

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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Shock Artist Chris Burden Is Dead at 69

Gained fame in the 1970s by deliberately having his arm shot

Kelly Crow



Pop artist Chris Burden in front of his kinetic sculpture 'Metropolis II' at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2012. PHOTO: JAE C. HONG/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Chris Burden, a conceptual artist and sculptor who gained fame in the 1970s by having his arm shot and calling it art, died Sunday in Los Angeles. He was 69.

Larry Gagosian, his dealer, confirmed the artist's death. The cause was cancer.

Mr. Burden was a pioneer in performance art who put his body through extreme physical and psychological challenges and considered the acts as works of art. Between 1971 and 1977, he hired a man to shoot him in the arm. He was also crucified, electrocuted and kept in locker for five days.

His performances shocked the art world at the time and helped refine the traditional idea that art could be an ephemeral experience as much as a canvas hanging on a wall.

He later shifted to making huge sculptures that often employed elements of architecture. He is known for "Urban Light," a 2008 group of roughly 200 ornate street lamps clustered into a temple-like configuration in the piazza of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

In New York, he's known for "What My Dad Gave Me," a 65-foot skyscraper built using toy Erector set parts. That work was exhibited in Rockefeller Center in 2008.

Mr. Burden was born on April 11, 1946, in Boston, but he lived in Los Angeles for years and became a symbol of his adopted city's recent artistic renaissance.

Mr. Gagosian said he began working with Mr. Burden about 1978, becoming the first artist his gallery represented. "I am sure that over time his singular vision will only become more resonant and grow in importance," Mr. Gagosian said. "He was every inch an artist, as tough and uncompromising as any I have ever met."