

Raqib Shaw: Space Between Dreams

November 10 – December 22, 2023

540 West 25th Street

New York



Raqib Shaw, *Space Between Dreams - The Mourning Mendicant*, 2022-23 © Raqib Shaw / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

“Is *all* that we see or seem
But a dream within a dream?”
- Edgar Allan Poe

New York –Pace is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by Raqib Shaw at its 540 West 25th Street gallery in New York. On view from November 10 to December 22, the show, titled *Space Between Dreams*, will bring together 16 meticulously wrought works that merge imagined and real landscapes, combining imagery drawn from the artist’s memories of his native Kashmir; cityscapes evocative of London, New York, and Venice; and scenes from his garden in South London, where he lives and works. This will be Pace’s first presentation of Shaw’s work in New York since 2019.

Over the past two decades, Shaw has developed a singular method for creating opulent and richly detailed images depicting scenes that merge fantastical worlds with narratives from his own life. Reflecting on his own experiences, observations, and memories, Shaw’s dreamscapes are at once imagined environments and self-portraits, which meditate on afterimages from Kashmir—a place torn apart by political and ethnic violence—where he spent the early years of his life before emigrating to London at the age of 18. The title of the exhibition is an allusion to Edgar Allan Poe’s 1849 poem “A Dream Within a Dream,” which the artist first read as a child while growing up in India.

Poetry lies at the center of Shaw’s approach to painting. In addition to Poe, the works in his forthcoming exhibition also take Lord Tennyson’s famous 1832 poem, “The Lady of Shallot,” as a point of reference. Themes of enclosure, desire, longing, and mortality, which recur throughout Tennyson’s poem, cut through Shaw’s imagery. As with his previous bodies of work, his approach to artmaking draws deeply on his intense study of the history of European painting—particularly the works of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Annibale Carracci, John Constable, Caspar David Friedrich, and Thomas Gainsborough, among others—which he merges with the pictorial traditions drawn from a wide range of non-Western sources, such as Persian and Mughal miniatures. Composed of vivid and intricately rendered webs of form, the surfaces of Shaw’s alchemical compositions resemble cloisonné enamel, often suggesting the effect of richly inlaid gems and precious stones in the sumptuous arts of both Europe and India.

In the artist's latest paintings, landscapes are visible through the architectural frames of balconies, balustrades, and colonnades, which situate the outside world at a cinematic remove. Ornate arches and doors seem to serve as portals into unknown realms that teem with beauty but are also fractured and riven by undercurrents of violence. Though they were conceived individually, many of the works will be presented as diptychs, with their compositions unfolding as mirror images from one scene to the next. These hybrid landscapes are the result of a painstaking and laborious technical process—in which Shaw applies acrylic liner and enamel paint to an aluminum support—that yields mesmeric visual effects.

The otherworldly scenes in Shaw's new paintings forge continuities between various far-flung locales, both real and fictive: the richly foliated topographies of the artist's native Srinagar are woven into the distinctive architectural environment of London, while dreamlike depictions of Venice and New York collide with verdant scenes that seem drawn from his exuberant garden in the English capital. In one of these phantasmagoric tableaux, a robed figure gazes upon a receding mountainous landscape of flowering trees, which transforms into a roaring inferno ignited by soaring fighter jets. Meanwhile, many of the works in Shaw's upcoming New York exhibition also reference past paintings in his oeuvre, citing and reworking passages of earlier works to form a self-referential prism in which the artist retraces his life both *in* and *as* the history of his own painting.

Concurrent with his presentation of new works at Pace, Shaw's first traveling museum retrospective, *Ballads of East and West*, is on view at the Frist Art Museum in Nashville through December 31. *Ballads of East and West* will travel to the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston in February 2024, and it will remain on view there through May 12, 2024. Following its run in Boston, the show will be presented at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and finally at the Huntington Library, Art Museum and Botanical Gardens in Southern California.

Raqib Shaw's (b. 1974, Calcutta) paintings and sculptures reveal an eclectic fusion of influences—from Persian carpets and Northern Renaissance painting to industrial materials and Japanese lacquerware. Shaw moved from Kashmir to London in 1998 to study art. There, a patchwork of cultural references began to crystallize in his opulent and intricately detailed paintings of fantastical worlds. His works are often developed in series from literary, art historical, and mystical sources, with specific references in images and titles. His intimately scaled, painted bronze sculptures depict animal-human hybrids, figures that exist singularly as well as in the settings of larger tableaux. These otherworldly works bring Shaw's phantasmagorical visions into the three-dimensional realm.

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 seven locations worldwide, including European footholds 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. In spring 2024, Pace will open its first gallery space in Japan in Tokyo's new Azabudai Hills development.



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