

Vanishing Point is a new exhibition by artist Barbara Walker for the Jerwood Gallery in Hastings. (20thOct. - 6thJan. 2019). For the artist, it marks an embarking on a reviewed set of working methods and in a symbiotic way, a parallel address to subject matter. Like powerful previous bodies of work, as in the Birmingham MAC's **Shock and Awe** in 2016, Walker signals her intent in the title. **Vanishing Point** riffs on both the perspectival device in the canon of Western post renaissance art and an occlusion of black presence in that same canon.

Her project was submitted alongside her selected work for the Jerwood Drawing Prize in 2017 as a submission for the Evelyn Williams Drawing Award, attached for the first time in 2017 to the Drawing Prize (now the Trinity Buoy Wharf Drawing Prize). In a biennial cycle the Evelyn Williams Trust supports a recipient and funds, via the £10,000 award, a period of research and studio work, building to a guaranteed exhibition the following year. Barbara Walker was the choice of the Jerwood Drawing Prize selection panel: Dr David Dibosa, writer, researcher and Reader in Museology at the University of the Arts London, Helen Legg, Director of Spike Island and Michael Simpson, artist, the three of them working with Evelyn Williams Trust member Nicholas Usherwood.

Moving quickly, the artist and the Curators at the Jerwood Gallery were successful in a proposition to the National Gallery to borrow two works (a Tiepolo and a Luca Giordano) from the National's collection which have exerted, amongst an array of others, Barbara Walker's gaze and interrogation for her suite of drawings. These loans to her Jerwood Gallery exhibition have been made possible in the first year of the operation of the Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund, supporting more innovative exhibition making and new possibilities of reach for National collections.

In some ways what Barbara Walker has painstakingly and pointedly achieved in the suite of 11 works based on works in the National Gallery, argues strongly for a showing back in the Trafalgar Square Gallery. Walker interacts with these works because of her fascination with execution and the messaging of Old Master art, rather in the way and on scale, her work looked so fitting in situ drawn on the walls in the stairwell of the Venetian Palazzo Pisani a Santa Marina in the **Diaspora** exhibition in the 2017 Venice Biennale, with Walker as temporary inheritor and interrogator in a city of wall paintings and frescoed decoration.

Here she works on a size comparable to large sheets of surviving old master drawings, easel size versions that in most cases for the originals, would have existed as drawings on comparable scale, prior to transfer to a surface to take the painting. There are analogies too with the types of drawings that were made by engravers to reproduce a painting. As artists in those eras thought through compositional study, Walker first works meticulously to expose the workings of the overall composition and the black figuration within it. Working with the image in reverse on the computer, and removing, or leaving almost abstracted, the overall figures, the artist draws out, as it were, the powerful secondary presence of the black figuration in these works. This provides the reliefs to the image which when converted to a plate and printed as a blank, produces the embossed images which she then works on to re-insert the black figuration in graphite drawing and occasional use of coloured pencil. Other parts of the image such as skies maybe reconstructed through drawing.

The resultant works are both exquisite and powerful. Concept and effect prompts so many dialogues about these reclaimed images, through the referencing of seen and unseen aspects of the original images. This then encompasses some of the hierarchies of traditional art history and the historical consideration of the position of drawing vis à vis painting. Walker restores a dialogue around what subtends these compositions and what formally is blanked in the image and what by her is given an asserted presence. This in turn powerfully evokes presences and absences, what is implied and what now in terms of social justice needs to be unequivocal and focal in the image -black presence: history redressed, history re-addressed.

David Alston

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