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Larry Bell Complete Cubes
23 June–23 September 2018

Press release courtesy Hauser & Wirth.

Hauser & Wirth Los Angeles is pleased to present **Larry Bell. Complete Cubes**, the gallery's first solo exhibition for the internationally acclaimed American artist in his hometown. Larry Bell's innovative approach to sculpture and perceptual phenomena has placed him uniquely at the hub of both Southern California's Light & Space movement

and New York Minimalism in the sixties, which continues to inform his practice today as a forerunner of California Minimalism. This landmark exhibition offers viewers insight into Bell's lifelong dedication to the glass cube through a groundbreaking body of work that has become inextricably linked to the emergence of Los Angeles as an internationally significant center of artistic innovation.

Complete Cubes is the first exhibition to organize Bell's iconic glass cubes by scale, showcasing an example of every size the artist has produced from the early 1960s to the present. Featuring rarely seen works that are among the most important of Bell's early career, the exhibition comprises over 20 sculptures ranging in size from 2 inches to 40 inches, as well as new large-scale works created specifically for this presentation, which extend new formal explorations seen in his recent 2017 Whitney Biennial installation **Pacific Red II**.

Born in Chicago in 1939, Larry Bell first moved to LA with his family in the 1940s. He attended the Chouinard Art Institute (known today as the California Institute of the Arts), from 1957 to 1959. After college he began working at a San Fernando Valley frame shop where he experienced a crucial artistic breakthrough: Bell would experiment with scraps of glass while at the shop, making small constructions with the material and other framing supplies. One day, he placed a cracked piece of glass in a shadow box. 'The result was an intriguing dual effect,' Bell recounts, 'the cracked glass threw a shadow and also a reflection of the crack on the paper.' This fortuitous moment launched Bell's career as a sculptor; he moved away from paint and canvas and began to manipulate light and glass in a practice that has now spanned nearly six decades.

Bell rose to prominence in the 1960s, a decade of experimentation during which he worked alongside Southern California Light & Space artists Robert Irwin and John McCracken. In 1965, he relocated to New York for a two-year interlude during which he met Donald Judd and Frank Stella, two life-long friends of significant mutual influence. In 1967, Bell moved back to Los Angeles where, spurred by the emergence of a consumer class and encouragement from like-minded artists, he continued to explore the optic possibilities of glass and its capacity to absorb, reflect, and transmit light.

Complete Cubes introduces visitors to Bell's early experiments with scale and materials while illustrating his long engagement with the glass cube. The first seven works on a Plexiglas pedestal custom-designed by Bell demonstrate the variety of methods, materials, and surface treatments that the artist has employed while working with glass cubes from the early 60s through the 2000s.

The first work visitors encounter is Bell's smallest construction, **Untitled** (1964)—a 2-inch sculpture joined at the edges with chrome binding. Such miniature works were so fragile and costly that Bell only made them for a brief period of time and, subsequently, nicknamed them 'heartbreakers.' **Untitled** (1964) is an 8-inch cube with curved patterns on the exterior surface of the glass panels. This work, which Bell made for his first solo show at New York's Pace Gallery, is characteristic of the artist's use of geometric patterns on the surface of his cubes throughout the early sixties. For years he attempted to manipulate the effects of light on glass through this method. This approach ultimately left the artist dissatisfied as it had only limited effects on the reflection and transmission of light.

The exhibition continues with **Cube 29** (2008, 12 inches), which is coated with inconel, an alloy whose ability to withstand extremely high temperatures and pressure make it uniquely suited to vacuum deposition. Along with other glass sculptures from the 2000s, **Cube 29** demonstrates a highly polished application of the glass coating technology which Bell began to explore in 1963, and evinces the artist's career-long dedication to this technique.

In 1965, Bell was catapulted to international fame at the age of 26 with the success of his sold-out show at Pace Gallery. In January of 1966, living in New York, he purchased a vacuum coating chamber from Ben Koenig, a German decorative metalizer in the Bronx. Bell learned to operate this machine by reading an old manual called **Vacuum Deposition of Thin Films**. Up to this point, he had relied on several companies across Southern California to coat the panes of glass he used in his sculptures, a time-consuming and expensive process. His new vacuum

chamber allowed the artist to deposit films of different metallic and non-metallic substances onto the glass himself. This coating technique, known as 'thin film deposition,' was widely used in camera lenses and telescopes by the burgeoning optics industry.

The years following Bell's acquisition of the vacuum coating chamber gave the artist greater freedom to experiment with the surface of glass. Engagement with this technology pushed the artist away from silkscreening, which he was using to apply patterns to his cubes. According to Bell, such shapes rested 'on the volume, but they didn't have anything to do with it; they were pictures of something.' Bell has said that acquisition of the vacuum chamber allowed him to produce his best work between 1965 and 1968, including **Untitled** (1965–1966, 15 inches) and **Untitled** (1965, 18 inches), both on view in the exhibition.

Complete Cubes also includes Bell's earliest attempts at creating three-dimensional representations of the shapes he painted on canvas before he decisively moved away from that medium. In **L. Bell's House, Part II** (1962–1963, 25 inches), Bell used ¼ inch household mirrors, scraping both sides to create a double mirror effect, and painted the exterior surface using epoxy paint along the edges joined to a four-sided plywood frame. This cube was so heavy that Bell was unable to lift it. **Bette and the Giant Jewfish** (1963, 16 inches), a cube with a checkerboard pattern silkscreened on four sides, is another experiment in size and surface. The title of this work references an announcement for Bell's second show at the Ferus Gallery on La Cienega Boulevard. It was also the first sculpture for which Bell used a coating technique through which he applied aluminium directly onto glass.

Some later works in **Complete Cubes** feature meditations on the cubic form and glass sculpture in which Bell returns to the motifs and methods of his early efforts. **Early and Late** (2008, 20 inches), a cube produced in the late 2000s, recalls the pictorial treatment of surface of Bell's first cubes. Three sides of this sculpture portray polygonal shapes. The end result is a sleek, nearly transparent cube with an elegant finish. It demonstrates decades of work with the vacuum deposition chamber and Bell's full mastery of light and volume.

The exhibition concludes with a large-scale cubic construction comprised of three structures, each containing a cubic form within a cube. This structure was first debuted in his 1992 seminal work **Made for Arolson** and has been utilised repeatedly throughout his career. In this new work for the LA presentation, **Blue Lapis, Red Poppy**, and **Optimum White** interior structures interface with a fog-like outer form to harness the recent advancements in coloured architectural glass, creating a sublime meditation on colour interactions. While Bell's glass cubes investigate the formal qualities of the material, these new sculptures focus on the way light and shadow manipulate the saturation of colour.

LARRY BELL
Bette and the Giant Jewfish
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LARRY BELL
Cube 29
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Cube 59
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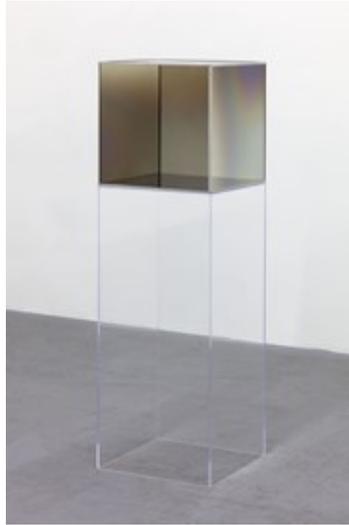


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