

## Robert Whitman: American Moon

January 18 – February 4, 2023  
508 West 25th Street  
New York



Robert Whitman, *Preparatory Sketch for American Moon Performance* (1960), 1959 © Robert Whitman, courtesy Pace Gallery

New York – Pace is pleased to present a multifaceted program—comprising an in-person exhibition, an accompanying performance series organized by Pace Live, a dedicated online viewing room, and a new generative NFT series—dedicated to Robert Whitman, launching January 18 at the gallery’s 508 West 25<sup>th</sup> Street space in New York. The in-person and online exhibitions, along with the live performances, will focus on the artist’s seminal 1960 performance work *American Moon*, a production realized as part of the experimental Happenings scene on New York’s Lower East Side in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The release of Whitman’s first-ever web3 project—which transports viewers to otherworldly, cosmic landscapes beyond the Earth—will coincide with the exhibitions and live events centering on *American Moon*.

A pioneer of performance and multimedia installation art, Whitman has devoted his career to exploration and collaboration. He was a major figure in the ephemeral Happenings—a hybrid art form spanning installation, performance, and other mediums that is foundational in Pace’s history and its interdisciplinary program today—presented in New York in the postwar years by a group of artists that also included Claes Oldenburg, Allan Kaprow, Jim Dine, and Red Grooms. Whitman was at the vanguard of scientifically and technologically engaged art making during this period, co-founding the Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.), a collective that supported creative partnerships between artists and engineers, in 1967.

The four performances of *American Moon*, which will feature a recreation of Whitman’s original set for the work, will take place from January 18 to 19 at the gallery’s 508 West 25<sup>th</sup> Street location. This set will serve as the cornerstone of the physical exhibition, on view from January 18 to February 3. A selection of preparatory drawings Whitman created for the 1960 performance will be displayed alongside the set, and these works on paper will be the subject of a focused online exhibition from January 18 to February 10.

On the occasion of this performance series and exhibition with Pace in New York, Whitman will also unveil his first NFT project, titled *New Worlds* and produced as part of the expansive partnership between Pace Verso, the gallery’s web3 hub, and the leading generative art platform Art Blocks. The interactive and generative *New Worlds* NFTs, which depict imagined planetary bodies in space, are based on Whitman’s projections of planets and moons presented in his solo exhibition *Turning* at Pace’s New York gallery in 2007. The planets in the NFTs feature distinctive colors and patterns on their surfaces, and they are situated in vast skies rendered in varying hues and opacities. Viewers can navigate around the planets and explore the celestial environments by zooming in and out

and dragging their cursors on the screen. Selections from the New Worlds NFT series—which will be released on January 25 at 12 p.m. EST—will be exhibited on screens in Whitman’s physical exhibition at Pace’s New York gallery. New Worlds is realized by Art Blocks and Pace Verso in conjunction with Digital Practice, an artist-focused web3 creative agency that worked in close concert with Whitman on project conceptualization, art direction, and development. More information about the project can be found at [artblocks.io](https://artblocks.io).

Pace’s forthcoming presentations of *American Moon* and Whitman’s NFT release situate his influential practice in a contemporary context, bringing his artistic achievements and innovations to new audiences. Together, the components of this hybrid program—which traverses physical and digital mediums—reflect the limber, rigorous, and timeless nature of the artist’s work and showcase the breadth of his oeuvre across various formats.

*American Moon* premiered at the Reuben Gallery in New York on November 29, 1960, and the work was performed some ten times through early December of that year. The original presentation of *American Moon*—for which the artist constructed an immersive environment made with construction paper, used fabrics, and scrap lumber—featured Whitman himself, fellow artists Lucas Samaras and Simone Forti, and other performers. Incorporating flashes of light, moments of total darkness, film projections, and cacophonous sounds, *American Moon* induced feelings of awe and disorientation in audience members, who watched the event from semi-enclosed tunnels built as part of the set. The final portion of the performance saw Samaras suspended on a swing above the installation.

“The thing about theater that most interests me is that it takes time,” Whitman once said. “Time for me is something material. I like to use it that way. It can be used in the same way as paint or plaster or any other material. It can describe other natural events.”

In her book *Happenings: New York, 1958-1963*, Milly Glimcher writes that, amid the production and debut of *American Moon*, “John F. Kennedy had just been elected—the first glamorous, media-savvy president—and hopes were high for a new approach to culture and world relations.” Glimcher continues, “For *American Moon*, Whitman spent three weeks clearing and rebuilding the interior of the gallery ... Whitman believes the homemade, rough quality of the construction gave the work an organic and authentic quality.”

The upcoming rendition of Whitman’s *American Moon* at Pace’s New York gallery is produced by Pace Live, the gallery’s interdisciplinary platform for commissioning and presenting new live art performances, musical acts, and other events. The four showings of *American Moon*—staged over the course of two days amid a structure of scaffolding, fabric, craft paper, burlap, and varied props—will each include six performers. The set, along with Whitman’s sketches for the 1960 iteration of the work, will remain on view for visitors to experience through February 3. Further information about the performances of *American Moon* will be released in the coming weeks.

**Robert Whitman** (b. 1935, New York) was a leading figure in New York’s Happenings movement from the late 1950s through the early 1960s. A pioneer of performance art and multimedia installation, he co-founded Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.), a nonprofit organization dedicated to collaboration between artists and engineers. Throughout his career, Whitman has aspired to transform and transcend the limitations of images by emphasizing their spatial, temporal, and dimensional qualities. His interests are focused not in the content of images but in what they can communicate and the ways in which viewers experience and relate to them. His use of technology and media functions as a means to investigate larger issues of perception.

**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 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 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.

**Pace Verso** is Pace Gallery's hub for web3 projects, launched in 2021 under the leadership of Pace President and CEO Marc Glimcher. Pace Verso works closely with artists within and beyond the gallery's program to incubate, develop, and realize their web3 projects, operating an NFT platform on the Ethereum blockchain at [www.pacegallery.com/pace-verso](http://www.pacegallery.com/pace-verso). In addition to releasing independent projects, Pace Verso frequently collaborates with leading web3 platforms to share artists' work with wide audiences. In 2022, Pace Verso established a multifaceted partnership with Art Blocks, the leading generative art platform, encompassing boundary-pushing generative NFT releases by Pace's artists as well as crypto-native artists, exhibitions, and community programming. In its first year, Pace Verso—which reflects the gallery's longtime and ongoing support of innovative artists who have cultivated advanced studio practices engaged with boundary-pushing technologies—has presented NFT projects by Jeff Koons, Zhang Huan, Glenn Kaino, DRIFT, Lucas Samaras, and other artists. Pace Verso has also grown a robust following on its dedicated Discord server, directly engaging web3 communities through discussions with artists and leaders in the crypto space.

**Art Blocks** is a company that is in service of bringing the most compelling examples of contemporary generative art to life. Art Blocks unites artists, blockchain technology, and collectors in a destination dedicated to groundbreaking work and remarkable experiences.




**Digital Practice** is an art-focused web3 agency, supporting artists and estates in expanding their oeuvres and preserving their legacies through the translation of authentic artistic practices to the blockchain. Their expertise is in smart contract development, creative coding, generative art, and incorporating digital art into an artist's more traditional or physical practice. For more information, visit [www.digitalpractice.art](http://www.digitalpractice.art).

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