

CELIA
COOK

adam gallery

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Close to the Edge

You are standing in an artist's studio and you see a painting on the wall. There is another painting behind you, resting on an easel. They are all squares of different sizes. There are more paintings leaning against each other in the corner: Whimble, Yazim, Umbow, and Veezer. There is talk of Charline von Heyl at the Liverpool Tate and reference books lining a shelf - Nozkowski, Delaunay and Murray. You are standing in the studio of Celia Cook and she is preparing for an exhibition at the Adam Gallery.

As you move closer to one of the paintings, there is something oscillating at the surface. Its visual reality is immediate and inescapable yet there is barely an illusion here. In the space of painterly action, something is breaking away from the surface, an 'impossible object' that is at once sustained and suppressed by the movement of paint, the play of colour and the curve of light and shade. 'I want the background and the form as one. I want to deny the idea of a frame that can be looked through,' says Cook. A line draws the eye across the surface of the painting (and back again). A pattern draws the eye away from the border (and back again). The boundaries between one painterly gesture and another come in an out of attention: they form edges of contact or simultaneous interstices of colour and form. A green circle emerges from the aesthetic space, one that has been drawn and re-drawn from the outside in. Sometimes a figure of eight takes shape, one that is made and re-made in the same way (drawn with a palette knife from the painting's edge to the formal border of the geometric motif). 'The whole process of painting is quite confusing. I'm almost sure what I first put down won't work. I just keep painting, trying to find order out of nothing. I am creating an object.'

Each painting is approached in the same way. Cook starts with left over paint as a way of establishing continuity. You will see a trace of this inheritance infused in shapes, shadows and erasures: a (barely perceptible) common ground that reaches across the palette of the entire work. Cook moves the paint around (often with

fast and continuous gestures at first), using a palette knife to mould the negative space of an emergent form. It is here that things start to slow down (and things can go off in different directions). Paint is modeled and re-modeled; it is moved around the aesthetic surface until something emerges in the action space of the painting's visual performance. 'The colours have to hover on the surface,' Cook explains, 'and fight for equality with other devices. Nothing is happy to be in the background.' And it's not just a question of what is added, but also what is taken away. If you look closely, especially at the edges, you can discover a tracing and re-tracing of elements. The edges of things are drawn and re-drawn in the process of 'getting them right.' Indeed, with time, the painting affords its own archeology.

From the relative chaos of pattern, colour, light and shadow, the impossible object - a bounded shape instilled with presence - contrives to stand alone with a sense of order and authority. When this implausible structure holds - somewhere between the surface and the viewer - Cook has achieved her goal; you believe in its minor solidity, its holes and fissures. In this regard, the painting now occupies a duality and offers the viewer two visual experiences at once: the objective reality of paint on canvas and the allusive reality of an unrecognizable, unfeasible and un-nameable form (the impossible object) that is neither painting nor not painting. Shapes on and above the surface have acquired a small-scale magnitude and direction, occupying an action space that has been created dynamically by the artist. Indeed, you could say that the impossible object now inhabits the surrogate space of the painting, a beyond space (a before space) that is truly a space created by a painter.

In *Close to the Edge*, the work of Celia Cook offers a purely visual adventure; there is no other message or story. 'It's all visual,' says Cook. 'The thesis is that.'

Julia Moszkowicz



1. Wenge oil on linen 18 x 18 in



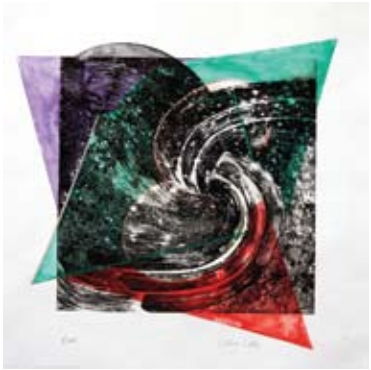
2. Veezer oil on linen 36 x 36 in



3. Vasp oil on linen 18 x 18 in



4. Whimble oil on linen 36 x 36 in



5. Untitled etching with watercolour 24 x 24 in



6. Untitled etching 24 x 24 in



7. Untitled etching 24 x 24 in



8. Untitled etching 24 x 24 in



9. Oield oil on linen 18 x 18 in



10. Yazim oil on linen 36 x 36 in



11. Fesch oil on linen 30 x 30 in



12. Cheme oil on linen 30 x 30 in



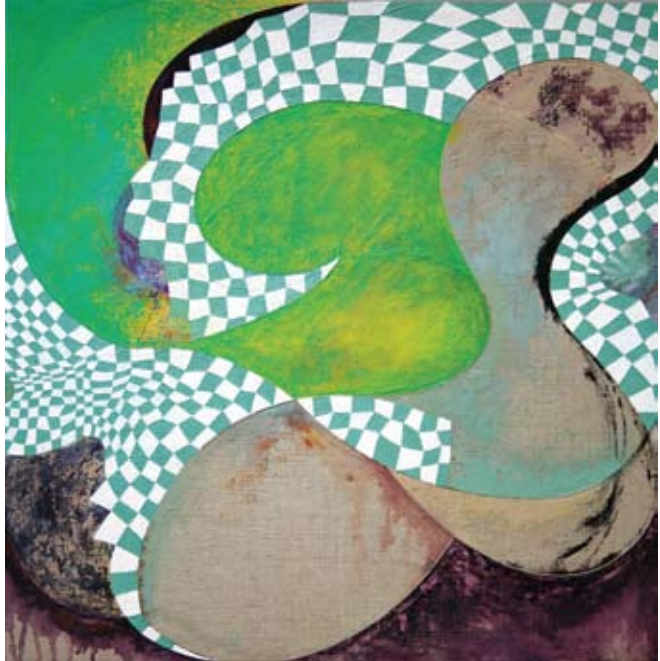
13. Untitled carborundum with pastel 36 x 36 in



14. Untitled carborundum with pastel 36 x 36 in



15. Lisch oil on linen 39 x 39 in



16. Nisme oil on linen 24 x 24 in

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