



Cisia, 2017 Oil on canvas, 90 x 120 cm

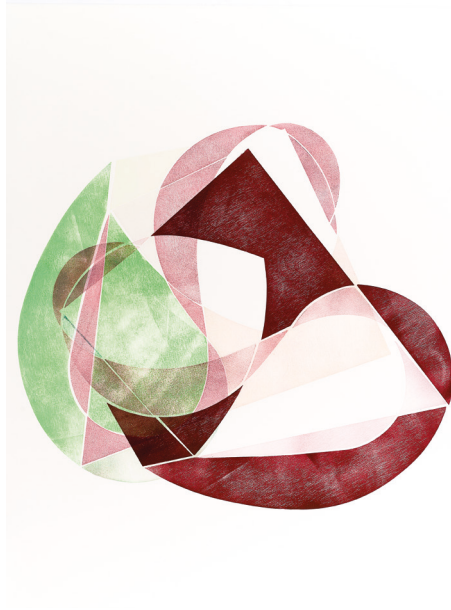
Route

1. A way or course taken in getting from a starting point to a destination.
2. From Old French rute ‘road’, from Latin rupta (via) ‘broken (way)’.

Lines dart out of sight like errant children. Shapes stumble into focus before disappearing into the surface. Colours flaunt themselves only to disintegrate. You search the canvas as if it were a crowd, straining for a glimpse of the familiar. But your route through the work is blocked. Dead ends. Detours. Mirages.

The works of Celia Cook are routes without roadmaps, that move from start to destination without a plan. They capture the effort of comprehension, the labour of trying to move forward. The paintings stage the rupture between plasticity and sensibility; the tension between the world you see on the canvas and the one you understand.

These are works that are activated by the struggle inherent in them, performing their own failure as they traverse the tightrope walk between completion and oblivion. The deeper you get the further away you realise you are.



Clan Concrete 29, 2018 Unique woodcut 76 x 56 cm



Clan Concrete 3, 2018 Unique woodcut 76 x 56 cm

Writing of his friend Giacometti, Samuel Beckett observed that “things were insolvable [for him], but that kept him going”. The same is true for Cook. Comfortable resolution eludes both artists, whose work celebrate the act of the endeavour. Staging the process of their own creation, Giacometti’s sculptures and Cook’s canvases articulate their intangibility and in doing so animate themselves.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the writer’s impact on the artist, it is Beckett who characterises the essence of Cook’s plight best, in *The Unnamable*:

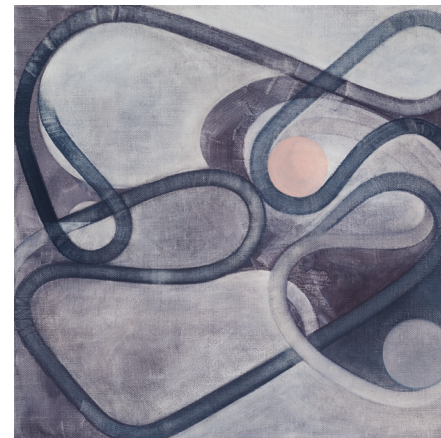
“You must go on. I can’t go on. I’ll go on”

These are paintings that are animated by their own impossibility. Here, to arrive is to fail. You tiptoe through their precarity, contemplating their silences. The route you are following will never relent. So follow the vanishing line.

Georgia Attlesey, 2019



Pinkler, 2018 Oil on canvas, 190 x 120 cm



Fludle, 2016 Oil on linen 30 x 30 cm

Sezuse, 2019 Oil on linen 30 x 30 cm

Celia Cook graduated from the Royal College of Art, London, with an MA in Painting in 1989 following a first class degree, BA Hons in Fine Art Painting, from Ravensbourne College of Art and Design. She was then awarded the prestigious Visiting Fellowship in Painting at Winchester School of Art from 1989-1990, when Clyde Hopkins and Vanessa Jackson were head of Fine Art and Painting respectively. Vanessa and Celia struck up a friendship that lasts to this day. Now 30 years on we see how Cook's formative series of paintings made during her time at Winchester titled 'Circular Ruins' (taken from 'Labyrinths', a collection of stories by Borges) have a direct route to her current work with the same dynamic, visual riddles, still incessant and restless.

Dr John Gillet wrote in 1990 for her first exhibition catalogue "Few contemporary painters are more successful than Celia Cook in liberating themselves from the habits of a lifetime of eyesight and the demands of a pictorial tradition. In their attempts, some resort to rigorously methodical systems, others to an unbridled splurge with their materials. Celia Cook avoids both. Her compositions are cool and diagrammatic, their elements bound together by an internal logic, locked into tail-chasing movement." True to herself and to her art, this statement still applies to her work today and demonstrates that the work is never done, the route is never finished.

(Left hand page) *Lumoir*, 2017 Oil on canvas, 90 x 120 cm

(Left hand page) *Clan Concrete 20*, 2018 Unique woodcut 56 x 76 cm

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Celzia, 2018 Oil on linen 130 x 100 cm

CELIA COOK ROUTE