

Mark Rothko 1968: Clearing Away

October 8 – November 13, 2021
5 Hanover Square
London



Mark Rothko, *Untitled*, 1968, acrylic on paper mounted on panel
23-7/8" × 18-3/4" × 1-3/8" (60.6 cm × 47.6 cm × 3.5 cm) Artworks on paper by
Mark Rothko Copyright © 2020 by Kate Rothko Prizel and Christopher Rothko

"It was almost certainly his experience with the paradoxical nature of paper—absorbing and reflecting at the same time—that set him on his course to the great clearing away that his life's work represents." — Dore Ashton

London—Pace is honoured to inaugurate its new London gallery with *Mark Rothko 1968: Clearing Away*, an exhibition of rarely seen paintings on paper from the final years of Mark Rothko's life. On view October 8 – November 13 at 5 Hanover Square, this landmark exhibition will be the first in the United Kingdom that is solely dedicated to the artist's extraordinary paper-based practice. The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue featuring an introduction by Christopher Rothko and a new essay by art historian Eleanor Nairne, curator at the Barbican Art Gallery.

Mark Rothko 1968: Clearing Away brings together key paintings from Rothko's renowned body of work made in the late 1960s—a significant and prolific period in the artist's life. In the wake of a particularly difficult bout of ill health and a tumultuous time in his personal life, Rothko was forced to reduce the scale of his practice from his signature monumental canvas to more intimately sized paper. Despite physical limitations, Rothko worked feverishly with a renewed enthusiasm for colour, delighted by the effect of acrylic paint, which he had newly discovered.

These jewel-like paintings encourage intimate examination, offering a meditative, pulsating quality that envelops viewers within their frame. Rendered in an array of pigments, from the deepest blue to riotous pink, Rothko's manipulation of colour and light is masterful. Central to his iconic sectional compositions is Rothko's unique

negotiation of space. He creates visual tension through rectangular forms that are at once contained yet expansive. Rothko's expert layering and feathering of colour creates the illusion of luminous, infinite space, yet the painting's edge maintains focus within the colour-field.

Greatly influenced by the writings of Nietzsche—who advocated for the importance of an artist's freedom from the physical world in order to arrive at ideas of eternity and the mythic—Rothko explained that his ultimate ambition was 'the elimination of all obstacles between the painter and the idea, and between the idea and the observer.' The paintings borne from this singular moment in the artist's life represent the realization of this lifelong endeavour, showcasing his enduring will to clear away all ties to representation and refine his vision of boundlessness.

The comparatively small scale of these works allows viewers an intimate encounter, fulfilling Rothko's desire to collapse boundaries between artist and viewer. Rothko playfully suggested that the optimal distance from which to engage with these works was 18 inches away, mirroring his own proximity to the paintings as he made them. This exhibition offers viewers a rare glimpse into the artist's more spontaneous practice as he experimented with colour and medium, unencumbered by the demands of large-scale canvases.

This exhibition coincides with Tate Britain's landmark display of Rothko's 1958 Seagram Murals in dialogue with paintings by J.M.W. Turner. The suite of large-scale paintings originally intended for the Four Seasons Restaurant in New York were given by the artist to the Tate in 1969, arriving in London in 1970. This new display marks 50 years since the iconic paintings came to London, fulfilling Rothko's wish to have his work hung beside the British painter he deeply admired.

Mark Rothko 1968: Clearing Away will be the first exhibition in Pace's new London gallery on Hanover Square. The opening programme will also feature *Liquid a Place*, a collaborative performance and sculptural installation by Torkwase Dyson presented by Pace Live.

Pace's new London gallery has been designed by architect Jamie Fobert Architects. Fobert enjoys a longstanding relationship with Pace having been involved with the original gallery on Lexington Street in 2011. For Hanover Square, Fobert will completely transform the interior architecture of the existing building to incorporate flexible galleries across two floors. The levels will be connected by a feature staircase rendered in black steel, giving the impression of a fully integrated space. The new modular layout will allow for dynamic presentations and will accommodate installations of works ranging from intimate to monumental in scale.

Mark Rothko (b. 1903, Dvinsk, Russia; d. 1970, New York), a pioneer of the New York School, is predominantly recognized for his mesmerizing Color-field paintings of immense scale produced between 1949 and 1970, which followed his works of figurative and biomorphic imagery. His stylistic explorations resulted in a proliferation of works on paper and canvas, with layered transparencies of vibrant pigments and earth tones culminating in luminous and ethereal soft-edged compositions. His approach to painting emphasized an experimental engagement with process in order to fully articulate a universal expression. Among Rothko's artistic philosophies, he held that painting was a deeply psychological and spiritual experience through which basic human emotions could be communicated.

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 exploration into the intersection of art and technology through new business models, exhibition interpretation tools, and representation of artists engaging with technology.

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. In fall 2021, Pace will continue to expand its European presence with the opening of a larger gallery space in London.

Press Inquiries

EUROPE

Rebecca Riegelhaupt

Communications Director

rriegelhaupt@pacegallery.com

+44 7917 909779

Sam Talbot

sam@sam-talbot.com

+44 7725 184630

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UNITED STATES

Amelia Redgrift

Senior Director, Global Communications & Content

aredgrift@pacegallery.com

+1 646 236 5241

Adriana Elgarresta

Director of Public Relations

aelgarresta@pacegallery.com

+1 305 498 1649