

# METRO PICTURES

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## MUSÉE



Robert Longo *Untitled (Caravan; Arriaga, Mexico; October 27, 2018)*, 2019. Charcoal on mounted paper 97 x 132 inches 246.4 x 335.3 cm.

Images pulled from the media come with a slew of connotations. When confronted with them, we're prepared to be stunned, swayed, and slandered. We're told at times not to trust these images. At other times, we are saved by them. The war, peace and politics of the twenty first and even late twentieth century are shaped by the paramount role of the media and can seldom be understood outside of their media construction. Since the 1990's, wars have become global media events, with 24 hour coverage and cameras attached to missiles. Hearings and inquiries clog the media cycle regularly, and local protests can stir solidarity around the world. At the same time, these images are fleeting, consistently replaced by the bigger, badder beast. Robert Longo's large scale photorealistic charcoal drawings pause those moments and memorialize them. They say, "Hey, remember this? Remember this."

A sculptor by nature, Longo chisels the most poignant moments from recent history off of the screen and onto paper, using artistic license to shape our perception in ways not unlike the use of rhetoric in broadcast journalism. For example, instead of creating a typical portrait of Jamal Khashoggi, the Saudi Arabian journalist and contributor to the *Washington Post* who was murdered in the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul by agents of the Saudi Government, Longo instead chose to depict Khashoggi in a field of television static, reminiscent of the surveillance footage used to prove the malicious nature of his death. This image at once honors Khashoggi's life and untimely death, as well as acknowledges the slowly fading media presence of his story, his essence carrying over into the style of his representation.



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Longo does this again in his depiction of Donald Trump's second State of the Union address in February of 2019. On this day, female members of the 116th congress attended the speech dressed in all white as a nod to the early 20th century suffragette movement. Longo alters the lighting of the popular media photograph, taken in the House of Representatives Chamber of the congress members. He places a shadow of darkness and grain over the conservative males contrasted by a beacon of light over the women wearing white. Being that the drawings are photorealistic, the beacon of light glares just like it would in an overexposed image. The women in the picture are surrounded by a blinding light of optimism in the midst of an ominous, almost apocalyptic grey.

Each image measures an average of 90x100 inches and in total the series takes up two grand, shadowy rooms, adding to their impressive, dramatic quality. Longo's manipulation of photography and mass media is provocative and refreshing. By pulling from moments in the Confederate statue debates, the 2015 Russian airstrike on Syria, and the 2017 spike in Mediterranean Sea refugee crossings, Longo captures the challenges and triumphs of our modern day, leaving us focused, reflective, and ready for what's to come.