

Trevor Paglen: A Thousand Flowers

June 11–27, 2021
68 Park Place
East Hampton, New York

Image: Trevor Paglen, *Bloom (#b8816a)*, 2021
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East Hampton – Pace Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition by American artist Trevor Paglen at the gallery’s location in East Hampton. Paglen is a multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary artist whose practice examines themes such as the power of technology and the politics of image culture. Although focused on sculpture, video, photography, and installation, Paglen has developed a groundbreaking practice that involves incorporating techniques from investigative journalism, engineering, experimental geography, and other fields into his process. *Trevor Paglen: A Thousand Flowers*, on view June 11–27, 2021, will feature artworks from a number of his recent series exploring artificial intelligence and machine learning and comes on the heels of the artist’s solo exhibition, *Bloom*, at Pace’s London space in 2020. This solo presentation marks Paglen’s third with the gallery, having joined Pace’s roster in March of 2020 and inaugurates the gallery’s exclusive representation of the artist in New York.

Centered at art’s intersection with technology, Paglen’s work invokes art historical traditions of conceptual art, minimalism, and naturalism while examining and investigating the use of technological structures that shape and control society. Recently, he has turned his attention to the application of artificial intelligence within machine learning, data mining, and predictive analytics, examining these computer algorithms that collect and categorize information. Of this development, the artist shares: “Ways of seeing are never purely aesthetic—there are always hidden assumptions and forms of power built into perception. As computer vision and artificial intelligence systems become ubiquitous, I have been exploring the assumptions built into these technical systems.”

This exhibition presents large-scale works from Paglen’s *Bloom* series alongside a selection of drawings and albumen prints. The aesthetic beauty of Paglen’s *Bloom* flower formations belies their conceptual foundations: they are hybrid constructions made by applying computer vision algorithms to photographs. In the artworks, machine learning systems assign arbitrary colors to different regions of the artists’ black-and-white images. Odd and unlikely colors differentiate between the various textures, shapes, and objects that the computer vision system detects in the images.

Similarly, on closer inspection, the landscape photography depicted in Paglen's albumen prints is marked with patterns of arrows, lines, circles, and squares, the symbols of various computer vision algorithm attempts to read, understand, and categorize the images. Employing traditional printing techniques utilized by 19th century photographers, Paglen's photographs of canyons, waterfalls, and rock formations are developed using direct sunlight and bear the marks of machine learning.

Also included in this exhibition is Paglen's innovative and interactive artwork *ImageNet Roulette* (2019), which classifies its viewers according to the most widely-used training set in computer vision research and development. The artwork caused a major controversy when released as part of Paglen and AI researcher Kate Crawford's exhibition *Training Humans* at the Fondazione Prada. The work showed how ImageNet, a dataset developed at Princeton University and Stanford University in 2009 and used in countless image classification and artificial intelligence systems, was not only pseudoscientific in its construction but actively racist, misogynistic, ableist, cruel, and LGBT-phobic. The widespread shock and disturbance caused by Paglen's project led to an announcement by ImageNet that it would be removing 600,000 images from its dataset in 2019.

The artist has a forthcoming commission at the San José Museum of Art, opening this September. He recently had an exhibition, *Trevor Paglen: Opposing Geometries*, at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, PA. The documentary film *Unseen Skies* chronicling his work played virtually at the San Francisco International Film Festival in April of this year. Other recent shows include *Trevor Paglen: Inaugural Exhibition Solo Show* at Officine Grandi Riparazioni in Turin, Italy and *Trevor Paglen: From 'Apple' to 'Anomaly,' (Pictures and Labels) Selections from the ImageNet dataset for object recognition* at The Curve, Barbican Centre in London.

Trevor Paglen (b. 1974, Camp Springs, MD) is known for his wide-reaching and interdisciplinary practice that incorporates image-making, sculpture, investigative journalism, writing, engineering, and numerous other disciplines into his unique approach to art. Paglen constantly questions the limits of visibility in series such as *The Black Sites*, *The Other Night Sky*, and *Limit Telephotography* in which the limits of vision are explored through the histories of landscape photography, abstraction, Romanticism, and technology. Paglen's investigation into the epistemology of representation can be seen in his *Symbology* and *Code Names* series which utilize text, video, object, and image to explore questions surrounding military culture and language. Among his chief concerns are learning how to see the historical moment we live in and developing the means to imagine alternative futures.

Paglen has had numerous one-person exhibitions, including at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C. (2018), Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2018), Fondazione Prada (2019), Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (2019); Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt (2015); Eli & Edythe Broad Art Museum, Michigan State University, East Lansing (2015); Protocinema Istanbul (2013); Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, Netherlands (2013); and Vienna Secession (2010). He has participated in group exhibitions at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2009, 2010, 2018); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2014); The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2011); Tate Modern, London (2010), and numerous other institutions.

In tandem with his museum exhibitions, Paglen is well-known for his site-specific public projects, among them, *Sight Machine*, an interactive performance with the Kronos Quartet, *Orbital Reflector* with the Nevada Museum of Art, and *The Last Pictures* (2013), an artwork containing a micro-etched disc with one hundred photographs into geostationary orbit around Earth via the communications satellite EchoStar XVI, produced in collaboration with Creative Time and MIT. In 2015, Paglen created *Trinity Cube*, a radioactive public sculpture made from material collected within the exclusion zone in Fukushima, Japan, and from Trinitite, the radioactive material made from molten sand after the testing of the Atomic Bomb at the Trinity Site in New Mexico.

In addition, Paglen achieved critical acclaim for his contributed research and cinematography on the Academy Award-winning film *Citizenfour*, directed by Laura Poitras. Paglen is the author of five books and numerous articles on subjects including experimental geography, state secrecy, military symbology, photography, and visuality. His work has been profiled in the *New York Times*, *Vice Magazine*, the *New Yorker*, and *Artforum*.

Paglen is the recipient of the 2016 Deutsche Boerse Photography Prize, 2018 Nam June Paik Art Center Prize, and was the 2017 recipient of the MacArthur “Genius” award.

Paglen holds a BA from the University of California, Berkeley, an MFA from the Art Institute of Chicago, and a PhD in Geography from the University of California, Berkeley.

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.

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