

Li Hei Di: the year of mud

November 6 – December 19, 2026
540 West 25th Street
New York



Li Hei Di, *a kiss from the butterfly*, 2026 © Li Hei Di, courtesy Pace Gallery.

New York — Pace will present *the year of mud*, an exhibition of new paintings by London-based artist Li Hei Di, at its 540 West 25th Street gallery from November 6 through December 19. Marking the artist's first solo exhibition with Pace in New York since they joined the gallery's program in 2024, *the year of mud* will situate Li's oneiric, effervescent compositions in a mediated viewing environment.

Existing between figuration and abstraction, Li's paintings inhabit a space where certainty begins to dissolve. Li understands life as an ongoing act of transformation—an unending negotiation between interior experience and external reality. Their figures are never fixed, continually shifting between states of becoming and allowing the body to function less as a stable form than as a vessel through which memory, emotion, and desire flow. The compositions, rendered in a rich and almost shimmering palette, reveal themselves gradually as forms surface, recede, and transform.

Li's new paintings document a year of reckoning. "I kept thinking about the Chinese goddess Nüwa, who is believed to have created humans," Li explains. "She dipped a rope into muddy water and swung the muddy cord through the air. The flying drops of mud turned into common people as they hit the ground. As I transformed throughout the past year, I kept picturing my body, a droplet of mud, flying through midair and dipping back into the fertile mud of possibility. There, I saw many shapes. I moved through them, searching for one I could inhabit, shedding the coat I was given, watching myself in the realm of chaos and hope, my body bouncing between the signified and the signifier, the soul and the form, the home and the body, lack and desire. Slowly, as I waited, I made this body of work. These paintings became more than a documentation of my transition: they were giant listeners. They stretched wide and held me in this chaotic time of reemergence."

The resulting paintings are at once intimately personal and expansively human. They invite both close looking and the scopic impressions of all-encompassing, dreamlike atmospheres, where fragmentation becomes a condition of transformation rather than loss. Holding beauty and suffering in the same breath, the paintings keep open this fragile tension, where tenderness and force, vulnerability and resilience, remain inseparable. Here, these states of being are not understood as opposing conditions but as experiences through which each is more deeply encountered.

In keeping with the spirit of the paintings, *the year of mud* is conceived as a continual process of discovery, with different works and relationships unfolding as visitors move through space. A new monograph that both traces the recent development of Li's painting practice and documents the exhibition will be released by Pace Publishing following the close of the show. The publication will include a new text by Tyler Blackwell, Curator of Contemporary Art at the Speed Art Museum in Louisville, Kentucky.

Li Hei Di (b. 1997, Shenyang, China) lives and works in London. The artist attended a one-year student exchange program in Ohio before studying at Idyllwild Arts in southern California. They received a BA in Fine Art from Chelsea College of Arts, London, in 2020, and an MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art, London, in 2022. Their first solo exhibition was held at Linseed Projects, Shanghai (2022), followed by Michael Kohn Gallery, Los Angeles (2023), and Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London (2024). Most recently, *Tongues of Flare* (2025) was presented at Pace Gallery, Hong Kong, marking Li's first solo exhibition with the gallery since they joined in 2024. Following its run in Hong Kong, *Tongues of Flare* traveled to the Pond Society where it was on view during Shanghai Art Week. Recent group exhibitions including their work have been held at Gagosian Gallery, Hong Kong (2023); Centre of International Contemporary Art, Vancouver (2023); X Museum Triennial, Beijing (2023); Yuz Museum, Shanghai (2023); Metropolitan Museum of Manila, Philippines (2024); Le Consortium, Dijon, France (2024); GRIMM, New York (2024); Pace Gallery, Los Angeles (2025); X Museum, Beijing (2025); and The Hepworth Wakefield, United Kingdom (2025–26). They are included in the upcoming exhibition, *East of the Pacific: Making Histories of Asian American Art*, at The Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, opening on April 15, 2026. Their work is held in numerous public collections worldwide, including the Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy; The Hepworth Wakefield, United Kingdom; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; Long Museum, Shanghai; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Pond Society, Shanghai; The Rachofsky Collection, Dallas, Texas; Tanoto Art Foundation, Singapore; and Ueshima Museum, Tokyo, among others.

Pace is a global art gallery of and for the future, modeled on a set of core values established during its founding in 1960 and designed to serve its artists, estates, and collectors in a way that is focused, responsive, and aligned with its enduring mission.

Working with a roster of around 80 artists, the gallery sets a unique approach for the individual development and trajectory of each artist and estate, the majority of whom it has partnered with for decades. This intergenerational mix of new, established, and legacy artists is centered on shared lineages, pairing contemporary figures with their forebears. Pace's robust global exhibition program further foregrounds this connection and dialogue between contemporary art and 20th-century masterworks.

Pace's artist-first ethos prioritizes human relationships above systems and focuses resources strategically, with a responsive and nimble program that extends to public installations, philanthropic projects, performances, and other interdisciplinary initiatives. Rooted in its historic context and decades-long relationships with artists, Pace has played a key role in shaping and building major public and private collections across the US and around the globe. It also advances legacy and scholarship through its imprint, Pace Publishing, which has published more than 1,000 titles, including monographs and special-edition artist's books.

Today, Pace has a presence in nine cities worldwide, with an approach driven by the character of the local collecting community and resonating with the history of each region. This commitment to place and community is grounded by two galleries in New York—its eight-story headquarters at 540 West 25th Street and an adjacent 8,000-square-foot exhibition space at 510 West 25th Street in Chelsea—and 125 Newbury, an experimental project space in Tribeca. Through an exhibition program spearheaded by Arne Glimcher, 125 Newbury mounts innovative shows by emerging artists as well as curated presentations focusing on revealing new dimensions of historical artists' practices.

Pace has also been active in California for 60 years and opened its West Coast flagship in Los Angeles in 2022, and has galleries in London, Seoul, Berlin, and Tokyo. It was one of the first international galleries to have a major presence in China, where it has been active since 2008, the year it first opened in Beijing's vibrant 798 Art District. It now operates offices in Beijing and Hong Kong, as well as Geneva.

A reputation for innovation and collaboration is woven through Pace's history, noticeable in the very first decision to name the gallery after something other than its founder, and evident in its pioneering of many of the practices that have defined the gallery landscape. This extends from Arne Glimcher, who built the first large-scale, market-defining international gallery, to Marc Glimcher, who has introduced new strategies and innovations that have expanded the purview of gallery initiatives, and to Samanthe Rubell, whose commitment to fostering collaborative partnerships has further strengthened the program. In 2025, Pace initiated and became a partner in Pace Di Donna Schrader Galleries, a boutique model devoted to secondary market sales operating on a global scale, which is charting a new path for the sale and stewardship of historic artworks.

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