

Yoshitomo Nara

Ceramic Works and...

12/F, H Queen's
80 Queen's Road Central
March 27 – May 12, 2018

Opening Reception:
Monday, March 26, 6 - 8 PM



Hong Kong—Pace Gallery is pleased to inaugurate its second gallery in Hong Kong with an exhibition of new works by Japanese artist Yoshitomo Nara. On view March 27 through May 12, 2018 in H Queen's, *Yoshitomo Nara: Ceramic Works and...* is the artist's fourth solo exhibition with Pace Gallery worldwide. Coinciding with Art Basel Hong Kong 2018, the exhibition includes new ceramic sculptures, paintings, and works on paper that continue the pioneering contemporary artist's innovative approach to representation and form.

The cornerstone of the exhibition comprises 12 new ceramic sculptures. The works were made in Shigaraki Japan, one of the oldest places in the country for production in the medium and a place where the artist has returned to work. With a dual focus on the form and materiality, Nara links together volumetric considerations with aesthetic qualities of the clay to service a conversation between the two. He further draws from frank observations of nature and humans, intermixing the two, suggesting an emotional range of psychological expressions, from steadfast and pensive to tired and mischievous in these works. Following the exhibition at Pace, several of the new sculptures will be loaned to the forthcoming Taiwan Ceramics Biennale, on view from September 7, 2018 to March 3, 2019.

In his new paintings, Nara continues to present his familiar images of a single figure that he's continued to refine. Relying on the thinner quality of acrylic paint compared to oil, Nara creates each painting by adding and removing pigment until he reaches his desired effect: a canvas made up of suspended hues that allows the figure to emerge through layers of color, inviting the viewer to stand still and enter a moment of contemplation. For his works on paper, Nara presents a more narrative approach. The lively pencil lines capture moments and figures, all in an expressive style experimenting with light, shadow, stillness and movement.

Ceramic Sculptures and Drawing and Painting

By Yoshitomo Nara

Painting on a canvas carries the weight of an important mission, and it's actually difficult for me to deal with. I try to make it easier by enjoying how the colors on the surface and the elements of the composition change. But even this, I find myself thinking and acting, rather than doing it by feeling. Basically, I'm not naturally suited to painting. Saying so might leave us with nothing, but for some reason, I continue painting. I wonder why...

Well, putting aside such personal worries, let's get to drawings and dimensional works. I pick up a pencil, and drawings are born one after another, faithful to the feelings of that day, that moment. This sense of being born is hard to come by in the painting process. In my case, painted works aren't born, they're created. This is probably why the painting process is saddled with the kinds of worries and agonies I mentioned earlier. Drawings are born without the pain of creation. They're born naturally, like breathing, without concern for success or failure.

Drawings have always sustained me as an artist whenever my painting process wasn't going well, but since I first took the medium of clay in my hands about 10 years ago, it's become something that lies right between painting and drawing for me. In particular, the positive surrender to taking a clay work that I believe is creatively complete, and seeing it replaced by the fired ceramic result which may be better or worse than my own capabilities, feels good. I think it's because it differs from other sculptural media that can be controlled, but my encounter with creating ceramics has been one of the most significant of my artistic life.

Recently I realized that clay is freer than pencil. Before a toddler first grasps a pencil and draws, comes the act of holding. Change comes about from holding, squeezing, releasing, holding again. This is a more primal instinct to create with the hands directly, rather than using a tool like a pencil or a brush. This exhibition shows ceramic sculptures created by my hands in the space between freedom and restriction, and the drawings that supported those ideas. That, plus the newest paintings created through my process of worries and struggles. I believe that my artistic consciousness (or rather, my personal consciousness), which has long been sustained by drawing whenever painting did not come easily, has grown a little from gaining the output of ceramics.

Yoshitomo Nara (b. 1959, Hirosaki, Aomori, Japan) After graduating from Aichi University of the Arts with a Master's degree in 1987, Nara completed further studies at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and resided in Cologne until 2000 when he returned to Japan. Since the mid-1990s, Nara has exhibited around the world and has worked with a range of institutions, from small independent art spaces to internationally renowned galleries and museums. For Nara, the type of institution or the size of a space matters less than how connected he feels with its environment. His approach to art is also similarly dependent on his sense of connection with their making. His paintings are expressions of colors that breathe life into his bold images, his recent sculptures bear traces of his fingers that have shaped their forms, and his drawings capture the spontaneity of daily thoughts. Nara has also exhibited his photographic works to depict his life and travels.

Yoshitomo Nara lives and works in Japan. He has been represented by Pace since 2011.

Pace is a leading contemporary art gallery representing many of the most significant international artists and estates of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Under the leadership of President and CEO Marc Glimcher, Pace is a vital force within the art world and plays a critical role in shaping the history, creation, and engagement with modern and contemporary art. Since its founding by Arne Glimcher in 1960, Pace has developed a distinguished legacy for vibrant and dedicated relationships with renowned artists. As the gallery approaches the start of its seventh decade, Pace's mission continues to be inspired by our drive to support the world's most influential and innovative artists and to share their visionary work with people around the world.

Pace advances this mission through its dynamic global program, comprising ambitious exhibitions, artist projects, public installations, institutional collaborations, and curatorial research and writing. Today, Pace has eight locations worldwide: three

galleries in New York; one in London; one in Palo Alto, California; one in Beijing; one in Hong Kong; and one in Seoul. Pace will open its second gallery in Hong Kong, as well as a new space in Geneva in March 2018; and will open a new flagship gallery in New York, anticipated for completion in fall 2019. In 2016, Pace joined with Futurecity to launch Future\ Pace – an international cultural partnership innovating multidisciplinary projects for art in the public realm.

Image: Studio view of sculpture in progress, 2018, ceramic. Photographs by Yoshitomo Nara © Yoshitomo Nara, courtesy Pace Gallery.

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