

Persistence of vision

Robert Ellis talks about an idea that has stuck in his head for the past 60 years

By Rick Romancito

Robert Ellis knows something and when he lets audiences in on it, he expects either a collective “aha!” or disbelief. Either way, he says, “I just hope it makes people think.”

Ellis's lecture is titled “Where Are We Now: Theories I've Stumbled Upon on My Way to Age 90” and it is based on a series of art history lectures Ellis heard in 1952 as an art student in California, which combine theories on climate change,

financial change, major cultural change and, of course, changes in art.

The lecture is planned Friday (Oct. 14), 7 p.m., in the Arthur Bell Auditorium at the University of New Mexico's Harwood Museum of Art, 238 Ledoux St.

Far from a Nostradamus redux, this theory Ellis says, tracks actual trends and how they tend to recur throughout history. Not surprisingly, Ellis believes a new cycle is upon us. His talk will go back through history picking out highlights to support his thesis and bring in new theories which explore how cli-

mate change, financial change and even the current Occupy Wall Street protests fit into this schematic — which he even plans to illustrate with graphs.

The idea at the core is that there are recurring cycles between faith and intellect.

In 1952, Ellis said he was introduced to Schardt's Art History Theory which combines the examination of cyclical events and shifts between intellect and faith and their direct impact on culture going back thousands of years.

Alois Jakob Schardt (1889-1955) served as director



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Art and culture shifts

■ **When:** Friday (Oct. 14), 7 p.m.

■ **Where:** Harwood Museum of Art, 238 Ledoux Street

■ **Admission:** Tickets \$10, \$8 museum member

■ **Information:** (575) 758-9826

of the National Gallery in Berlin in 1933 but forced out by the Nazis after a few months in this position. Later he was forbidden to teach, to speak in public, or to publish. He left for the United States in 1940 and came to California to teach where his papers are archived, at the J. Paul Getty Center.

Schardt presented art history in terms of ages of intellect and faith. For example Egyptian art could be categorized as created around faith, while the Greco-Roman period was a shift to

intellect, the middle ages was a plummet backwards into faith to be followed by the Renaissance which can be considered the beginning of modern art.

Ellis said Schardt's model may help explain bigger conceptual changes in thought and art through the modern and post-modern age.

Ellis served as director of the Harwood Museum for 12 years and was instrumental in the mid-1990s renovation and expansion of the museum. He and his wife Caroline Lee were major supporters of the art and cultural community in Taos.

After retiring from the Harwood in 2001, Ellis returned to Albuquerque where he set up a studio and returned to painting full-time.

Before coming to the Harwood, Ellis worked as assistant director and director at the University of New Mexico Art Museum and as a professor in UNM's art department for 23 years. He made numerous contributions to the New Mexico arts community, receiving the New Mexico Governors Award for Individual Support of the Arts and a Regents Meritorious Service Medal from UNM.

Before coming to New Mexico Ellis worked at the Pasadena Art Museum where he was a leading figure in museum education. Prior to this he was a student at the University of Southern California, and it was during this time when attending an art history class with German art historian Alois Schardt that he was exposed to a radical “new way” of thinking about art history.

This program will be followed by a reception.

Tickets are \$10, \$8 Harwood Alliance members. For more information, call (575) 758-9826 or visit www.harwoodmuseum.org.



Courtesy photo

Art professor and artist Bob Ellis