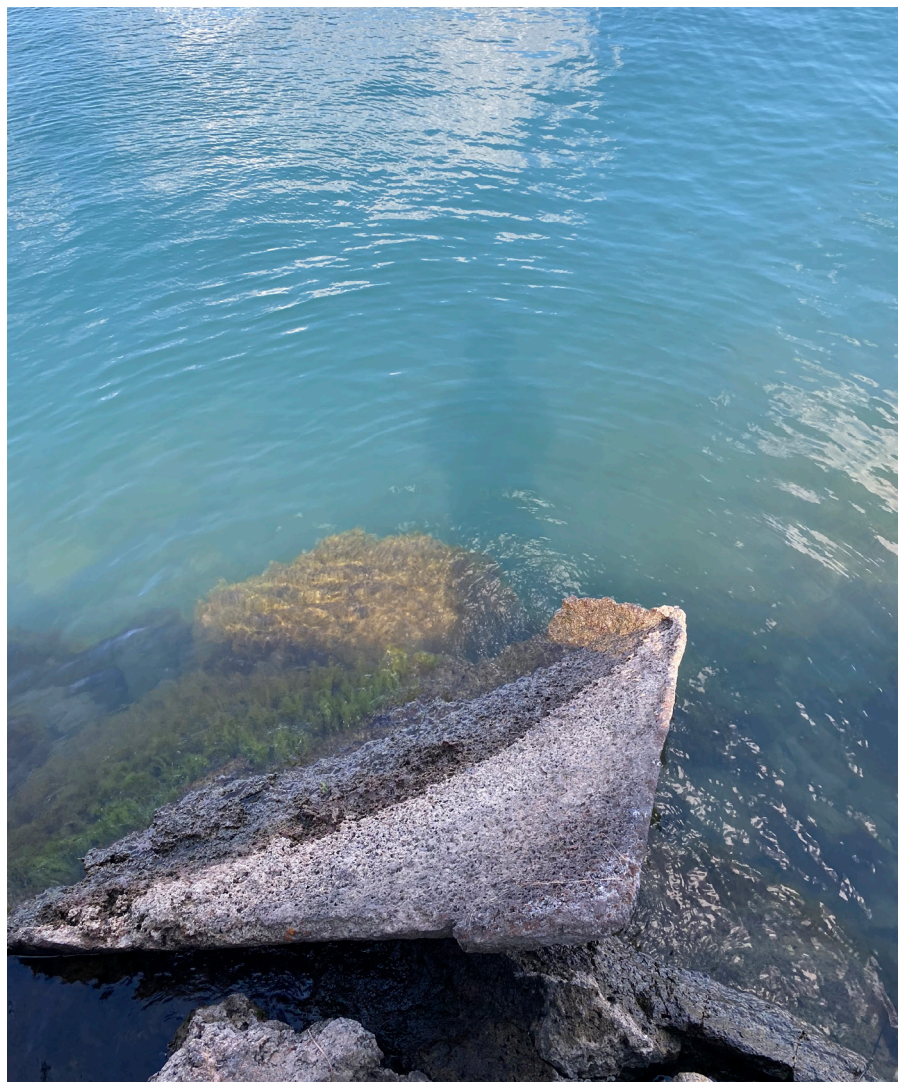


# **NORMAN W. LONG**

## **CALUMET IN DUB**

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## **DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES**

**November 10, 2022–February 17, 2023**

# Calumet in Dub

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*Calumet in Dub* focuses on Norman Long's research-based work delving into the ecology and soundscapes of the Southeast Side of Chicago along the Calumet and Little Calumet River area. Inspired initially by a story that aired on the BBC about the relationship of the Little Calumet River to the history of the Great Migration, Long has investigated how housing, labor, and environmental activism has coalesced in this location and how historic figure, Hazel Johnson considered the "mother of the environmental justice movement," diligently brought these issues to light. Other inspiration was found in Annea Lockwood's work *A Soundmap of the Hudson River*, and production techniques found in the works of Dub producers King Tubby and Lee "Scratch" Perry.

