

Janice Mason Art Museum  
LESSON PLANS FOR WIER EXHIBIT  
Background Information

**ARTIST NAME: Robert Longo**

**ART PIECE(S) ON DISPLAY: “Pressure”**

**About the Artist**

Robert Longo was born on January 7, 1953, in Brooklyn, New York. He was raised on suburban Long Island, where as a youth he participated in various art activities from a very young age. Longo developed an early fascination with all forms of mass media; especially movies, television, magazines and comic books. Longo’s art training and backgrounds are very diverse. He began his higher education at the University of Northern Texas, where he excelled in several different art forms. Longo received a grant to study art in Florence, Italy, and upon returning to the United States, he received a B.F.A. in 1975 from State University College in Buffalo, New York.

In 1974, while studying at State University College, Longo co-founded Hallwalls, a studio and exhibition space for [contemporary](#) art. Between 1977 and 1981, Longo created [sculptures](#), pictures, and [performance works](#). In 1979, he showed at The Kitchen, a downtown space that encouraged artistic experimentation and [collaboration](#). The following year he had his first one-person exhibit in Europe in Milan, Italy. However, it was his first solo exhibit in New York in 1981 that brought him international critical acclaim. His work, “Men in the Cities,” presented his charcoal, [graphite](#) and dye studies of office workers, interspersed with cast aluminum [reliefs](#) of brutal architectural forms. The introduction of [three-dimensional](#) relief into a series of flat images was a Longo signature. Since 1980, Robert Longo’s work has been exhibited extensively throughout the United States, Europe and Asia.

In 1990, Longo moved to Paris and changed direction in his art. He created “The Black Flag” series, which was influenced by the flag art of Jasper Johns. One of the pieces in this series was a huge wooden flag that, when hung, would bisect the gallery. Longo went on to produce pieces described as [abstract logos](#). In the late 90’s he made a body of works inspired by comic book characters.

Longo has described his work as existing between “the movie and the monument”. In addition to his continuing endeavors as a visual artist, he has become well known as a director of music videos and feature films. In 1995, the movie *Johnny Mnemonic*, which Longo directed, was released. He also directed the music video of REM’s “The One I Love”.

When asked to list influences on his art, Longo includes Sol LeWitt and Jasper Johns in his list of inspirations. He continues to live and work in New York.

### **About the Art**

Robert Longo is one of a group of artists who returned to [figurative painting](#). The subjects in many of his paintings and [relief sculptures](#) show young, urban people, who are shown in anxious, tense situations. His pieces are also typically brash, eye-catching, and large-scale art works. His works explore the importance of images and [symbols](#) in popular culture and the alienation of the individual in a complex society. Although he studied [sculpture](#) and has produced many sculptural pieces, [drawing](#) remains Longo's favorite form of self-expression. However, the sculptural influence pervades his drawing technique, as Longo's paintings have a distinctive chiseled line that seems to give the drawing a [three-dimensional](#) quality. In addition to [drawing](#) and [sculpting](#), Longo also creates [lithographs](#), which often involves studio assistants to do much of the basic work for the finished piece.

The Robert Longo piece in this exhibit is a drawing using [acrylic](#) and [watercolor](#). It is entitled "Pressure" and is a preliminary drawing for the large painting "Pressure," which is now owned by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The image in the drawing is that of Harlequin, a common symbol used to represent artists. This harlequin sits with a huge building over his head. The building represents the art community (curators, collectors, fellow artists) that creates large pressures on the artist to produce new work. This model drawing was completed in 1983 and measures framed h 31 ¼" X w 28".

### **Related terms**

art form  
abstract logos  
acrylic  
collaboration  
contemporary  
contemporaries  
drawing  
figurative painting  
graphite  
lithographs  
lithography  
media  
painting  
performance works  
relief sculpture  
reliefs  
sculpture  
symbol  
symbolism  
three-dimensional  
watercolor

## Specific Lesson Plans

### Grades K-5

#### Kentucky Core Content

AH-E4.1.34 Describe a variety of media and processes used to produce two-dimensional (2-D) and three-dimensional (3-D) artwork.

