

Yoshitomo Nara: Pinacoteca

26 November 2021 – 15 January 2022

5 Hanover Square

London

Opening Reception Thursday 25 November



Yoshitomo Nara, *STOP THE BOMBS*, 2019
acrylic on wood, 58-7/8" × 46-1/4" × 3-1/16" (149.5 cm × 117.5 cm × 7.8 cm) © Yoshitomo Nara

London – Pace Gallery is delighted to announce **Yoshitomo Nara: Pinacoteca**, a landmark solo exhibition, opening 26 November 2021. Marking the first show to utilize the full expanse of Pace's new London gallery, Yoshitomo Nara's exhibition will be presented across two levels with a major new installation at its centre, and a diverse range of recent paintings, sculpture, and works on cardboard throughout the three galleries.

Yoshitomo Nara's practice expertly balances the aesthetics of material with thoughtful reflections on the human experience – pain, war, spirit, politics, loneliness, music, and nature. *Yoshitomo Nara: Pinacoteca* coincides with the artist's major retrospective at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which has been extended through January 2022, and the exhibition, *i forgot their names and often can't remember their faces but remember their voices well* at Dallas Contemporary, Texas, March 20–August 22, 2021.

At the cornerstone of the exhibition Nara will present *Pinacoteca 2021*, a new multi-room installation that is reworked from an earlier project titled *London Mayfair House* which Nara built from abandoned materials found in a London suburb in 2006. One of only 15 in existence, seven of which are in public collections such as the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Leum, Samsung Museum of Art in South Korea and the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, this installation offers a rare insight into the artist's radically multidisciplinary, experiential practice.

Borrowing its title from the Ancient Greco-Roman term for a public art salon, *Pinacoteca 2021*, is a specially crafted multi-room structure that imitates an exhibition space. Since 1985, Nara's practice has explored the relationship between space and artwork. In 2001 he created an installation that resembled his student room, in which he exhibited unframed drawings by pinning them directly on the walls as if just completed, bringing the viewer into his inner world. Between 2003 and 2010, Nara made several spatial installations, often using found materials and personal affects alongside artworks to build and compose his structures.

'In these fantastical, childlike rooms, Nara disrupt[s] the institutional spaces of museums and galleries by challenging the traditional classifications of what is and is not considered art. ... With each exhibition, a viewer's experience as voyeur, consumer, or passerby becomes a part of the dislocating effect of this concentrated layering of things.' – Dr. Yeewan Koon

Visitors are invited to enter *Pinacoteca 2021* and experience the work from within as a gallery of paintings. Nara has meticulously designed every facet of the space to evoke a strong sense of place and emotion and create connections between viewer and environment. On the internal walls, newly created paintings on wood and canvas as well as drawings on paper, used envelopes, and cardboard boxes, are hung by the artist himself. Adorning the outside walls – which have been directly painted onto – Nara hangs new paintings on wood which are stylistically simpler and more graphic than the works inside the installation. Sightlines from outside the structure have been carefully constructed through wooden slats and windows, deftly shifting the viewer's position from participant to onlooker as they enter and exit the space.

For more than three decades, Nara's idiosyncratic visual language has centred on innocent, genderless figures often rendered in bright colours with large heads and oval eyes. Drawing on a multitude of sources, including politics, punk rock and folk music, and the counterculture of the 1960s, Nara's iconic figures function as a kind of self-portrait. Working alone, Nara channels his inner world through these unusual and brazen figures, whose expressions range from indignant and rebellious (*Banging the Drum*, 2020) to despondent (*Okhotsk Girl Island, Cape Shiretoko*, 2020) and inquisitive (*... So*, 2020). Particular attention is paid to the materiality of his work. Nara's paintings on cardboard such as *Girl with Drum Sticks* (2019) and *Remember BTB* (2020), retain the exposed raw edges, leaving old barcodes and shipping text visible as part of the painting's composition.

Peace Head (2020) and *Ennui Head* (2020), two new bronze sculptures covered in a white urethane coating, began as small palm sized works in clay before being enlarged and cast. Melding the physical, natural world with portraiture, these sculptures have a shared sensibility with his graphite drawings in their use of shadow and line. Nara's work with ceramics introduces an element of chance to his experiments in clay via the firing process. In *Miss. Smooth-Flat* (2021), Nara focuses on form and materiality, imbuing the character with an ambiguous mix of emotions that ranges from anger to boredom, the interpretation is left to the viewer.

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. In 2021, Nara opened two major exhibitions: a survey at Dallas Contemporary, Texas and a retrospective at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which continues through to January 2022.

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.

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