

## Yto Barrada: Bite the Hand

22 March – 11 May, 2024

Pace Gallery

5 Hanover Square

**Opening Reception: Thursday 21 March, 6-8pm**



Yto Barrada, *Untitled (Color Wheel I)*, (2024) © Yto Barrada, courtesy Pace Gallery

Pace is pleased to announce a new exhibition by New York-based artist Yto Barrada, whose multidisciplinary practice spans textiles, sculpture, film, photography, and drawing. Titled *Bite the Hand*, this exhibition of recent work will be shown across all three rooms of the Hanover Square gallery. On view from March 22 to May 11, the artist's third solo show with Pace in the UK will include a suite of textile works, sculptures, prints, and the London premiere of a film installation. This exhibition also marks the first major display in London of Barrada's textile works, all of which were dyed at The Mothership, her Tangier-based natural dye garden, eco-feminist research centre and artist residency which opened to the public early this year with the support of Artangel.

Over the last two decades Barrada has shared the breadth of her work at the intersection of history, social memory, and contemporary politics. Decomposition and materiality of colour retrace a lineage of lost histories and ways of making and thinking. Found and degraded forms register the tension between the forces of nature and colonial and capitalist systems of time management and cadence, which function as markers of discipline and productivity. For Barrada, slowness and improvisation can be forms of resistance. Through research and practice in the art and science of natural dyes, and an awareness of how representations of time shape our experience, Barrada has located and reclaimed rhythms and temporality.

The 16 mm experimental film installation *A Day is Not a Day* (2022) is a meditation on the industrial-testing process known as "weather acceleration", which studies the fading of colour and the production of decay. The purpose of these industrial labs is to simulate the effects of the sun in a condensed time frame in order to test the durability of consumer products and materials such as plastics, automotive and domestic parts, paints, and textiles against fading and corrosion. Workers share surreal fields and offices with machines, and it is the human eye that must be constantly calibrated as a tool of measurement. Meditating on the relentless nature of the mechanised processes that take place in these facilities, *A Day Is Not a Day* explores the simultaneity of the

marvellous and the monstrous. Formally, Barrada's filmmaking entwines a specialized visual vocabulary of age and decomposition with an exploration of motherhood, inheritance, and subjectivity. The abstract, peeling colour forms filling the screen might seem to refer to the history of modern art, but actually describe the fatigue of synthetic materials and nature's assertion of rot and fading by subtle, inexorable processes that are imperceptible in real time.

The title of the exhibition evinces a dark sense of humour, but also deconstructs a word commonly used in the dye workshop: "mordant"—biting, in French—is a fixative substance used to set dyes on fabrics, to allow better light fastness and durability. Infused into these collaged fabrics are dyes produced from the dozens of tinctorial plants in The Mothership garden, including deep blue from indigo leaves (woad and *Indigofera tinctoria*), red and pink from madder roots (*Rubia tinctoria* and *peregrina*), and yellow and orange from pomegranate, weld, coreopsis, oxalis, and cosmos.

Symbolic and chromatic representations of the passage of time permeate many of the textile works Barrada will be presenting as part of *Bite the Hand*. Among them, *Untitled (Hourglass I)* and *Untitled (Hourglass II)* (both 2023) feature patterns of paired triangles converging at the apex in varying hues from lilac to tangerine. A room in the gallery contains works including found objects, sewing exercises, colour samplers, and collages, evoking a future born from the duality of Afrofuturism and afro-pessimism.

A selection of abstract works aerially map the planning of the dye garden using abstracted rectangles and squares in the series *How to Plan a Garden*. In the *Doorstop (Afrofuturism)* series, painted wooden blocks arranged into geometric botanical forms resemble plants found in The Mothership garden. Barrada's dye samplers, such as *The Fabric Book* (2014 – 22), offer the viewer new chromatic grammars.

New works in aluminium, brass, and copper will also figure in *Bite the Hand*. All titled as variations of *Holes in the Moon*, these evoke the power of toponymy, the naming of things of the natural world. There are names given to the 5000 impact craters riddling our Moon's surface; 24 of these depressions are named after medieval Islamic scholars. Imprints of long forgotten asteroids, they are sustained in an environment without wind or air or erosion. Mark-making on the moon is a durational art; it operates according to lunar time, which figures outside of the short-term memory of Earth.

Three hand-set letterpress posters titled *Opening Night* locate the comical performance of identity in acts of hospitality.

Concurrent with *Bite the Hand*, Barrada is presenting work in several group exhibitions across the UK and Europe—*Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art* at the Barbican in London; *My Oma* at the Kunststituut Melly in Rotterdam; and *Trad u/i zioni d'Eurasia* at the Museo d'Arte Orientale in Turin. Barrada will unveil a major new commission for the courtyard of MoMA PS1 in April and a solo exhibition *Part Time Abstractionist* at the International Center of Photography in May. After being awarded the 2022 Mario Merz Prize, Barrada will open a new site-specific solo exhibition this autumn at the Fondazione Merz in Turin, Italy. She is currently a Soros Arts Fellow.

**Yto Barrada** (b. 1971, Paris) is an artist recognized for her multidisciplinary investigations of cultural phenomena and historical narratives. Engaging with the performativity of archival practices and public interventions, Barrada's installations reinterpret social relationships, uncover subaltern histories, and reveal the prevalence of fiction in institutionalized narratives. In 2006, Barrada founded the artist-run Cinémathèque de Tanger, North Africa's first cinema cultural center. Her work has been exhibited at the Stedelijk Museum, Mass MoCA, Tate Modern, The Museum of Modern Art, The Met, Renaissance Society, the Walker Art Centre, and the 2007 and 2011 Venice Biennales. Barrada has received multiple awards, including the Soros Arts Fellowship (2023); Mario Merz Prize (2022); the Queen Sonja Print Award (2022); the Roy R. Neuberger Prize (2019); the Abraaj Group Art Prize, UAE (2015); Deutsche Guggenheim Artist of the Year (2011).

**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 2024, Pace will open its first gallery space in Japan in Tokyo’s new Azabudai Hills development.




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