

## THOMAS DANE GALLERY

**Cecily Brown**  
*Madrepora*

Private View: 10 June 2016, 6-8 PM  
Exhibition Dates: 11 June – 23 July 2016

*“I want there to be a human presence without having to depict it in full” - Cecily Brown*

Showing for the first time at Thomas Dane Gallery, Cecily Brown is, and has been throughout her career, one of the most engaged and distinctive painters of our time. To this day, her preoccupation remains the Body – in all its various guises and narratives: as subject matter, as form, as boundary, but also as quintessence, as core structure, and even as a total Corpus.

Brown's paintings are immersive. Her passion for her craft is contagious. She keeps reminding us how great it is to look at art unhurriedly: the miraculous pleasure (and rare treat) of contemplation, examination - not in a complacent, or comforting way, but as a tool for existential inquiry. A painting, for her, ought to reveal itself slowly, almost 'continuously'.

Brown often talks about 'Sublimation', paraphrasing Francis Bacon who craved “the grin without the cat”, the “sensation” without the “boredom of its conveyance”. Her painting indeed sometimes amounts to such a process—expunging an often clear, defined beginning. Something she calls a 'Breaking-down' process. And through these layers of paint and meaning, it is possible to lose ourselves.

With her passionately eclectic, almost scholarly approach, Brown brings to mind the best of Academic thinking, as defined by Annibale Carracci in the late 16<sup>th</sup> Century. To assiduously learn from the history of painting by studying its codes and genres and then breaking down its hierarchies, can (still) transcend the act of painting, and open new ways for it.

Recently, Brown has been (re)looking at a particular painting, and has fallen in love with it all over again: Degas' Young Spartans, from 1860, at London's National Gallery. The very recognizable, almost iconic cluster of bodies, postures and composition of the original reoccur directly in some of the work in the exhibition. Less apparent, perhaps, is how it might have prompted her, in her latest works, to depict with ease crowds of women and, subsequently, crowds of men.

Crowds are indeed omnipresent in the exhibition - in the luxuriant and enigmatic *Madrepora*, 2015, or *In One Life to Live*, 2015, which brings to mind the matter-of-factness and aplomb of Rembrandt's troupes and gatherings. The ghoulish assembly of *The Smugglers*, 2015, could have sprung out of a James Ensor painting.

A series of 'Dark' paintings - 'Black' even - reminiscent of the Spanish Masters, brings together Brown's taste for the slightly macabre, or forbidden, with more risqué reclining male nudes. This is possibly her own irreverent intrusion into the lexicon of Majas in the works of Velasquez and Goya.

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Spanning both spaces of the gallery, the exhibition will also include works from the past, some of which were kept by the artist. More than merely contextualising the present works, or showing the subtle alterations in her style and methods over the years, they reveal her practice as a continuum, where the mischievous and the imposing are treated all the same, and where memories and nostalgia are not at all involuntary.

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Gallery Hours: Tuesday to Friday 10am-6pm, Saturday 12pm-6pm or by appointment

Admission: Free

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Nearest Tube: Green Park or Piccadilly Circus