



For his first solo exhibition in Los Angeles since his acclaimed four decade retrospective at the USC Fisher Museum of Art in 2019, Praz-Delavallade is pleased to present *Deep Cuts*, an exhibition of monumental new oil paintings, wooden and pigmented polystyrene wall-reliefs and cast bronze and stainless steel sculptures by the Venice legend Charles Arnoldi.

“This is an artist whose best is yet to come, who is still experimental and still willing to risk” — Frank Gehry

Charles Arnoldi’s fascination with wood and sculpting raw materials began in the early 1970’s when he would gather truckloads of branches from large ranches in Santa Barbara to build his first Stick Paintings, three-dimensional wall works forming sculptural line drawings in positive space to challenge the notion of what a painting could be from a material and spatial perspective. Those works, which were featured in the historic Documenta V exhibition, curated by Harald Szeemann, led Arnoldi into other experiments with material and perspective. A woodcutter on one of the ranches, who helped Arnoldi gather sticks, turned him on to the idea of using a chainsaw in his practice.

At the time, Arnoldi was making linear abstract paintings that mimicked the forms of the branches he was collecting. The Ohio-born artist who had taken a space in the old Venice tram depot, kept a phone near his work area, and if a call came in he would typically start painting directly on the princess phone he’d attached to the wall. “One day I was looking at these paintings,

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then I looked down at the phone, which I'd been painting the same way," recalls Arnoldi. "I realized here's a three-dimensional form which I'm causing to collapse and flatten because of the brushstrokes."

Arnoldi didn't know how to work a chainsaw at the time, but he got a few slabs of hardwood and attempted to create these new three-dimensional paintings in negative space. Though his first Chainsaw Paintings were too heavy, and too decadent, the scrappy Arnoldi quickly found a formal solution in stacked laminate plywood, which he glued together then cut and painted into volumetric abstractions that collapsed space and gesture into multidimensional planes.

"For me, it's all intuitive. I get an idea and just do it," says Arnoldi, who followed his intuition with the work into experiments with bronze, monoprints, and even cast glass. Then he put down the tool for nearly a quarter century. In the past five years, however, Arnoldi has expanded the formal language, scale, and mark-making of his Chainsaw Paintings and during the pandemic he began carving new architectonic forms—many inspired by those in his Machu Picchu paintings—utilizing pigment and pargeting on polystyrene, composite woods painted with copper and iron oxide oils, antique silver washes, and expressionistic splashes of acrylic. His new "Lumber Jack" wall reliefs made from compositions of sugar pine expand the investigations of his Stick Paintings. These works—and some bold new oil abstractions on canvas and linen—are the indefatigable Arnoldi at his best: innovating spatial concepts that seem to defy gravity and creating intuitive painting strategies with a new urgency and intensity that rivals any high point in his storied five-decade career.

"Normally, I wouldn't leave things so loose," says Arnoldi. "But I like the raw energy."

CHARLES ARNOLDI

Born in 1946 in Dayton, Ohio, Arnoldi studied at the Chouinard Art Institute and was awarded the LACMA Young Talent Award in 1969 and has long been considered "The Kid" of the Cool School. His work has been the subject of solo shows at Karma International, James Corcoran Gallery, Rico Mizuno Gallery, Fred Hoffman Fine Art, The Arts Club of Chicago, The Frederick R. Weisman Museum of Art (Malibu), California State University, Long Beach, USC Fisher Museum of Art, and Busan Metropolitan Art Museum. His work was included in the 1981 Whitney Biennial and is in the collections of many major museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), the Museum of Modern Art (New York), The Whitney Museum of American Art (New York), Guggenheim Museum (Bilbao), The National Gallery of Art (Washington D.C.), the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Hammer Museum (Los Angeles), The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, and the Norton Simon Museum (Pasadena). Last year, Arnoldi joined the Celine Art Project with the acquisition of his monumental wood sculpture,

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Fork, for the Celine store on Avenue Montaigne in Paris and Alexander McQueen incorporated his work into various looks for its Spring/Summer 2023 collection.