

Raymond D. Nasher, 1921-2007

The late Raymond D. Nasher, founder of the Nasher Sculpture Center, will be remembered as one of Dallas' most influential civic leaders and patrons of the arts. His passion for modern and contemporary sculpture and his tireless commitment to establish Dallas/Fort Worth as one of the finest cultural destinations in the world will carry his legacy for generations to come. His collection, which continuously rotates throughout the Nasher Sculpture Center, Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, and museums across the world, continues to be one of the most extensive and important collections of modern and contemporary sculpture.

Nasher was chairman of The Nasher Foundation of Dallas and chairman of Comerica Bank-Texas. He and his late wife Patsy began collecting art nearly 50 years ago. They started out by building an important collection of pre-Columbian art; over time, it evolved into one of the most extensive and significant private collections of modern sculpture. In 2003, Nasher opened the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, designed by architect Renzo Piano, which houses pieces from their collection of more than 300 works. The Nasher collection contains seminal works by Auguste Rodin, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Alberto Giacometti, Jean Dubuffet, Henry Moore, David Smith and Mark di Suvero. Nasher also established a sculpture garden in his name at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice and The Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University in 2005, where he graduated with a B.A. in 1943.

Nasher was one of the first real estate developers in the United States to place sculpture and other art in commercial retail complexes. In 1965, when he opened his first retail shopping center in Dallas – NorthPark Center – he and his wife Patsy made a commitment to install art throughout the center. He designed a structure inside and out that met the needs of retailers and provided space to display large sculptures from their collection by such artists as Jonathan Borofsky, Mark di Suvero, Henry Moore, Beverly Pepper and George Segal. NorthPark Center and the nearby NorthPark National Bank (now Comerica Bank) – another project of The Nasher Co. – have won architectural and design awards and become models for other developers around the world. Nasher was a member of the national Business Committee for the Arts Inc. since 1987 and was appointed chairman in October 2002.

Nasher served in several governmental positions: chairman of the National Commission of Urban Development, 1964 to 1965; executive director of the White House Conference on International Cooperation, 1965; member of the President's Commission on Urban Housing (Kaiser Commission), 1967 to 1968; U.S. delegate to the General Assembly of the United Nations, 1967 to 1968; member of the U.S. Commission to UNESCO, 1962 to 1965; U.S. member of the German Cooperative Delegation, 1967; board director of the United Nations Association of the United States. He was a member of the Council on Foreign Relations since 1995 and of the National Council of the United Nations Association of the United States. Nasher was appointed to the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities by three U.S. presidents and most recently served as vice chairman.

He also played a leading role in the development and growth of many of the major arts organizations in Dallas. He founded the Dallas Business Committee for the Arts in 1988 and served as a board member of the Dallas Museum of Art, the Dallas Opera, the Dallas Symphony, the Dallas Theater Center, Ballet Dallas and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. From 1992 to 1995, Nasher served on the Texas Commission on the Arts, and from 1988 to 1992 he was the ambassador of cultural affairs for the City of Dallas.

Nasher Sculpture Center

Nasher was a member of the National Council of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and the International Council of the Tate Gallery in London, and served on the committees and councils of numerous leading museums, including the Guggenheim Museum in New York and the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. He was the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including: the Linz Award, the Woodrow Wilson Award, the H. Neil Mallon Award of the World Affairs Council of Greater Dallas and the Dallas Business Hall of Fame Award.

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