

## JOHN CARROLL LONG: TIME MAKER

By Andrea Clark Brown

From John Carroll Long's vast repertoire of Mixed Media sculptures emerges a notable collection of sophisticated assemblages that are paradoxically more human natured than most humans. Long is a seasoned observer of human nature. He has an unfettered ability to capture life-giving essences from each of his found objects. By merging and distilling these essences into entirely believable three-dimensional anima, his narratives-made-physical exude and reveal subconscious human traits found mostly in our dreams. These chimeras appear to be transformed into the visceral and real by his unique hand.

What Long so often reveals, through his melding of otherwise inanimate objects with anthropomorphic elements, is the potential of his enlivened objects to jettison toward an ineffable future that has been within them all along and merely awaits the moment to go forward.

Long's futuristic vision is illustrated through his oft-repeated use of wheels, tricycles, unicycles, rotors, tanks and other forms of conveyance including birds and a variety of animals. Immanent in these iconic vehicular modes is their potential to "depart," to move forward, to take one to another (better, egalitarian, peaceful) place in the future. The artist's view is forwardly aimed, to a more intelligent reality that should be, could be, and can exist, but we are just not there yet.

Long wonders if we were offered the chance to travel through time and take one item with us, what would it be? And he offers his answer as he proposes that many would take their first vehicle, the tricycle or bicycle. For him, these are the elements that introduce every child to the opportunity to increase their range. This experience is one over which a child takes control, expanding the size of their world. The tricycle or bicycle is the first vehicle of empowerment and self-propulsion into a broad unexplored territory. Thus in Long's artwork, the wheel is a sign of forward movement and reach, defying former static limitations.

Birds are found to rest on many of Long's vehicles. These birds are placed and act as guardians to the imagined child's first ventures into an unknown frontier. They co-pilot the journey and are witness to it.

On many occasions Long overtly situates the female figure or female head amidst, within or upon his vehicles such that she is totally united with the transport and appears to be steering it with her silent intuitions, creativity and imagination. The female's mere presence as a source and initiator transforms and undoubtedly elevates her existence from the merely conventionally perceived object of desire (sexually) to an unchallenged and stable visionary with the mission of bringing the

world along with her to a better place. This nearly androgynous yet clearly sensuous prescient figure skillfully launches the sculptures' narratives into realms of physics, evolutionary science and spirituality as well as critiques of war, prejudice and inequality.

There is poignancy and regret for worldly errors exposed in much of John Carroll Long's sculptural works. His consistent presentation of visual and formal narratives subtly or overtly offer editorial comment and critique over past, current or seemingly inevitable future breaches of common sense. In studying the ways of Man, Long intentionally exposes his view of the unfortunate and plentiful foibles of humankind.

Such is the case when the artist crosses a line into a speculative remodeling of the story of Adam and Eve. Numerous artworks in Long's collection subtly pose the question of what would the world be like if Eve had been conceived as an equal. Could she have walked side by side with Adam as an unbridled and self-aware persona, choosing her role rather than merely accepting it?

His critical narratives aside, what is regularly summoned by John Carroll Long's intelligent and sentient assemblages is also beauty, promise, celebration and wonder. Deep though this artist's messages may be, there is also evoked a kind of childlike simplicity that resonates in a down-to-earth, "I get it" manner. What resounds here is that Long's breadth of subject matter is both universal and personal. His artistic language is accessible to the man on the street as well as the art savvy, both of whom see artifacts of their own lives skillfully blended and captured in the artwork's parts and pieces. Long's audience relates to his work and in many cases believes, or wants to believe, in the illusive destination that is offered through his sculpture's futuristic guidance.

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