

Robert Longo: Searchers

October 9 – November 9, 2024

5 Hanover Square
London

Opening Reception: Tuesday, October 8, 5 – 8pm



Robert Longo
© Sophie Chahinian, courtesy the artist

The idea of montage has always been in my vocabulary... When you put images next to each other, what happens? I'm not interested in pastiche or collage. I'm interested in collision. — Robert Longo, 2024

Pace and Thaddaeus Ropac gallery are pleased to announce *Searchers*, a two-part exhibition of new work by Robert Longo, on view from October 9 at both Pace and Thaddaeus Ropac's London galleries. Each presentation will include a new Combine—monumental, five-panel multimedia wall works that return to the artist's 1981-89 series of the same name—in addition to a large-scale charcoal drawing, a small graphite drawing, and a film. By rupturing and reassembling the symbols of a collective cultural mythology, these works advance Longo's long-standing investigation into the relationship between the individual to society.

Robert Longo is widely recognized for his ambitiously scaled, hyperrealistic charcoal drawings. These monochromatic works often depict images from art historical sources, as well as scenes of protest, civil unrest, violence, war, and other social and political events. A key figure in the Pictures Generation of the 1970s and 1980s, his critical relationship to the media culture of his formative years has only intensified amid ever-more sophisticated methods of image distribution and an increasingly tumultuous global climate. Sourcing from television, film, news photography, personal photographs, and the internet, Longo carefully selects, alters, and enlarges these images, freezing their immediacy through the deliberate, time-intensive process of drawing. In doing so, he prompts viewers to reconsider their roles as consumers within today's image-saturated landscape.

Informed by Soviet film director Sergei Eisenstein's theory of montage and John Berger's influential text *Ways of Seeing* (1972), *Searchers* grew out of Longo's desire for his charcoal drawings to be and do more. For the exhibitions at Pace and Thaddaeus Ropac, he has revisited his Combines, which he envisions as a tool in which to overcome the visual and conceptual limitations of two-dimensional images. Referring to Robert Rauschenberg's earlier series of the same name, these large-scale, three-dimensional works bring together a range of materials (such as paint, stone, plaster, cast bronze, glass) and media (such as sculpture, drawing, film, photography) in a single work. The disparate parts are arranged in the way that Longo believes we encounter the world: as a bombardment of images and information that pervade our environment and consciousness.

The five-panel work at Pace, *Untitled (Hunter)* (2024), is composed of the following, from left to right: a film still of Keanu Reeves from the movie *John Wick*, a hyper-violent film about vengeance; a cascading sculptural relief made up of dense vertical strips of black and red plexiglass with dangerous, irregular, and highly reflective edges; a painting using 3D printing of cut-and-pasted protest images; a video of a sparkling blue-black current installed behind a steel frame with seven horizontal openings receding in perspective; and a charcoal drawing based on a grainy telephoto image of refugees at the Belarus-Polish border, appearing like a ring from Dante's *Inferno*.

Internally, Longo's Combines resist simple resolution. Each constituent image of *Untitled (Hunter)* captures a moment of acute, visually violent motion. Their formal symbolism, suspended like a staccato edit in a film, undergoes a further stage of translation as they are entwined with their respective mediums. By applying scale and sequential structure to these familiar yet incompatible images, Longo challenges the viewer to interpret the work and, by extension, the expansive array of images that surround us. In this endeavor, Longo echoes Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan's theory that 'the medium is the message,' highlighting how these images are mediated shapes our understanding and response to them.

Accompanying the Combine at Pace will be *Untitled (Black Peony)* (2024), a large-scale charcoal drawing. Longo describes flowers as "at once feminine yet masculine; sweet yet venomous; explosive yet temporal events." Another drawing, *Untitled (After Navalny)* (2024), based on a photograph of a protest following the unlawful imprisonment and subsequent death of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, will also be included in the exhibition. Measuring 6 x 8 1/8 inches (15.2 x 20.6 cm), this work once again transforms scale to challenge the viewer's process of meaning-making. The final element of the exhibition is a black-and-white, ultra-fast-paced, looped film presenting the onslaught of the image storm from one day of international news: July 4, 2024. The rapid flood of images is interrupted randomly by computer-generated stops, creating an experience with no beginning and no end, only different ways of looking and seeing.

