

Raqib Shaw *Reflections Upon the Looking-Glass River*

June 8 – August 7, 2021
Quai des Bergues 15-17
Geneva

Raqib Shaw, *Bloom bleeder in the looking-glass river*, 2020-2021
© Raqib Shaw, courtesy Pace Gallery



Geneva—Pace is honoured to present the first exhibition of paintings by Raqib Shaw at its Geneva gallery. On view June 8 – August 7, *Raqib Shaw: Reflections Upon the Looking-Glass River* brings together a suite of recent paintings made while in lockdown. Presented in dialogue with one another, these intricate paintings speak to the most pressing themes of contemporary life: beauty, kindness, cruelty, loneliness, contentment, loss. This exhibition will be accompanied by an illustrated artist publication with an introduction by Shaw.

The lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 afforded Shaw more time to devote to his passions. In paintings such as *Lockdown Bliss*, Shaw is depicted reading under the moonlight with his beloved dog. Shaw also used the enforced time at home to tend to the garden of his South London home-studio. Inspired by the landscape of Kashmir, Shaw hand-built an elaborate alpine rockery from over 70 tonnes of rock and soil with a cornucopia of flowers, shrubbery and miniature trees; serving as both a tranquil oasis from the bustling city and a stage set for his ornate paintings. Borrowing its title from the 1885 poem by Robert Louis Stevenson, *Raqib Shaw: Reflections Upon the Looking-Glass River* pays homage to the imposed ‘slowness’ of the last 18 months. Shaw’s contemplative paintings, much like Stevenson’s poem, call attention to the quiet moments of life and the knowledge that all disturbances eventually calm:

‘Patience, children, just a minute –
See the spreading circles die;
The stream and all in it
Will clear by-and-by.’

In connecting his painting to the idyllic, pastoral imagery of Stevenson's poem, Shaw underscores his preoccupation with the relationship between nature and childlike fantasy. The paintings titled after the poem—*Bloom Bleeder in the Looking-Glass River*, *High Summer in the Looking-Glass River*, and *Tempesta (after Giorgione) in the Looking-Glass River*—represent the cycle of the seasons, connected by the same mystical view of London in the background. The familiar swirl of the River Thames snakes around the iconic city skyline, a stark reminder of the reality of the outside world while the painting's protagonist remains entrenched in their individual world.

Renowned for his ornate and elaborate paintings, Shaw's work is a fusion of fantasy, mythology, realism, and biography, with direct references to Indian miniature painting and Western art history. Responding to his self-imposed exile from Kashmir, paintings such as *That night in Xanadu when the birds were set free...* (2019-2021) reclaim the lush landscapes of Shaw's childhood to evoke the duality of expansiveness and self-containment. At the core of Shaw's distinctive visual language is this tension between escapism and confinement, longing and exile. The global pandemic has brought this further into focus.

The paintings on view in *Raqib Shaw: Reflections Upon the Looking-Glass River* mark a new development in the artist's distinctive visual lexicon with the addition of London's modern cityscape. Shaw has combined his iconic compositions of acrylic liner, Hammerite and enamel with a contrasting wash of watercolour. The interplay of viscous, glossy paint with delicate watercolour enhances the sculptural effect of the former, imbuing his paintings with newfound solidity. In *Final Submersion in the looking-glass river* (2021) Shaw carefully interweaves the two mediums in the reflection on the water's surface, a playful comment on the fragile relationship between reality and imitation.

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 mythical sources, with specific references and symbolism 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 President and 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. The gallery has also spearheaded exploration into the intersection of art and technology through new business models, exhibition interpretation tools, and representation of artists engaging with technology.

Today, Pace has nine locations worldwide including London, Geneva, a strong foothold in Palo Alto, and 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 was one of the first international galleries to establish outposts in Asia, where it operates permanent gallery spaces in Hong Kong and Seoul, as well as an office and viewing room in Beijing. In 2020, Pace opened temporary exhibition spaces in East Hampton and Palm Beach, with continued programming on a seasonal basis. In fall 2021, Pace will continue to expand its European presence with the opening of a larger gallery space in London.

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