

Pulitzer Prize-winning Author Hilton Als Curates an Exhibition of Recent Work by Celia Paul at the Center

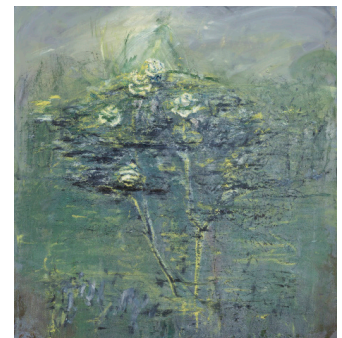
NEW HAVEN, CT (April 3, 2018) – This spring, the Yale Center for British Art presents an exhibition of work by the contemporary British artist Celia Paul (b. 1959), curated by the Pulitzer Prize-winning author Hilton Als. The display, specially selected by Als in collaboration with the artist and a deeply personal testament to their transatlantic friendship, focuses on Paul’s recent paintings (made between 2015 and 2017). This selection of Paul’s work is redolent of her great subjects: memory, family, and the inner lives of women. Born to missionary parents in Thiruvananthapuram (formerly Trivandrum), South India, Paul’s family returned to their native England before Paul and her four sisters were adolescents; the artist subsequently lived with her parents and siblings in Yorkshire near Haworth, a town made famous by another group of sisters: the Brontës, and which continues to inform Paul’s work. This exhibition is on view at the Center from April 3 through August 12, 2018.



“Visionaries such as Celia and her counterparts define a post-Young British Artist (YBA) aesthetic that puts the personal to the forefront. Whether drawing from life, or the life of the imagination, she is inspired by the figurative. Sometimes the figures are family members, or bodies that the painter invents living and dancing and stretching in scenes based on moments experienced in real life. So doing, the artist showcases her interest in the complex and rich relationship between the seen, and the seer,” notes Als.



Six of Paul’s most recent paintings are on display in the second-floor galleries, including intimate works such as *My Sisters in Mourning* (2015–16), a painting she began on the thirty-second anniversary of her father’s death and five months after her mother died. Completed in October 2016, this painting commemorates her mother and relates to a previous work, *Family Group* (1984–86), a memorial to her father that depicts her mother and sisters (currently on display in the exhibition *All Too Human: Bacon, Freud and a Century of Painting Life* at Tate Britain). The painting *Rosebush, Magdalene Garden* (2017) depicts another family association, and it is a vehicle to connect with Paul’s brother-in-law, Rowan Williams, who is the master of Magdalene College, Cambridge University, and the former archbishop of Canterbury.

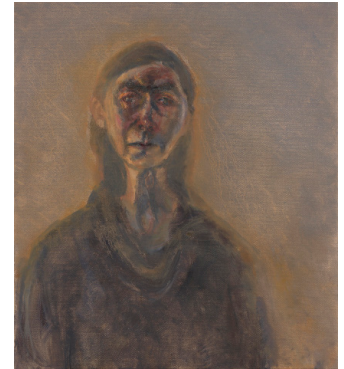


Paul says that she only started painting self-portraits successfully when she was in her fifties. A portrait that she made reflecting her likeness in 2017 can be viewed in this

CELIA PAUL

exhibition. Paul had only come to this as a subject recently and notes that as a younger woman she was too self-conscious to render her image truthfully.

“Women are so often defined by their appearance, not for who they are, or by their relationship to a man. Our place in society is tenuous and shifting, difficult to pin down. Women don’t even have a foothold in the history of art, so to represent herself squarely in front of her easel is false, unless there is a lot of intentional humor,” states Paul. “I think a woman painter must be particularly conscious of the difficulty of self-representation, and she needs all her wits about her.”



As a student, Paul’s interests turned from writing poetry to portrait painting; her first subjects were elderly women in care homes and her family. She has always worked from life, and her style has always been her own. “Inspired by Gwen John and others, Paul’s visual vocabulary was deep and psychological, poetry that alchemized as paint. Between 1977 and 2007, Paul’s work concentrated on her mother and sisters and, eventually, loss. Since her mother’s passing, Paul has painted the sea and other bodies of water believing that if her mother is anywhere, she is there,” comments Als.

This exhibition of Paul’s work is the inaugural installment of a trilogy, curated by Als, spanning three successive years, and will focus on the work of Lynette Yiadom-Boakye in 2019, and Njideka Akunyili Crosby in 2020. Each artist creates a world based on the familiar and the familial, and this theme will be consistent throughout each collaboration. The genesis of this exhibition series developed following a gallery talk on Paul’s work that Als gave at the Center in September of 2016, as a winner of the prestigious Windham-Campbell Literature Prize, which is administered by the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale.



“Hilton, who has collaborated with Celia on other projects and has written poignantly on her work, spoke eloquently during his talk at the Center, and we were so moved that we asked him to curate a small and deeply personal exhibition of her paintings,” notes the Center’s director, Amy Meyers. “Indeed, we asked Hilton to curate this display as part of a trio of small exhibitions exploring the work of artists with whom he has developed close working friendships over the years.”



In addition, a group of paintings by artists of significance to Paul, selected by Als, is on display in the Center’s Long Gallery on the fourth floor, and serve as a complement to this exhibition.

