



Robert Longo Flag Unfurled for Creative Time's "Pledges of Allegiance" Public Art Project

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by Susan Hodara

Visitors arriving at the [Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum](#) in Ridgefield, CT should take a minute to pause and look up. There, just above the entrance, is a wonky simulacrum of the American flag, its skewed stars and stripes forming a somber effigy fluttering in the breeze. A similar sight will also greet visitors to the Brooklyn Museum, Creative Time's Manhattan headquarters, the RISD Museum in Providence, USF Contemporary Art Museum in Tampa and five other art museums located across the United States.



"Untitled (Dividing Time)" by Robert Longo, 2017, installed atop of Creative Time's NYC Headquarters as part of its "Pledges of Allegiance" public art project. Polyester flag. Photo by Guillaume Zicarelli, Courtesy of Creative Time.

Untitled (Dividing Time) is one of [16 flags](#) commissioned by Creative Time's "Pledges of Allegiance," its latest public art project. Each flag was designed by a notable contemporary artist—including [Ann Hamilton](#), [Vik Muniz](#), [Pedro Reyes](#), [Tania Bruguera](#), [Nari Ward](#), [Rirkrit Tiravanija](#) and [Yoko Ono](#)—to reflect the political climate and to encourage a collective response. The designs have been reproduced in sizes ranging from 3-by-5 feet to 8-by-12 feet. On October 11, 2017, Longo's flag will be lowered and Jayson Musson's *A Horror* will be raised at another set of locations as part of an artist daisy chain that continues through July 2018. Each flag will be flown for approximately one month, according to Creative Time.



"Untitled (Dividing Time)" by Robert Longo, 2017, installed at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum as part of Creative Time's "Pledges of Allegiance." Polyester flag. Photo by Paul Hodara.

“‘Pledges’ communicates a sentiment that institutions have been eager to articulate since the election,” Nato Thompson, Creative Time’s artistic director, stated in an email. “For many different kinds of places all around the country – from universities, to museums, to nonprofit organizations – we’re providing a much needed way to express unity and illuminate artists’ perspectives.”

Longo’s *Untitled (Dividing Time)* is the project’s fourth installation. “Pledges of Allegiance” was inaugurated on Flag Day, June 14, 2017, when [Marilyn Minter](#)’s *RESIST FLAG* was raised on Creative Time’s roof and a few other sites. Since then, interest in the series has grown and more institutions have enlisted to fly one of the flags.

“We look forward welcoming new partners and seeing the project continue to resonate in communities across the country,” Thompson stated.

Longo’s flag retains the bones of the American flag stripped (mostly) of color: white stars against a black background in the upper left quadrant, black and white stripes filling the rest. But the rows of stars are angled and the stripes are sullied as if the fabric was dipped in dirty water. And the design is bisected into not-quite-equal halves by a bold vertical black band outlined in slivers of gold appliqué.



“Untitled (Dividing Time)” by Robert Longo, 2017, from Creative Time’s “Pledges of Allegiance.” Polyester flag. Photo by Nicholas Prakas, Courtesy of Creative Time.

The piece is based on Longo’s 2016 large-scale charcoal drawing *Untitled (Nov. 8, 2016)*, which he completed on the date Donald Trump became president. “I chose to draw the right panel larger but with fewer stars,” Longo explained in the project announcement.

The drawing was shown earlier this year in the artist’s “The Destroyer Cycle” exhibition at [Metro Pictures](#), his New York City gallery. *Untitled (Dividing Time)* joins other Longo works presently on view in New York: in “[Proof: Francisco Goya, Sergei Eisenstein, Robert Longo](#)” at the Brooklyn Museum, and along Hunter College’s skywalks, where his monumental site-specific [American Bridge Project](#) spans Lexington Avenue and includes a similar iteration of the flag.

In CT, Longo is no stranger to the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum. His solo show, “The Capitol Project,” was exhibited at the museum in 2013. Happy to have Longo’s art return to the Fairfield County museum, Aldrich Curator Amy Smith-Stewart commented that the current “Pledges of Allegiance” project provided the museum with “...an opportunity not only to have continuity with artists we’ve shown in the past, but also to collaborate with like-minded institutions in an act of solidarity, especially in our current political times.”

“The flag is such powerful and historically significant symbol,” she said. “‘Pledges of Allegiance’ is a way of using that symbol to talk about unity in a difficult period.”

It also allows the voices of contemporary artists to be heard. “Artists are engaged with what’s happening in the world,” she said. “It’s important to support their messages.”

BASIC FACTS: *Untitled (Dividing Time)* by Robert Longo will continue flying in 10 spots through October 10, 2017. His art installation can be found in the front of the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art (Ridgefield, CT); the Brooklyn Museum and Creative Time Headquarters (New York); Cornell University’s [Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art](#) (Ithaca, NY); [Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum](#) at Washington University (St. Louis); [21c Museum Hotel](#) (Durham, NC); [KMAC Museum](#) (Louisville, KY); [Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit \(MOCAD\)](#) (Detroit); [RISD Museum](#) (Providence, RI) and [USF Contemporary Art Museum](#) (Tampa, FL).

For information, visit www.creativetime.org.

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