

Lucas Samaras: Boxes and Reconstructions

November 6, 2026 – January 23, 2027
540 West 25th Street
New York



Left to right: Lucas Samaras, *Box #90*, 1974 © Lucas Samaras, courtesy Pace Gallery; Lucas Samaras, *Reconstruction #88*, 1979 © Lucas Samaras, courtesy Pace Gallery.

New York — *Lucas Samaras: Boxes and Reconstructions* will bring together two seminal bodies of work by the influential Greek-born American artist Lucas Samaras at Pace's 540 West 25th Street gallery from November 6, 2026 through January 23, 2027. Alongside a selection of iconic, deeply enigmatic box sculptures from the 1960s through the 1980s, *Boxes and Reconstructions* will also feature never-before-seen fabric paintings from Samaras's pioneering and little-known Reconstructions series of 1979.

Across more than seven decades at the forefront of the avant-garde, Samaras's work remained both profoundly personal and formally inventive. Drawing on elements of his personal history—from his childhood amid the Greek Civil War to his later experiences as part of the New York City's avant-garde of the 1950s and 1960s—he engaged sculpture photography, painting and drawing, and digital art to explore the nature of selfhood and identity. Samaras's boxes, the works for which he best known, underscore his enduring interest in assemblage as an assertion of the self. Presented in dialogue with the sewn fabric works that Samaras called Reconstructions, they illustrate the artist's uncanny ability to assemble and transform banal materials from the world around him into surreal, self-contained environments.

Samaras began making crude assemblage-based sculpture in the late 1950s, while still a student at Rutgers and an active participant in the Happenings movement in New York. In his long-running series of mixed-media, interactive boxes, which began in the early 1960s, Samaras used liquid aluminum and plaster to attach photographs, ephemera, and found objects—including cutlery, nails, mirrors, brightly colored yarn, and feathers—to structures nested with compartments, drawers, and other interior spaces. Art critic Thomas McEvilley described this process of collecting and repurposing the stuff of life as a kind of self-portraiture: "History's wreckage in World War II, a fact somewhat shrouded from American artists, left [Samaras] not with a search for history but with the theme of the self unsupported by historical mission: the delicacy and courage of selfhood on its own, finding new uses for the random remains of history, constructing a world out of them."

Although begun in the early 1960s, Samaras continued his box series over the course of the next three decades. In total, the series includes almost three hundred unique works. *Boxes and Reconstructions* highlights a selection illustrating the development of these works over time, from the relatively straightforward hinged construction of the rectangular *Box #5* (1963–1968) to the sinuous yet also sinister curves of the Cor-ten steel *Stiff Box #14* (1971) and the cosmic *Box #133* (1989). "Samaras's assemblage boxes continue their wicked, seductively beautiful ways," wrote the critic Roberta Smith,

“only more so, since the artist knits together and patterns color, the ultimate tool of visual seduction, more complexly. [T]he viewer is cast as involuntary voyeur. . . everyday objects and materials take on unexpected lives of their own.” Possessing elements of sculpture, architecture, and painting, the boxes are some of Samaras’s most evocative and intimate works.

Boxes and Reconstructions places these objects in conversation with a group of works belonging to Samaras’s Reconstructions series of 1979. These works, which come from the personal collection of the artist, will be exhibited here for the first time. Like the boxes, Samaras’s complex compositions of hand-sewn fabrics incorporate a range of patterns, colors, textures, and shapes in extraordinarily active configurations. The use of fabric also has autobiographical connotations for the artist. “I had a cousin in Greece who had a dress shop,” he told Barbara Rose in 1978. “I would go there in the afternoon and I would cut up some paper. But, if I went to touch the fabric, she would say, ‘now watch it, don’t touch the fabric.’ When I became an adult, or semi-adult, I began using things like pins and wool, and nobody could tell me anymore, don’t use them, don’t touch them. Even using the fabric, in a sense, is going back to childhood again.”

In part, the Reconstructions are homages to the textiles that surrounded Samaras in his youth, yet their overall effect is—like all of his work—harder to classify. Seen in the light of his later explorations in digital art and photography, the scramble of visual information they present can resemble distorted signals or a collection of pixels. Most of all, however, they suggest paintings. As art critic Kim Levin has written, “Samaras’s Reconstructions must be seen as paintings, highly sophisticated and completely perverse. Big dazzling abstractions. They are also variegated, witty, improvisational hybrid surfaces that fuse random and disparate materials into a seamless expressive whole. They reconstruct not folk handicraft but modernist art.”

Eluding historical categorization, **Lucas Samaras**’s (b. 1936, Kastoria, Greece; d. 2024, New York) oeuvre is united through its consistent focus on the body and psyche, often emphasizing autobiography. The themes of self-depiction, self-investigation, and identity were a driving force behind his practice, which, at its onset in the early 1960s, advanced the Surrealist idiom while proposing a radical departure from the presiding themes of Abstract Expressionism and Pop art. Samaras emigrated with his family from Greece to the United States in 1948 and attended Rutgers University, New Jersey studying under Allan Kaprow and George Segal, and then at Columbia University, New York, where he studied art history under Meyer Schapiro. During this time, he initiated painting self-portraits and gravitated toward the use of pastels, which enabled him to work quickly, exploring figurative and geometrical forms in rich colors and with luxuriant texture, characteristics that would reoccur throughout his practice. He soon shifted toward objects, producing assemblage reliefs and boxes comprised of elements culled from his immediate surroundings and five-and-dime stores—cutlery, nails, mirrors, brightly colored yarn, and feathers—affixed with liquid aluminum or plaster. Gesturing toward a larger investigation of (self) reflection in his work found in his early mirror rooms, self-portraiture, and more recent use of digital mirror-imaging, Samaras’s oeuvre acts as an extension of his body while underscoring the transformative possibilities of the everyday—a true blurring of art and life.

In 1969, Samaras began to expand upon his use of photography, experimenting with a Polaroid 360 camera, which appealed to his sense of immediacy. His innovation further materialized with his use of the Polaroid SX-70 in 1973 in a melding of self-portraiture and abstraction, created by manipulating the wet-dye emulsions with a stylus or fingertip before the chemicals set. This process progressed with digital art in 1996 when he obtained his first computer and began to experiment with printed texts on typewriter paper. By 2002, he had acquired a digital camera and the use of Photoshop became an integral component of his practice. These technologies gave way to Photofictions (2003), a series characterized by distorted self-portraits and psychedelic compositions.

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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