DR KIMATHI DONKOR UNMASKING AFRICANA

AFRICANA UNMASKED: FUGITIVE SIGNS OF AFRICA IN TATE'S BRITISH COLLECTION



Charles and Sanite Belair (2002)



Toussaint L'ouverture at Bedourete (2004)



Toussaint L'Ouvertue at Bedourete (2018, Wolverhampton Art Gallery)

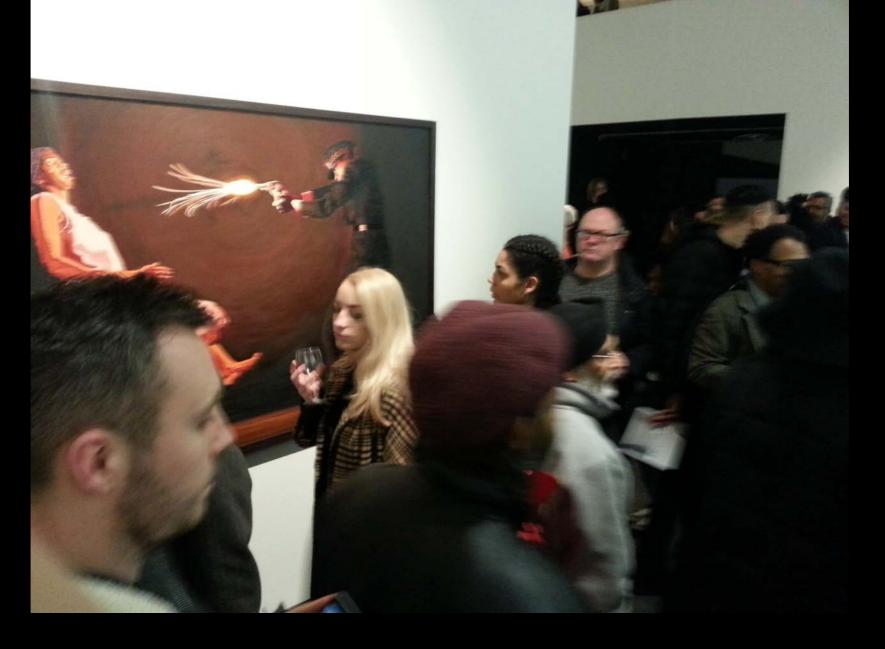


Bacchus and Ariadne (2004)



2017, Bacchus and Ariadne installation for The Diaspora Pavilion at Venice Biennale





2017 Installation at New Art Exchange Gallery, Nottingham





Created in 2007
to mark the 200th
anniversary of
Parliament's 1807
'Act to Abolish
the Slave Trade'





Map of the island of Great Britain



Portraits of famous people connected with slavery

Symbolic objects assembled like a Voodoo shrine

Nails represent Nkisi Nkondi sacred sculptures



SIR JOHN HAWKINS

1532 - 1595

1581 portrait of sea captain

National Maritime Museum

Artist anonymous

1562-1569
Hawkins
kidnaps 1,500
West Africans

Sold to Spain's Caribbean slave labour camps



ARISE SIR JOHN





ELIZABETH I

1533 -1603

1575 portrait in National Portrait Gallery

(Nicholas Hilliard)

Queen Elizabeth I loaned Hawkins a ship explicitly for slave trading

Hawkins is knighted and appointed navy Admiral



ELIZABETH REX LIVES



ELIZABETH REX LIVES

Portrayed by more than 17 cinema actors

Including Oscar and BAFTA winners Cate Blanchet, Helen Mirrer and Judy Dench.

Slavery is never mentioned...





Founder of the slave trade praised as British icon



Other slavetrading figures depicted in the work are:

George Washington

Sir Isaac Newton

Sir Francis Drake

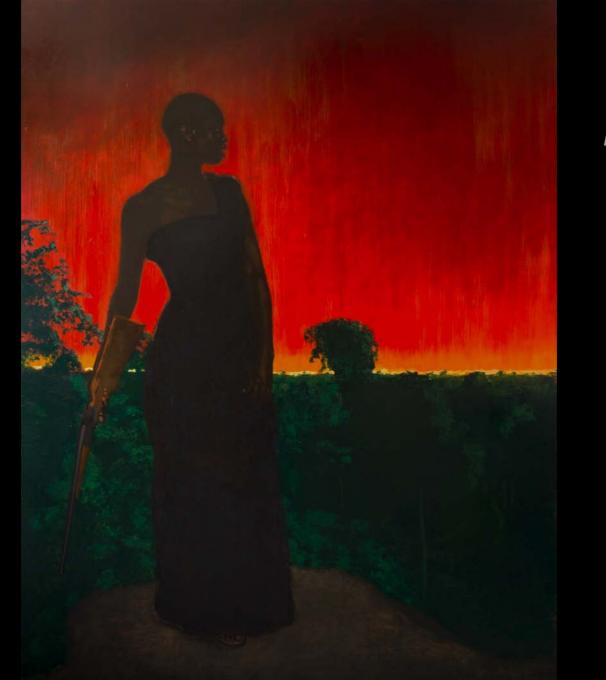
Daniel Defoe





Installation of UK Diaspora

Acquired by International Slavery Museum 2017.



