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**ROBERT LONGO: A HISTORY OF THE PRESENT
TO OPEN AT GUILD HALL ON AUGUST 7, 2021**



Robert Longo. ©M. Kunze

July 22, 2021—East Hampton, NY — Guild Hall (158 Main Street, East Hampton) has announced their summer exhibition, **ROBERT LONGO: A HISTORY OF THE PRESENT**, which will open on **Saturday, August 7 and run through October 17**. *A History of the Present* is a celebration of and a critical investigation into the span of American history bookended by Abstract Expressionism and the current moment in which we live. In two adjacent galleries, Longo juxtaposes America's past with its present through 19 monumental, highly labor-intensive charcoal drawings that act as mirrors into history. A documentary film, featuring Longo and other art world luminaries discussing the show, produced by [The Artist Profile Archive](#), will accompany the exhibition.

The exhibition begins with Longo's "Gang of Cosmos" series — exquisitely rendered, highly sensitized black and white translations in charcoal — based on prominent paintings from the American Abstract Expressionist movement. Many of the artists who created the works, upon which these interpretations are made, lived and worked on the East End, making the ubiquity of

the local landscape's presence in the abstractions at once mesmerizing and inevitable. Considered the most advanced American art at the time, Abstract Expressionism was championed for being monumental in scale, romantic in mood, expressive of freedom, and uniquely American in spirit. "These works embody America's willful rise out of the ashes after the world tried to destroy itself during the Second World War," says the artist. Longo's personal fascination with this era is no coincidence: he was born around the beginning of it and bore witness to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, an event which took place as the Abstract Expressionist influence was beginning to wane.

Pictures in the second gallery are from the series, "The Agency of Faith," echoing our current state of affairs, and posing questions about our national and environmental narratives. A massive wave drawing anchors the visual energy of the gallery and serves as a reminder of nature's enigmatic, unrelenting power. Longo's connection to the ocean and surfing on the East End goes back decades and inspired his creation of the classic wave drawing, the largest wave Longo has made to date and one which he made specifically for this exhibition. A quiet wing of a fallen bird evinces nature's vulnerability. Yet, once the viewer encounters a drawing depicting a field of cotton alongside a drawing of a closely cropped Native American headdress, the seeming innocuousness of the natural imagery begins to expose a more provocative narrative. Longo presents us with captivating images both of our American crimes and answered calls to action, unleashing an urgency to acknowledge our shared burdens and therefore shared responsibilities. Longo's signature velvety charcoal chiaroscuro activates the power of beauty, seducing the viewer into a state of, if not unadulterated, optimism, renewed faith in our agency to create possibilities for our future.

"As a curator I am so thrilled to be able to work with Robert Longo, as he is an artist whose work I have admired for years," says Guild Hall Museum Director and Chief Curator, Christina Mossaides Strassfield. "His generosity last year in giving up his summer exhibition slot to help create *All for the Hall*, an exhibition/fundraiser during the pandemic was beyond our wildest dreams. *A History of the Present* is composed of two bodies of work, *Gang of the Cosmos* and *The Agency of Faith*, and could not be more perfect for Guild Hall. They are a tribute to our past as a showcase and proponent of Abstract Expressionism and a snapshot of where today's society stands. Robert's work is cached in depth and meaning from an artistic as well as social perspective, pushing the boundaries on all fronts."

Robert Longo will be honored at the [Annual Summer Gala](#) on Friday, August 6 in recognition of his extraordinary work mobilizing 60 artists to donate artworks for a special benefit exhibition. *All for the Hall* was created in response to the challenges faced due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and included painting, sculpture, photography, and site-responsive installations by such artists as Laurie Anderson, Philippe Cheng, Jeremy Dennis, Eric Fischl, Rashid Johnson, Shirin Neshat, Enoc Perez, Dorothea Rockburne, Ugo Rondinone, Michael Halsband, Clifford Ross, Cindy Sherman, Kiki Smith, Karin Waisman, and Robert Wilson, among many others.

ABOUT ROBERT LONGO

Robert Longo (b. 1953) is a New York-based artist, filmmaker, and musician. After attending Buffalo State University New York, he moved to New York City in 1977. That same year, he showed in *Pictures* curated by Douglas Crimp, the first exhibition to contextualize a young group of artists who were turning away from Minimalism and Conceptualism and instead towards image-making, inspired by newspapers, advertisements, film, and television. Longo became

known as a leading protagonist of the Pictures Generation, working across drawing, photography, painting, sculpture, performance, and film.

His work is represented in numerous major museums and private collections all over the world, including the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum, and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York; The Broad Collection, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris; and the Albertina in Vienna. Robert Longo lives and works in New York and is represented by Pace Gallery and Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac; London, Paris, Salzburg.

RELATED PROGRAMS

TUESDAY, AUGUST 17, 7PM

Robert Longo and Shirin Neshat in Conversation

[MORE INFO](#)

TUESDAY, AUGUST 17, 8:30PM

Screening of Robert Longo's 2021 Black and White Release of *Johnny Mnemonic*

[MORE INFO](#)

TUESDAY, AUGUST 31, 7PM

Robert Longo Documentary film by The Artist Profile Archive

Followed by a Q&A with the artist Robert Longo, Filmmaker Sophie Chahinian, and moderated by Christina Mossaides Strassfield, Museum Director/Chief Curator

[MORE INFO](#)

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 3PM

Gallery Tour with Christina Mossaides Strassfield

Exhibition Credits

Principal Sponsor: Lucio and Joan Noto

Lead Sponsors: Susan and Olive Numeroff in memory of Marvin Numeroff, Fern and Lenard Tessler, Alison and Donald Weiss, and public funding provided by Suffolk County

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Additional support: Shari and Jeff Aronson, Carol and Arthur Goldberg, Agnes Gund, and Deborah and David Roberts

Guild Hall's Museum programs are made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, an anonymous donor, Peggy J. Amster, Crozier Fine Arts, and funding from The Michael Lynne Museum Endowment, and The Melville Straus Family Endowment.

Free gallery admission is generously funded by Dime Community Bank and Landscape Details.



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ABOUT GUILD HALL

Guild Hall, one of the first multidisciplinary centers in the country to combine a museum, theater, and education space under one roof, was established in 1931 as a gathering place for community where an appreciation for the arts would serve to encourage greater civic participation. For nine decades, Guild Hall has embraced this open-minded vision and provided a welcoming environment for the public to engage with art exhibitions, performances, and educational offerings. Art and artists have long been the engine of Guild Hall's activities and the institution continues to find innovative ways to support creativity in everyone.

For more information about this and other programs, visit guildhall.org.

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