

Thomas Browne Cornell



BRUNSWICK — Thomas Cornell, celebrated artist and the Richard E. Steele Professor of Studio Art Emeritus at Bowdoin College, died on December 7 at the age of 75.

In June of 2012, Cornell retired from teaching after 50 years as a professor at Bowdoin. He joined the faculty in 1962, establishing the visual arts program at the college. Cornell loved imparting his passion for art and was known on campus for his devotion to his students, with whom he often remained in close contact even after their graduation.

Cornell began his career with drawings and etchings, which were widely distributed and were included in many fine art publications. Since the mid-1970s, Cornell dedicated himself primarily to oil painting. In his work, Cornell depicted loving communities of people interacting with nature. Against artistic trends, Cornell was committed to moral content, focusing on issues of social, economic, and environmental justice. His work spans printmaking, marble and bronze sculpture, portraits, landscapes, and still lifes.

Cornell's work received considerable critical acclaim over the years, including a full-page review in the *New York Times*, which led the paper's weekend Arts section. Among his numerous honors were a grant from the National Endowment of the Arts and election to the National Academy of Design. Cornell's work is included in the collections of museums across the country, including the Museum of Modern Art, art museums at Harvard and Princeton Universities, the National Museum of American Art, and the Beinecke Library at Yale University.

Cornell was born on March 1, 1937, in Cleveland, Ohio, to Norman Cornell and Betty Browne. He received his B.A. in Art from Amherst College and studied at the Yale University School of Art and Architecture. Cornell was a Professor of Art at the University of California, Santa Barbara, for two years before coming to Bowdoin. He was appointed the Richard E. Steele Professor of Visual Arts in 2001.

In addition to his career as an artist, Cornell was a vocal presence in the community. He could always be found at the Bowdoin squash courts, where he served as a faculty advisor to the Bowdoin Squash Team. He was known locally for his support of numerous causes and generously gave his time to advocate for justice and social change.

Cornell is survived by his wife, Christa, of Brunswick, three children—Olivia Cornell of Portland, Nicolas Cornell and his wife Emily Dupraz of Tunbridge, VT, and Diana Cornell of Philadelphia, PA—and a sister, Karen Cornell Wilson Furst of Wilbraham, MA.

A memorial service will be held at the Bowdoin Chapel on Saturday, December 15, at 3:00 p.m.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Bowdoin College Scholarship Fund.