

# PAULA COOPER GALLERY

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## **Cecily Brown**

524 W 26th Street

October 15 – November 21, 2020

NEW YORK—Opening on Thursday, October 15, 2020 at 524 West 26th Street is a one-person exhibition of new work by Cecily Brown.

Painted with a diverse palette, from warm polychrome hues to brooding velvety blacks, Brown's work demonstrates a unique combination of abstraction and figuration. Transcending classical notions of genre and narrative, she draws from a wide range of art-historical motifs and contemporary references, building her compositions with a panoply of impassioned brushstrokes and compressed depth of field. Brown states, "One of the main things I would like my work to do is to reveal itself slowly, continuously, and for you to never feel that you're really finished looking at something."

Brown's earliest paintings in the exhibition, begun in 2019, evolved from her interest in the work of the seventeenth-century Flemish master Frans Snyders. Executed in grand scale, her triptych *One Man's Meat* echoes the abundance of fruit, objects and dead game seen in Snyders's *nature mortes*. Staged over an expansive crimson tablecloth, Brown's wilting carcasses of geese, rabbits and deer seem to sporadically ignite across the canvas—gesturing toward the vitality of sport hunting and sybarite worldly pleasures. Another work, *The Demon Menagerie*, plays on Snyders's *concert of birds* paintings. Evoking a liminal place between paradise and hell, resplendence and macabre, Brown's vernal forms melt into broad pulses of pigmented paint that arrest the viewer's eyes. This notion of shifting narratives is explored further in Brown's five-panel work, *Of nothing something still*. Using digital printing to produce four copies of one of her own paintings, Brown returned to both the original and printed canvases, working on each separately as well as side-by-side. Presented together, "the whole thing almost becomes an allegory of painting itself. The nature of it being always and never the same."

Produced in the recent spring and summer months, a number of intimate easel-sized *Bedroom Paintings* mark a notable shift in tone. Depicting interior scenes of individuals or couples in erotic entanglements, the series introduces impassable straight lines and hyper-dense brushwork—suggesting a disquiet that belies their domestic subject matter and soft pastel hues. Art historian Jason Rosenfeld writes, "Furniture hovers at the periphery, leaning inward, as if poised to act. It is reminiscent of a symbolist sensibility, as in James Ensor's etchings and paintings titled *Le meuble hante* (*Haunted Furniture*) or Xavier Mellery's drawings of interior spaces titled *La vie des choses* or *The Inner Life of Inanimate Things*."<sup>1</sup> Juxtaposed with her earlier large-scale works, Brown's *Bedroom Paintings* offer a world that is closing in on itself.

Cecily Brown was born in London in 1969 and received her BA in Fine Arts from the Slade School of Art, London, in 1993. Her work is included in renowned public collections such as the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Metropolitan

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<sup>1</sup> Jason Rosenfeld, "Cecily Brown: The Painterly Picaresque," in *Cecily Brown* (New York: Phaidon Press, November 2020).

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Museum of Art, New York; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the Brooklyn Museum, New York; and the Tate Gallery, London. A major exhibition of her work is currently on view at Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, England through January 3, 2021. Other important one-person exhibitions have been presented at Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. (2002); MACRO, Rome (2003); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2004); Museum of Modern Art, Oxford (2005); Kunsthalle Mannheim (2005–06); Des Moines Art Center, Iowa (2006); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2006–07); Deichtorhallen, Hamburg (2009); Kestner Gesellschaft, Hannover (2010), which traveled to GEM, Museum of Contemporary Art, The Hague; Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin (2014); The Drawing Center, New York (2016), which traveled to Santa Barbara Museum of Art, CA; and at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark (2018). Cecily Brown lives and works in New York.

In November 2020, Phaidon Press will publish the first major monograph on the artist—a richly illustrated publication with texts by Courtney J. Martin, Jason Rosenfeld, and Francine Prose.

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