

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aaron Payne Fine Art Presents *"Paths to the Horizon: An Exhibition of Light and Space Artwork by Michelle Cooke"*

Exhibition Dates: September 18 – October 31, 2026

Opening Reception: Saturday, October 3, 2026, 4–7 pm

Midissage and Directors Walk Through: Saturday, October 17, 2026, 4–7 pm

Aaron Payne Fine Art in Santa Fe presents *"Paths to the Horizon: An Exhibition of Light and Space Artwork by Michelle Cooke"* from September 18 through October 31, 2026. This 15-year survey features works on paper, sculpture, and glass constructions that explore the intersection of light, shadow, materials, and form. This is the artist's first exhibition at the gallery.

An opening reception will be held Saturday, October 3, from 4 to 7 pm, with a second reception on Saturday, October 17, from 4 to 7 pm.

Cooke works across a range of media — graphite on handmade paper, ink pencil on handmade paper, and glass — producing perceptual studies in which gravity and light shape three-dimensional form. The exhibition's glass installations originated years ago, when a friend gave the artist several boxes of glass slide covers from an art history department and suggested she find a use for them. Through years of working with the material, Cooke has arrived at a precise set of conditions for the glass pieces: they must be vertical, perpendicular to the wall, and delineated only by light, whether natural or artificial. The compositions themselves have evolved over time, moving from representations of music and lyrical, free-form gestures toward geometric shapes and, most recently, simple blocks and lines that fall from the ceiling, hover above the floor, or hide in corners — subtly altering the character of a space.

Fragility, transparency, balance, weightlessness, and gravity are recurring themes throughout Cooke's work. In her glass pieces particularly, she explores the tension between the material's transparency as a medium for light and its more assertive presence as a projecting grid.

Also featured are several drawings from her *Horizon* and *White Light* series. These works done in graphite and ink pencil are almost photorealistic and yet, clearly the result of meditative mark-making by the artist. Both the beauty and the process of the drawings captures the viewer at once.

Of her practice, Cooke writes: "I have not worked in a vacuum. Early on the work of Robert Irwin, Larry Bell, and James Turrell, as well as exposure to the conceptual work of Bruce Nauman gave me a foundation for the perceptual direction of my work and an understanding of and appreciation for the rigor necessary to realize my ideas. It has been a captivating pursuit and one which continues to teach."

Cooke holds an MFA from Claremont Graduate University and a BFA from Laguna College of Art and Design, with additional studies at UC Berkeley and UCLA. Over more than four decades she has exhibited widely across New Mexico and beyond, with solo shows at venues including the Harwood Museum of Art, Eight Modern Gallery, and the Taos Center for the Arts, and her work has been reviewed in THE Magazine, the Santa Fe New Mexican, and the Albuquerque Journal, among other publications.

This Fall, her work will be featured alongside Larry Bell's in "Larry Bell and Michelle Cooke, The Realm of Perception" at the Taos Center for the Arts.

****Selected Press****

"These pieces are alive."

— Susanna Carlisle, THE Magazine

"The feeling is one of transparency, weightlessness, fragility, beauty."

— Harmony Hammond, Albuquerque Journal North

"Cooke's work is downright masterful."

— Christine Hemp, THE Magazine

****Exhibition Details****

The Horizon Within

September 18 – October 31, 2026

Opening Reception: Saturday, October 3, 4–7 pm

Second Reception: Saturday, October 17, 4–7 pm

Aaron Payne Fine Art
1708 Lena Street, Suite 203
Santa Fe, NM 87505

****Gallery Hours****: Thursday–Saturday, 11 am–4 pm, and by appointment

www.apfineart.com

Instagram: @aaronpaynefineart

****Press Contact****

Aaron Payne
info@apfineart.com
917-319-5430