

**CHRISTOPHER COOK / MIMEI THOMPSON
NEW WORKS**

Private view: Tuesday 18th October, 6-8pm
Exhibition dates: 19th October – 19th November 2016

Art First is delighted to present new paintings by two artists working in mediums much of their own invention. Cook's manipulation of graphite in oil suspension, both on paper and on canvas, achieves luminous tonal effects that are unique. Thompson also alters her oil paint using thinners, amongst other ingredients, which compliment her technical fluency and the particular brushwork that distinguishes her practice. These honed, singular techniques within the broad spectrum of painting and drawing set Cook and Thompson apart, but the exhibition invites a closer scrutiny of these two different sensibilities, exploring the common ground as much as the contrasts within their achievements.

Both artists envisage the everyday as the sublime. Thompson's clumps of weeds, as in *Brambles* (2016), pavement-scapes and cave entrances adopt a sensuous, fluid and somewhat alien quality – imagery that presents as both mundane and thrillingly surreal.

In Cook's work principles of perspective and scale are applied only in the loosest terms, with the result that works such as *Reaper and Bowl of Ink* (2016) guide the viewer through an uncertain landscape, where the recognizable still-life tabletop arrangement is bisected by the ghostly strands of electricity pylons, and the menacing, insect-like intrusion of a military drone.

This dual sense of fantasy and foreboding gives both Cook's and Thompson's paintings an inherent edge. The emotional ambiguity in the presentation of the tableaux before us is matched by the unalloyed skill in mark-making and compositional devices that produce works of alluring mystery and imaginative fantasy, whilst they remain rooted in the real.

Notes on the Artists

Christopher Cook studied at Exeter University and the Royal College of Art. He has had regular solo exhibitions in London since 1985, and in New York since 2004. Major museum shows include Heidelberger Kunstverein, Germany, Yokohama Museum of Art, Japan and Today Art Museum, Beijing. Collections in the U.S.A. include the Metropolitan Museum, New York, Cleveland Museum of Art and Yale Center for British Art, whilst in the UK works are held in MIMA, the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge and the British Museum. His work was a prizewinner at the John Moores Prize for Painting XXI, and was again included in 2014. His first solo exhibition with Art First also took place in 2014. He is Reader in Painting at Plymouth University, and lives and works in Devon.

Mimei Thompson was born in Japan and lived in Sudan before moving to the UK. She studied at Glasgow School of Art, Central St Martins and the Royal College of Art, London (MA 2005). She was selected for Jerwood Contemporary Painters and has work in the Arts Council Collection. Recent exhibitions include solo shows at Trade Gallery, Nottingham and Queens Park Railway Club in Glasgow. She recently co-curated *Inland Far* at the Herbert Read Gallery in Canterbury and has had solo exhibitions at AF Projects in 2013 and 2015. She lives and works in London.