Yaa Asantewaa Inspecting The Dispositions at Ejisu

Anti-colonial leader in 1900s West Africa

Portrait of my partner who is British-born of West African heritage

Depicted in Ghana's countryside

(2014, oil on canvas, 210 x 160cm, collection of the British Museum)



John Singer Sargent

Study of Mme Gautreau

(1884, oil on canvas, 206 x 108cm, courtesy of Tate Britain)



N04102 STUDY OF MME GAUTREAU c. 1884

Not inscribed.

Canvas, 81 1/4×42 1/2 (206·5×108).

Presented by Lord Duveen through the National Art-Collections Fund 1925.

Coll: Sargent Sale, Christie's, 24 July 1925 (79); withdrawn by arrangement with the members of the Sargent family and acquired by Sir Joseph (later Lord) Duveen for presentation to the Tate Gallery. Exh: R.A., winter 1926 (451, repr. Illustrations of the Sargent Exhibition, p.62).

Lit: N.A.C.F. Report 1925, 1926, p.17, repr.; Charteris, 1927, pp.65, 259 (under year 1885); Mount, 1955, p.430; McKibbin, 1956, p.97; Mount, 157, p.338.

A study for the 'Portrait of Mme Gautreau' in the Metropolitan Museum, New York. The sitter is Virginie Avengo, wife of Pierre Gautreau, and famous for her beauty in Paris society. This study appears to resemble the finished portrait in every respect so far as pose and setting are concerned. The face, arms and hands are quite fully modelled, but the dress is only brushed in with a first layer of dark body colour and left incomplete at the bottom. The background is only sketched in, as is the table-top on which Mme Gautreau rests her right hand. An outline sketch of a head and shoulders appears in the lower left corner. Sargent began work on the 'Mme Gautreau' early in 1883 and only after many sittings did he decide on the final pose; it was finished in his Paris studio in time for the opening of the Salon on 1 May 1884. Although critical reception of the portrait was moderately good, Paris society regarded it with derision, and the sitter and her mother were enraged by the artist's frank portrayal of Mme Gautreau's sartorial eccentricities (as the style of décolleté dress was then considered), and of her use of a peculiar purplish cosmetic which imparted a bluish tone to her flesh. This portrait, instead of setting the seal on the artist's success in France as he had hoped, frightened French patrons into the studios of the more conventional French portraitists.

Charteris (p.65) was unable to discover whether this study was done before or after the

Metropolitan Museum <u>painting</u>, but Mount (1957, *loc. cit*) described it as a replica and dated it 1884. In a letter to the compiler (15 May 1963) Mount pointed out that the Metropolitan picture shows considerable revisions, the head has been altered, the arms both moved, the table lowered and the bustle of her gown eliminated; the Tate study incorporates all these revisions and therefore probably followed the finished painting.

Published in:

Mary Chamot, Dennis Farr and Martin Butlin, *The Modern British Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture*, London 1964, II



The enslaved Africans who produced Mme Gautreau's inheritance are not visible in portraits or curatorial texts:

Sargent's artwork functions as 'Masked Africana'

John Singer Sargent

Madame X

(1884, oil on canvas, 206 x 108cm courtesy Metropolitan Museum)



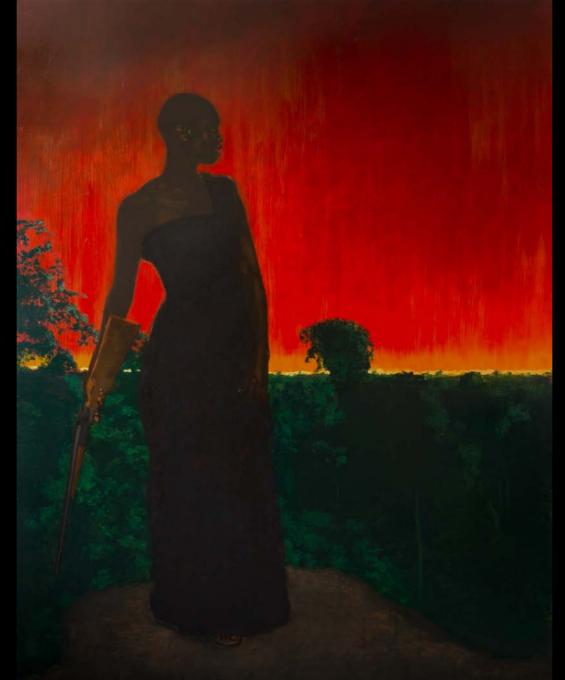


'Unmasked Africana' are intended as

"visual appropriations of the masking artwork...as a critical détournement"

(Donkor, 2016)





Does this gesture expose, critique (or, perhaps, become complicit in) the original work's glorification of elite, colonial privilege?





