

Robert Nava: Tornado Rose

September 5 – October 21, 2023

267 Itaewon-ro

Seoul



Robert Nava, *Mountain Fight*, 2023 © Robert Nava

Pace is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by Robert Nava at its arts complex in Seoul. On view from September 5 to October 21, the presentation, titled *Tornado Rose* and coinciding with Frieze Seoul, marks the artist's first solo show in Asia. It will spotlight six new paintings, varying in scale, created by the artist this year.

Known for his lively depictions of fantastical creatures, objects, and landscapes, Nava imbues his work across painting and drawing with philosophical and psychological import, often tapping into a dark, contemplative, and existential space. In the suite of new paintings that he will show at Pace in Seoul, Nava navigates the fault-lines between beauty and chaos. The protagonists of his latest works are suspended perpetually between creation and destruction, and a sense of the elemental pervades these new canvases—a storm of marks sweeps across the picture planes, reshaping everything it touches. For Nava, this whirlwind of form becomes a metonym for the act of painting itself. Abstraction takes shape while tempests of marks and explosions of color unfold in reverse, like a field of dispersed particles coalescing back into a tangle of expressive forms.

In his new works, Nava returns to some of the most recognizable motifs in his visual lexicon—the shark, the ghost, and the bunny rabbit—while intensifying the density of his painted surfaces and developing further the narrative quality of the paintings. In *Storm Fire Body Bunny* (2023), a violent maelstrom of brushstrokes takes the shape of a bunny, whose roiling interior contrasts starkly with the placid expression on its face. “It has no worries in its heart,” Nava explains, even as the creature witnesses what the artist describes as “dawn over an apocalypse.”

In *Burial Shark* (2023) and *Violet Shark Ghost* (2023), Nava returns to what is perhaps his most iconic creature: the shark. Represented alternately in these works as a figure of death and a figure of vitality, the shark becomes an avatar for the psyche—a predator stalking the underwater world of the subconscious, provoking terror through invisibility more than appearance. In *Burial Shark*, the predator is caught in the act of breaking through the surface of a maritime nightscape riven by thunder and lightning, its mouth agape and its body transformed into a graveyard of ghosts. In *Violet Shark Ghost*, images of the shark and the specter suddenly merge, suggesting that the act of painting is a kind of haunting, with form lurking beneath the surface, emerging as abstraction.

Nava pushes this theme of ghostliness further to explore the uncanniness of the double with *Mirror Universe Doppelganger* (2023). In a horror show of mirrors, two fanged creatures—which might be dragons or hellhounds—seem to share a shield-like body, the contours of their individual forms merging and disintegrating at once. Meanwhile, Nava's painterly imagination is on full view in *Mountain Fight* (2023), in which an epic battle unfolds between one of the artist's signature angels and a phalanx of dog-like creatures. Their face off rends the pictorial surface asunder, revealing the

substrate of abstraction that makes figuration possible. Nava's new paintings can be understood as odes to enactments of disintegration, disaggregation, and breakdown—forces of destruction that are, nevertheless, integral to the act of creation.

Concurrent with his show in Seoul, Nava is presenting a solo exhibition at the Hall Art Foundation's Kunstmuseum Schloss Derneburg in Germany through November 12. He recently concluded the inaugural residency and exhibition at Fondazione Iris, Cy Twombly's old studio and palazzo in Bassano in Teverina, Italy. The exhibition featured a new body of work that the artist realized during his stay at Iris.

Robert Nava (b. 1985, East Chicago, IN) received a BFA in Fine Art from Indiana University as well as an MFA in Painting from Yale University. His practice centres on large-scale paintings and works on paper that portray whimsical creatures, rendered through gestural markings. Finding inspiration in the art of the distant past, from Medieval Christian imagery to Mayan and Sumerian art, as well as popular contemporary sources such as animation, Nava creates compositions that are carefully considered yet marked by a sense of naivete and spontaneity.

His art has been exhibited in various solo exhibitions both domestically and abroad, including *Bloodsport* (2022) at Night Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, *Angels* (2021) at Vito Schnabel Gallery, New York, NY, and *Robert Nava* (2020) at Sorry We're Closed in Brussels, Belgium.

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 eight locations worldwide, including a European foothold 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.

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