

Keith Coventry City Racing

28 April – 25 May, 2023
5 Hanover Square
London

Opening Reception: Thursday 27 April, 6-8pm



Keith Coventry, *Landscape Junk 1, 2023*
oil on linen, Perspex and wood framed, 150 × 275 cm © Keith Coventry

London—Pace Gallery is pleased to announce *Keith Coventry: City Racing*. Taking over two galleries in Pace’s Hanover Square space, Coventry brings together several of his most celebrated bodies of work, as well as a new series he has been ruminating on for nearly three decades. Titled after the renowned South London gallery Coventry co-led from 1988-1998, this presentation marks a significant moment in the artist’s career as he works towards the opening of his new gallery in a renovated church in Shropshire, UK, which is set to open in summer 2023 under the City Racing name.

Taking inspiration from the urban environment of contemporary London, Coventry’s practice is preoccupied by the gritty reality of city life. Working in a diverse array of mediums and subject matters, Coventry’s work sheds light on the often overlooked or unquestioned aspects of daily life. Through a simultaneously witty and serious modernist visual language, Coventry dissects notions of capitalism, addiction, and social housing.

Coventry’s incisive view of society is articulated through his signature balancing of opposites: serious and humorous, lauded and dismissed, familiar and obscured. He explains, “Even in the most impoverished places, you can bring about the ennobling of something ignoble.” Split across two levels, the ground floor gallery will hold a bronze sculpture of pigeon spikes. In magnifying this commonplace device to more than three meters in height, Coventry confronts viewers with the often unnoticed, violent architectural interventions that pervade cities.

On the surrounding walls, Coventry will present a suite of new Junk paintings, which have been a mainstay of his practice since 2002. In these works, he combines a hard-edge approach to abstraction – in the vein of artists such as Theo van Doesburg or Kazimir Malevich – with a lively, painterly cross-hatched technique that creates a highly textured surface. What initially appears entirely non-representational, is in fact a closely cropped segment of the ubiquitous McDonald’s ‘M’. Coventry uses the language of mass corporate globalisation to engage with the capitalist structures prevalent in daily life. Measuring nearly three meters in length, these monumental Junk paintings take, for the first time, a horizontal orientation that recalls billboard advertising.

City Racing will also include a new body of wall-based bronze reliefs cast from rubbings Coventry made from vandalised buildings the day after the 1995 Brixton riots. Akin to the modernist forms in his paintings, these seemingly abstract works are deeply rooted in the representation of contemporary society. Coventry identifies the buildings in simple block letters – BODY SHOP, SEVEN ELEVEN, DOGSTAR – at once placing these locations within familiar vernacular and shocking the viewer with the reality of human impact. Likewise, in *Two Forms (Divided Circle)* (2011), Coventry captures the aftermath of the theft of a Barbara Hepworth sculpture by metal thieves in Dulwich Park, South London. Viewers are acutely aware that there is something missing, something nefarious has occurred. In his signature objective voice, Coventry's bronze cast provokes questions around the reverence and value attributed to works of art.

The lower ground floor gallery will present three newly completed *Community Party Table* sculptures. In a similar manner to *Pigeon Spike*, Coventry casts in bronze the aspects of society that so often go unseen. In this case, it is the remnant components of tables that had been installed by Woolwich local council along the river. Intended as a public community project, they have been vandalised leaving only the immovable metal legs onto which empty alcohol bottles are inserted, recalling the language of Duchamp's infamous readymade, *Bottle Rack* (1914).

A recurring theme of Coventry's practice is an interest in the messaging delivered to the public via major corporations or governments. His Community Sign series – shown in its entirety for the first time in this exhibition – was made in response to Coventry's residency at Shanghai University. The signs, written in Chinese and English, were present throughout the campus, proclaiming guidance on individual behaviour. Cast in ceramic – a nod to the ancient Chinese practice – and glazed in Chinese Red, these artworks are preoccupied with the imposition of ideology. The faded red pigment and fractured characters speak to the historical tidemarks of communism.

Keith Coventry's (b. 1958, Burnley, United Kingdom) paintings and sculptures filter everyday subject matter—the British Monarchy, fast food, addiction, and public housing, among others—through the lens of modernist idealism, bringing the movements of twentieth-century art and their tendencies in dialogue with contemporary political, cultural, and social issues. He was featured in the seminal exhibition *Sensation* at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, in 1997 and was a co-founder and curator of *City Racing*, an influential not-for-profit gallery in Kennington, South London from 1988-98. In 2006, Coventry received a mid-career retrospective at Glasgow's Tramway (Art Centre) and in 2010 was awarded the John Moores Painting Prize. His work has been exhibited widely in the United Kingdom and Europe and is included in collections worldwide, including the British Council; Tate Modern; Arts Council of England; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

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.

The gallery has also spearheaded explorations into the intersection of art and technology through its new business models, exhibition interpretation tools, and representation of artists cultivating advanced studio practices. As part of its commitment to technologically engaged artists within and beyond its program, Pace launched a hub for its web3 activity, Pace Verso, in November 2021.

Today, Pace has nine locations worldwide, including a European foothold in London and Geneva, 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's long and pioneering history in California includes a gallery in Palo Alto, which operated 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, as well as an office and viewing room in Beijing. Pace's satellite exhibition spaces in East Hampton and Palm Beach present continued programming on a seasonal basis.

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