This exhibition consists of an 8-channel speaker installation in the main gallery, accompanied by two rooms that shed light on the research that has informed the work. The population demographics, ecological information, and pollution statistics about the Calumet region provide the raw data that Long uses in this body of work and his experimental sound art practice translates visual and text-based information into sonic experiences.

Long's experimental sound practice uses sound from direct field recordings, sonified research data, and experimentation with various inputs and outputs. This exhibition includes sounds from historically significant locations of the Great Migration in the Calumet area, such as wind in the trees or bubbling water of a stream. Long gathers other sounds by processing data through inputs such as the TwoTone webapp (which allows him to assign a particular note or pitch to the numerical data in order to turn it into sound) or the PlantWave device (that reads plant biorhythms through electrodes connected to a plant). Once sounds have been collected, effects are used to manipulate sound and further creative methods of editing, splicing, and moving sound through multiple audio channels are used to transport the listener to different locations via the soundscapes he creates.

# NORMAN W. LONG

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**Norman W. Long's** practice has been influenced by the emergent practices and thinking of 1970s artists, musicians, critics, and designers regarding landscape and sound—specifically Rosalind Krauss' article *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*, and the development of acoustic ecology by R. Murray Schafer. The sounds found in Long's work have their inspirational roots in the Black music of house, techno, so-called 'free jazz,' Great Black Music, Herbie Hancock's Mwandishi, Pauline Oliveros, King Tubby, and Dub, as well as the sounds of artists outside and in between genres. Long's improvisational and compositional strategies are inspired by Samuel R. Delany's writing in his collection of fictional stories entitled *Atlantis: Three Tales* and in his science fiction novel *Dhalgren* (in particular, the palimpsest text of Chapter VII, *The Anathemata: a plague journal*), and the 2011 survey of Mark Bradford's work at the Museum of Contemporary Art: Chicago (featuring Bradford's process of collecting and collaging materials sourced from his community in Los Angeles).

The processes involved in Long's practice lie within the areas of field recording, sound walks, electro-acoustic composition, musical improvisation, mapping, databending, video, and installation. These processes open multiple access points to understanding and experiencing subjects, places, and themes in his work. Long's pieces reflect the culture, ecology, and history of the places he records. It is Long's desire that his practice affirms our existence and offers us a space to consider our relationship to sound via our interiority and the social, as well as to political, economic, historical, and ecological structures.

**Norman Long's** work centers on walking, listening, improvising, performing, teaching, field recording, and exploring memory, place, ecology, and race. Long has performed and exhibited at Yale University's Center for Collaborative Arts & Media in Newhaven, High Zero Festival in Baltimore, as well as the Experimental Sound Studio, Kavi Gupta Gallery, The Renaissance Society, Chicago Humanities Festival, Chicago Cultural Center, and the 2021 Chicago Architecture Biennial all in Chicago. Long has performed and toured with Angel Bat Dawid and the Brothahood, the Ali/Harris/Long/McKenna group, Honey Pot Performance Spectralina, Todd Carter, Xris Espinoza, Carol Genetti, Damon Locks, Jamal Moore, Tatsuya Nakatani, Joe Namy, Cristal Sabbagh, Ami Yamasaki, and Sara Zalek. He has released his compositions on labels such as Hausu Mountain, Reserve Matinee, LINE, and Room40. *Anemoi* is the latest ensemble release with Ishmael Ali, William Harris, and Wills McKenna. His solo album, *BLACK BROWN GRAY GREEN* was released in September 2021 on Hausu Mountain, and *Return and Recovery* is his latest solo release on LINE.

