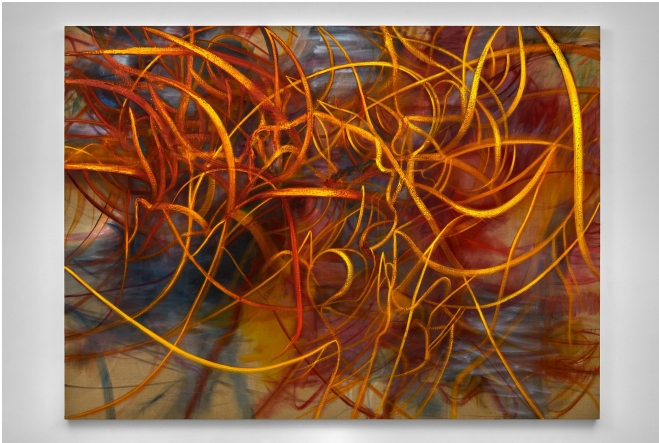


Nigel Cooke: *How the World Became Natural*

May 12 – July 1, 2023
540 West 25th Street
New York



Nigel Cooke, *The Cloud that Distills a Mirror*, 2023 © Nigel Cooke, courtesy Pace Gallery

New York – Pace is pleased to present an exhibition of eight monumentally scaled paintings by Nigel Cooke at its 540 West 25th Street gallery. On view from May 12 to July 1, this exhibition will spotlight new, vibrant canvases featuring enactments of duality, tension, opposition, and entropy. Titled *How the World Became Natural*, the show will coincide with the 2023 editions of Frieze New York and TEFAF New York.

Cooke is known for his evocative, atmospheric paintings that unite figurative forms and abstract elements in layered compositions. The artist's work is informed by a wide range of subjects, including paleontology, neuroscience, classical mythology, and zoology, and his process is often guided by his experiences in different parts of the world and other autobiographical material. In Cooke's paintings, intricate networks of calligraphic marks serve as portraits of psychological and physical spaces alike, fluctuating between states of balance and collapse.

Borrowing its title from paleontologist Loren Eiseley's 1960 essay describing the evolution of mythic to scientific thinking in the field of natural history, Cooke's upcoming exhibition with Pace in New York spotlights a selection of large-scale, horizontal paintings created by the artist this year. For these works, Cooke has experimented with an entirely different mode of painting to transport viewers into a world of intense colors and lyrical forms. Instead of building up his compositions with marks layered atop one another in a linear fashion, he has forged these impressionistic new works through a process of erasure. With an eye towards the relationship between the background and foreground of his paintings, Cooke uses colliding and overlapping forms to obscure some elements while accentuating others. In this way, he imbues his works with a sense of immeasurable depth.

How the World Became Natural follows Cooke's recent solo exhibition with Pace in London, where the artist showed six vertical paintings and a group of works on paper. His New York presentation will offer a look into an expanded formal universe that elaborates on the stylistic vocabulary showcased in the English capital. In contrast to those saturated canvases, Cooke's latest paintings also feature greater nuance in terms of color, tone, and mood. Drawing inspiration from the late works of Titian, Monet, and Turner for his new canvases, Cooke has adopted a more painterly mode of mark making. By way of this approach, his new paintings take on an immersive quality as the viewer moves closer to them, becoming cinematic panoramas when seen from afar. The artist also takes a more comprehensive and grandiose approach to space with these epically scaled works.

In constructing a painting, Cooke is always directed by his own intuitive stream of thought originating from a singular subject or personal attachment—something he has seen, read, heard, or felt. The beginnings of any given composition are ultimately replaced by a process through which Cooke understands and comes to terms with a new concept invented by the painting itself. His resulting works are mysterious and ambiguous, replete with fleeting and shapeshifting images that can be interpreted in numerous ways. Each work also bears a poetic, open-ended title that invites a multiplicity of readings.

Many of the works in Cooke's exhibition with Pace in New York meditate on inner life and relationships—the worlds that are all one's own and the worlds that one shares with other people. Some of the paintings are based on pairs of interlocking figures—these compositions are transformed to tell the story of a relationship through a language of flowing and breaking forms. Expressions of motion and disruption, growth and collapse cut across all of the new works in the show, with their landscape formats allowing for pronounced cycles of surges and interruptions.

Nigel Cooke (b. 1973, Manchester, United Kingdom) is known for evocative works that merge figurative forms with abstract and elemental atmospherics.

Informed by a range of fields from palaeontology, neuroscience, classical mythology and zoology, the linear construction of Cooke's paintings recalls brain circuitry, the human or animal body and landscape formations simultaneously. Using notational sketches and paintings made on location at various sites around the world, the artist distils his impressions of specific places and the people in them into a personal vocabulary of forms that evolves and repeats through time, with autobiographical material often infusing and directing the process. Developing an emotive and highly focused use of colour alongside these forms, Cooke's calligraphic images are delicately balanced, with structure and collapse held together in a state of tension. In their unfixed and writhing ambiguity, the works engage with the self as a porous system, in flux between animal states and prehistory, between one's inner life and the ecosystems of the world at large.

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 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.

Today, Pace has eight locations worldwide, including a European foothold in London and Geneva, 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's long and pioneering history in California includes a gallery in Palo Alto, which was open from 2016 to 2022. Pace's engagement with Silicon Valley's technology industry has had a lasting impact on the gallery at a global level, accelerating its initiatives connecting art and technology as well as its work with experiential artists. Pace consolidated its West Coast activity through its flagship in Los Angeles, which opened in 2022. 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.




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