

## *Robert Nava*

January 6–17, 2021  
 340 Royal Poinciana Way  
 Suite M333  
 Palm Beach



Image: Robert Nava, *Untitled*, 2020 © Robert Nava, courtesy of Pace Gallery

Palm Beach – Pace Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of five new large-scale paintings by New York-based artist Robert Nava at the gallery’s recently opened seasonal space in Palm Beach, Florida. Driven by his desire to “make new myths” responsive to our times, Nava has developed an uncompromisingly personal visual language that has established him as one of the most innovative painters working today. Drawing inspiration from sources as disparate as prehistoric cave paintings, Egyptian art, and cartoons, Nava creates magical worlds and fantastical figures that invite viewers to tap into their childlike imaginations. In this new series of paintings, Nava hones the iconography of sharks to explore the dualities of good and evil present in the subject matter—a theme that runs throughout his oeuvre. On view from January 6–17, 2021, this exhibition marks Pace’s first presentation with Nava since the artist joined the gallery in December 2020.

Building on the groundbreaking approach of artists like Jean Dubuffet and Jean-Michel Basquiat, Nava combines spray paint, acrylics, and grease pencil with everyday materials to create thought-out composites of hybrid monsters that he first reworks obsessively in his sketchbooks before transferring them over to large canvases. Often developed to the vitalizing beat of techno and house music, his paintings conjure a realm awash in magic and possibility, where beings are always seemingly on the verge of transfiguration. Though offering viewers respite from the more cynical and dystopian aspects of today’s world, his paintings do not, however, veer into escapism as exemplified with his latest body of work.

Nava was initially drawn to sharks because of the formal opportunities they offered him. Rendering these figures through the repetition of triangular shapes, Nava continues to blur the lines between reality and fiction in his signature

style by morphing his sharks into supernatural beings. In this instance, he uses a boxcutter, a tool he used often in his previous day job, to amplify his sharks' jaws to unnatural proportions. On a symbolic level, Nava has long been fascinated by the duality of the antihero—a main character in a story who lacks conventional heroic qualities but nonetheless has genuine intentions. Nava points out that whenever we see sharks or ferocious monsters in art, man is always in the process of slaying them, as in, for example, Medieval Christian imagery where dragons are shown with spears in their sides. But, as he argues, history has shown us that even angels, which are typically depicted as benevolent entities, have the potential for violence and betrayal.

Continuously mining a range of sources from pop culture to ancient mythology, Nava creates a new iconography around the subject matter of sharks with this new body of work by presenting these nautical creatures in a sympathetic light. In this series Nava challenges viewers' preconceived notions of sharks as the vicious and dangerous monsters that they are commonly portrayed as in mainstream culture, most notably seen in Steven Spielberg's iconic film *Jaws* which redefined the horror film genre. Furthermore, the works in this exhibition reinforce Nava's idiosyncratic style which exudes a playful candidness that defies the pretensions of high art, while altering viewers' subconscious associations with a set of symbols and images that have been embedded in culture over time. Through his meditation on sharks, Nava underscores the duality of good and evil latent in all beings.

Following Pace's exhibition in Palm Beach, Nava has a forthcoming solo show with Vito Schnabel Gallery in New York City in February 2021. Nava's work can also be found in the permanent collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, ICA Miami, and Zuzeum Art Centre, Latvia.

**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 centers 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 *Mythologies* (2019) at V1 Gallery, Copenhagen, Denmark, and *Vs* (2019), Night Gallery, Los Angeles, CA. His work has also been featured in several group exhibitions, most recently, *Majeure Force* (2020) at Night Gallery and *Punch* (2019) at Jeffrey Deitch, Los Angeles, CA.

**Pace** is a leading contemporary art gallery representing many of the most significant international artists and estates of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Under the leadership of President and CEO Marc Glimcher, Pace is a vital force within the art world and plays a critical role in shaping the history, creation, and engagement with modern and contemporary art. Since its founding by Arne Glimcher in 1960, Pace has developed a distinguished legacy for vibrant and dedicated relationships with renowned artists. As the gallery enters its seventh decade, Pace's mission continues to be inspired by a drive to

support the world's most influential and innovative artists and to share their visionary work with people around the world.




Pace advances this mission through its dynamic global program, comprising ambitious exhibitions, artist projects, public installations, institutional collaborations, performances and interdisciplinary projects through Pace Live, and curatorial research and writing. Today, Pace has nine locations worldwide: two galleries in New York—including its newly opened headquarters at 540 West 25th Street, and an adjacent 8,000 sq. ft. exhibition space at 510 West 25th Street—as well as galleries in Palo Alto, London, Geneva, 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.

## Press Inquiries

Amelia Redgrift  
Senior Director, Global Communications & Content  
aredgrift@pacegallery.com  
+1 646 236 5241

Adriana Elgarresta  
Director of Public Relations  
aelgarresta@pacegallery.com  
+1 305 498 1649

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