

Yto Barrada

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 68 Park Place
 East Hampton



Image: Yto Barrada, *Untitled (After Stella, Sunrise III)*, 2020 © Yto Barrada, courtesy Pace Gallery

“I’m interested in building on the history of a place, a moment, a movement. The more I learn about something, the more meaning I find.” – Yto Barrada

East Hampton — Pace Gallery is pleased to inaugurate its second summer season in East Hampton with a solo exhibition of new and recent work by French-Moroccan artist Yto Barrada, who is known for her research-based approach of mining historical figures, sites, and situations as fodder for artistic transformation. This exhibition brings together over 25 works from five interrelated series by Barrada: recent textile works created in response to Frank Stella’s Moroccan paintings; a selection of velvet collages which feature chromatic hand dyed scale studies sourced from the artist’s dye garden in Tangier; a series of photograms of candy wrappers that explore the idea of the void; a selection of collages that respond to the aftermath of the catastrophic 1960 earthquake in the Moroccan city of Agadir; and furniture sculptures that draw on the history of the 18th century “conversation chair” created using traditional Moroccan wicker weaving techniques. The resulting works explore the layered interconnectivity of places, people, commerce, and politics in a global post-colonial world.

Barrada’s work is intrinsically imbued with politics, often subtly suggested in symbolic visuals and instilled with a poetic sensibility rather than obvious directives and political positions. The artist’s series of new large-scale textile works continues her exploration into dyeing processes using natural pigments, and alludes to Frank Stella’s Moroccan paintings, which he began in 1964 and completed the following year. Each of the 12 paintings in Stella’s series are titled after a city in Morocco, and their geometry and the brilliance of their fluorescent alkyd paints mimics the colorful tile patterns he found during his travels there beginning in the 1960s. Directly citing his paintings in their titles, Barrada’s hand-sewn textile works similarly present luminous tones in alternating diagonal bands of color. Barrada’s textile works are equally inspired by the painters Mohamed Chebaa, Farid Belkahia, and Mohamed Melehi of the Casablanca Art School in the 1960s. Following Morocco’s independence in 1956, they pioneered a North African modernism that turned away from the traditions of French colonialist history, instead using an approach to

abstraction that integrated the materials and motifs of the local heritage and visual culture. For the present series, Barrada expanded Stella's list of Moroccan cities, adding her hometown of Tangier in compositions using indigo, cochineal, and madder.

Barrada has been exploring the natural dye process for several years, using indigo and chamomile to stain fabrics in her studio. Barrada's use of natural dyes extends from the local traditions of Morocco's textile industry. Connecting the origins of the colors to their botanical sources, she surveys the networks of trade surrounding dyes and their complex history of movement between the East and West. Furthermore, the series of velvet collages included in this exhibition are inspired by the color chart sampling systems used in textile conservation. Composed of velvet squares in geometric shapes that reveal gradations of the dyeing process and experiments with muted natural hues, these works speak to the history of abstract painting, modernist design, and the pragmatism of practice and learning. Barrada is currently building a public botanic garden in Tangier to cultivate over 500 varieties of plants to be used in the production of natural dyes. Color and abstraction are also important themes in Barrada's series of photograms. Untitled (Bonbon series), from 2017, are produced using a camera-less photographic process that turns light and shadow into positive and negative images. While playful, these works also gesture to the themes of absence and presence—what remains in history and what is hidden—prevalent throughout Barrada's practice. Through the layering of images and texts, alongside sitting sculptures that invite specific forms of engagement, the artist maps a process of healing and reconnection that translates to the present moment.

In the gallery's back viewing room, Barrada has also installed a group of collaged works on paper together with pieces from her series of conversational furniture handcrafted using traditional Moroccan wicker weaving. Created for her 2018 exhibition at the Barbican Curve Gallery in London, these works are inspired by the novel-play *Agadir* (1967) by Moroccan writer Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine, which reflects on the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that destroyed most of the city of Agadir in 1960. The city's destruction coincided with a time of decolonization and the Cold War, as well as modernist ideas of rebuilding and reinvention. Shown together, the Agadir collages and furniture sculptures explore the ways in which cities and people might address the process of rebuilding following a disaster. In a time where social dynamics are in flux following a year of distance in the pandemic, Barrada's exploration of trauma is particularly poignant.

Concurrently, the Museum of Modern Art will mount the latest edition of its Artist's Choice exhibition series by Barrada. On view from May 8, 2021 to January 9, 2022, *Artist's Choice: Yto Barrada—A Raft* brings together over 60 works selected by Barrada from the museum's permanent collection across two galleries. For this iteration of the series, Barrada gathers works that resonate with the ideas and work of the French social work pioneer and writer Fernand Deligny (1913–1996) who attempted to create a new way of living “outside language,” adapted for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Barrada's work will also be presented alongside pieces from MoMA's collection.

In Europe, Barrada's work is highlighted in *Moroccan Trilogy 1950-2020*—a sweeping survey of the culture of Morocco from the 1950s to the present day—which is currently on view at the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid through

September 2021. Forthcoming exhibitions include a presentation at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam opening in October 2022.

Yto Barrada (b. 1971, Paris) is recognized for her multidisciplinary investigations of cultural phenomena, with a focus on Morocco. Grounded in documentary photography, her practice also encompasses other media including film, sculpture, painting, printmaking, and publishing, through both original work and found objects. Informed by postcolonial thought and socio-political concerns, Barrada's interests range from the tensions around borders, immigration, and tourism to the urban landscape, and from children's toys to botany and paleontology. Avoiding direct reportage of dramatic events, her work includes photographs of vacant lots and accounts of the Moroccan fossil trade that relate microhistories and focus on economic and cultural issues. She initiates cross-cultural dialogue by reinterpreting social relationships, uncovering subaltern histories, and revealing the prevalence of fiction in institutionalized narratives.

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, Isamu Noguchi, 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 spaces in Hong Kong and Seoul. In July 2020 Pace opened a temporary gallery space in East Hampton, New York that will be programmed through October 2021. Additionally, the gallery's seasonal exhibition space in Palm Beach will be open through spring 2021. 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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