Concurrent with his exhibitions in London, Longo is the subject of a major retrospective at the ALBERTINA Museum in Vienna, on view through January 26, 2025. At the Milwaukee Art Museum, Wisconsin, the artist is presenting work from the last ten years within the broader scope of his career and in comparison to other art historical genres such as history painting. This exhibition, titled *The Acceleration of History*, will be on view from October 25, 2024, through February 23, 2025.

Robert Longo (b. 1953, Brooklyn, New York) grew up in Long Island, New York. In 1973, Longo enrolled at Buffalo State College, where he worked for artists Paul Sharits and Hollis Frampton, who introduced him to structuralist filmmaking. Along with Charles Clough, Longo also co-founded Hallwalls (1974–ongoing), an alternative non-profit art exhibition space where he organized shows and talks with artists such as John Baldessari, Lynda Benglis, Robert Irwin, Joan Jonas, Bruce Nauman, and Richard Serra.

Longo has had one-person exhibitions at the Musée d'art moderne et d'art contemporain, Nice; Kunstmuseen Krefeld, Germany; Albertina, Vienna; Isetan Museum of Art, Tokyo; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and the Menil Collection, Houston. He has been included in Documenta 7 and 8, the 1983 and 2004 Whitney Biennials, and the 47th Venice Biennale.

Continuing to work with characteristic scale, precision, and perceptiveness, Longo achieves visually striking images of people, places, events, and animals. He slows his images down through the venerable medium of charcoal, often capturing images that would not otherwise be possible to see with the human eye. Through his large-scale hyperrealistic charcoal drawings, Longo has cemented himself as a preeminent artist of his generation. His work is held in multiple collections worldwide including, The Albertina Museum, Vienna; The Art Institute of Chicago; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Tate Modern; London, and The Museum of Modern Art, New York. In September 2024, The Albertina Museum, Vienna will host a retrospective of Longo's work, and in October 2024, the Milwaukee Art Museum, Wisconsin will present a solo exhibition of work made between 2014 and 2024.

Pace is a leading international art gallery representing some of the most influential artists and estates of the 20th and 21st centuries, founded by Arne Glimcher in 1960. Holding decades-long relationships with Alexander Calder, Jean Dubuffet, Agnes Martin, Louise Nevelson, and Mark Rothko, Pace has a unique history that can be traced to its



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early support of artists central to the Abstract Expressionist and Light and Space movements. Now in its seventh decade, the gallery continues to nurture its longstanding relationships with its legacy artists and estates while also making an investment in the careers of contemporary artists, including Torkwase Dyson, Loie Hollowell, Robert Nava, Adam Pendleton, and Marina Perez Simão.

Under the current leadership of CEO Marc Glimcher and President Samanthe Rubell, Pace has established itself as a collaborative force in the art world, partnering with other galleries and nonprofit organizations around the world in recent years. The gallery advances its mission to support its artists and share their visionary work with audiences and collectors around the world through a robust global program anchored by its exhibitions of both 20th century and contemporary art and scholarly projects from its imprint Pace Publishing, which produces books introducing new voices to the art historical canon. This artist-first ethos also extends to public installations, philanthropic events, performances, and other interdisciplinary programming presented by Pace.

Today, Pace has eight locations worldwide, including two galleries in New York—its eight-story headquarters at 540 West 25th Street and an adjacent 8,000-square-foot exhibition space at 510 West 25th Street. The gallery's history in the New York art world dates to 1963, when it opened its first space in the city on East 57th Street. A champion of Light and Space artists, Pace has also been active in California for some 60 years, opening its West Coast flagship in Los Angeles in 2022. The gallery maintains European footholds in London and Geneva as well as Berlin, where it established an office in 2023. Pace was one of the first international galleries to have a major presence in Asia, where it has been active since 2008, the year it first opened in Beijing's vibrant 798 Art District. It now operates galleries in Hong Kong and Seoul and opens its first gallery in Japan in Tokyo's Azabudai Hills development in 2024.

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