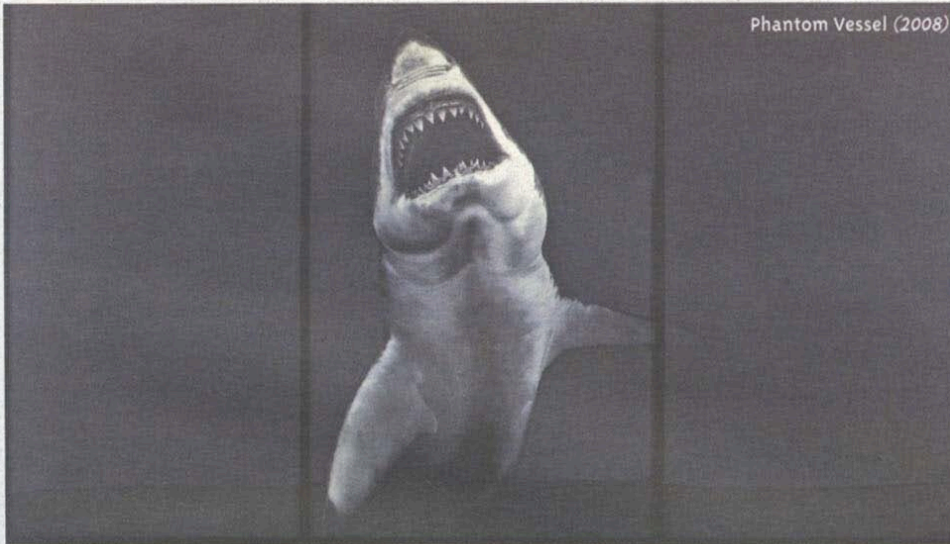


Miles, Christopher. "Robert Longo at Margo Leavin Gallery." *LA Weekly* (Art Around Town), 8 January 2008, p. 35.



Phantom Vessel (2008)

ART AROUND TOWN

Robert Longo at Margo Leavin Gallery

There's a relentlessness that defines Robert Longo's oeuvre, and his imagery — whether the yuppies spasming as if their strings are being yanked by an invisible puppet master, or his supersized guns, mushroom clouds, scrutinizing eyes and pounding waves. In their inevitable unfolding of trouble ranging from mischief to atrocity, Longo's pictures always leave you feeling somewhere between cornered, complicit and seduced, and his current show at Margo Leavin extends this gulp-inducing trend. While his past images often leap out at and assault you, or draw you in as voyeur/witness, these latest, at their most powerful, deal in an almost suffocating immersion. When Longo presents massive great-white sharks drawn at roughly life size, he gives you the feeling that you're almost swimming with them, only the water is more like some kind of existential void — pure blackness, pure bleakness — and the sharks stand-ins for whatever haunts your darkest thoughts. Other images are more playful though still ominous — like a close-up of cleavage seemingly plucked from a noir flick and blown up to smothering scale — or perhaps even hopeful, as in the case of a pair of angel wings hovering in the darkness as if waiting for a suitor. Covering large areas of the drawings in solid coal-black and then framing them behind glass, Longo converts much of the prime real estate into black mirrors by which you become part of the picture. As installed here, the works capture and incorporate one another's reflections as you move about the room, recalling Longo's early music-video projects and other cinematic experiments, and what seems to be the guiding subtext of his work — that the relentlessness to which he gives image is in fact a kind of montage. *Margo Leavin Gallery, 812 N. Robertson Blvd., L.A., Tues.-Sat., 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; through Jan. 24. (310) 273-0603.*

—Christopher Miles