

naplesnews.com | Thursday, October 14, 2010 | NAPLES DAILY NEWS | SECTION D

Review

Sculptor's found objects invigorate his show

The story of found art objects, invented by modern master Marcel Duchamp in the early 20th century, receives strong contemporary expression in the work of John Carroll Long of Naples. A former syndicated cartoonist for the Chicago Tribune and Detroit News, Long is serious about his work. But he also combines his knowledge of many art techniques with a personal sense of humor that appeals to adults as well as children.



Donald Miller

Long's bright and unusual constructions and wall assemblages are on view at UP Art and Design Gallery, Downtown. The gallery shares space with the firm of distinguished Naples architect Andrea Clark Brown, the artist's wife, agent and gallery director. Long, a Michigan native and a master of fine arts graduate of the Detroit College of Creative Studies, worked more than 50 years in the Ann Arbor area.

On vacation here, he met Brown on the beach. They will be married two years in November. Long has lived here 2½ years.

If you go 'Bold Moves 1'

What: A multimedia art by John Carroll Long

Where: UP Art and Design Gallery,
340 Eighth St. S., Naples

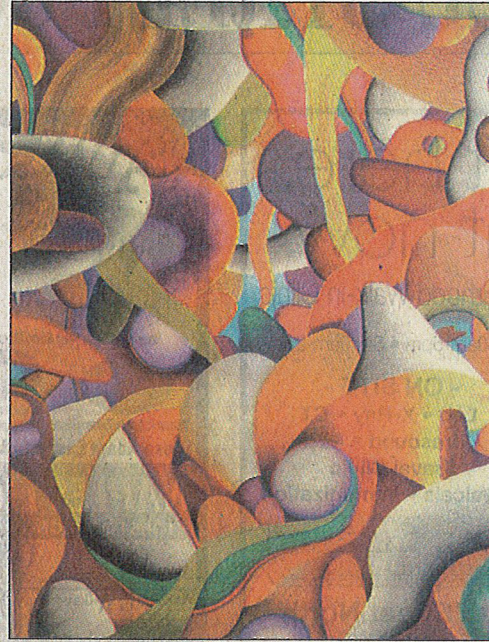
When: Business hours, including Sunday,
through Nov. 19

Admission: Free

Contact: (239) 641-3898 or UpArtandDesign@yahoo.com

Long's show, "Bold Moves 1," presents more than 70 artworks in an artistic catharsis that has taken him from two-dimensional painting and drawing to three-dimensional sculpture. "I am constantly on the lookout for materials," he said. "I gather and mix my pieces together from what I find in junkyards, antiques shops and the many possibilities in between, even shells from the beach."

He approaches his subject of the moment from many intellectual viewpoints: art history, politics, life's conundrums or visual whimsy.



"Canyons" pastel by John Carroll Long

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GET OUT PLAN YOUR DAY

TODAY: Support breast cancer awareness and get 10 percent off all purchases along with pink champagne and cupcakes at Island Trends from 3 to 5 p.m. at 938 N. Collier Blvd., Marco Island and 6 to 8 p.m. at 850 Fifth Ave. S., Naples.

FRIDAY: Get what you need and more during the 50 percent off sale at the Salvation Army, 2313 Davis Blvd., Naples. This is also a good place to get things for your Halloween costumes. If you can't get there today it is still happening on Saturday.

Long »From 1D

Sometimes there is a cartoonist's twist or an artist's way of bringing rich color combinations to the viewer's eye.

"Looking In" depicts a female figure staring into an old frame. In it Long combined all of his older subjects as a way of saying goodbye to his artistic past.

"The only way to eliminate my limitations was to use all of the tricks in my bag. I paid my dues. Now I was trying to make the piece all it can be by moving on to the power of three-dimensions," he said.

Long's found objects often suggest to him not only what he thinks they should be as an art subject but also how that should be expressed. "Sometimes this combination may need something in addition," he said, "and I often dip into my background of painting skills to complete the composition."

Or he uses his writing skills. In "Anna's Gate," a 10-by-5 foot-wide weathered trellis combined with an angel, dried vines and a collapsed aqua lawn chair, is accompanied by Long's partially written short story. It is about a Mexican-American married couple's life-long love during which they give each other humble gifts, as in found objects.

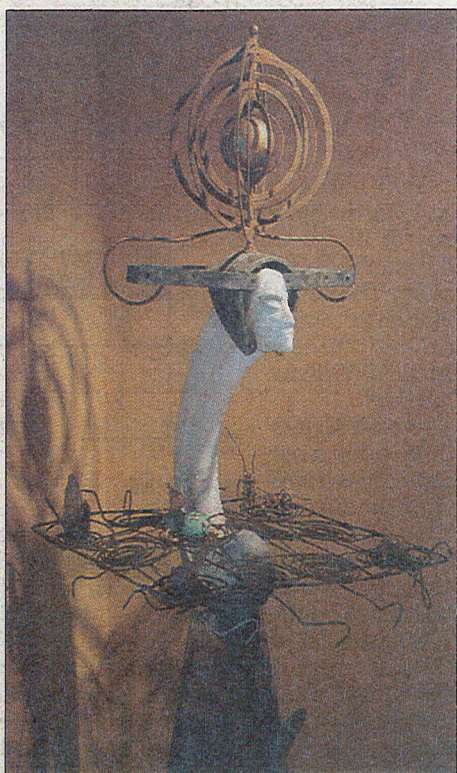
Near this assemblage on a white wall is "Andrea," Long's brown-toned shrine-like appreciation of his wife. An iconic female figure stands fetish-like inside a wooden frame of an antique clock. Attached below is a clutch of roots, indicating symbolic dedication.

Long has produced an extensive art series about horses. "Getalong," a standing metal construction, suggests to the artist a weathered and virtually forgotten outdoor road sign. On the outward side he has mounted a blanket of small multi-colored plastic cowboys and Indians perpendicular to the surface.

"Don't you often wonder what is on the other side of those road signs?" he asks. The horse's other side reveals, like an X-ray, its heart and brain. Adding the cowboys and Indians to the front surface is one of Long's most inspired ideas.

He often makes a transition from adult themes to ones for children through stylized animals. A wooden squirrel contemplates a column of varied nuts arranged on top of each other like a vertical ruler. "I see magic in this piece," he said, "a blending of folk art, modern art and serious art."

In another composite work, a giant bee, carefully finished in wood, pauses below a rusty-colored honeycomb made of corrugated paper. Long's animals show much imagination, ranging from a welded metal floor screen of African animals cut from painted sheet-metal to works on paper,



"Fabric of the Universe,"
by John Carroll Long

including a colorful collection of drawings. Here, wry humor abounds in such titles as "Chameleons Discussing Color" and "If Mickey (Mouse) Met Keith Haring." Like Disney, Haring (1958-90) had his collection of images, including "Barking Dog" and "Radiant Baby." Also available is Long's large and fine collection of colorful and witty note cards produced on the computer.

Long calls a tabletop of small sculptures "The Heart Races," inspired by transportation through the ages, in which mythical females in sailing ships and other conveyances appear to compete on wheels toward their hearts' desire, be it man or god. Part of the amusement is noting how these particular found objects inspired Long. More fun comes from deducing the implied classical metaphors in the dash of love.

This is a large exhibition of more than 70 works in five small but immaculate hallways and rooms. The best pieces are uniquely worked out while some simpler ones, such as stacked chairs, appear to be works in progress.

But the overall impression is of an artist with teeming imagination and technical skills having the time of his life being creative.

Art and architecture critic Donald Miller lives in Naples. Miller88@embarqmail.com.