

Yoshitomo Nara: The Bootleg Drawings 1988 – 2023

17 November 2023 – 29 February 2024

Pace Gallery

Quai des Bergues, 15-17



© Yoshitomo Nara, courtesy Pace Gallery

Geneva – Pace is pleased to present a survey of drawings by Yoshitomo Nara at its Geneva gallery. On view from November 17, 2023 to February 29, 2024 the exhibition will mark the artist's first-ever solo show in Switzerland. Tracing more than three decades of his career, *Yoshitomo Nara: The Bootleg Drawings 1988 – 2023* will bring together nearly 200 works on paper informed by politics, punk rock, folk music, and 1960s counterculture along with the artist's own memories, childhood experiences, and his years spent living in Germany.

For his upcoming exhibition, Nara has culled a selection of never-before seen works which embraces somewhat raw and unfiltered sensibility. Individually, each drawing in the show sheds light on the artist's aesthetic interests and approach to figuration at different points in his life. Together, these works present a holistic, deeply personal picture of his career through the lens of a singular medium.

Created in notebooks and on found materials ranging from corrugated cardboard to envelopes and newspapers, Nara's spontaneous drawings featuring youthful figures, anthropomorphised animals, song lyrics, and expletives are fundamentally intimate reflections of his psychological landscape. In Nara's hands, aesthetic signifiers of youth—like large heads and wide eyes—tap into complex emotions and psychic states, from rebellious and resistant to quiet, contemplative, and lonely.

The artist began doodling as a young child, practicing during classes, as he walked home from school, and at his childhood home in the semi-rural town of Hirosaki in northern Japan. Since Nara's youth, music has been a hugely important force and influence in his work and life. Purchasing his first album at eight years old, he has always seen music as inextricable from his drawing process, with the sounds from his records transfiguring his ideas and feelings into images on the page.

The earliest drawings in Nara's forthcoming exhibition with Pace in Geneva date to 1988, the year he moved to Germany to attend the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. There, he studied under artist A.R. Penck, who encouraged Nara to combine his drawing and painting practices—an important moment in the development of his signature style. A selection of Nara's bold figurations from 1989 on view in Pace's exhibition reflect the violent rawness of Penck's work. In departing from gridded compositions of composite parts in favour of singular subjects and motifs set against flattened backgrounds, these works are preludes to a significant shift in the direction of Nara's painting style a few years later: large, rounded heads against plain backgrounds.

In Nara's expansive practice—which encompasses painting, photography, large-scale installation, and sculpture—drawing is the medium through which he expresses his humour and introspective sensibilities most vividly. Interspersed with song lyrics and slogans, figurative images of skateboarders, mermaids, and guitar players speak to the artist's personal, freewheeling musings. For Nara, drawing is a deeply personal act of refinement and experimentation when it comes to both ideas and technical processes.

Yoshitomo Nara: The Bootleg Drawings 1988 – 2023 will coincide with a major solo exhibition of Nara's work at the Aomori Museum of Art in Japan, running from October 14, 2023 to February 25, 2024.

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 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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