

HOLLIS TAGGART

Hollis Taggart Announces Representation of the Estate of Trailblazing Modernist Artist Dusti Bongé

Hollis Taggart to Feature Bongé's Work in the Upcoming 2021 Edition of The Armory Show

Gallery Also Announces Forthcoming Exhibition on the Decades Long Friendship Between Bongé and Iconic Gallerist Betty Parsons

"Today let's look at everything as though we have never seen it before." –Dusti Bongé

New York, NY—August 19, 2021—Hollis Taggart announced today the representation of the Dusti Bongé estate, which is comprised of the collections of the Dusti Bongé Art Foundation and Bongé's grandson, Paul Bongé. A trailblazing artist, Bongé (1903-1993) developed a distinctive style that embraced the visual vocabularies of Cubism, Surrealism, and Abstract Expressionism. Based in Biloxi, Mississippi—and recognized as one of the south's first modernist artists—Bongé also developed strong ties to New York's inner art circles and had a long association with iconic gallerist Betty Parsons, with whom she showed for nearly three decades. Despite Bongé's many artistic innovations, she has been conspicuously absent from the mainstream art discourse, within the narratives of art history, and contemporary understanding of the artists that shaped modernist art movements.

With its representation of the Bongé estate, Hollis Taggart is committed to furthering scholarship of the artist's work and bringing well deserved attention to the artist by illuminating the significance of her artistic contributions. This builds on the gallery's prior successes in deepening scholarship on and expanding visibility for female artists such as Audrey Flack, Grace Hartigan, Kay Sage, Marjorie Strider, Idelle Weber, and Michael (Corinne) West. To launch its new collaboration with Bongé's estate, Hollis Taggart will present a selection of works by the artist as part of its exhibition of Abstract Expressionist painters at the upcoming edition of The Armory Show, opening in September 2021. The presentation at the fair will mark the first time that Bongé's works will be on view in New York in approximately 50 years, offering an important opportunity for collectors, scholars, and the public to re-engage with Bongé's vision and work.

The presentation at the Armory Show will then be followed, in fall 2022, with an exhibition at Hollis Taggart's flagship location in Chelsea. That exhibition will explore Bongé's close association with Betty Parsons, illuminating for the first time their long-standing friendship and professional collaborations. Bongé and Parsons first became acquainted in the 1940s when Bongé was a forerunner among the talented stable of groundbreaking first-generation Abstract Expressionist artists that Parsons presented and elevated after acquiring her named gallery. Bongé was the subject of solo exhibitions at Betty Parsons Gallery in 1956, '58, '60, '62 and '75, in addition to her inclusion in many group shows. Bongé and Parsons remained friends until Parsons's death in 1982. The exhibition at Hollis Taggart will include artworks by Bongé and Parsons as well as archival materials that capture their relationship.

“Dusti Bongé is an incredible artist whose works engage with and push the boundaries of major modernist movements. She is among the artists that so greatly deserves further study and understanding. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to work with the Dusti Bongé Art Foundation and Bongé’s grandson to bring greater attention to her adventurous and brilliant work and to amplify her presence within the trajectory of the AbEx movement,” said Hollis Taggart. “In addition to our commitment to presenting her work, we are focused on placing important pieces by Bongé, especially those from the 1950s and 1960s, in major museum collections, so that they can be experienced and researched by a wide range of audiences.”

“The foundation is extremely pleased to be able to embark on this next phase of its mission, and to, once again, feature the art of Dusti Bongé in New York,” stated Kevin Cole, board president of the Dusti Bongé Art Foundation. “The extensive process we completed during the last two years in reaching our selection of Hollis Taggart will certainly bode well for what lies ahead.”

Paul Bongé added, “I am delighted beyond measure to be working with Hollis Taggart to further expand the recognition of my grandmother and her significant contribution to modern art in the 20th century. I know she would be proud and happy that we are embarking on this endeavor, but I can hear her now, ‘Honey, I don’t why you are making such a fuss over me.’”

Today’s news about forthcoming presentations of Bongé’s work in New York comes on the heels of the highly acclaimed retrospective of the artist’s work at the Mississippi Museum of Art in Jackson, which concluded its run there in early July 2021. *Piercing the Inner Wall: The Art of Dusti Bongé* was curated by Bradley Sumrall of the Ogden Museum of Southern Art in New Orleans, where it debuted in 2019. That exhibition coincided with the release of the book, *Dusti Bongé, Art and Life: Biloxi, New Orleans, New York*, which serves as the first comprehensive and extensively illustrated publication on the artist. Author, J. Richard Gruber, Ph.D., director emeritus of the Ogden, examines Bongé’s life and reveals how her practice and artistic vision evolved. Through in-depth research and insights, Gruber explores Bongé’s artistic output from a regional and national perspective within the cultural context of 20th century American art and society. A solo presentation of Bongé’s work will also go on view at the McCormick Gallery in Chicago in November 2021.

