

Charles Long

Askesis

March 26 – April 23, 2022

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery Project Room

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is pleased to announce an installation featuring nine new bronze sculptures by Charles Long. Entitled *Askesis*, the series marks Long's 14th exhibition with the gallery. This particular exhibition also inaugurates the Project Room for the Los Angeles Gallery. LA based composer and musician Bryan Senti created the score with audio by Phana Phang.

In ancient Greece, *Askesis* was the exercise of rigorous self-directed challenge. It was also a concept central to the late writings of Michel Foucault devoted to readings of ancient philosophy. Those writings are understood to be less about developing a new knowledge of ancient ideas and more about allowing oneself to be transformed by the very practice of reading, thinking, and writing.

Long's studio practice is distinguished by its unceasing proliferation of diverse sculptural objects. Each iteration has been the consequence of a particular phase of study, exploration, and material engagement. The works in this new series are not ends, answers or conclusions of this process, but rather they are curious husks, cast-offs from Long's rolling *askesis*.

The bronze sculptures were made using a modified version of the "lost wax" technique, a process of casting bronze that has been in use for over 5,000 years. While the process of birthing these new works was detailed and drawn out, the initial sculpting and working in clay happened in momentary stabs and in a flight of creative flow. Figures, shields, mantles, temples, and mounds were created extemporaneously, then completed at a foundry where the procedural steps of building molds, waxes, ceramic shells and castings had to follow standard artisanal practice.

After casting, those fresh clay forms returned to the studio, but now in metal. Long found further inspiration in the colorful iridescent traces left on the bronze surfaces during the post-casting finishing work. These transient "heat patinas" as fugitive as rainbows, disappear with the slightest touch after the work cools. Long photographed and made studies to replicate those iridescent colors, then transformed them in scale and pattern back onto the surface through mists of permanent transparent pigments.

Long's preparation for this show included the study of philosophy new to him, recent cosmologies and ancient myths, daily meditation experiments, trip reports from a collection of famed and amateur psychonauts, as well as the artist's own explorations of consciousness through psychedelic journeys. In addition, one component most valuable for the artist's deep dive has been the limitless flood of music which accompanies the solitude of studio work. One of the books that inspired these new works was E.M. Cioran's 1937 book *Tears and Saints*, in which the Romanian philosopher declares "Music is the soundtrack of *askesis*."

Long has stated that "While the (new works) are perhaps byproducts of one individual's *askesis*, they more naturally belong to the myriad artifacts of all exploratory work that pool into the collective work of *askesis*."

Born in 1958 in Long Branch, New Jersey, Long currently lives and works in California. In 1981, he received a BFA from Philadelphia College of Art while also participating in the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program that year, and later earned an MFA from Yale University in New Haven in 1988. He currently teaches as a professor in the Art Department at the University of California, Riverside.

Throughout the past two decades, Long's work has been the subject of major exhibitions worldwide, most recently *Made in L.A.* at the Hammer Museum in 2018, curated by Anne Ellegood and Erin Christovale. His most important solo presentations include *CATALIN* at The Contemporary Austin in Texas (2014), *Fountainhead*, a public commission in Dallas, Texas organized by the Nasher Sculpture Center (2013), *Pet Sounds* at Madison Square Park in New York City (2012), *Seeing Green*, a solo project in conjunction with *All of this and nothing: The 6th Hammer Invitational* at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles (2011), *100 Pounds of Clay* at The Orange County Museum of Art in California (2010), and *More Like a Dream Than a Scheme* at David Winton Bell Gallery at Brown University in Rhode Island, which traveled to SITE Santa Fe in New Mexico (2005).

His work was featured twice in the Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York (1997, 2008), and has also been included in notable group exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, SculptureCenter in New York, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Magasin 3 Stockholm Konsthall in Sweden, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C., Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, Mori Art Museum in Tokyo, among other museums.

His work is represented in important public and private collections worldwide, including those of The Museum of Modern Art in New York, Philadelphia Museum of Art, St. Louis Art Museum in Missouri, Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Magasin 3 Stockholm Konsthall, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark, and the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University in Cambridge, MA. Additionally, in 4th grade Long won the prize for best poster at the school book fair. This prize allowed him to acquire all the books he wanted to read.