AH-E-4.2.35 Recognize that artists choose to express themselves in different styles and subject matters.

AH-E-4.1.42 Use a variety of media and art processes to produce two-dimensional (2-D) and three-dimensional (3-D) artwork.

AH-E-4.2.31 Identify various purposes for creating works of art.

AH-E-4.2.32 Purposes of Art- expressive (express emotions and ideas), narrative (describe and illustrate experiences), functional (decorate objects).

AH-E-4.2.35 Recognize that artists choose to express themselves in different styles and subject matters.

AH-E-4.2.36 Styles: realistic, abstract, non-objective

#### Objectives

- To learn that Robert Longo is an internationally critically acclaimed artist.
- To understand that several different factors greatly influenced Robert Longo as a child and served as the basis of much of his adult art work.
- To find that Robert Longo is a very talented artist that uses different and various types of [media](#) to produce his art.
- To become aware that artists such as Robert Longo, often do different types of artwork at different times of their life. Their art changes or evolves over time.
- To learn the meaning of Robert Longo's work , "Pressure" which is featured in the Janice Mason Art Gallery.

#### Suggested Questions

1. What makes you think that Robert Longo is an internationally critically acclaimed contemporary artist?
2. What were some of the major influences in Robert Longo's childhood that contributed to him becoming a great artist?
3. What are some of the different types of [media](#) Longo utilizes and different types of art that Longo creates?
4. Describe some of the different types of art Longo produced at different stages in his life.
5. What was Longo trying to tell us in his picture "Pressure"?

### **Related Activities**

1. Have the students draw a picture with an office worker(s) using **graphite** (pencil) and add a **three dimensional relief** (object) that fits in with their picture. The introduction of **three-dimensional relief** into a series of flat images is one of the things for which Longo is remembered. He did this in his work “Men in the Cities”.
2. Longo directs movies and music videos. Have the students produce a music video. They will select the music, write the script, and act out the parts of the video. You can either have someone video the finished product or present it to another class. You could do the same thing with a movie.

## Grades 6-8

### Kentucky Core Content

AH-M-4.1.34 Identify and describe a variety of art media, art processes, and subject matter to communicate ideas, feelings, experiences, and stories.

AH-M-4.1.35 Media: two dimensional-crayon, pencil, fabric, yarn, paint (tempera, watercolor), ink and pastels.

AH-M-4.1.36 Media: three-dimensional-clay, paper-mache', found objects (used to produce artwork), wood, glass, metal, and stone (Properties of media need to be known in order to respond to artworks).

AH-M-4.1.39 Subject Matter: landscape, portrait, still life, abstract, and non-objective.

AH-M-4.1.42 Effectively use a variety of art media, processes, and subject matter to communicate ideas, feelings, and experiences.

AH-M-4.1.37 Art Processes: two-dimensional-painting, fabric design, printmaking, and mosaics.

AH-M-4.2.31 Describe and compare the characteristics and purposes of works of art representing various cultures, historical periods, artists, and/or styles.

### Objectives

- To learn that Robert Longo is an important American, [contemporary](#) artist.
- To understand that several different factors greatly influenced Robert Longo as a child and gave him the basis for his interest and participation in many different art forms as an adult.
- To find that Robert Longo created many different art forms such as [sculpture](#), [drawing](#), [painting](#), [lithography](#), [performance works](#), [three dimensional relief](#) on flat images, feature films, and music videos.
- To become aware that artists such as Robert Longo, often do different types of artwork at different times of their life. Their art changes or evolves over time.
- To learn the meaning of Robert Longo's work, "Pressure" which is featured in the Janice Mason Art Gallery.
- To learn the ways that Longo's art is set apart, distinctive, from other contemporary artists.

