and appreciation for him. Bell has been an iconic figure in the Taos art world since the 1970s. Born in Chicago in 1939, he moved to Los Angeles with his family as a child. He is considered one of the most influential artists to emerge from the Los Angeles art scene of the 1960s. Bell's unique work with glass, light, reflection and shadow earned him an international reputation by the time he was 30. He has called Taos home since 1972.

One of the first events planned for the 80th birthday celebration was originally conceived as a "pop-up" show of Bell's work at the Harwood Museum of Art, 238 Ledoux Street. This quickly evolved into the more in-depth "Cubic Propositions" exhibit, a retrospective of six decades of Bell's renowned work with the cube form. "Cubic Propositions" is on view at the Harwood's Joyce and Sherman Scott Gallery, where it can be seen through April 26.

A second birthday-inspired tribute promises to honor Bell's lifetime of work and carry his legacy forward in service to future generations of artists and art lovers. The Harwood recently announced the establishment of the Larry Bell Fund for Excellence in Contemporary Art.

Sonya Davis has been director of development for the Harwood since May, 2017. She spoke with us about the fund and its great potential.

"The inspiration was a gift from an anonymous collector of Larry Bell's work who wanted to honor Larry, in part connected with and honoring his 80th birthday this past December," Davis said. "He is recognized by the community and the world as a major force in contemporary art, with work sold and shown internationally. The fund will benefit the Harwood by supporting a spectrum of endeavors related to contemporary art. Emerging artists may well be among the beneficiaries of these endeavors through exhibitions and perhaps purchases. Research and catalogs are a possibility, especially related to future exhibitions of contemporary artists. It will provide the support needed for bringing the Harwood's contemporary art exhibitions and acquisitions to the next level."

Davis credited Taos artist Dora Dillistone as an early benefactor of the fund. "Dora is a recognized contemporary visual artist in her own right. She is also the author of the recently published book, 'Luna, the Mare with the Sky Blue Eyes.' She serves on the Harwood Governing Board and Harwood Collections Committee as well as the Harwood Alliance. She and her husband, Carl, are collectors of Larry's work as well as a personal friends. Leading by example, she made a gift to the Larry Bell Fund."

Dillistone spoke eloquently about her friend Bell. "We have been lucky to count Larry Bell as a friend for over two decades. Our friendship began with our admiration of his art and appreciation for his continuing quest for change while exploring the relationship between visual art and science. The Harwood is also lucky to have a contemporary artist of his caliber living next door to count among its friends. Although his work is closely associated with the Los Angeles art movements, his family and heart are in Taos. His generosity to the Harwood cannot be praised enough. The Larry Bell Contemporary Art endowment fund is a tribute to his enduring excellence in the art world and his dedication to Taos and the Harwood Museum of Art."

"We welcome other gifts to this important new fund," Davis said. "Through this fund, the Harwood not only continued to be a destination for the finest contemporary art in our region, but also, with such works as Larry's and Agnes Martin's and many others in the collection, the Harwood can continue to emerge as a mecca for some of these globally respected and recognized artists."

Davis stressed the Harwood's commitment to its own history and origins. "While the Harwood has become the center for showing and collecting outstanding contemporary art in our region, the museum also continues to seek balance by exhibiting and collecting works from earlier periods. It is important to the Harwood, to the community and to the art world that we continue to remember our roots."

Davis said that Bell was recently told about the creation of the fund established in tribute to his life's work. "Larry is aware, and, in his typical humble way, is pleased to be honored. But more so, we know he is happy that the fund will support contemporary art and artists at the Harwood, something he does personally and quietly himself."

All are invited to make gifts to the fund in Larry Bell's honor by calling the Harwood Museum at (575) 758-9826, ext.116.