**Twitter:** [@n\\_dub\\_L](https://twitter.com/n_dub_L)

**Instagram:** [@normanwlong](https://www.instagram.com/normanwlong)

**Bandcamp:** <https://normanwlong.bandcamp.com>

**Soundcloud:** <https://soundcloud.com/normanlong>

**Blog:** <http://intothebreaks.blogspot.com>



Norman W. Long, *Van Vlissingen Prairie (Video Album Mix)*, 2017, video still from 60 min. video

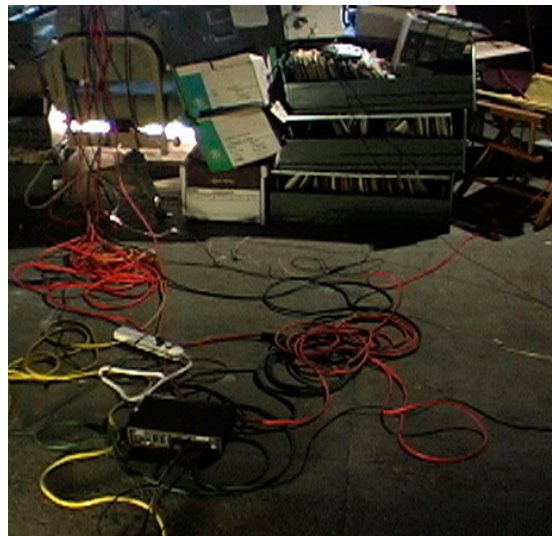
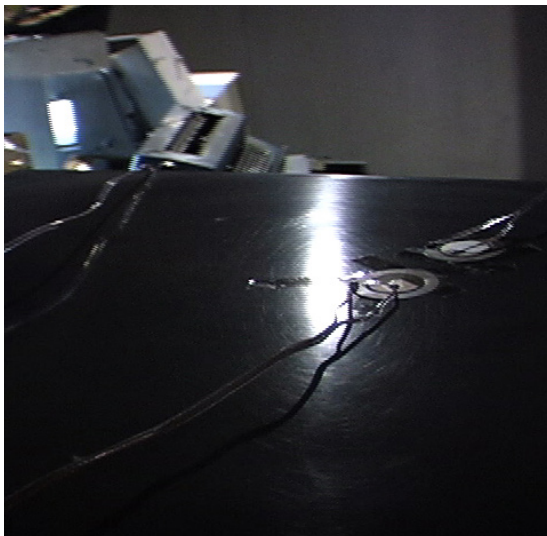
*Van Vlissingen Prairie (Video Album)* is a single channel video installation with projection and speaker placements featuring the sound ecology of Van Vlissingen Prairie also known as Marian R. Byrnes Natural Area within the South Deering community area on the South-Side of Chicago. My interest lies in the progression of the ecological restoration and maintenance of this space. My expectation, as the site is restored (via soil remediation, the creation of walking paths, removal of invasive plant species, and the introduction of native species), is that the soundscape will also change incrementally. In some pieces I mixed field recordings with analog synthesizers weaving in and out of the postindustrial noise coming from the adjacent rail yard, local residences, as well as the local ecology of birds and singing insects. This soundtrack questions the notion of what a Black Community sounds like and what a community is. These videos challenge notions of landscape by bypassing the pastoral and the beautiful.



Norman W. Long, *Van Vlissingen Prairie (Video Album Mix)*, 2017, video still from 60 min. video



Norman W. Long, *Van Vlissingen Prairie (Video Album Mix)*, 2017, video still from 60 min. video



Norman W. Long, *Re:combinant Window*, 2002,  
photo documentation of sound installation

This video is from a 2002 installation at the San Francisco Arts Commission's Grove Street Galleries. I proposed a sound installation where I combined the history of the gallery with the present. The piece was somewhat like a palimpsest with the stacked furniture, signage, etc. from the Arts Commission Gallery, and sound from a radio scanner that was picking up sounds from the local area.



Norman W. Long, *Neighborhood Listening Garden*, 2019,  
photo documentation of native plant garden sound installation

*Neighborhood Listening Garden* is a two-speaker sound-system and native plant garden installed at the Jeffery Manor Public Library's Reading Garden in South Deering Community Area in Chicago, IL from September 21–October 31, 2019. The South Deering community area is a former steel industrial area located on the southeast side of Chicago and is home to majority Black and Latinx residents. It was the home of Wisconsin Steel Works, originally the Joseph H. Brown Iron and Steel Company, South Works (US Steel), Iroquois Steel and Republic Steel. There are several neighborhoods that make up this community: South Chicago, Jeffery Manor, South Deering, and Slag Valley. The two-speaker outdoor sound system plays a composition made from recordings from analog synthesizers from Norman W. Long's home studio; Elektronmusikstudion EMS in Stockholm, Sweden; as well as Jeffery Manor, Bessemer Park, Calumet Park, Van Vlissingen Prairie, Big Marsh Park.





