

## Office

Francesco João  
*Untitled*, 2024  
Acrylic, gouache and vinyl on canvas  
35 x 50 cm

## Gallery

Robert Longo  
*Jones/ Dolphin in Tank JM7*, 1993  
Charcoal, graphite, chalk, marker on vellum  
40 x 48 cm

Francesco João  
*Untitled*, 2023  
Acrylic, gouache and vinyl on canvas  
35 x 50 cm

Robert Longo  
*J-Bone transmission JM 13*, 1993  
Charcoal on paper  
30 x 41 cm

Francesco João  
*Untitled*, 2025  
Acrylic, gouache and vinyl on canvas  
35 x 50 cm

Robert Longo  
*Johnny Hotel JM 21*, 1993  
Charcoal on paper  
43.5 x 54.5 cm

Francesco João  
*Untitled*, 2024  
Acrylic, gouache and vinyl on canvas  
35 x 50 cm

## Francesco João & Robert Longo Politic

ON VIEW

July 5 – August 2, 2025

OPENING

July 4, 2025

Hot Wheels London  
91 Great Russell Street, WC1B 3PS  
London, United Kingdom

A dark surface, suspended on two metal cables, stretched from floor to ceiling. Seen from a distance, it might appear as a monochrome. A blank, deep space—with gloomy, blueish tones. As your gaze sharpens, details emerge: markings, an icon. 00:00. A seven-segment display—a component employed to represent decimal numerals and alphabetic characters, known for its use in digital clocks, calculators, microwaves, and other electronic devices. A relic from the future. It's a new painting by Francesco João: *Untitled (SSD)*, acrylic, vinyl, gouache on raw canvas.

You're in London. It's July 4th, 2025. Just days ago, temperatures in the city soared to 37.4°C—the highest recorded anywhere in Britain this year. The Met Office declared it “virtually certain” that the heatwave was driven by global warming.

You move through the rooms of an unfurnished apartment at 91 Great Russell Street, turned into a gallery for contemporary art. On the white walls, a series of two-dimensional images forms a kind of horizontal punctuation. A mental landscape. More recent paintings by João—again featuring seven-segment displays—this time layered over a reddish, abstract background: a sky in flames, a dramatic celestial space.

The works are interspersed with a group of small charcoal drawings on paper by Robert Longo, framed in thick black wooden frames, under glass. *Jones / Dolphin in Tank JM7*, *J- Bone Transmission JM13*, *Johnny Hotel JM21*—all from 1993. Visual studies and storyboards for *Johnny Mnemonic*, Longo's debut feature film—a dystopian cyberpunk thriller based on a 1981 short story by science fiction maverick William Gibson, who also wrote the screenplay.

Set in the year 2021, the film stars Keanu Reeves as Johnny, a black-market data courier with a cybernetic implant in his brain. When the information he carries exceeds his memory capacity and threatens his life, he must deliver it within 48 hours—while being hunted by corporate assassins and criminal syndicates.

Underlying the work of both artists, a scenario where politics is liquified into data streams and human beings are reduced to overloaded interfaces.

Longo is renowned for his monumental, hyper-realistic charcoal drawings that examine the creation of symbols tied to power and authority. Drawing inspiration from Carl Jung's concept of the collective unconscious, he investigates the impact of an image-saturated culture—how we absorb, interpret, and remember the constant stream of visual stimuli.

João was always “interested in the relationship between transcendence and economics.” His SSD series is a metaphor of a perpetual present, a short circuit, a return to the “zero degree” of painting, a niche of resistance towards a form of power exercised through algorithmic prediction. Art as an anomaly, a system error, a blackout of automation.

Power failures and data losses are a recurring and powerful theme in cyberpunk fiction. In a hyper-connected, tech-dominated world, a blackout is more than just darkness—it's vulnerability. It's a political act. A blinking SSD display, back to 00:00.

—Alessio Ascari

Special thanks to Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac London Paris Salzburg Milan Seoul.