CELIA PAUL

CREDITS

Organized by the Yale Center for British Art and Victoria Miro, *Celia Paul* has been curated by Hilton Als, staff writer and theater critic for the *New Yorker* and Associate Professor of Writing at Columbia University. Als will deliver an Andrew Carnduff Ritchie lecture to open each exhibition at the Center, and the three talks will be published as a book, in association with Yale University Press, following the completion of this series. In addition, this exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated brochure.

OPENING PROGRAM

Tuesday, April 3, 5:30 pm, Andrew Carnduff Ritchie Lecture | *The Sea, The Sea*

Als discusses his collaboration with, and the work of, contemporary British artist Celia Paul. This program is jointly sponsored by the Center and the Yale University Art Gallery.

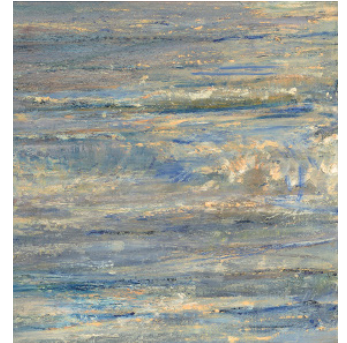
ABOUT CELIA PAUL

One of Britain's leading contemporary painters, Paul was born in 1959 in Thiruvananthapuram (formerly Trivandrum), South India, and now lives and works in London. She studied at the Slade School of Fine Art in London between 1976 and 1981. Paul has held many major solo exhibitions, such as *Desdemona for Celia* by Hilton at Gallery Met, New York, from 2015 to 2016, and *Gwen John and Celia Paul: Painters in Parallel*, Pallant House Gallery, Chichester, from 2012 to 2013. She has also participated in many international group exhibitions including the following: *All Too Human: Bacon, Freud and a Century of Painting Life*, Tate Britain, London, in 2018; *La Diablesse, Tramps*, Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, in 2016; *NO MAN'S LAND: Women Artists from the Rubell Family Collection*, Rubell Family Collection, Miami, between 2015 and 2016; and *Forces in Nature*, curated by Als at Victoria Miro in 2015.

Artworks by Paul are included in numerous public and private collections, including the British Museum, London; the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge; Frissiras Museum, Athens; the Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Metropolitan Museum, New York; the Morgan Library and Museum, New York; Musée Maillol, Paris; National Portrait Gallery, London; Saatchi Collection, London; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; as well as the Center.

ABOUT HILTON ALS

Born in Brooklyn in 1960, Als is a staff writer for the *New Yorker* magazine, where he has been the magazine's chief theater critic since 2013. He was awarded the prestigious Windham-Campbell Literature prize in 2016, and won the Pulitzer Prize for Criticism in 2017. Als is the author of two acclaimed works of nonfiction, *White Girls* (2013) and *The Women* (1996). A former fellow of the Guggenheim Foundation, staff writer for the

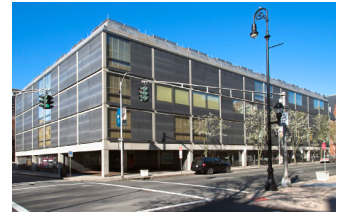


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Village Voice, and editor-at-large at *Vibe* magazine, Als is currently an associate professor in the writing program at Columbia University's School of the Arts. He has also taught at Smith College, Wellesley College, Wesleyan University, and the Yale School of Drama.

ABOUT THE YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

The Yale Center for British Art is a public art museum and research institute that houses the largest collection of British art outside the United Kingdom. Presented to the university by Paul Mellon (Yale College, Class of 1929), the collection reflects the development of British art and culture from the Elizabethan period onward. The Center's collections include more than 2,000 paintings, 250 sculptures, 20,000 drawings and watercolors, 6,000 photographs, 40,000 prints, and 35,000 rare books and manuscripts. More than 40,000 volumes supporting research in British art and related fields are available in the Center's Reference Library. In May 2016, the Center reopened to the public following the completion of a multiyear project to conserve its iconic Louis I. Kahn building.



Visit the Center online at britishart.yale.edu, and connect on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat @yalebritishart. #CeliaPaul

PRESS CONTACTS

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Image credits: (All exhibition images are courtesy of the artist and Victoria Miro, London / Venice, © Celia Paul 2018) Celia Paul, *The Brontë Parsonage (with Charlotte's Pine and Emily's Path to the Moors)*, 2017, oil on canvas; Celia Paul, *My Sisters in Mourning*, 2015–16, oil on canvas; Celia Paul, *Rosebush, Magdalene Garden*, 2017, oil on canvas; Celia Paul, *Self-Portrait, March*, 2017, oil on canvas; Celia Paul, *Clouds and Foam*, 2017, oil on canvas; Celia Paul, *Shoreline (detail)*, 2015–16, oil on canvas; Celia Paul, *Shoreline (detail)*, 2015–16, oil on canvas; Celia Paul in her studio, courtesy of the artist and Victoria Miro, London/Venice, photograph © Gautier Deblonde; Hilton Als, photograph by Brigitte Lacombe; Yale Center for British Art, exterior view, photograph by Richard Caspole