

Nigel Cooke

12/F, H Queen's
80 Queen's Road Central
November 23, 2018 – January 4,
2019

Opening Reception:
Thursday, November 22, 6 – 8 PM

Hong Kong—Pace Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings and works on paper by British artist Nigel Cooke. The first solo show for the artist in Asia, the exhibition introduces a new body of work, in which Cooke explores the interplay between memory and invention. Beginning with his real-life experiences and visited landscapes, Cooke infuses the memories of these sites with a range of new ideas—thoughts on the nature of creativity, recollections of other personal moments, or responses to historical paintings and works of literature—culminating in paintings that present the artist's "psychological landscape". The exhibition will be on view at Pace's gallery in the H Queen's building November 23, 2018 – January 4, 2019, with an opening reception in the presence of the artist on Thursday, November 22, from 6 – 8 pm.

"A painting happens because the place I have seen or experienced has made contact with something in my mind," says Cooke. "Inspiration lets me see the everyday thing in the light of other, more obscure, personal ideas. It's alright that the viewer doesn't know where these images come from or what they are about to me. A painting for me is a conversation on the complexity of how we perceive phenomena in general. To get this across, I draw on many layers of thought simultaneously as I make each image. I want to make as rich and memorable an image as I can with what my lived experience throws up, so that hopefully the paintings become immersive and spark ideas in others."

Constructed in spatial layers corresponding to features of a landscape—including areas of sky, architecture, geology, and plant life, as well as human figures and animals—Cooke's paintings balance that figuration with an abstract technique that distorts the objects and surfaces to foster holistic and all-encompassing moments. While architectural backgrounds and structures have long existed within Cooke's paintings, for this new body of work, the architecture has taken on a character of its own, with the image of the wall adopting a range of meanings and forms throughout the different paintings. While the wall "motif" has grown conspicuous in today's political landscape as a symbol of division and isolation, for Cooke, the wall operates as a site of possibility and freedom, a place where words and images coalesce to create alternative visual languages.



The new works possess a broad array of painting styles and underscore the artist's ongoing curiosity and engagement with the vocabulary of the medium. Using classical painting techniques, drawing, simulated aerosol marks, staining, stencilling, spraying, masking, charcoal, acrylic and oil, inks, trowelling and scraping, palette knives and oil bars, Cooke creates a wide range of marks and depth, culminating in an exhibition of rich and profuse sensory effects. The application of paint varies within each individual work and is at times dense and patinated, and at others ethereal and transient. Figures can appear solid or transparent, with light framing objects or passing straight through them, exerting power through both their presence and their absence. This lightness of touch and use of luminous colors and ambiguous forms mark new developments in Cooke's evolution as a painter. While diverse in style and form, all of the paintings maintain Cooke's celebrated and delicate balance between gravity and absurdity, memory and imagination.

Nigel Cooke (b. 1973, Manchester, U.K.) is known for his evocative paintings, which thematically explore intersections of creative labor, individual consciousness, art history, and the constructed and natural worlds. In his epic compositions, figures are not portraits of individuals but hybrids of many—combinations of found photographs, observation, and invention. Cooke uses ambiguity and fragmentation as strategies in his practice, collapsing the distinction between genres such as abstraction, figuration, landscape, and still life.

Cooke has been featured in over fifty group exhibitions, including *Still Life* (2002), organized by the British Council, which was presented at eleven venues throughout Latin America. He has been the subject of over twenty monographic exhibitions at institutions including the South London Gallery (2006); Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas (2006); and Moderna Museet, Sweden (2007). In 2011, the Gross Michael Foundation, Dallas, presented a comprehensive survey of Cooke's work, plotting the evolution of his series of paintings and sculpture. In 2015, *Black Mimosa* was held at Pace Gallery, New York, and the following year, Pace London installed *Roman Willow*, an exhibition that coincided with the release of a major monograph on Cooke, published by Phaidon.

Cooke's work is held in numerous public collections, including the Astrup Fearnley Museet for Moderne Kunst, Oslo; British Council, London; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Honart Museum, Tehran; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; and Tate, London.

Nigel Cooke has been represented by Pace since 2014. Focused shows of his works at the gallery include *Black Mimosa* (2015) in New York, and *Roman Willow* (2016) in London.

Pace is a leading contemporary art gallery representing many of the most significant international artists and estates of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Under the leadership of President and CEO Marc Glimcher, Pace is a vital force within the art world and plays a critical role in shaping the history, creation, and engagement with modern and contemporary art. Since its founding by Arne Glimcher in 1960, Pace has developed a distinguished legacy for vibrant and dedicated relationships with renowned artists. As the gallery approaches the start of its seventh decade, Pace's mission continues to be

inspired by our drive to support the world's most influential and innovative artists and to share their visionary work with people around the world.

Pace advances this mission through its dynamic global program, comprising ambitious exhibitions, artist projects, public installations, institutional collaborations, and curatorial research and writing. Today, Pace has ten locations worldwide: three galleries in New York; one in London; one in Geneva; one in Palo Alto, California; one in Beijing; two in Hong Kong; and one in Seoul. Pace will open a new flagship gallery in New York, anticipated for completion in fall 2019. In 2016, Pace joined with Futurecity to launch Future\ Pace—an international cultural partnership innovating multidisciplinary projects for art in the public realm.

Image: Nigel Cooke, *Sunset Bathers*, 2018. Oil on linen back with sailcloth, 230 cm x 220 cm x 5 cm (90-9/16" x 86-5/8" x 1-15/16"). © Nigel Cooke, courtesy Pace Gallery

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