



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

Oral history interview with Robert Longo

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## Collection Overview

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| <b>Repository:</b> | Archives of American Art   |
| <b>Title:</b>      | Oral history interview with Robert Longo   |
| <b>Identifier:</b> | AAA.longo09  |
| <b>Date:</b>       | 2009 January 30-31   |
| <b>Extent:</b>     | 4 Items (sound discs (4 hr., 54 min.) Sound recording; digital)<br>91 Pages (Transcript) |
| <b>Creator:</b>    | Longo, Robert<br>Richards, Judith Olch   |
| <b>Language:</b>   | English .  |

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

This interview is part of the Archives of American Art Oral History Program, started in 1958 to document the history of the visual arts in the United States, primarily through interviews with artists, historians, dealers, critics and administrators.

### Available Formats

Transcript is available on the Archives of American Art's website.

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## Biographical / Historical

Robert Longo (1953- ) is a painter and sculptor in New York, New York. Judith Olch Richards (1947- ) is former executive director of iCI in New York, New York.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview of Robert Longo conducted 2009 January 30-31, by Judith Olch Richards, for the Archives of American Art, at Longo's studio, in New York.

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## Scope and Contents

Longo speaks of his Italian heritage, his family and growing up in Long Island, New York; the role magazines, television, and movies played in artistic inspiration; his dyslexia; his interest in sports and music in high school; moving to Denton, Texas to attend the University of North Texas before being

expelled; moving back to New York and enrolling in Nassau Community College; traveling to Italy to study art history, where he discovered his desire to become an artist; attending Buffalo State University where he met Charlie Clough, Michael Zwack, and Cindy Sherman, with whom he created Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center; Robert Irwin, Sol LeWitt and Vito Acconci's involvement with Hallwalls; moving to New York City with Cindy Sherman to begin their careers as artists; working at The Kitchen and his performance pieces of the period; the child-like, punk, and corporate influences and the process of creating his "archetypical" Men in the Cities series; his relationship with Gretchen Bender; the formations of Metro Pictures gallery by Helene Winer and Janelle Reiring; the Combines, sculptures, music videos, and short films created in the 1980's and their mixed reception and mixed success in the difficult art market; his works cast in aluminum and metal; his first retrospective held at the LA County Museum of Art in 1989 and feeling lost in his own work; creating "bad art" in the process of attempting sobriety; black flag imagery and his success in Europe, which served as inspiration to move to Paris for several years; meeting his wife, Barbara Sukowa, a German actress; how having children changed his perspective and how they act as antennae to the world; his directorial role of the 1992 film, "Johnny Mnemonic"; and the slow progression, and continuity, of imagery in different bodies of work from the mid-1990's through the present, including the Magellan series (drawings of 366 different images), Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud's offices, and series of waves, bombs, roses, planets, sleeping babies, and sharks. Longo also recalls Leonora Fink, Phil Malkin, Rick Zucker, Les Krims, Troy Brauntuch, Jack Goldstein, Paul McMann, David Salle, Matt Mullican, Diane Shea, Alanna Heiss, Kasper Konig, Konrad Fischer, Brooke Alexander, Dominic Ranieri, William Gibson, Keanu Reeves, Emilio Mazzoli and others.

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## General

Originally recorded on 4 sound discs. Reformatted in 2010 as 5 digital wav files. Duration is 4 hr., 54 min.

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Dyslexia  
Painters -- New York (State) -- New York -- Interviews  
Sculptors -- New York (State) -- New York -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

Interviews  
Sound recordings

Names:

Acconci, Vito, 1940-  
Alexander, Brooke  
Bender, Gretchen, 1951-2004  
Brauntuch, Troy, 1954-  
Clough, Charles, 1951-  
Fink, Leonara  
Fischer, Konrad  
Gibson, William  
Goldstein, Jack, 1945-2003  
Hallwalls (Museum)

Heiss, Alanna  
Irwin, Robert, 1928-  
Krimms, Leslie  
König, Kasper  
LeWitt, Sol, 1928-2007  
Los Angeles County Museum of Art  
Malkin, Phil  
Mazzoli, Emilio  
McMann, Paul  
Metro Pictures (Gallery)  
Mullican, Matt, 1951-  
Nassau Community College -- Students  
Ranieri, Dominic  
Reeves, Keanu  
Reiring, Janelle  
Salle, David, 1952-  
Shea, Diane  
Sherman, Cindy  
State University of New York at Buffalo -- Students  
Sukowa, Barbara, 1950-  
University of North Texas -- Students  
Winer, Helene, 1946-  
Zwack, Michael, 1949-

Geographic Names:

France -- Paris -- Description and Travel  
Italy -- description and travel