

ROBERT LONGO

GOD MACHINES

PARIS DEBELLEYME

21 Monday - 23 Saturday



Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac is pleased to announce God Machines, an exhibition by the American artist, Robert Longo.

All three levels of the gallery will be devoted to this magnificent show of recent works. This will be the artist's first major solo exhibition for Paris in many years. God Machines is a major installation of three immensely heroic works. These towering framed charcoal drawings almost entirely cover the walls of the main gallery space. Dedicated to the three major monotheistic world religions, Longo has created multi-paneled, monumental works depicting images of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem.

In each of these artworks is an iconic depiction of a sacred space. Mecca, the most sacred site in Islam, depicts the holy place where millions of worshippers on pilgrimage come to pray. Each Muslim is required at least once in a lifetime to visit this site if possible. St. Peter's Basilica, one of the holiest sites in Catholicism, famed as a place of pilgrimage and the largest interior of any Christian church in the world, is represented by an eight-panel depiction of the vaulted main nave and side chapels. The abstract minimalist depiction of The Wailing Wall, said to be the last existing remnant of the Second Temple built around the time of Herod (19 BCE) is one of the most sacred sites in Judaism. Worshippers on pilgrimage come to this site to mourn and bemoan the destruction of the Temple.

Longo's epic narrative strength comes from his transformation of the intimate practice of drawing into the monumental scale of painting, elevating the medium to a scale never seen before. Like an Old Master artist, he achieves an extremely emotional range through his use of chiaroscuro, harnessing light and dark as primary material. As an artist known for his profound ability to depict complex psychological states, his work strikes a balance between the very personal and the socially charged, reflecting the world we live in today.

Though, photographically based - his works are conceptual in design and highly abstract upon close inspection. There's often a political undercurrent in his choice of imagery. His works are constructed pictures with an emphatic physical presence, certainly an exploration of power and its implicit workings through all levels of life and experience.

Longo is perhaps best known for his "Men in the Cities" series from the early 1980's. But over the past decade he has developed several other distinct bodies of work including: Monsters, waves about to break; The Sickness of Reason, atomic clouds rising into the sky; Ophelia, mysterious red roses in full bloom. Longo explains, "...the roses and the bombs and the waves are things that exist at the moment of their being: a bomb is meant to explode, a rose is born to bloom, a wave is destined to crash. They are at the moment of their fulfillment."

Also on view will be studies and large-scale, single-panel works of themes that have interested him in recent years like the images of tigers, burqa-clad women, waves, dark forests and rock concerts, etc. A bi-lingual (French/English) publication with an essay by Jonathan T.D. Neil will be published in conjunction to the exhibition.

Robert Longo was born in 1953 in Brooklyn, New York. In 1972 he received a grant to study at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Florence (Italy) and in 1975, he received a BFA from Buffalo State College, where he studied sculpture. In 2005 he was the recipient of the prestigious Goslar Kaiser Ring in Germany. Important museum retrospective exhibitions include: Museu Berardo, Lisbon (2010); Musée d'art moderne et d'art contemporain, Nice (2009); the Isetan Museum of Art in Tokyo (1995); Hamburger Deichtorhallen (1991); the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (1989); and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago (1989). Other major exhibitions include: Kunsthalle Weishaupt, Ulm (2010); Krefelder Kunstmuseen, Krefeld (2002); and the Albertina (2002). Longo's works are part of many major public collections, including: the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum and the Whitney Museum of American Art, in New York; the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam; the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris; the Albertina in Vienna; the Tate in London, and the Ludwig Museum in Cologne. Longo, along with his wife Barbara Sukowa and artist Jon Kessler are co-founders and members of the band Barbara Sukowa and the X-Patsys. Anthony Coleman, Anton Fier Sean Conly and Jonathan Kane join them as band members. Robert Longo lives and works in New York City with his wife, Barbara Sukowa, and their three sons.