

Press release

Robert Longo

Untitled (Vatican Bishops)

7 June—19 July 2025

Opening Saturday 7 June 2025, 11am—1pm

Thaddaeus Ropac
Salzburg Villa Kast
Mirabellplatz 2, 5020 Salzburg



Robert Longo, *Untitled (Vatican Bishops)*, 2016.
Charcoal on mounted paper. 236.9 × 355.6 cm (93.27 × 140 in)

Thaddaeus Ropac presents a selection of works by American artist Robert Longo that focus on the iconic imagery and symbolism of Christian iconography. While Robert Longo has worked in a variety of media – including performance, photography, sculpture and painting – he is best known for his large-scale, hyper-realistic charcoal drawings. Over his career, Longo has built a diverse visual

lexicon, often centred upon motifs that signify power, authority, and socio-political structures. Drawing on Carl Gustav Jung's notion of the collective unconscious, Longo explores how our visually oversaturated world shapes the way we filter, retain and process the images that bombard us daily.

Religious themes have been a recurring element in Longo's arsenal of pictures, serving as a lens through which he examines the structures and narratives that shape Western society. The six works on view revisit motifs taken from mass media as well as classic works of art history, including paintings by Rembrandt and Leonardo da Vinci, and span from intimate, postcard-sized to monumental works. The exaggerated proportions of the works – whether monumental or minuscule – seek to challenge the passive consumption of images by reasserting their physical and ideological power in a media-saturated culture. In *Untitled (Vatican Bishops)* from 2016, a work spanning over three and a half metres in length, Longo depicts a group of cardinals waiting for the announcement of the election of Pope Francis in 2013. Huddled together in a mass of embroidered fabric, their backs turned from the viewers, the cardinals project a sense of secrecy. Undertaking a forensic approach to examining his source image, Longo internalises the minutiae in graphite on paper in 'a sincere attempt to slow down the image, to provoke the viewer to consume its full power.' Longo transforms artefacts of the sacred and historically charged into resonant meditations on faith, representation, power and the sublime.



Robert Longo, *Untitled*
(X-Ray Detail of Head of Christ, c.1655, After Rembrandt), 2023.
Charcoal on mounted paper. 177.8 × 114.3 cm (70 × 45 in)



Robert Longo, portrait of the artist
Photo: Sophie Chahinian

About the artist

Robert Longo was born in New York, where he lives and works today. After graduating from the State University College in Buffalo, he moved to New York with Cindy Sherman in 1977, becoming studio assistant to Vito Acconci and Dennis Oppenheim. That same year, he participated in the formative five-person show *Pictures*. This was followed in 1981 by his first solo exhibition, debuting the *Men in the Cities* drawings that established his early career. His work has been shown at documenta, Kassel, in 1982 and 1987, the Whitney Biennial, New York, in 1983 and 2004, and the Venice Biennale in 1997. He has been the subject of recent solo exhibitions at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk (2025); the Milwaukee Art Museum (2024); Albertina Museum, Vienna (2024); Hall Art Foundation, Reading (2024); National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (2023); Palm Springs Art Museum (2021–22); and Hall Art Foundation, Derneburg, Germany (2020). His works were also shown alongside those of Francisco Goya and Sergei Eisenstein in *Proof*, which travelled from the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow (2016) to the Brooklyn Museum, New York (2017) and Deichtorhallen Hamburg (2018).

For press enquiries:

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