

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Celebrating Robert Therrien's Pop Art

Stephen West · Tuesday, November 25th, 2025

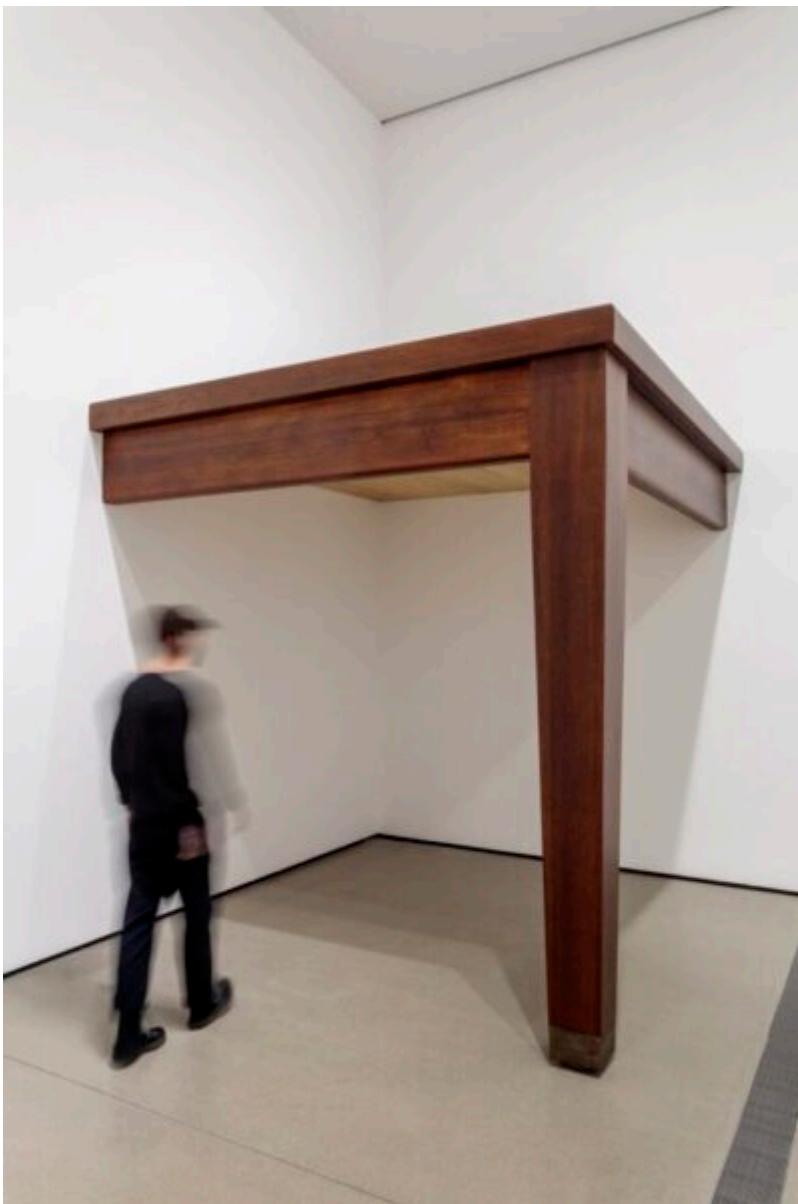
The Broad museum in Los Angeles has just opened a major one-man show, *Robert Therrien: This Is a Story*. It features the sculptures, paintings and other work by one of the many L.A. artists who came to prominence in the 1960s and '70s.

Born in Chicago, Therrien grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area. In the early 1970s, he moved to Los Angeles to pursue an MFA at the University of Southern California and stayed in the area for the rest of his life. While he wasn't one of the L.A. sculptors best known for the "finish fetish" style of carefully crafted, highly polished works (think Larry Bell, Billy Al Bengston, Kenneth Price), he fits right in.



Robert Therrien (1947-2019), *No title (stacked plates, white)*, 1993, ceramic epoxy on fiberglass; The Broad Art Foundation.

Therrien also used the Pop Art strategy of turning ordinary household objects like [Campbell's Soup cans](#) into something more significant, often by radically changing their size. One of the first works you see in the exhibition, for example, is a towering stack of enormous white dinner plates, as if you stepped into the kitchen of a restaurant populated by giants. Like nearly all of the artworks in the show, the 1993 sculpture is untitled. The wall label simply calls it *No title (stacked plates, white)*.



Robert Therrien (1947-2019), *No title (table leg)*, 2010, wood and metal; Robert Therrien Estate; installation photo by Joshua White.

Other household objects blown up to extra-large scale include a card table and set of folding chairs, as well as a quarter segment of a 9-foot-tall brown wooden table pushed into a corner. One of the attractions to these oversized but familiar objects may be that they take you back to your early childhood, when you could actually walk upright under your family's dining room table. Another appeal of these works is how they can be read in multiple ways. If you squint your eyes, the table in the corner seems to be emerging from the walls.

Therrien wasn't the first artist to play around with the scale of ordinary objects. The New York-based Swedish-American sculptor Claes Oldenburg made his reputation in the 1960s doing just that, and it's hard to imagine that Therrien wasn't familiar with Oldenburg's work. The Broad exhibition doesn't mention him, however.



Robert Therrien (1947-2019), *No title (room, pots and pans 1)*, 2008-15, metal and plastic; courtesy Artworks Holdings; installation photo by Stephen West.

One of Therrien's cleverest works in the show is a double-door closet whose interior is painted an intense red. Inside the closet is a stack of huge, shiny aluminum pots, topped off by a black cast-iron frying pan. Again, the change in scale of the work, *No title (room, pots and pans 1)* of 2008-15, makes you look at it more closely and imagine multiple meanings. Its identity goes beyond the contents of a normal kitchen cabinet.



Robert Therrien (1947-2019), *No title (bent cone)*, 1985, bronze; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, gift of an anonymous donor; and *No title (bent cone relief)*, 1983, lacquer and wax on wood; The Broad Art Foundation; installation photo by Stephen West.

Going back at least to the 1980s, Therrien showed an interest in geometric forms, such as three stacked balls that form a snowman-like shape. He was particularly drawn to the cone, which he used in a number of variants, such as cones with bent tips, or others turned into black witch's hats or chrome oiling cans.

A bronze sculpture, *No title (bent cone)* of 1985, and a wooden wall relief, *No title (bent cone relief)* of 1983, are installed near each other, seeming to create a dialogue between the two. The sculpture on the floor, more than 8 feet tall, appears shiny black, while the wall relief is lacquered and waxed to a deep red. What exactly they're saying to each other, though, remains a mystery.

*Robert Therrien: This Is a Story* runs through April 5, 2026, at [The Broad](#), 221 South Grand Avenue, Los Angeles. The museum is closed Mondays, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

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*Top image: Robert Therrien (1947-2019), No title (stacked plates, white), 1993, ceramic epoxy on fiberglass; The Broad Art Foundation; installation photo by Stephen West.*

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