For Moses had married an Ethiopian woman (Numbers 12:1)

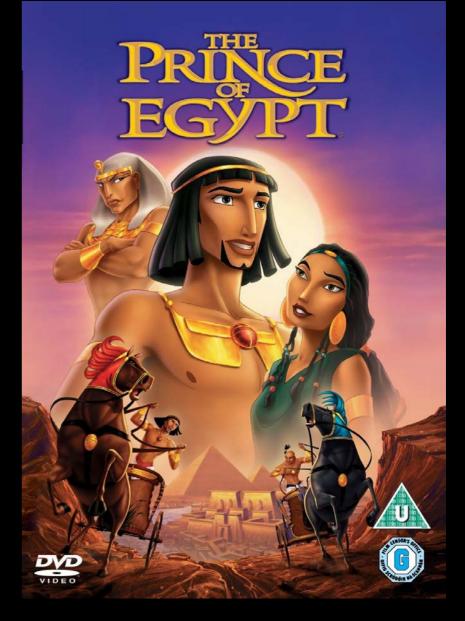
(2015)



Jacob Jordaens, Moses and his Ethiopian Wife, c.1650



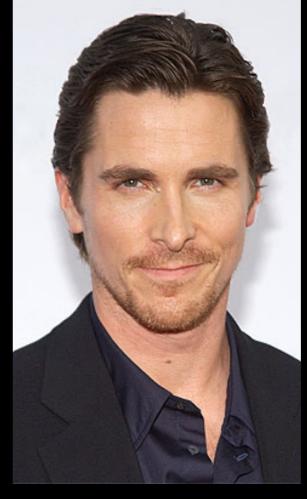
Michaelangelo, Moses, 1513-1515

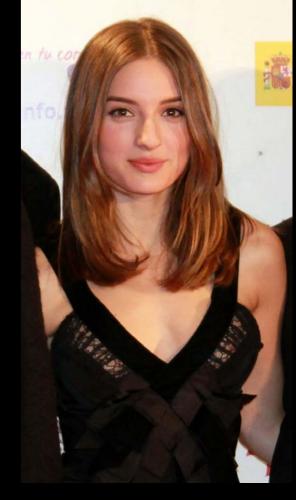


The Prince of Egypt, 1998 Dreamworks & Michell Pfieffer









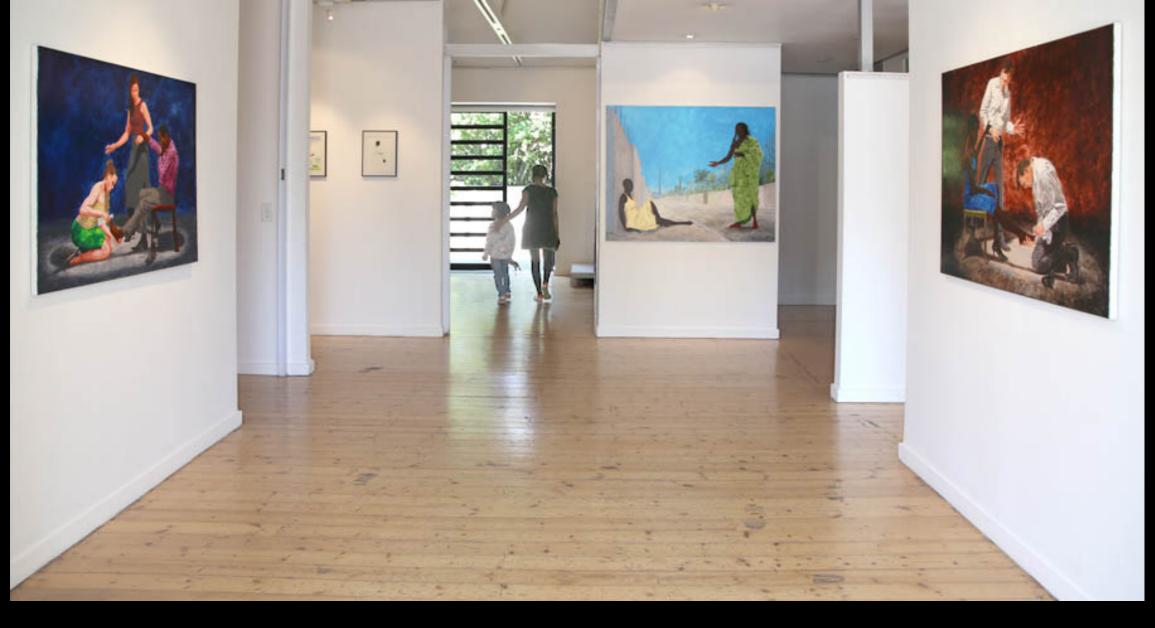


Massacre of 34 protesting South African miners at Marikana, 2012 (press photograph)





Installation view from 'Some Clarity of Vision' Gallery MOMO Johannesburg, 2015



Installation view from 'Some Clarity of Vision' Gallery MOMO Johannesburg, 2015



One of the few major South African galleries that is black owned



Installation in The Diaspora Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, 2017



