

Jeffrey  
Deitch

**ROBERT LONGO**  
***STORM OF HOPE***

**NOVEMBER 21, 2020 - JANUARY 30, 2021**  
**925 NORTH ORANGE DRIVE, LOS ANGELES**

Asked if his work was “preaching to the choir,” Robert Longo responded, “It is not preaching to the choir – it is screaming at the choir.”

“My work is like ripping chunks of the world out and offering to the viewer to contemplate,” he continued. Longo’s work has always had a political edge, especially during recent years. He strives to find a pictorial balance between nature and politics, the social and the personal, “marrying a sense of humanity with a sense of justice” while exposing the “politics of power, futility and aggression.” He has created a personal fusion of Pop and Conceptual art, heightened by a sense of political urgency. His title for this exhibition, *Storm of Hope*, expresses his wish for a better future on the other side of the storm.

Longo’s work navigates the world we live in and how we see it. Countering the “image storm” that surrounds us, he creates iconic and provocative works based on the daily flow of images across our screens. He envisions his large-scale drawings as monuments, securing a sense of permanence that transcends the flood of transitory imagery. Longo cites his version of the Cassandra curse: “artists can see the future, but will people listen?”

Explaining the genesis of why his massive drawings are displayed behind glass, Longo recounts, “I grew up with TV, black and white. All the images I saw in the formative time in my life were always behind glass. Now, we’re inundated with images behind glass, on various screens.” His drawings are created with charcoal, an ancient material, using one of the oldest art mediums to create hyperreal contemporary images. The drawings are so meticulously crafted that they are sometimes mistaken for photography. The word “drawing,” however, is a bit of a misnomer: Longo’s charcoal on mounted paper works measure upwards of 11 feet tall and 38 feet long, on par with the scale of history paintings. Each image is actually



Robert Longo, *Untitled (Black Panther)*, 2020.  
Charcoal on mounted paper, 107 3/4 x 70 inches  
(273.7 x 177.8 cm).

the product of months of labor-intensive work, based on source images that have been highly altered to create an image that becomes a memory, expressing something over and beyond itself. Longo likes the way that the medium of charcoal slows things down. He appreciates the irony of creating monumental images out of dust.

One of the central presentations in the exhibition is Longo's epic three-part work showing the three pillars of the US government: the Capitol, the Supreme Court, and the White House. His image of the Capitol creates the illusion of the building moving toward the viewer. The Supreme Court is rendered in front of a stormy sky. The building is splitting like Gordon Matta-Clark's house and appears to be decaying. The White House, meanwhile, is pictured from a sinkhole in the front lawn, an ominous gnarly forest growing around it.

The exhibition will also feature one of Longo's best known and most notorious works: *Death Star*, made from 40,000 30 caliber bullets, the type used in AR-10 assault rifles. The number of bullets corresponds to the number of gun deaths in the United States in 2017, the year Longo began fabricating the work. He used an algorithm to place the bullets in a random arrangement, representing chaos in its avoidance of a set pattern.

The exhibition also presents a powerful survey of works from Longo's three most recent series—*Gang of Cosmos*, *The Destroyer Cycle*, and *Fugitive Images*—with works ranging from his black and white translation of Jackson Pollock's *Convergence* to an image of the “wall of moms” during the 2020 Portland protests. In each of these bodies of works, Longo extends the tradition of artistic political engagement into the present.

*Storm of Hope* is Robert Longo's first exhibition in Los Angeles since his 2008 show at Margo Leavin Gallery. His work was the subject of a large survey exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1989. Jeffrey Deitch has been involved with Robert Longo's work since 1979. He was the model for one of Longo's influential *Men in the Cities* triptychs from 1980.

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