



# Gao Brothers' "Utopia of Hugging" Will Embrace West 16th Street

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by Hamptons Art Hub Staff

Hugging is one of those physical expressions of affection that draws a dividing line: some people are huggers; some are not. Some hug indiscriminately; some are more judicious, reserving their hugs for only certain people and circumstances. For some, hugging might seem a chore; for others, it is a taste of heaven on earth.

Without knowing any other background, one might imagine it is this last group The Gao Brothers were thinking of in 1999 when they first conceived their interactive performance art piece, *Embrace: The Utopia of Hugging for 20 Minutes*. A site-specific performance of the piece, which invites 60 strangers to embrace for an extended period of time, will be presented at RH Contemporary Art on West 16th Street at 3 p.m. on Sunday, March 9,

Participants will be pre-registered volunteers and the performance is open for public viewing. Volunteers may register to participate by sending their name/age/country of origin to [rhcainfo@rh.com](mailto:rhcainfo@rh.com). No RSVP is required to watch the performance.

*Embrace* is being offered in conjunction with RH Contemporary's "Outside the Lines: New Art From China," on view through April 12.

The Gao Brothers, a duo comprised of Gao Qiang and Gao Zhen, have been collaborating on installation, performance, sculpture, photography and text since the mid-1980s. According to a release from the gallery, the pair are well known for their socially charged, iconoclastic works. The brothers also address social concerns with powerful interpersonal gestures via ongoing performance pieces, such as *World Hug Day* and *Embrace*.

According to the release, the Gao Brothers developed *Embrace* as a "means to confront pain and suffering with a simple, yet ultimately monumental gesture." In 2001 the artists were invited to present the piece at the Venice Biennale, but were unable to leave China and instead performed the work with art students in their hometown in Jinan Province.



"Embrace: The Utopia of Hugging for 20 minutes" by the Gao Brothers.

The performance has since been presented in multiple locations, including London, Rome, Singapore, in various cities across China, and at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City. The performance of *Embrace* on March 9 will be the first in New York.

RH Contemporary Art's current exhibition, "Outside The Lines: New Art from China," features 12 Chinese artists: Gao Weigang, The Gao Brothers, Hu Qinwu, Li Hui, Meng Zhigang, Ni Youyu, Pan Jian, Qiu Anxiong, Qiu Deshu, Yan Bing, Yang Yongliang, and Zheng Chongbin.

Spanning light, sculpture, painting, ink animation, prints, and performance works, the exhibition is presented across all five floors of RH Contemporary Art's new Chelsea gallery.

RH Contemporary Art encompasses an online gallery featuring a series of artist documentaries, an art journal written by a roster of curators, critics and artists and the commercial gallery in New York.

**BASIC INFO:** *Embrace: The Utopia of Hugging for 20 Minutes* by The Gao Brothers takes place on March 9 at 3 p.m. at RH Contemporary Art, 437 West 16th Street (between 9th and 10th Avenues), New York, NY. [www.rhcontemporaryart.com](http://www.rhcontemporaryart.com)

*Embrace* is a site-specific interactive performance piece offered as part of "Outside the Lines: New Art from China" The exhibition continues through April 12, 2014.

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