

Amar Gallery, London, Sept 12 - Oct 31, 2017

Amar Gallery, London is proud to announce the first UK solo exhibition from the British Liberian artist Lina Iris Viktor, running from September 12 to October 20 2017. Bringing together new and existing abstract works in a solely black and gold colour palette, *Black Exodus* renegotiates artistic and socio-political definitions of "blackness", whilst exploring existing narratives surrounding race and the African diaspora. The exhibition marks the first 'Act' in an evolving series for the artist.

Presenting large and small scale gilded works on canvas and paper, the exhibition highlights the co-dependent relationship of light and dark, within a folkloric universe of the artist's creation. Taking a new Exodus tale as a point of departure - a mythologised dystopia where the black race itself has been extinguished - Viktor's works interrogate the implications of this theoretical future.

In her ongoing 'Constellations' series, Viktor presents black canvases perforated by hand-gilded gold patterns - regal abstractions piercing the surface of the darkness beneath. Drawing together religious symbology, cosmology and naturally occurring biological patterns - such as human DNA - the artist explores indigenous and etiological beginnings, repositioning blackness not as a void, but rather a source of matter. The hypnotic alchemy of the artist's gold renderings present Viktor in the role of cartographer, mapping out labyrinthine patterns which reference the Dogon of Mali, indigenous cultures of Australia and Aztec and Ancient Egyptian lore. Riffing on the national flag of the UK, Viktor also debuts large-scale black translucent gilded canvases titled 'Union Black' and 'Black Union'.

New pieces revisiting Viktor's 'Dark Continent' series depict the artist's form as a central motif, though these too are considered abstractions - ultimately obscuring the human subject. The works on paper present the artist shrouded in a shadowy botanical landscape; at once inviting and foreboding, the setting evokes an uneasy paradise, somewhere before - or after - the fall. Here Viktor's use of gold is sparing, highlighting focal points within the picture plane: a sun, rays of light or a glimpse of the human form. The silhouetted tableaux expose displaced figures seemingly oscillating between the ancient and the futuristic; the body becomes a timeless conduit for interrelated, trans-cultural histories, representing a circular idea of being which references non-linear (and distinctly African) concepts of time.

Discussing the exhibition, Viktor explains: '*Black Exodus* explores the charged topic of race universally, lifting the veil of seemingly 'colour-blind' societies, and reinvestigating stereotypes surrounding "blackness". Across the globe, throughout history and to this very day, the black race has suffered subjugation and marginalisation, and "blackness" has become indicative of deficiency, or absence. The exhibition repositions the colour as a '*materia prima*' - the ultimate presence that is the source of all matter, all people and all life; it is the place from which gold and precious materials are mined, and in which stars and planets are born.'

Lina Iris Viktor is a multidisciplinary artist, working across performance, painting, installation and photography. Of Liberian heritage, Viktor currently lives and works between New York and London. Uniting materials and methods from both contemporary and ancient art forms, her work calls into question the nature of time and being. Viktor's utilization of ancient gilding practices is notable by the inclusion of 24-karat gold to create intensely evocative canvases embedded with "layers of light", in the form of symbols and intricate patterns. These "light-works" at once address the infinite and the finite, immortality and mortality, microcosm and macrocosm, and the socio-political and historical preconceptions surrounding "blackness" and its universal implications.

For press enquiries, hi-res images or to request interviews with the artist, please email press@amargallery.com

Notes for Editors

About the Artist

Raised in London to Liberian parents, Viktor studied film at Sarah Lawrence College (New York), before completing photography & design at The School of Visual Arts (New York).

Select exhibitions include *Back Stories*, Mariane Ibrahim, Seattle (2017); *Art of Jazz: Form/Performance/Notes*, Cooper Gallery of African & African American Art and the Harvard Art Museums, Boston (2016); *Sisters of the Moon*, Kentucky Museum of Arts & Craft, Louisville (2016); *Africa Forecast: Fashioning Contemporary Life*, Spelman Museum of Fine Art, Spelman College, Georgia (2016) and *Arcadia*, Gallery 151, New York (2014).

Viktor has engaged in critical talks and panels at Harvard University, New York University, The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA, London), King's College (London) and The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (New York).

About Amar Gallery

Founded by Amar Singh in January 2017, Amar Gallery is a new London based gallery committed to exhibiting international contemporary artists. Looking to play a pivotal role in London's cultural landscape and community, the gallery is based in an emerging arts district in central London, located in between Kings Cross and Islington.

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