

METRO PICTURES

Lehrer, Adam. "Best of 2017: Our Top 20 NYC Art Shows," *Forbes.com* (December 14, 2017).

Forbes



Francisco Goya 'When There's a Will There's a Way'

Francisco Goya, Sergei Eisenstein, and Robert Longo at Brooklyn Museum

For the Goya, Eisenstein and Longo show at the Brooklyn Museum, I was initially drawn in solely because I greatly admire all of the artists displayed. I've marveled at Goya's paintings, have defended Longo's mid-career offensively masculine sculptures to friends (his black charcoal photorealism drawings of late need no defense, they are indisputably great, and were featured in a solo show earlier this year at Metro Pictures), and have been enjoying many of the Soviet director Eisenstein's films via my FilmStruck account this year.

But still, it didn't make much sense to me that these guys would have any thematic connections to one another. I was, as I so often am, wrong. Featuring paintings by Goya, films by Eisenstein, and charcoal drawings by Longo, the show examines how the artists all looked at the turbulent political periods that they were working under and shunned journalistic coverage for personal impressions of the events that surrounded them. The show was a touching ode to art's ability to do more than show us the world, but to shade our impressions of the world and to inform and progress cultural attitudes. In an entirely monochromatic show, the exhibition looks at world events with poetry, despair, and just the faintest reassurance of hope.

Goya's work, with its gothic melancholy, offers a despairing vision of the world that nevertheless welds a mystical beauty. The military strength of the Soviet Union is found in Eisenstein's stills that are presented in a way that offers reassurance but also critique. One detects that Eisenstein, who had to work under Soviet guidelines, critiqued his country in the most subtle of ways; note, for instance, the phallic nature of the battle ship in *Battleship Potemkin*. Longo's vision of the world is actually a bit more hopeful. There are bullet holes and lonely American flags, but there are also depictions of the events that bring us together: football, activism, celebration.

You see progress in these works. It reminds us, that despite the rise of Trump and the Alt-Right, the world has progressed in the last 100 years. I, for one, felt oddly reassured after viewing this exhibition.