

Gideon Appah: The Play of Thought

March 20 – April 27, 2024
267 Itaewon-ro
Seoul



Gideon Appah, *Will You Ever be Here Again?* (2023) © Gideon Appah, courtesy Pace Gallery

Seoul – Pace is pleased to present an exhibition of new works by Gideon Appah at its gallery in Seoul, on view from March 21 to April 27. Marking the artist's second solo show with the gallery since he joined its program in 2022, and his first-ever solo exhibition in Asia, this presentation will feature paintings and drawings that examine memory and sensuality through Appah's virtuosic compositional arrangements and his surrealist visual language. The exhibition will be accompanied by a digital catalogue produced by Pace Publishing.

Known for his rich, jewel-toned figurations, Appah paints utopian landscapes that serve as intuitive, outward translations of the inner self. The oneiric, often coastal realms of Appah's paintings are inhabited by nude and semi-nude figures inspired by the artist's imaginative readings of archival imagery. Using layered impasto, Appah constructs worlds that, though visually flattened, take on a seemingly infinite breadth that is at times unsettling and, alternatively, inviting and seductive.

In the new paintings, Appah expands his expressions of memory and cultural identity through his evolving technique and renewed commitment to his distinctive surrealist vocabulary. Within his expansive canvases, life-size athletic figures find anchorage in meticulously crafted landscapes made up of careful interplays of line, color, light, and shade. Appah's substantial and layered application of paint dissolves any suggestion of rigidity in his compositions—an effect that he accentuates by revealing areas of undercoat. Left unworked, these abstract sections of lightly washed and dripped paint give rise to almost identifiable forms from within the canvases. Further subverting narrative expectations is the apparent indifference of the figures to one another and the viewer—as if in a memory or dream, they embrace, swim, play music, and recline in states of undisturbed reverie.

Drawing inspiration for his paintings from a vast visual archive that includes newspaper clippings, family photographs, and Ghanaian films and documentaries—especially those made during a major period of cultural production after the country gained independence in 1957—Appah imbues his works with a uniquely cinematic, scenographic quality. In an act of creative reinvention, the artist transforms moving images from film for his two-dimensional works, suspending time and dislocating any sense of place in the process. His interest in monochromatic imagery is also central to his approach—for Appah, black-and-white film is not limiting but rather a perfect vehicle for investigating the expressive potential of light, shade, and hue. Guided by images he has encountered in classic Ghanaian cinema, he overlays vibrant colors onto these scenes, making them entirely new and uniquely his own.

Throughout Appah's oeuvre, surrealist motifs abound. Disembodied heads, smoking hands, and suited torsos float alongside similarly uprooted—or unrooted—vegetation, merging seamlessly into the atmosphere of individual works. Also featured in Seoul will be a selection of charcoal drawings showcasing these motifs, marking the artist's debut exhibition of works on paper with Pace. Initially conceived as preparatory sketches, Appah now regards them as standalone works. Taking on a dreamlike sensibility detached from any identifiable narrative, these monochromatic drawings, alongside *The Sensitivity of Everyday Things* series—an ongoing body of paintings that explore the rituals of daily life—offer visitors insight into his imaginative process.

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 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 seven locations worldwide, including European footholds in London and Geneva as well as Berlin, where the gallery established an office in 2023. Pace maintains 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, along with an office and viewing room in Beijing. In 2024, Pace will open its first gallery space in Japan in Tokyo's new Azabudai Hills development.




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