

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Bert L. Long, Jr.** ***Looking for the Right Time***

Deborah Colton Gallery is pleased to present *Looking for the Right Time*, a solo exhibition of the works of Bert L. Long, Jr. (1940-2013), one of the most talented, versatile, and prolific artists ever to hail from the state of Texas. With his paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints, and photographs, he sought above all else to communicate with the viewer. As Bert once put it, "I paint in order to help people understand their ills so that they might cure them." The exhibition opens with a public reception on Saturday, November 19, from 6:00 to 8:00 pm. The exhibition will be on view through January 28, 2017.

Born and raised in the city's Fifth Ward, Bert's biography is a story of gumption, ingenuity, and stubborn perseverance. He first developed a successful career as an executive chef in the kitchens of major hotels in Las Vegas, Chicago, and Houston and, for a few years, at his own gourmet eatery in Klamath Falls, Oregon. After he picked up the paintbrush in 1975 he rarely put it down, becoming consumed by the spirit of art and devoting himself to full-time art making by the end of the decade. After a few years of driving his canvases (and his family) to art shows in malls and parking lots across the American West, he broke through in 1979 with a solo show at the O'Kane Gallery at the University of Houston's downtown campus.

Throughout the '80s, Long's paintings became larger and more elaborate, and eventually it became difficult to tell if they were decorated paintings or painted sculptures. He placed many of them in heavy Hydrostone frames of his own making, embedded with found materials such as mirror shards, empty paint tubes, bones, glass eyes, even shellacked fish heads. Often, they were self-referential works dealing with the struggles faced by the working artist.

In April 1990, the American Academy in Rome announced that he was among the twenty-five winners of the Prix de Rome. During this prestigious yearlong residency, he was celebrated at home as the Art League of Houston's "Texas Artist of the Year" and just after his return, he displayed the results of his Italian sojourn in an expansive solo show at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

The new millennium inspired an explosion of artistic activity including a city-sponsored "Spark" park at the E.O. Smith Education Center and "Field of Vision," a site-specific work of fifty painted concrete eyes on fifty pedestals, dedicated at its original site on Lyons Avenue in the Fifth Ward in 2000, and later relocated to the Project Row Houses campus.

By now, Long had become acknowledged and cherished as one of Houston's true master artists. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston celebrated his career with a retrospective in 2006, and a year later, Long was commissioned by the Houston Arts Alliance to produce a 30-foot mural for the Looscan Public Library. Long's friend John Guess produced a biography film about him, and Mayor Bill White declared July 6, 2009, "Bert L. Long, Jr. Day" in Houston.

It's been close to three years since Bert Long's passing, and his departure leaves a gap in Houston's art scene that can never be filled. We still have his art, however, and a newly-published tribute book by his friend, the esteemed art critic Thomas McEvilley. Deborah Colton Gallery celebrates both with this exhibition.

Deborah Colton Gallery is founded on being an innovative showcase for ongoing presentation and promotion of strong historical and visionary contemporary artists worldwide, whose diverse practices include painting, works on paper, sculpture, video, photography, performance, and conceptual future media installations. The gallery aspires to provide a forum through connecting Texas, national, and international artists to make positive change.