

Miles, Christopher. Review. *Los Angeles Times* (Entertainment), Friday, 7 October 2005, p. E20.

Los Angeles Times | Entertainment

Rich in seduction, rich in allegory

Robert Longo made his mark in the 1980s with images of yuppies caught in struggles, or flinching as if controlled by external forces. With images populated by corporate minions, watchful eyes, warriors, fascist architecture, foreboding machinery and oversized guns, it's no surprise that his work has been interpreted in terms of power, control and emptiness.

At Margo Leavin Gallery, Longo offers a sampling of imagery that has preoccupied him more recently. Large charcoal drawings, as well as small studies in assorted media on velum, all picture colossal waves or offer frame-filling close-ups of red roses.

The wave images, which suggest black-and-white photos while balancing efficient handling of detail with appreciation of the charcoal mark, move from highlights in the unfettered white of the paper to the blackness of densely pigmented dark water.

The paper used for the rose drawings is first dyed an intense red; the image is then created by drawing in the shadows between petals.

The drawings deal with power, control and emptiness in different ways. Pulling you in with the delicacy of their marks, they satisfy up close. But they also fill your periphery, dominating your vision and overwhelming you. You are caught in the trough of the wave or seduced into the void at the center of the rose.

These works articulate a romanticism often sublimated in Longo's previous work but now offered at face value as he gets back to nature. But that doesn't mean he's getting away from culture or society. This is classic Longo in terms of the themes, but it's also new and improved, rich in allegorical layering. The drawings that look out to sea, across the corduroy of incoming sets of waves, sum up the feeling of the whole exhibition: alluring and dominating, and utterly relentless.