“Dusti never sought fame and attention as an artist. Her focus was on continually challenging herself and creating the best art she could in her Biloxi studio. Working and living away from the city, on the Gulf Coast, provided her the space and place to independently pursue her boundless creativity,” said Ligia Römer, executive director of the Dusti Bongé Art Foundation.

More About Dusti Bongé

Born in 1903 in Biloxi, Mississippi, Dusti Bongé (nee Eunice Lyle Swetman) was the youngest of three children in a family that established The Peoples Bank. At age 19, after graduating from Mississippi’s Blue Mountain College, she moved to Chicago to study acting, and in the 1920s, appeared on stage and in silent films in Chicago and New York.

In 1928, she married artist Archie Bongé (1901–1936), a self-proclaimed “Cowboy Painter,” who was schooled at the Art Institute of Chicago (AIC), the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts (PAFA), and the noted Art Students League of New York. It was Archie who encouraged her natural abilities as an artist, after she once drew him a “picture” to make up for an argument. Their son Lyle was born a year later, in 1929, and the family moved to Biloxi in 1934 to afford Archie greater opportunity to focus on his art. Archie built a studio in their backyard. But, in 1936 he succumbed to ALS (Lou Gehrig’s disease), leaving Dusti to fend for herself as a single mother.

While raising Lyle and grieving for Archie, Dusti turned to art, dedicating the next 50 years to her practice. Bongé initially exhibited in New Orleans and Biloxi. In 1939, her work was shown for the first time in New York at the Contemporary Arts Gallery. A few years later, in 1945, she was included in a group show at the Mortimer Brandt Gallery, which led to her meeting Betty Parsons. Bongé received increasing recognition once she joined the roster of the renowned Betty Parsons Gallery. In 1956, Bongé received her first solo exhibition at Parsons’s gallery, placing her in a select group of artists that included Barnett Newman, Jackson Pollock, Robert Rauschenberg, Mark Rothko, Theodoros Stamos, Lee Krasner, Hedda Sterne, and Clyfford Still.

Bongé continued to show with Betty Parsons until 1975, maintaining a strong voice in the New York art scene for more than three decades. Bongé and Parsons also often travelled together and remained close friends until Parsons’s death in 1982. And, although Dusti continuously traveled between the two cultural worlds of New York and the Gulf Coast throughout her career, her home base would always remain Biloxi, where she could pursue her work independently, and where she continued to produce new work until two years before her death in 1993.

About the Dusti Bongé Art Foundation

The Dusti Bongé Art Foundation (DBAF) was established in 1995 in Biloxi, Mississippi, a few years after the passing of Dusti Bongé. Her family and a group of friends formed the organization to honor and promote her extensive and impressive oeuvre. The DBAF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public awareness of, and access to, the beautiful collection of works Bongé left as her legacy.

Since its inception, the Foundation has been engaged in cataloguing, conserving, and exhibiting Bongé’s art. It has placed several significant works with major regional institutions and maintains an extensive collection of her work in a variety of mediums.

About Hollis Taggart

Founded in 1979, Hollis Taggart presents significant works of American art, showcasing the trajectory of American art movements from the Hudson River School to American Modernism and the Post-War and Contemporary eras. Its program is characterized by a deep commitment to scholarship and bringing to the fore the work of under-recognized artists. The gallery has sponsored several catalogue raisonné projects, most recently for the American Surrealist artist Kay Sage, and

has been instrumental in advancing knowledge of such artists as Alfred Maurer, Arthur B. Carles, and more recently, Theodoros Stamos, Marjorie Strider, and Michael (Corinne) West. In the summer of 2019, the gallery announced the formal expansion of its primary market business and focus on the presentation of contemporary work. It continues to expand its roster of contemporary artists, focusing on emerging and mid-career talents. With more than 40 years of experience, Hollis Taggart is widely recognized by collectors and curators for its leadership, expertise, and openness, on matters of art history, and market trends and opportunities. The gallery's flagship location is in Chelsea, and it also operates a space in Southport, Connecticut.

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