

Yoshitomo Nara: Ceramic Works

September 5 – October 21, 2023
267 Itaewon-ro
Seoul



Yoshitomo Nara, studio view in Shigaraki, 2023 © Yoshitomo Nara

Seoul–Pace is pleased to present an exhibition of work by Yoshitomo Nara at its arts complex in Seoul. On view from September 5 to October 21, the presentation, titled *Ceramic Works* and coinciding with Frieze Seoul, marks the artist's first solo show in Korea since 2005. In his upcoming exhibition in Seoul, Nara will present some 140 ceramics and 30 drawings on paper and cardboard—along with selected items from his personal collection—as part of an installation that captures the essence of environment as well as his ideas, feelings, and creative impulses.

Nara rose to prominence in the late 1990s, when he became internationally known for his emotionally resonant, stylized images of child-like characters set against monochromatic backgrounds. Drawing inspiration from various sources—including politics, punk rock, folk music, 1960s counterculture, and his own memories and experiences from childhood—Nara developed a signature style that celebrates the introspective freedom of the imagination and the individual. The children in his works are depicted in a range of psychic states, from rebellious and resistant to quiet, contemplative, and lonely.

The artist's practice encompasses not only painting but also drawing, photography, large-scale installation, and sculpture in ceramic, bronze, and fiber-reinforced plastic. It was during Nara's 2007 residency in Shigaraki, Japan—home to one of the country's six ancient kilns, where the artist has since returned to work—that he began experimenting with clay, a medium that allowed him to engage new modes of creating three-dimensional forms. The collaborative, community-oriented ethos of the residency also influenced Nara's early work in ceramic, which included handmade sculptures as well as plates and cups produced on the wheel.

Nara's forthcoming presentation with Pace in Seoul will spotlight the expressionistic and material qualities of his ceramics. In addition to idiosyncratic plays of shape and texture, hand-painted faces and written messages imbue the works with emotional and psychological import. The show—featuring mostly recent works that Nara produced in the past three years during an ongoing residency in Shigaraki—will be installed within cabinets and atop custom wooden tables and shelves owned by the artist. These ceramics will be situated in conversation with a selection of his drawings in an active, while deeply intimate environment, bringing into focus his sensibility of expression across different, yet inherently linked, materials and mediums.

This unique installation of Nara's ceramics and drawings, along with objects from his personal collection, will reflect his own creativity, curiosity, and interdisciplinary approach to making. Spirited exchanges among the works and items on view will abound the space, shedding light on the artist's process and offering visitors a window into his private world.

The artist's exhibition in Seoul will coincide with his first institutional solo exhibition in Europe in a decade, on view at the Albertina Modern in Vienna through November 1. In October, during his presentation with Pace in the Korean capital, Nara will open a solo show at the Aomori Museum of Art in Japan.

Yoshitomo Nara (b. 1959, Hirosaki, Aomori, Japan) is a pioneering figure in contemporary art whose signature style—which expresses figures in a range of emotional complexities from resistance and rebellion to quietude and contemplation—celebrates the introspective freedom of the imagination and the individual. Nara's work spans painting, drawing, photography, large-scale installations, and sculpture in ceramic, bronze, and fibre-reinforced plastic. Influenced by popular music, memories of childhood, and current events, he filters these references through an exploratory realm of feelings, loneliness and rebelliousness especially, which span autobiographical as well as broader cultural sensibilities.

Pace is a leading international art gallery representing some of the most influential contemporary artists and estates from the past century, holding decades-long relationships with Alexander Calder, Jean Dubuffet, Barbara Hepworth, Agnes Martin, Louise Nevelson, and Mark Rothko. Pace enjoys a unique U.S. heritage spanning East and West coasts through its early support of artists central to the Abstract Expressionist and Light and Space movements.




Since its founding by Arne Glimcher in 1960, Pace has developed a distinguished legacy as an artist-first gallery that mounts seminal historical and contemporary exhibitions. Under the current leadership of CEO Marc Glimcher, Pace continues to support its artists and share their visionary work with audiences worldwide by remaining at the forefront of innovation. Now in its seventh decade, the gallery advances its mission through a robust global program—comprising exhibitions, artist projects, public installations, institutional collaborations, performances, and interdisciplinary projects. Pace has a legacy in art bookmaking and has published over five hundred titles in close collaboration with artists, with a focus on original scholarship and on introducing new voices to the art historical canon.

Today, Pace has eight locations worldwide, including a European foothold in London and Geneva as well as Berlin, where the gallery established an office in 2023. Pace maintains two galleries in New York—its headquarters at 540 West 25th Street, which welcomed almost 120,000 visitors and programmed 20 shows in its first six months, and an adjacent 8,000 sq. ft. exhibition space at 510 West 25th Street. Pace's long and pioneering history in California includes a gallery in Palo Alto, which was open from 2016 to 2022. Pace's engagement with Silicon Valley's technology industry has had a lasting impact on the gallery at a global level, accelerating its initiatives connecting art and technology as well as its work with experiential artists. Pace consolidated its West Coast activity through its flagship in Los Angeles, which opened in 2022. Pace was one of the first international galleries to establish outposts in Asia, where it operates permanent gallery spaces in Hong Kong and Seoul, along with an office and viewing room in Beijing.

Press Inquiries

Kyungmi Kim
Public Relations Associate
kkim@pacegallery.com
+82 070 7708 7755

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