

Nov 4 Exhibition Review: Robert Longo

Reviews



Untitled (After Mitchell, Ladybug, 1957), 2013. Collection of Suzanne and Bob Cochran

By Saige Buffington

Robert Longo's exhibition *A History of the Present* haunts me. A series of charcoal replicas of paintings and photography alike adorns the walls of Guild Hall. This combination of work is something I haven't seen before — and I hope it won't be the last. Despite both groups of artwork being different from each other, they both strike a similar feeling in my chest: chaos.



Untitled (Protest for George Floyd; Minneapolis, Minnesota; May 28, 2020), 2021. Courtesy of the artist; Metro Pictures, New York; and Pace Gallery.

Gang of Cosmos, a collection that mirrors famous paintings, makes me uncomfortable. Whether that was Longo's intention, I don't know, but the discomfort drew me in the more I looked at the pieces, particularly *Untitled (After de Kooning, Woman on Bicycle, 1952-53)*. The part that sticks out to me the most is the eyes on the top of the canvas. They're threatening, continuing to hold my attention until I force myself to move onto

another image. In turn, all of his pieces hold a similar feeling of danger, a feeling of chaos and discomfort. After de Kooning and *Untitled (After Krasner, Birth, 1956)* are the ones that haunt me the most.



Untitled (Field of Cotton, Alabama), 2019. Courtesy of the artist; Metro Pictures, New York; and Pace Gallery.

While the exhibit as a whole is nothing short of beautifully haunting, it was the drawings of photographs that kept my attention the longest. Not only are the images blown to miraculous proportions, but the stark contrast between the black and white makes one

lose their breath. These drawings make me crave for more: more of the unexplored depths, and more visuals of the situations that occur in our country.

The life-like copies bring both fear and comfort. Rumi, a massive jellyfish, is beautiful and serene, but these creatures can cause great pain and damage if they sting in the right place. Some jellyfish can live hundreds to thousands of years, floating within the depths, invisible to humanity.



Untitled (Warrior), 2021. Courtesy of the artist; Metro Pictures, New York; and Pace Gallery.

Longo's collection as a whole is paralyzingly beautiful. Each stroke of charcoal creates both harmony and chaos within each piece he makes, and weaving all the different media together. I crave to see more.

A History of the Present was on view at Guild Hall in East Hampton, New York, from Aug. 7 through Oct. 17. The exhibit can be viewed online at the Guild Hall [website](#).