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(Denver) RULE Gallery is deeply saddened to announce the passing of artist Joe Clower on Saturday, February 4, at the age of 86.

Throughout his 60-years as an artist, Clower examined the wonder and absurdity of the 20th-century world in which he grew up. His paintings, sculptures, and furniture brought to life both the optimism and displacement he felt through humanity's many advancements and tribulations. Born in Norfolk, VA in 1937, Clower spent several years in the US Army before attending college. He received his BFA in 1963 from the University of Georgia, Athens, and his MFA from the University of Colorado, Boulder in 1967. After graduation, Clower taught for a year at the Art Institute of Chicago, where he met and took inspiration from members of the Chicago Imagists, including Christina Amber, Phillip Hansen, and Ray Yoshida. These associations made a profound and lasting impact on Clower's aesthetic for the remainder of his career.

Subsequently, Clower returned to Colorado, teaching at both CU Denver and Boulder. He was active alongside Boulder's key contemporary artist groups, including the Armory Group and the Criss-Cross artist cooperative, making numerous contributions to their exhibitions and print publications. During this time, he achieved significant national recognition when a painting of his was included in the Whitney Biennial of 1975.

Clower next moved to Los Angeles, where he spent the better part of a decade, teaching at the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising, LA; while continuing his art practice. The vast flatness of the concrete urban landscape he found in Southern California further influenced his work and sharpened the sense of an idiosyncratic surreality evoked in his paintings. His work during this era is considered part of the "Comic Book Paradigm" that was taking place in contemporary art at that time.

In addition to the occasional paintings depicting UFOs, Joe Clower was an active participant in 'El Disco,' a collaborative set of artists and pranksters active 1987-present. The group, including Steve Thomsen and Tennyson Woodbridge, produced Polaroids and printed photographs of 'reality-based phenomena, factual and presumed,' typically depicting UFO sightings throughout the West. These humorous and intriguing images have regained a sense of relevancy amid current events.

Clower returned to Denver for good in the early 90's, and began a lengthy relationship with RULE, with the first of many shows with the gallery in 1993. Over the next 30 years, he tirelessly created work, honing his craft and interrogating images in what was now the 21st century. Clower's 2019 solo exhibition 'Paintings' was a survey of works that inaugurated RULE's current location. A selection of his work is currently on view in 'The Unusual Suspects,' where he is paired with Amber Cobb. It will be on view in Denver through March 9, 2024. The exhibition will then travel to the gallery's Marfa location for a Spring showing.

Clower has exhibited his work nationally in New York City, NY; Los Angeles, CA; San Diego, CA; Chicago, IL; Seattle, WA; and throughout Colorado. His museum exhibitions include the Denver Art Museum, MCA/Denver, Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Kansas City Art Institute, Whitney Museum of American Art, Center on Contemporary Art Seattle, The Harwood Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, Alaska State Museum, in addition to numerous University institutions around the country. His work is in the public collection of The Art Institute of Chicago, The Eli and Edythe Broad Collection, the National Gallery of Australia, Warner Brothers Records, and many private collections.

A memorial at the Denver gallery will be planned with his family and friends in the Summer of 2024.