

Leonard Levitan

February 21, 1934 - March 26, 2026

Leonard Levitan, born February 21, 1934 in Tarrytown, New York, an accomplished industrial designer, visionary storyteller of exhibitions, and deeply devoted husband, father, and grandfather, passed away at 92 on March 26, 2026 in Sarasota, Florida.

He is survived by his beloved wife, Sylvia L. Levitan; his children, Ariella and Brian. He was also a loving stepfather to Steve, Andrew, and James Wolf. He enjoyed having a big blended family. Leonard's pride and joy were his beloved grandchildren; Grace (Brian), Clayton, Paxton and Dashton (Steve), Max and Sarah (Andrew), and Maya (James).

Leonard was born to Harold Levitan and Selma (Cohn) Levitan, along with his brothers, Jerome and Donald Levitan. He was adored by his nieces and nephews—Jean, Richard, Nancy, Amy (d.1996), Charles, and Andrea—who were an important part of his extended family.

A 1956 graduate of Pratt Institute as an Industrial Designer, Leonard began his career in Pittsburgh with Peter Muller-Munk Associates, where he designed household appliances for Westinghouse Electric Corporation, along with a range of consumer products. After serving his country in the military, he contributed to one of the most iconic symbols of the 20th century—the Unisphere for U.S. Steel, centerpiece of the 1964–65 New York World's Fair in

Flushing Meadows.

Leonard's career quickly expanded to the global stage. Working with the U.S. Department of Commerce and the United States Information Agency, he designed large-scale exhibitions throughout Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, using innovation and design as a subtle but powerful tool of diplomacy. In 1963, he created a major U.S. exposition in Rio de Janeiro.

In 1965, Leonard founded Levitan Design Associates in Montreal, where he became a leading force in the world of international expositions. He played a major consulting role in Expo '67, helping shape its thematic vision and creating La Ronde, the fair's celebrated amusement area. He married Anne Marie (Fekete) Levitan (d.1996) in Montreal in 1968, and together they had their daughter Ariella and son Brian.

His work continued to bridge creativity and cultural exchange. His expertise led to further global commissions, including the Canadian Pavilion at Expo '70 Osaka. In 1976, the U.S. State Department commissioned him to design a Bicentennial exhibition in Moscow.

As his reputation grew, Leonard became one of the foremost designers of World's Fair pavilions. His projects included work for Federal Express at Expo '82 in Knoxville, major pavilions at Expo '86 in Vancouver, the host pavilion at Expo '88 in Brisbane, and the Spanish National Pavilion at Expo '92 in Seville. Drawing on decades of experience, he later became a devoted historian of World's Fairs, channeling his passion into creating large, detailed oil paintings depicting two of the most impactful exhibitions in history: the 1939–40 New York World's Fair and the Columbian Exposition of 1893.

His creative reach touched many industries and organizations. In the United States, Leonard collaborated with NASA on exhibitions celebrating the Saturn V rocket and the moon landing, as well as visitor experiences at Cape Canaveral, the Johnson Space Center, and Huntsville's astronaut training

facilities. His work extended to institutions such as the National Aquarium in Baltimore, the Chicago Museum of Science & Industry, the National Geographic Society, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He also helped develop one of the first African American museums in the United States during the 1976 American Bicentennial in Philadelphia.

In 2001, Leonard married Sylvia Leonard Wolf (coincidentally the same names) and retired to Woodstock, NY in the Upper Catskill Mountains in New York. Retirement, however, did not slow his passion. He became instrumental in developing the Catskill Water Discovery Center in Arkville, New York, and dedicated years of service to the Woodstock Artists Association & Museum, an organization that promotes and fosters the visual arts and arts education. There, he served on the board for 15 years, including two terms as chairman. He continued to create art that reflected the natural surroundings in the Catskills and in Sarasota, FL, where he and Sylvia made a home in the winter months.

Leonard will be remembered for his sweet manner, sense of humor, great storytelling, and his artistry. He had a rare ability to see the bigger picture—whether designing for millions on the world stage, contributing thoughtfully to his local community, or preserving his family history and ancestry, taking great pride in understanding those who came before him.

To his family, Leonard was a source of strength, wisdom, and enduring love. To those who worked with him, he was a visionary and a collaborator. Leonard believed in the power of ideas, in the importance of storytelling through design, and in leaving places better than he found them.

Memorial services will be held in June in Woodstock, New York. In lieu of flowers the family prefers donations to the Woodstock Artist Association &

Museum.

<https://wl.donorperfect.net/weblink/weblink.aspx?name=E334479&id=155>

Tribute Wall

CG

“ So lucky to have known and shared time with such a gentle, sweet, talented man. He raised a beautiful family, lived an amazing life, married brilliantly and seemed to enjoy all of it. We will miss him.

Cynthia Goldberg - April 15 at 11:34 AM

DP

“ So sorry to lose such a loving, gentle and so accomplished a friend. Deepest condolences to Sylvia, Ariella and Brian. Rest in peace, dear Leonard.

Dana Patton - April 01 at 03:57 PM

MF

“ Our deepest condolences

Martin Haber & Family - April 01 at 03:39 PM

MT

“ Dear Ariella and Family ~ Leonard was such a wonderful man and definitely a gentleman. The world has lost one of our great legends; a creator, an inventor and an inspiration. I'm sorry for your loss, Ariella and all who were closest to him. May you rest in Peace, Leonard. I'm grateful that our paths crossed.

Melissa Thomas - April 01 at 02:11 AM

SK

I never got to meet him but he made you happy and that's good enough for me.

Stephen Koplan - April 15 at 12:19 AM

BW

A wonderful man to know and work with. Among so many other things later in life in Woodstock, Leonard helped spear head WAAM's Centennial project and book in 2019.

Bruce Weber - April 15 at 07:13 AM

AL

*So sorry to hear about Leonard's passing.
Our sympathy goes out to Sylvia our past next door neighbor at Schwab House
Arnold and Judy Liebman*

Arnold Liebman - April 20 at 04:14 PM

AA

“ *Len was a dear friend and a Woodstock treasure....a gentle man among gentlemen rest in peace dear Leonard. Arthur AndersonDedham MA*

Arthur Anderson - March 30 at 01:42 PM

HL

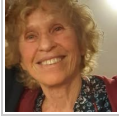
“ *Dear Ariella ,Brian & family please accept our deepest sympathy on the passing of your beloved Lenny as I remember him a very kind and gentle person.
May he rest in eternal peace.
Hedy & Julius*

Hedy Lis - March 28 at 04:52 PM

HF

Sylvia, My thoughts are with you and your family during this difficult time. Take care of you, Helaine Fendelman

Helaine Fendelman - April 07 at 12:40 PM



I feel privileged to have known Leonard. He was talented, sharp, funny, witty, kind...A friend we always looked forward to seeing. My deepest condolences to Sylvia and the rest of Leonard's family. He shall be sorely missed.

Greta Berman - April 14 at 08:27 PM