

THE GARY BELL COLLECTION: MASTERWORKS OF NORTHWEST COAST ART



CHRISTOS DIKEAKOS
The Collector (2017)
archival pigment inks printed on Epson lustre paper
63 x 77 in, 160 x 195.6 cm
Courtesy of Christos Dikeakos
Not for sale with this lot.

GARY BELL IS not someone you would describe as reclusive, though for a man whose collection is spoken about quietly and reverently in the art community, he remains a notably private individual. When Vancouver-based photographer Christos Dikeakos began developing his portrait series *The Collectors* for Griffin Art Projects, North Vancouver, where it showed in fall 2025, Bell was the first person he approached. “It took me years to convince him to take the photo,” Dikeakos recalls.

The resulting image, *The Collector* (2017), shows Bell seated, reading, in his modest-size apartment, surrounded by some of his significant collection of historical Northwest Coast Indigenous artworks and ceremonial objects. Bell’s collection—now regarded as one of the most important privately held assemblies of Northwest Coast art—is the product of decades of passionate pursuit, rigorous study, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. In Bell’s own words, “If I wanted it, I would get it.” A lifelong collector, Bell first immersed himself in the world of Pop Art, building and eventually selling a substantial collection before redirecting his focus towards Indigenous Northwest Coast works. That shift was sparked by his friendship with the late John Livingston, the master carver and adopted member of the Hunt clan.

Bell’s living room was a meeting place for academics, artists and those people passionate about Northwest Coast art. Bill McLennan, curator at the Museum of Anthropology for decades, was a close personal friend of his and catalogued his collection. His purchases were highly considered and done in consultation with several of the leading experts in Northwest Coast Art—a method of collecting done in the old salon style.

Beyond collecting, Bell has played a meaningful role in cultural stewardship. He has worked extensively to repatriate significant objects to institutions such as the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, the Haida Gwaii Museum and the U’mista Cultural Centre in Alert Bay. His efforts reflect a deep respect for the communities whose artistic traditions he so passionately champions. In a world where collectors often seek visibility, Gary Bell stands apart. His influence is felt not through self-promotion but through the quiet, steadfast care he brings to the artworks and histories he has spent decades honouring and preserving.

