



John Riepenhoff

Out of Mind

March 28 - May 2, 2026

Opening reception: Saturday March 28, 5-8pm

COOPER COLE is pleased to announce *Out of Mind*, an exhibition of new paintings by John Riepenhoff. The exhibition brings together a recent body of sky paintings that continue Riepenhoff's long engagement with the act of looking upward. Rooted in earlier works based on obscured plein air observations of the night sky, these paintings distill accumulated observations of atmosphere, light, and time into intuitive yet systematic constellations of colour and pattern.

For more than a decade, Riepenhoff developed his sky paintings through an unusual process of painting outdoors at night in near darkness. Working under conditions that privileged the subtleties of stars over the surface of the canvas, he would paint continuously until dawn, seeing the finished work clearly only in daylight. This approach allowed the artist to sidestep aesthetic habits and expectations and opened the possibility for discovery within the act of painting itself. Many of the earliest works in the series were produced in the forests of northern Wisconsin, where the absence of artificial light offers exceptional visibility of the night sky.

While the earliest sky paintings described distant constellations and celestial fields, the works in *Out of Mind*, shift toward more atmospheric systems. Layers of color and subtle shifts in luminosity evoke changing conditions in the sky, including drifting clouds, light pollution, and the diffuse glow of the atmosphere. Composed through a balance of observation and improvisation, the paintings move between abstraction and representation, suggesting both specific moments of perception and broader patterns of natural phenomena.



The title *Out of Mind*, reflects the exhibition's central concerns. On one hand, it refers to the generative potential of stillness and idleness, the simple act of gazing at the sky and being lost in ones thoughts. On the other, it points to the heightened awareness of duration that emerges when one becomes attentive to the passage of time. In Riepenhoff's paintings, time is both subject and material. Each work gathers many moments of observation and condenses them into a suspended present.

The exhibition will also include a sculptural decoy of a great horned owl positioned within the gallery as a companion to the paintings. Associated with nocturnal vision and heightened perception, the owl serves as an intermediary between human observation and the vastness of the night sky. Its presence subtly recalibrates the viewer's encounter with the works and suggests alternative ways of seeing that extend beyond the limits of human perception.



John Riepenhoff (b. 1982, Milwaukee, Wisconsin) is an artist whose practice moves fluidly between studio production and collaborative, community oriented initiatives. His work includes painting and ceramic sculpture alongside projects that create platforms for artistic exchange and collective activity.

Riepenhoff is co owner of The Green Gallery in Milwaukee and serves as curator for Sculpture Milwaukee. He is the founder of the Beer Endowment and The Open Fund, programs that redistribute resources to support artists and cultural production. He also co organized the Milwaukee International and Dark Fair. Across these activities, Riepenhoff has developed a reputation for inventing new artistic platforms that enable the work of others while expanding the social and material contexts in which art can be experienced.

Recent solo exhibitions include Tanya Leighton, Los Angeles in 2025; Misako and Rosen, Tokyo, in 2025; Broadway, New York in 2024; Various Small Fires, Dallas in 2023; Broadway Gallery, New York in 2022; Artbeat, Tbilisi, Georgia in 2021; Center for Contemporary Art and Culture, Portland and Night Gallery, Los Angeles in 2018; Green Tea Gallery, Fukushima, Japan in 2017; Marlborough Gallery, New York in 2016; Atlanta Contemporary Art Center and Misako & Rosen Gallery, Tokyo in 2015, among many others.

His work has also been included in group exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Milwaukee Art Museum, Wisconsin; Arlington Arts Center, Virginia; New Bedford Art Museum, Massachusetts; Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Wisconsin; Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago and Times Art Museum, Beijing. Riepenhoff currently lives and works in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA.