



Broad, at right, poses with a piece by Julian Lethbridge in his Los Angeles office, which also features works by Julie Mehretu, at left, and Ed Ruscha, above.

POWER SEAT  
**ELI BROAD**

Inside the office of Los Angeles' modern-day Medici, Lesley McKenzie finds vision and not just a view  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY DANIEL TRESE

Ask Angelenos to point out the skyline's greatest building, and chances are they won't single out the most architecturally significant structures. Instead, your gaze will be directed toward Fox Plaza, a 34-story skyscraper in Century City more commonly known as the building where *Die Hard* was filmed.

These days, Bruce Willis isn't the building's

greatest hero. It's Eli Broad, L.A.'s most influential philanthropist, who occupies a corner office on the building's 30th floor.

Since arriving in Los Angeles 50 years ago, Broad has left an imprint on the city's cultural and business landscape—not to mention its skyline—with a fortune spent on philanthropic causes from education to the opera, trustee seats at MOCA and LACMA and buildings including the Broad Stage in Santa Monica and the soon-to-open Broad museum downtown.

And while billionaire Broad manages his empire from Fox Plaza, he didn't build it there. His operation recently moved after 14 years in Westwood, giving its leader a fresh work space. "I wanted a different kind of office," he says. "I wanted all white, all open, all the light." The result is a sun-soaked 25,000-square-foot space, designed by Shubin + Donaldson, that houses the 80-person team that makes up the Broad Family Office, the Broad Center and the Broad Education Foundation. (The Broad Art Foundation remains in Santa Monica.)

The founder of two Fortune 500 companies—residential-building behemoth KB Home and financial firm SunAmerica—Broad stepped away from business in 1999 to focus on philanthropy, but his is an odd retirement. These days, Broad comes to his memento-strewn office four days a week, commuting from his art-filled home in Brentwood, which was designed, in part, by Frank Gehry.

Broad's workspace displays a similarly imposing aesthetic. An 11-foot-long custom-built white oak desk commands the room, framed by giant windows that look out onto downtown Los Angeles, a neighborhood Broad is committed to revitalizing. "Every city needs a vibrant center," he explains. The neighborhood is also the future home of the Broad museum. Set to debut in 2015, the \$140 million Diller Scofidio + Renfro-designed building will showcase more than 2,000 pieces of art from both the Broad Art Foundation and its namesake's personal collection, which includes works by Jeff Koons, Cindy Sherman and Roy Lichtenstein.

"We believe in having contemporary art in the office," says Broad, whose own walls boast a 1981 Jasper Johns. "It stimulates creativity." The main reception area features pieces by Ed Ruscha and a Koons sculpture, while a conference room, anchored by a customized Frank Pollaro table, is home to two Terry Winters canvases and a large-scale print by Julie Mehretu.

Like all the other offices on the floor, Broad's is encased in glass, with privacy shades that he says he's never lowered. Prominently on display are a collection of silver-framed photos and hard hats that represent various construction projects on which he's broken ground, evidence of past accolades and achievements and photos of Broad with Edythe, his wife of almost 60 years.

It's a place that Broad says he can enjoy spending his time, whether he's planning to build another museum or figuring out funding for a fledgling arts organization. "I work all the time," he says. "I enjoy it." ●