

Addiction

Larry Bell

Thank you for the opportunity to address the theme of “Authenticity.” I have read the “statement” paragraph many times trying to find a way to get into the discussion; alas I have failed!

I am only an artist, I am not a philosophical artist or an intellectual artist. I am into it for the sensuousness of “hands on” work. I have been in the studio almost 60 years and have not made anything that was not totally amusing to me.

I started my studio investigations around 1959–60 when I rented an old store front in Ocean Park, California. The building straddled the line that separated Venice Beach from the city of Santa Monica. As I recall the rent was \$45 a month for 3,000 square feet next to the beach.

I began working by painting oil on paper. The imagery always related to the size and shape of the paper, sort of replicating the page plane with squares of paint and borders that considered the imagery part of the shape of the page plane. This developed into reliefs and then constructions suggesting the space of a cubic volume. I always started these constructions on a table that stood in the corner of the room. So in a sense the room was the volume and the corner was the structure that contained the volume.

My work was about the corners that contained the volume of light that illuminated the interior. I do

not know why I took this approach. Possibly because it was the easiest way to “follow the work.” I was also impacted by a severe hearing loss due to something called Hereditary Nerve Degeneration. It was very quiet in my studio. There was a meditative feeling to the little box-like containers made of wood and glass and mirror. One experiment comes to mind of a small shadow box, 11 by 14 inches, 3 inches deep. I was putting a piece of paper on the back side of a piece of glass that covered one side of the shadow box. Somehow the piece of glass cracked horizontally. There were three lines visible: the crack, the shadow of the crack on the blue paper backing, and the reflection of the crack above the actual crack.

This little epiphany changed my life. There was no need for anything else in the container. The magic of the crack’s appearance and how it happened still sends chills up my back. I don’t know how it happened. My intuition told me this object was finished.

I have always considered that my work was my teacher. I follow the work. My priority has always been to keep working no matter what. No one needs this kind of study except for the person doing the study. It is not a product, it is the evidence of a series of investigations. I am addicted to working in this manner.

Peace and love,

Larry Bell







