

Emmet Gowin: The One Hundred Circle Farm

March 25 – April 30, 2022
 540 West 25th Street
 New York



Emmet Gowin, *Large Circle Complex near the Columbia River, Lincoln County, Washington, 1991* © Emmet Gowin, courtesy Pace Gallery

New York – Pace Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of photographs by Emmet Gowin, a key figure in the history of photography who has explored humanity’s relationship to the natural world for six decades. On view at Pace’s 540 West 25th Street space in New York from March 25 to April 30, the presentation spotlights aerial images of center-pivot irrigation circles on farms in the American West and Midwest. Made over the course of a decade beginning in 1987, these photographs are the subject of the forthcoming monograph *The One Hundred Circle Farm*, published by Princeton University Press and set to be released in the US on April 19. Pace’s exhibition, which takes its title from Gowin’s upcoming book, represents the artist’s first major presentation with the gallery.

Throughout his career, Gowin has captured images of landscapes around the world as well as intimate portraits of family members. His powerful and contemplative photographs offer meditations on the complexities of personhood and family, on humanity’s relationship to the natural world, and on industry’s toll on the Earth. Having studied under the famed photographer Harry Callahan at the Rhode Island School of Design during the 1960s, the artist served as a professor of photography at Princeton University from 1973 until his retirement in 2009.

Pace’s show includes some 30 pigment prints from Gowin’s series of circular farms, many of which have been printed for the first time. Most of the works in the exhibition also figure in Gowin’s upcoming publication. Each of these varied images depicts otherworldly formations of land and natural phenomena as seen by the artist from a bird’s eye view of a small aircraft. Depicting scars left by industry as well as traces of geological and climatic processes, the works in this series can be understood as studies of mark-making on the Earth. These images invite reflection on timely questions of sustainability, agricultural practices, and water use through a visual language that often borders on abstraction.

In contrast to their visual dynamism and beauty, the images in this body of work are indices of urgent environmental issues, pointing to the ties between land destruction, water scarcity, and center-pivot agriculture. Ostensibly investigations of form and light, Gowin’s images remain inextricable from contemporary anxieties surrounding climate change, offering prophetic visions of humanity’s troubled relationship to and exploitation of the natural world.

“I still loved the images themselves even as I began to realize where reality was headed,” Gowin remarks of the environmental impact of his subject matter in the introduction for *The One Hundred Circle Farm*. “Beauty can also be the agent of difficult and unwanted news.”

For Gowin, the circular formations he photographed in this series also allude to the language of the sacred, which transcends the specificities of a given time and place. The circle, Gowin notes, remains as “deeply human and profoundly attractive as worshipping the sun or the moon must have been for the peoples of prehistory.”

The book *The One Hundred Circle Farm* will be available at Pace Gallery in New York upon its publication. In the afterword, anthropologist Lucas Bessire meditates on the poetry and portent of Gowin’s photographs, writing, “Each hand-printed image features a different arrangement of the same elements: circle, pivot, line. The circles are the footprints of industrial irrigation; the center pivots are icons of American agribusiness; the lines inscribe the founding frontier mythologies of this country. Never have these surfaces been portrayed with such delicacy and force.”

Images from this series can also be understood in dialogue with Gowin’s aerial photographs of America’s primary nuclear testing site in Nevada, which served as the subject of a 2019 exhibition with Pace/MacGill in New York. The artist has also previously focused his environmentally engaged works on the volcanic devastation of Washington’s Mount St. Helens, chemical contamination of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation, and the chemo-petrol industries of the Czech Republic.

Emmet Gowin (b. 1941, Danville, VA) received a BFA in Graphic Design from the Richmond Professional Institute (now Virginia Commonwealth University) in 1965 and an MFA in Photography from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1967.

He served on the faculty of Princeton University as a professor of photography in the Visual Arts Program from 1973 until his retirement in 2009, and is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship (1974) and two National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships (1977, 1979).

Gowin has produced 12 monographs since 1976, including *Emmet Gowin/Photographs* (1976); *Emmet Gowin: Photographs, 1966-1983* (1983); *Emmet Gowin/Photographs: This Vegetable Earth Is But A Shadow* (1990); *Emmet Gowin: Aerial Photographs* (1998); *Emmet Gowin: Changing the Earth* (2002); *Mariposas Nocturnas – Edith in Panama* (2006); and *Emmet Gowin: The Nevada Test Site* (2019).

Gowin’s photography has been the subject of exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Morgan Library and Museum, New York; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the Princeton University Art Museum; Fundación MAPFRE, Madrid; and other international institutions. His work can be found in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris; and many other museums.

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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