

PRESS RELEASE

CAROL RHODES
30 APRIL - 29 MAY 2021



Carol Rhodes, *Inlet*, 1997. © Carol Rhodes Estate

Alison Jacques Gallery is proud to present its first exhibition of work by Carol Rhodes (1959–2018). Organised in partnership with the Carol Rhodes Estate, whose curator Andrew Mummery worked closely with the artist for much of her career, the exhibition will include landmark paintings and rarely shown drawings dating between 1996 and 2013. The exhibition anticipates the first posthumous survey of Rhodes's work in an institution, scheduled to take place in June 2021 at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow, as part of Glasgow International Festival.

Throughout her career, Rhodes produced a highly individual body of paintings describing the encroachment of human activity and occupation upon 'natural' landscapes. Primarily adopting aerial viewpoints, Rhodes favoured what she called 'hidden areas' or 'left-over land': industrial estates, airports, motorways and reservoirs, unpeopled and existing at the margin of more defined (urban or rural) environments.

Writing on this element of Rhodes's work, the critic Tom Lubbock cited environmental theorist Marion Shoard's identification of 'edgelands': 'Between urban and rural stands a kind of landscape quite different [...] Yet for most of us, most of the time, this mysterious no man's land passes unnoticed: in our imaginations, as opposed to our actual lives, it barely exists.' Rhodes similarly identified blind spots and occlusions in our consciousness. 'Looking at things from above is detachment', she once told curator Lynda Morris. 'To have an opinion or view, you have to be outside society or your own particular group'.

Rendered in minute detail yet with painterly breadth, Rhodes's paintings are fictional syntheses: composite landscapes drawn from disparate sources, including photographs taken by the artist herself or found in books on geography and geology, industrial archaeology and urban planning. Rhodes integrated these disjointed topographies through a complex, intuitive drawing and painting process. Her palette is subtle and particular, often using muted compound colours. ('I like it bland' she once said, though somewhat disingenuously.) Pictorial space can be compressed, even flattened, despite the vast distances described. Both foreground and horizon are mostly eliminated – Rhodes spoke of wanting an 'egalitarian' composition.

Despite (or due to) these compositional factors, an unease remains in these paintings – indeed, it intensifies. In works such as *River, Roads* (2013) or *Forest and Road* (1998), assumed infrastructural logic slowly reveals itself to be improbable and inconsistent. In this way, Rhodes's pseudo-realistic scenes appear familiar yet unknown, mundane yet mysterious. And while the paintings can certainly be discussed within an environmental, sociological or political context, it is their restlessness and psychological charge that perhaps remains most resonant. Rhodes was known to speak of her landscapes as self-portraits.

Alongside her paintings, the exhibition will include a number of drawings. These are both rigorously pragmatic preparatory studies ('cartoons' in the technical sense of the word) and pictorial statements in their own right. Rhodes first began exhibiting these drawings in 2006; as standalone works, they further evince her profoundly personal aesthetics and her truly unique investigation into the depiction of physical and psychological space.

Carol Rhodes was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1959; she died in Glasgow, Scotland, in 2018. Rhodes studied at the Glasgow School of Art (1977–82) and, following her graduation, became involved in social activism, organising and participating in environmentalist, feminist, pacifist, gay rights and social justice campaigns. She co-founded the Glasgow Free University and, between 1986 and 1988, was part of a burgeoning group of artists associated with Transmission, the artist-led gallery of which she was a committee member.

During her lifetime, solo museum exhibitions of Rhodes's work were presented at venues including The MAC, Belfast (2017); Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh (2007–08); and Tramway, Glasgow (2000). 'See the World', the first posthumous institutional exhibition of Rhodes's work, is scheduled to take place in 2021 at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow, as part of Glasgow International Festival.

Rhodes's work has been acquired by public collections including Tate; Arts Council of England; British Council Collection; Center for British Art, Yale; City Art Centre, Edinburgh; Glasgow Museums; Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh and Southampton City Art Gallery.

To coincide with the exhibition, Sara Barker (artist), Oliver Basciano (editor-at-large, *ArtReview*) and Jennifer Higgie (editor-at-large, *frieze*) will discuss the life and work of Carol Rhodes in a virtual talk on Tuesday 18 May at 6pm GMT.

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FORTHCOMING: *SHEILA HICKS*, 4 JUNE - 10 JULY 2021



Carol Rhodes, *River, Roads*, 2013. © Carol Rhodes Estate



Carol Rhodes, *Deposits*, 2009. © Carol Rhodes Estate