

# Pepperdine University

## News and Events

### PRESS RELEASES

#### Charles Arnoldi Exhibit Comes Exclusively to Pepperdine

The Frederick R. Weisman Museum of Art at Pepperdine University will present *Charles Arnoldi: Wood* beginning Saturday, Jan. 12, through Sunday, March 30. Featuring over 25 large-scale works in wood from the 1970s and 1980s, this exhibition is exclusive to Pepperdine and is the first major museum survey devoted to this seminal Los Angeles artist. Members of the public are invited to meet the artist at a reception on Saturday, Jan. 12, from 6 to 8 p.m. Families and children are also invited to attend a special family art day full of free activities on Saturday, Jan. 19, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

"Charles Arnoldi rose to prominence during the 1970s and 1980s, a period that corresponds to the growth of Los Angeles as a major center for contemporary art," says Michael Zakian, director of the Frederick R. Weisman Museum of Art. "His works in wood from the period--especially the Stick and Chainsaw paintings--helped define the L.A. style. I am excited to re-examine this historic body of work and present it to the public."



Born in 1946 to a blue-collar family in Dayton, Ohio, Arnoldi came to California soon after high school. Originally a painter, he began to experiment with wood in the early 1970s. At first he lashed together thin strips of wood to create open lattice structures. Resembling Polynesian navigation maps, these primitive constructions hung on the wall as an alternative to traditional painting.

After noticing the dramatic silhouettes of charred trees left by a local wildfire, he began to use branches in his art. He admired branches for their "distinct line quality." "They feel hand-drawn," he said. "They have a certain gestural quality, a naturalness." Arnoldi began using them in constructions, stripping them, painting them, and exploiting their natural curves and lines. These stick paintings vary in mood from the open and lyric to the dense and weighty, and make explicit reference to nature, an important aspect of life in California.

He embarked on another new direction in the early 1980s when he began using a chainsaw to cut, carve, and "draw" into large sheets of plywood. These chainsaw paintings have lines that are ripped, torn, and appear intensely expressive. They reflect both the violence inherent in American culture as well as in Arnoldi's own childhood, growing up as he did in an alcoholic family in the decaying Rust Belt.

This exhibition is accompanied by a catalog with a critical essay that examines Arnoldi's work not simply as a California phenomenon but also as part of a national trend in the 1970s towards Postminimalism, a style where artists experimented with non-art materials in highly subjective and eccentric compositions. It also looks at his use of wood and techniques of house construction as a comment on America's waning role as a leading manufacturing nation at the end of the 20th century.

*Charles Arnoldi: Wood* includes 25 large-scale works from 1970 to 1990. Lenders to the exhibition include close friends of the artist such as architect Frank Gehry; actor and artist Dennis Hopper; and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger; as well as California collectors Dallas Price; Don Fisher and The Gap, Inc.; and the Long Beach Museum of Art.

The Weisman Museum, located on the Pepperdine campus in Malibu, is open Tuesday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and is closed on Mondays and major holidays. There is no admission charge. For more information on the exhibit and upcoming exhibits, please visit the Frederick R. Weisman Museum of Art Web site.

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