

The Armory Show

Booth 600, 7–10 March 2019



Celia Paul, *Sky, Sea, Shore*, 2017
Oil on canvas
70.5 x 63 x 6.5 cm
27 3/4 x 24 3/4 x 2 1/2 in
© Celia Paul, courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro, London/Venice

Victoria Miro participates in The Armory Show (Booth 600) with a special presentation of recent paintings by the British artist Celia Paul. Also on view are works by Alice Neel and Chris Ofili.

Celia Paul's art stems from a deep connection with subject matter and is quiet, contemplative and ultimately moving in its profound attention to detail and deeply felt spirituality. This presentation focuses on two key tenets of her work: portraiture and seascapes.

Works on view address the themes of memory and family, the gulf between outward appearances and inner lives, while offering touchstones for wider thoughts about time, transience, spirituality and mortality. Paul is renowned for her intimate depictions of people and places she knows well. From 1977 to 2007 she worked on a series of paintings of her mother, and since that time has concentrated on painting her four sisters, especially her sister Kate, as well as a number of close friends. Painted in her London home and studio, which is located directly opposite the British Museum, these works are charged with a pearly grey light that is particular to London, and chart its subtle shifts from hour to hour, month to month as it plays across her subjects. Paul has produced a large number of evocative self-portraits over the course of her career. Her self-portraits open up a painterly and conceptual dialogue between the dual role of subject and artist – caught between self-possession and self-scrutiny – as well as offering an extended consideration of the essential dualities of the medium – its ability to capture qualities of form, light and atmosphere, and its material presence.

Since her mother's death in 2015, Paul has painted the sea and other bodies of water. Taking the idea of portraiture in a more elemental direction, these water paintings are permeated by a sense of mortality, of bodies becoming dissolute and consciousness shifting into water, energy and light. Paul has spoken of her waterscapes in terms of feeling in flux following her mother's death. They certainly speak to the disorienting experience of grief. And yet, for Paul, solace can be found in the consoling beauty of nature and the flow of time that connects us all.

While markedly different in character to her portraits and self-portraits, her paintings of water similarly focus on a subject she knows well. During the 1970s, Paul's father was head of the Lee Abbey religious community in north Devon. Paul returned to this stretch of coastline to make studies for the paintings in this presentation. The works highlight the painter's challenge not only to capture specific states of matter – water and air – but to attempt to capture the moment.

Travelling from the Yale Center for British Art, an exhibition of works by Paul is currently on view at The Huntington, San Marino (9 February–8 July 2019). The exhibition is curated by Hilton Als, Pulitzer Prize-winning author, staff writer and theatre critic for *The New Yorker* and associate professor of writing at Columbia University. It features work selected by Als in collaboration with the artist as a testament to their transatlantic friendship.

About the artist

Celia Paul was born in 1959 in Trivandrum, India. She lives and works in London. Major solo exhibitions include *Celia Paul*, curated by Hilton Als, at Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut (2018) touring to The Huntington, San Marino, California (2019), *Desdemona for Celia by Hilton*, Gallery Met, New York (2015–16); *Gwen John and Celia Paul: Painters in Parallel*, Pallant House Gallery, Chichester (2012–13); The Grave's Art Gallery, Sheffield (2005) and Abbot Hall, Kendal (2004). She has participated in group exhibitions including *All Too Human: Bacon, Freud and a Century of Painting Life* at Tate Britain (2018), *La Diabliesse*, Tramps, London (2016); *NO MAN'S LAND: Women Artists from the Rubell Family Collection*, Rubell Family Collection, Miami (2015-2016); *Forces in Nature* curated by Hilton Als at Victoria Miro (2015); *Recent acquisitions: Arcimboldo to Kitaj*, British Museum, London (2013); *Self-Consciousness*, curated by Peter Doig and Hilton Als, VeneKlasen/Werner gallery, Berlin (2010); *The School of London: Bacon to Bevan*, Musée Maillol, Paris (1998) and *British Figurative Painting of the 20th Century*, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem (1992). Her work is in collections including Abbot Hall, Kendal; British Museum, London; Carlsberg Foundation, Copenhagen; Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; Frissiras Museum, Athens; Herzog Ulrich Gallery, Brunswick, Germany; Metropolitan Museum, New York; Morgan Library and Museum, New York; National Portrait Gallery, London; New Hall Art Collection, Murray Edwards College, Cambridge; Ruth Borchard Collection; Saatchi Collection, London; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Rubell Family Collection, Miami; and the Yale Center for British Art, Connecticut.

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