

Nigel Cooke: Sea Mirror

April 11 – May 17, 2025
267 Itaewon-ro
Seoul



Nigel Cooke, *Rilke in Rome*, 2025, oil on linen, 130.5 x 165 cm © Nigel Cooke, courtesy Pace Gallery

Pace is pleased to present *Sea Mirror*, an exhibition of new work by Nigel Cooke, at its gallery in Seoul. On view from April 11 to May 17, this show will span the gallery's second and third floors, bringing together never-before-seen canvases created as part of Cooke's new experimentations with portrait formats and panoramic scales, as well as a selection of 11 paintings on paper produced on the Spanish island of Formentera. With *Sea Mirror*—the artist's second solo exhibition Seoul—Cooke continues his explorations of memory, myth, and the passage of time through his distinctive visual vocabulary of gesture and touch. The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue from Pace Publishing featuring new texts by writer Chloe Aridjis and Marcelle Polednik, director of the Milwaukee Art Museum in Wisconsin.

Cooke is renowned for his evocative, atmospheric paintings that blend figurative and abstract forms within layered compositions. Drawing inspiration from a diverse range of subjects—including literature, paleontology, neuroscience, mythology, and zoology—his work merges personal narratives with broader cultural and natural histories. Through intricate networks of calligraphic marks, Cooke explores the intersection of painting, thinking, and perception, where image and meaning emerge from the convergence of disparate elements to create portraits of psychological and physical spaces alike. His intuitive process is often guided by his experiences in different parts of the world and other autobiographical material, and his works can be found in major collections and institutions around the world, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, Tate in London, the Pinault Collection in Paris, the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, and the Long Museum in Shanghai, among others.

In his latest body of work—which is the subject of his upcoming presentation in Seoul—Cooke has departed from the bold colors and graphic mark making that have characterized his paintings in recent years. Rendered in cool tones, his new paintings on canvas and on paper, created across Iceland and Spain, are softer, more contemplative and vulnerable compositions than his previous works. Featuring impressionistic lines that flow and emanate across their surfaces, Cooke's *Sea Mirror* paintings can be understood in conversation with works by Titian, Rubens, Turner, and other great painters in London's National Gallery. As ever, one of the central concerns of his practice is the mystery of painting itself—its timelessness, its narrative power, and its emotional and psychological depth.

A suite of 11 new paintings on paper, created on the Spanish island of Formentera, will complement the paintings on view in *Sea Mirror*. Deeply connected to his recent travels in Iceland, where he painted waterfalls on a daily basis, and his time spent in Formentera, these compositions meditate on notions of transience and transformation, of impermanence and renewal. Creating this group of gouaches on paper on Formentera's beaches, Cooke made use of seawater as a material in their production, imbuing each work with the spirit and rhythm of the Mediterranean Sea. In this way, the artist continues

his investigations into the poetic resonances of tidal movements and the ways that bodies of water—ever-moving and ever-disappearing—can metaphorically reflect the creative process.

Nigel Cooke (b. 1973) is known for evocative works that merge figurative forms with abstract and elemental atmospherics. Since the late 1990s, Cooke has explored and stretched the boundaries of figurative painting, creating a highly diverse and distinctive body of work. More recently, his work has assessed this output, moving into a succinct language with which to investigate his wide range of interests. Informed by a range of fields from palaeontology, neuroscience, classical mythology and zoology, the linear construction of Cooke's latest paintings recalls brain circuitry, the human or animal body and landscape formations simultaneously. The artist is interested in folding familiar dualities such as the mind and body, or the human brain and the natural world, into a single fluid gesture. His organic abstractions are loaded with mammalian and geological fragments, creating an instability and movement in the image as well as an ambiguity between a vast array of natural associations.

Pace is a leading international art gallery representing some of the most influential artists and estates of the 20th and 21st centuries, founded by Arne Glimcher in 1960. Holding decades-long relationships with Alexander Calder, Jean Dubuffet, Agnes Martin, Louise Nevelson, and Mark Rothko, Pace has a unique history that can be traced to its early support of artists central to the Abstract Expressionist and Light and Space movements. Now in its seventh decade, the gallery continues to nurture its longstanding relationships with its legacy artists and estates while also making an investment in the careers of contemporary artists, including Torkwase Dyson, Loie Hollowell, Robert Nava, Adam Pendleton, and Marina Perez Simão.

Under the current leadership of CEO Marc Glimcher and President Samanthe Rubell, Pace has established itself as a collaborative force in the art world, partnering with other galleries and nonprofit organizations around the world in recent years. The gallery advances its mission to support its artists and share their visionary work with audiences and collectors around the world through a robust global program anchored by its exhibitions of both 20th century and contemporary art and scholarly projects from its imprint Pace Publishing, which produces books introducing new voices to the art historical canon. This artist-first ethos also extends to public installations, philanthropic events, performances, and other interdisciplinary programming presented by Pace.

Today, Pace has nine locations worldwide, including two galleries in New York—its eight-story headquarters at 540 West 25th Street and an adjacent 8,000-square-foot exhibition space at 510 West 25th Street. The gallery's history in the New York art world dates to 1963, when it opened its first space in the city on East 57th Street. A champion of Light and Space artists, Pace has also been active in California for some 60 years, opening its West Coast flagship in Los Angeles in 2022. It maintains European footholds in London and Geneva as well as Berlin, where it established an office in 2023 and a gallery space in 2025. Pace was one of the first international galleries to have a major presence in Asia, where it has been active since 2008, the year it first opened in Beijing's vibrant 798 Art District. It now operates galleries in Hong Kong and Seoul and opened its first gallery in Japan in Tokyo's Azabudai Hills development in 2024.

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