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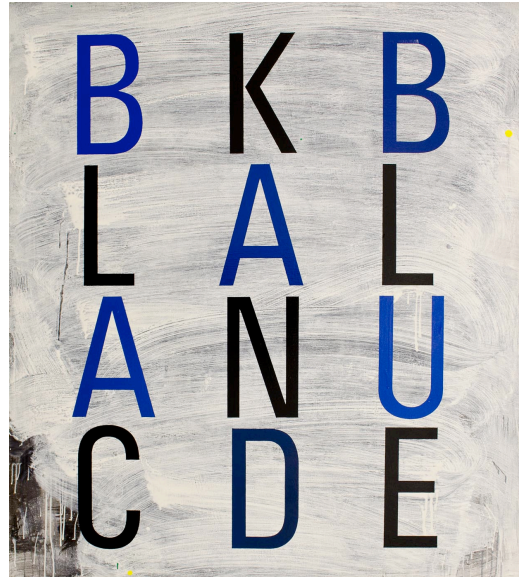
For Immediate Release:

ENN ERISALU: *MEMORY MELODY*

Opening reception: Thursday, Feb 1, 5 – 8 p.m.

Exhibition dates: Feb 1 – 27, 2017

**Gallery Jones** is pleased to present *Memory Melody*, a solo exhibition of work by the late Canadian modernist painter **Enn Erisalu** (1943–2005). The exhibition highlights selected text-based works produced in the late 1980's–early 2000's, including some newly uncovered works on paper, that investigate the cognitive connections between linguistic and pictorial perception in the art viewer. Erisalu's large mixed-media works present us with carefully selected numbers, letters and symbols arranged on a painted canvas that beg to be considered and, at times, unscrambled through a process of linguistic synthesis.



*Black and Blue*, mixed media on canvas,  
68 x 60 inches.

Enn Erisalu was a dedicated painter who worked prolifically in Vancouver since the 1960's. At the age of eight, he immigrated to Canada from Estonia with his family. Erisalu was gifted in the visual arts and pursued art studies as a young adult. He attended the Art Center College of Design near Los Angeles from 1963–67. He settled in Vancouver in 1969, where he painted abstractions for two decades before beginning to work with text.

In *Memory Melody* we see the Conceptualist tendencies of Erisalu's aesthetic emerge forcefully as he approaches optics, word-play, and the construction of meaning. In *Abstract Art* (1990), the brain can quickly identify the words of the title in the letters "TCARTSBA," exposing the cumulative as well as chronological aspects of reading. The artist's use of colour, repetition and placement of figures immerses the viewer in a game of cognition, while provoking larger questions around our relationship to art (is it necessary to "understand" the work?).

But Erisalu's work is not purely conceptual: the formal distinction of each individual painting is evident. The numbers and letters that demand attention (in a font of the artist's creation) have a certain elegance of their own—the gentle curve of the 6 in *six* (1991), or the pleasing spatial balance of letters in *Black and Blue* (1990). But underneath these hovering symbols, monochromatic washes of colour are interspersed with drippings and textures that demonstrate the artist's intuitive hand. Each hand-worked surface refocuses attention from the concept back to the art object, and then allows the viewer to hang in the balance between the two.

Erisalu's work and legacy as an artist been examined by several recognized art critics and historians including Robin Laurence, Chris Brayshaw, and Patrik Andersson. They cite his aesthetic influences in Cubism, Constructivism, Minimalism and Conceptualism among others. There is a collective regret in the early death of the gifted painter, whose work was often overlooked at the time of its making in Vancouver (though well-exhibited and collected in Toronto, Seattle, New York and in Europe). Only in hindsight will Erisalu's work and influence (in the words of Patrik Andersson) "take its rightful place" in the history of Vancouver art.