Norman W. Long, *Neighborhood Listening Garden*, 2019,  
photo documentation of native plant garden sound installation



Norman W. Long, *Neighborhood Listening Garden*, 2019,  
photo documentation of native plant garden sound installation

# INTERVIEW WITH NORMAN LONG

Conducted by Mariana Belaval

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**Mariana Belaval:** How did you come to your current practice? Has sound been a natural manifestation of your exploration, or was it the tool you initially chose?

**Norman Long:** I started working and composing with field recordings in 2000. It wasn't until 2015 that I began incorporating analog/hardware synths into my soundscapes. My practice grew along with my interest in installation art and experimental music from the mid to late 90's.

**MB:** What kind of explorations does working with sound allow, that other mediums don't? And how do we use sound to explore the convergence of memory, place, ecology, and race?

**NL:** Memory, culture, history, ecology, and space have been a constant theme in my practice, and I have found that sound as a time-based medium and as a physical object that takes up space is best suited for my concerns. Layering, echoing, looping, and reversing sounds speaks to how memory and history are synchronic. How memories and histories are layered and can be covered or uncovered.

**MB:** What is the relationship between Dub motifs and techniques, and your research process?

**NL:** There is a really nice quote from Arthur Jafa:

In Chapter 8 (Starship Africa: The Acoustics of Diaspora and of the Postcolony) of Michael E. Veal's book *Dub: Soundscapes and Shattered Songs in Jamaican Reggae* Arthur Jafa states:

"One of the things I'm thinking about is dub music . . . it ends up really speaking about

common experiences because the structure of the music is about things dropping out and coming back in, really reclaiming this whole sense of loss, rupture, and repair that is very common across the experience of black people in the diaspora."

Michael Veal goes on to say:

"The privileging of rupture in dub music comes to symbolize the disruptions in cultural memory and the historical shattering of existential peace, encoded into the cultural nervous system and sublimated into musical sound."

