

Creating Abstraction

3 February – 12 March, 2022

Pace Gallery

5 Hanover Square



Saloua Raouda Choucair, From left: *Poem*, 1972-74; *Dual*, 1978-80; *Trajectory of a Line*, 1957-59
© courtesy the Saloua Raouda Choucair Foundation

London – Pace Gallery is pleased to announce *Creating Abstraction*, a group exhibition that brings together seven female artists whose experimental approach to material and engagement with Modernism has pushed the boundaries of abstraction. Co-curated with Carla Chammas, this exhibition centres on the idea of multi-disciplinarity as a means of exploring abstraction.

On view 3 February – 12 March, across the full expanse of Pace’s recently opened Hanover Square gallery, *Creating Abstraction* looks at the ways in which various Modernist movements were disseminated across the world and interpreted by artists from Britain, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, Portugal, Singapore, and the United States. This exhibition creates dialogues between the sculptures, paintings, textiles, works on paper, video, photography, and installations of **Carla Accardi** (1924-2014), **Leonor Antunes** (b. 1972), **Yto Barrada** (b. 1971), **Saloua Raouda Choucair** (1916-2017), **Barbara Hepworth** (1903-1975), **Kim Lim** (1936-1997) and **Louise Nevelson** (1899-1988). Despite vastly disparate nationalities and socio-economic backgrounds, there is a shared sensibility between these artists who each found inspiration in Modernism’s non-hierarchical approach to material, and abstraction’s rich capacity for multi-disciplinary experimentation.

A pioneer of abstraction in Lebanon, Saloua Raouda Choucair’s innovative artistic practice was inspired by mathematics, architecture, poetry and Islamic design, encompassing sculpture, painting, drawing, jewellery, and textile. The modular structure of her sculptures, such as *Poem* (1972-74) or *Poem (Ramlet el Beida)* (1966/2013) which, like the stanzas of Arabic poetry can stand alone or be presented as a whole, have a particular resonance with the sculptures of Singaporean-British artist, Kim Lim. Lim’s practice, which traversed wood, bronze, marble, stone, fibreglass, aluminium, slate, and ink primarily took the form of sculpture and printmaking. Like Choucair, Lim took immense inspiration from the aesthetics of ancient Eastern art, travelling extensively across the Middle East and Asia throughout her life. In works such as *River Run II* (1996-97) or *Syncopation 2* (1995) Lim’s elegant fusion of totemic sculptural forms with a distinctly Modernist aesthetic is particularly apparent.

Lim and Choucair’s prints, works on paper, and paintings have a shared sensibility with the work of Italian artist Carla Accardi, whose avant-garde practice paved the way for many avant-garde movements in Italy. Best known for her experiments in sicofoil, a transparent plastic material, Accardi’s sculptures and paintings investigate both the formal and spatial effect of line, shape, and gesture. The graphic quality of Accardi’s work, such as *Fondo Rosso* (1959) or *Segni Grigi* (1986), resonates strongly with Choucair’s dynamic gouache paintings on paper.

An innovator of the Direct Carving technique and the first sculptor to pierce their forms, Barbara Hepworth is recognized as a master of British Modernism. Though most commonly recognised for her groundbreaking sculptures, which included bronze, stone, wood and string, her practice also encompassed painting, lithograph, collage, and drawing. The monochrome, totemic compositions of *Three Forms (Family Group)* (1965) and *Two Forms* (1934) create an enchanting dialogue with Louise Nevelson's sculptures and collages. Unlike Hepworth, Nevelson's artistic practice was additive, assembling materials found in the streets surrounding her studio to construct sculpture, collage, and installation. By painting the elements of her sculptures entirely black, white, or gold, Nevelson erased their former functions, focusing attention on their form. In *Untitled* (1971), a monumental monochromatic black sculpture, Nevelson nestles forms within a larger structure akin to a cabinet of curiosities.

By including both twentieth century artists who were instrumental in the development of abstraction, and contemporary artists – Yto Barrada and Leonor Antunes – *Creating Abstraction* considers the legacy of Modernism today. Antunes's research-based practice actively responds to the histories of overlooked female Modernists, *anni #26 I* (2020) is a reimagining of Anni Albers's abstract weavings in glittering brass. Antunes's installation, *indirect lighting (group 2)* (2021), which extends from floor to ceiling with ceramic sculptural pieces spiralling in space, echoes the modular sculpture of Choucair, Lim, and Nevelson. Similarly, Barrada's work in textile, photography and film speaks at once to the multifaceted, multidisciplinary histories of Modernism and to her own personal landscape. In *Untitled (indigo grey)* (2021) Barrada references the avant-garde history of the 'grid' while also drawing from the histories of education and architecture and celebrating the autodidact. Her use of natural dyes from plant extracts and insects points to the long history of Morocco's textile craft and the race between colonial powers to dominate the trade and production of colours. The Practice Piece series consist of photographs made from sewing exercises on paper used to train Tangier seamstresses and factory workers who followed the drawn lines on their sewing machines, tracing circles and other forms. This new work also refers to Friedrich Froebel's educational material, the inventor of Kindergarten in 1840s Germany.

In bringing together an array of work by these seven artists, *Creating Abstraction* offers a window into each individual's complex, layered, radical work as well as the broader context of their practice.

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. Pace's presence in Silicon Valley since 2016 has bolstered its longstanding support of experimental practices and digital artmaking. As part of its commitment to innovative, technologically engaged artists within and beyond its program, Pace launched its own dedicated NFT platform, Pace Verso, in November 2021. The gallery's past NFT projects have spotlighted digital works by Glenn Kaino, DRIFT, Lucas Samaras, Simon Denny, Urs Fischer, John Gerrard, and other artists.

Today, Pace has nine locations worldwide including London, Geneva, a strong foothold in Palo Alto, 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 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. In 2020, Pace opened temporary exhibition spaces in East Hampton and Palm Beach, with continued programming on a seasonal basis.



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