

Contemporary art held in the Tower

A show of works by established and emerging artists opens in one of London's most historic sites

By Gareth Harris. Web only
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"Chambre à part VII: Dark to Light", 13-23 May, The Doctor's House, Tower of London.
Photo: Laurence Dreyfus Art Consulting, © Martin Argyroglo

An exhibition of works by established and emerging contemporary artists opens today, 13 May, at one of London's most historic sites, the Tower of London. Works in a variety of media by 19 artists go on show across four floors of the Medical Officer's residence which was designed by Christopher Wren.

The show, "Dark to Light", (13-23 May) is part of the "Chambres à Part" initiative launched by the French art advisor Laurence Dreyfus. A selection of the works are for sale, while other pieces are on loan from galleries and collectors.

For the London show, Dreyfus has teamed up with Karen Marr, a British collector whose father is the on-site doctor at the historic venue. Marr attended the Fiac fair last October in Paris, and met Dreyfus' at her "Chambres à Part" show held at the La Réserve hotel complex off Place du Trocadéro, which included works by Olafur Eliasson and Robin Rhode.

"The Tower has never before held a fine art event like this," Marr says in a statement. "My husband [the artist Tim Marr] and I had requested permission over the two weeks of the Olympics last year [to host an exhibition], and were denied," says Marr, the co-founder of Arts Futures, a curatorial and art advisory organisation.

A press statement outlines the curatorial vision of Dreyfus and Marr: "Dark to Light" is widely inspired by the context of the Tower of London, an emblematic site, which cannot but remind us of our own attachment to medieval history." Artists inspired by the setting and historical milieu explore "shadow and light, good and evil, life and death".

A stark Flavin-esque neon installation by the Russian artist Andrei Molodkin, filled with crude oil (*Vertical of Power*, 2011), takes over the basement. Next door, there is a striking presentation of slides by the late Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers. The piece, entitled *Bateau Tableau*, 1973, flickers maritime scenes against the wall of what was once a prison cell.

On the ground floor, Hiroshi Sugimoto's imposing black-and-white photograph *Charles I*, 1999, sharply contrasts with Patrick Neu's intricate, intriguing depictions of classical scenes (2006-10) etched in the dust coated around a series of wine glasses. Two works by Albrecht Dürer, including the 1496 work on paper *St Jerome Penitent in the Desert*, are on view in the same room.

Upstairs, French artist Céline Cléron's sculptural installation, *La Régente*, 2005-06, comprising a honeycomb bound to a large lace collar, complements an unattributed medieval portrait of a lady from around 1589-90, most likely either Ann of Denmark or Arabella Stuart, hanging alongside.

The most dramatic installation is on the top floor where James Turrell's 1967 projection *Gard White* is the centerpiece of a white-cubesque setting. Other artists represented include Shahpour Pouyan (Iran), Teresa Margolles (Mexico) and Tim Marr (Scotland).

Entry to the exhibition is by appointment. Email chambresapart@laurencedreyfus.com or artsfutures@gmail.com