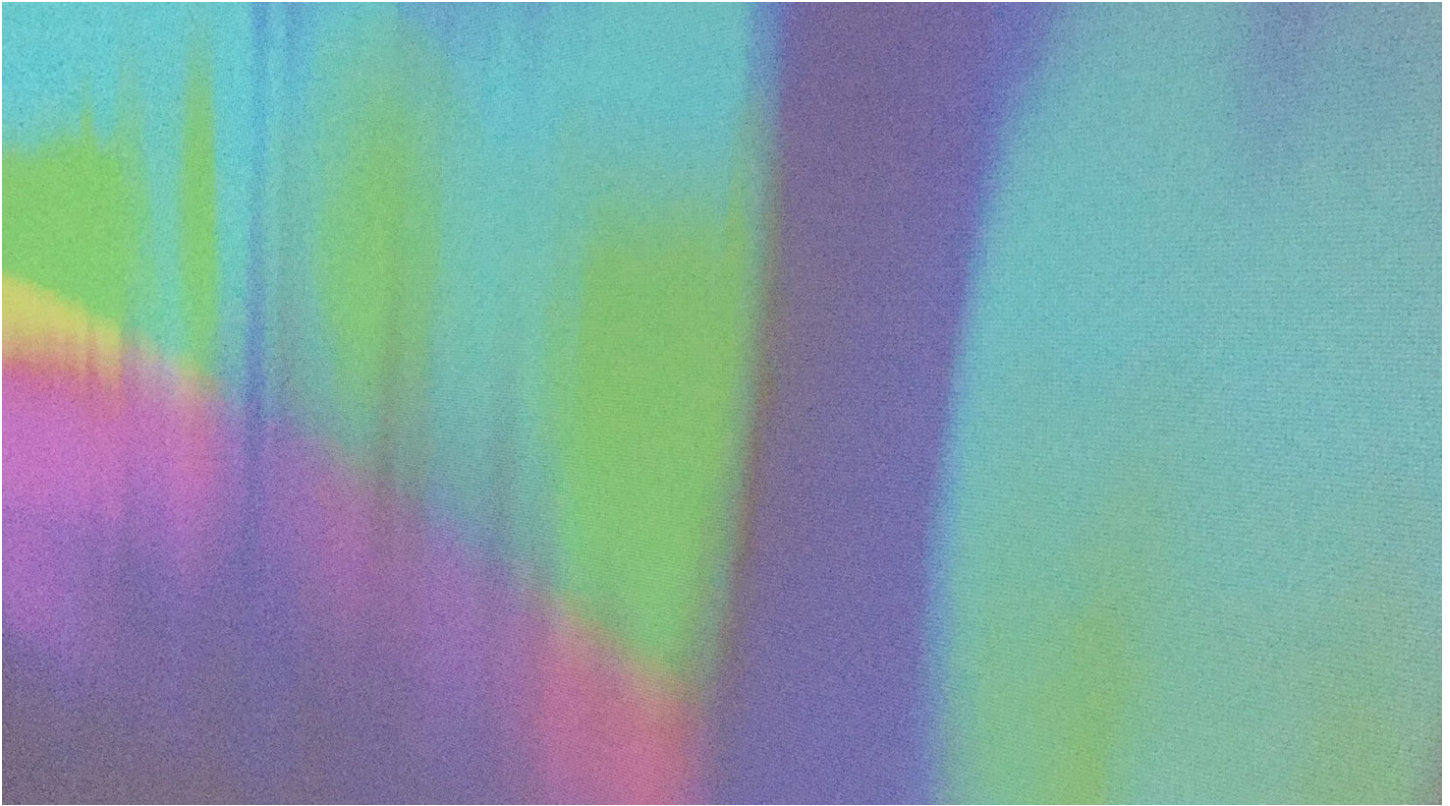
**MB:** *Calumet in Dub* is a research-based project within the Calumet Region, can you speak to how you became interested in working in that area?

**NL:** I have been recording in the area since 2015. Particularly Big Marsh and Marian R. Byrnes Park, both located in the South Deering area where I live. This area is also known as the Calumet Region named after the lake and river. Last year someone posted a link to a BBC feature in the Little Calumet River and its connections to the Underground Railroad and the Great Migration.

**MB:** What are you working on next?

**NL:** I am participating in a duo with John Daniel at the Empty Bottle on December 13, 2022, and a trio with Carol Gennetti and Gwyneth Anderson at Elastic Arts on December 18, 2022.

In 2023 I will be attending a residency at Yucca Valley Material in February, and then I will be working on a new project and installation in South Deering supported by ThreeWalls.



## THE DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

The DEPS Artist Profile Series presented by Columbia College Chicago's Department of Exhibitions, Performance and Student Spaces (DEPS), is a virtual publication on select artists involved with the DEPS Galleries and the Columbia College Chicago community. Our goal with this series is to connect artist and viewer on a deeper level, and to highlight the amazing works and thoughts of our featured artists through interviews, artist biographies, and catalogs of work. Art has always been a way to connect with others, no matter where one may physically be. We hope by presenting the creativity and insights of the people involved in the DEPS Artist Profile

Series that viewers may have one more way to stay in touch with and support the arts community. The DEPS Artist Profile Series is managed by DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Mariana Belaval. Graphic design is managed by DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Gray Beyer. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

**Learn more at:** [colum.edu/deps](http://colum.edu/deps)

**Contact information:** Mark Porter, [mporter@colum.edu](mailto:mporter@colum.edu) / 312.369.6643

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**Glass Curtain Gallery:** 1104 S. Wabash Ave., First Floor, Chicago, IL 60605

**Gallery Hours:** Monday–Wednesday, Friday–Saturday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.; Thursday 9 a.m.–7 p.m.