### Suggested Questions

1. Explain the indicators that prove Longo is an important American, contemporary artists?
2. What factors influenced Longo as a child that impacted his adult art career? Tell how they influenced his career?
3. Describe the [media](#) used and theme of his "Men in the Cities" work.
4. Who are some of Longo's [contemporaries](#) who influenced his art?
5. Discuss the "The Black Flag" series and how it was influenced by another contemporary artist.
6. What were the main subjects of his paintings and [relief sculptures](#) during his [figurative painting](#) stage? Describe his art at that period of time.
7. What is Longo's favorite art form?
8. What are some of the characteristics of Longo's artwork that set it apart from other artists' work?
9. Describe the [symbolism](#) found in Longo's "Pressure".

**Related Activities**

1. Have student's do a written or verbal critique of "Pressure" utilizing the [Four Step Method of Art Criticism](#) found on this web site.
2. Have students produce a picture that has [symbolism](#) in it. Ask the students to form small groups and discuss the symbolism each person used in his picture. The students are to select the best symbolic picture from their group. These are to be presented and described to the whole class. The class can select the best one.
3. Have students develop a timeline outlining the different types of art Longo produced at different periods in his life.

## Grades 9-12

### Kentucky Core Content

AH-H-4.1.31 Describe works of art using appropriate terminology.

AH-H-4.1.32 Art Elements: color and color theory: primary and secondary hues, values (tints and shades), intensity (brightness and dullness); color relationship: triadic, complementary, and analogous.

AH-H-4.1.33 Principles of Design: Balance (symmetry/asymmetry), emphasis (focal pattern), pattern, repetition, contrast, variety, movement, rhythm, proportion, transition/gradation, and unity.

AH-H-4.1.34 Defend personal interpretations of works of art and architecture by using arguments.

AH-H-4.1.35 Identify skills and training necessary for a variety of careers in visual arts..

AH-H-4.2.31 Know how media, art processes, subject matter, symbols, ideas, and themes communicate cultural and aesthetic values.

AH-H-4.2.33 Media: three-dimensional-clay, wood (constructive), glass, metal, stone, and plaster.

AH-H-4.2.36 Subject Matter: portrait, landscape, still-life, abstract, non-objective.

AH-H-4.2.39 Purposes of Art: persuasive (advertising, marketing, propaganda); formalist (abstract, non-objective, arrangement of elements and principles as subject matter).

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- To find that Robert Longo created many different art forms such as [sculpture](#), [drawing](#), [painting](#), [lithography](#), [performance works](#), [three dimensional relief](#) on flat images, feature films, and music videos.
- To become aware that artists such as Robert Longo, often do different types of artwork at different times of their life. Their art changes or evolves over time.
- To learn the meaning of Robert Longo's work , "Pressure" which is featured in the Janice Mason Art Gallery.
- To learn the ways that Longo's art is set apart, distinctive, from other contemporary artists.

### Suggested Questions

1. What factors influenced Longo as a child and carried over into his art as an adult?
2. Explain Longo's [sculptures](#).
3. Explain how Longo did his [lithographs](#).
4. Explain what Longo's signature trait is in his artwork?
5. How is Longo's art work different than other contemporary artists?
6. Discuss Longo's work "Pressure" including the [art form](#), [media](#), and subject, and [symbolism](#).
7. What is an [abstract logo](#) such as one Longo created?
8. What education, training, and experiences did Longo have which prepared him to be the great artist he is today?

**Related Activities**

1. Have students go on the internet/ or library and find a picture of one of Jasper John's flag pieces. From the same source find one picture from Longo's "The Black Flag" series. Compare and contrast these two works in writing. Describe what evidences you see that Jasper Johns influenced Longo.
2. Have students develop a timeline of Longo to this date. Include his education, training, and different periods of art development.
3. Have students divided into workable groups and have each group write a biography of Robert Longo to date. Have them search out as many details about him and his art as possible. Include some computer pictures of his different kinds of art. Give extra points if the individual groups make four different art forms that reflect the work of Longo and his style.