

Gideon Appah

How to Say Sorry in a Thousand Lights

March 15 – April 15, 2023

5 Hanover Square
London

Opening Reception: Tuesday 14 March, 5-7pm



Gideon Appah, *Red Sun*, 2022

Oil and acrylic on canvas, 179.7 × 200 × 3.8 cm © Gideon Appah

London—Pace Gallery is pleased to announce *Gideon Appah: How to Say Sorry in a Thousand Lights*. Marking Appah's first solo exhibition in the UK as well as his debut show with Pace, the artist will present a suite of new, highly ambitious paintings that speak to ideas of identity, memory, and imagination. Taking over the entirety of Pace's Hanover Square gallery, this exhibition showcases the artist's unwavering commitment to experimenting with scale, form, colour, and composition.

At the core of Appah's artistic practice is a fascination with the intangible. His dreamlike, enigmatic paintings convey emotions that exist beyond the confines of language. For Appah, painting is an intuitive act of translation of the inner self to the exterior world. His singular visual lexicon interlaces fragments from reality and imagination to construct mystical, painterly scenes that resist narrative and classification. A surrealist streak runs through several paintings, further subverting expectations and undermining straightforward readings. For example, in *Seated Man* (2021-22) a figure looks out to sea while a collection of incongruous objects including oranges and a disembodied hand holding a lit cigarette gathers beside them. Central to Appah's practice is the rich period of Ghanaian history following the country's independence in 1957. Appah draws on a diverse array of visual sources – including childhood memories and family photographs as well as old newspaper clippings, music videos, cinema, and early ethnographic images – to create his idiosyncratic paintings that feel at once deeply personal and coolly anonymous.

In *How to Say Sorry in a Thousand Lights*, Appah will present new paintings in his distinctive style that occupies the blurred space between imagination and memory. Appah's signature use of flattened perspective and ambiguous surroundings evoke ethereal landscapes that appear to exist outside the physical world. In *A Love Song* (2022) and *Red Sun* (2022), nude and semi-nude figures move through a seemingly utopian landscape with a sense of ease and grace. The subjects are alert to their surroundings, at once electrified and enmeshed in the undulations of the environment. The lush green carpet of grass in *The Dream* (2021) mirrors the reclined nude figure's soft flesh, underscoring the feeling of harmonious equilibrium between human and nature. The colour palette of rich, jewel toned blues, reds, pinks, and greens draw the viewer into Appah's cinematic world.

Appah's large-scale canvases position the viewer as a voyeur, stumbling upon secretive or private gatherings set in otherworldly landscapes. Stretching across four meters, Appah's diptych *Cloud Men* (2021-23) depicts seven tall men dressed in dark suits towering over the viewer – an impression that is further heightened by the low horizon line against an expansive blue sky. With all but two figures facing away from the viewer, the suggestion is a covert conversation. Appah evokes a sense of glamour and ceremony in the uncertain setting, leaving the viewer to interpret the scene with their own imagination.

The landscape that surrounds Appah's studio is also a major source of inspiration, as he seeks to capture the sensation of the vast clouds and fields visible from the farm on which his studio is situated. By stitching together real and imagined memories, fantasies, and scenes from everyday life, Appah constructs quasi-theatrical compositions that contain an uncertain narrative, stripping them of the signifiers of identity in order to leave them open to individual interpretation.

Gideon Appah (b. 1987, Accra, Ghana) creates figurative paintings, drawings, and mixed media works with subjects and imagery drawn from his memory and imagination as well as Ghanaian history and popular culture. Appah began his artistic training at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumasi, Ghana, initially taking up watercolour to explore and deepen his understanding of the power of colour. In 2022, the artist presented his first institutional solo exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia. His work—which has been featured in the 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair in New York, the 23rd International Exhibition at the Triennale di Milano in Italy, and other major international exhibitions—can be found in the collections of the Absa Museum, Johannesburg; the Musée d'Art Contemporain Africain Al Maaden, Marrakesh; and the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. Appah was shortlisted for the 2016 Kuenyehia Art Prize and the 2022 Henrike Grohs Art Award. The artist lives and works in Accra, he is a member of the blaxTARLINES collective.

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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Press Inquiries

Europe
Rebecca Riegelhaupt
Communications Director
rriegelhaupt@pacegallery.com
+44 7917 909779




Kirsteen Cairns
PR & Events Associate
kcairns@pacegallery.com
+44 7467 830230

Sam Talbot
sam@sam-talbot.com
+44 7725 184630

Sales Inquiries
Pace Gallery
londoninfo@pacegallery.com

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