



**BEST
OF
2012**

LONDON

Lindsay Seers

ARTANGEL AT THE TIN TABERNACLE

A rusting, corrugated iron chapel in North London hosted Lindsay Seers's captivating installation *Nowhere Less Now*, the latest site-specific project to be commissioned by Artangel. Seers transformed the interior of this nineteenth-century church, known as the "tin tabernacle" and occupied for the past fifty years by a troop of Sea Cadets, recladding it with riveted faux-metal sheets to resemble a ship. Seers extended this resemblance by placing an overturned iron ship's hull inside the nave. Viewers were led into this darkened space, handed a set of headphones, and seated on a gun deck facing two large white lenses (one convex, one concave), onto which a thirty-five-minute video was projected.

The video ostensibly retraces the African voyages of Seers's great-great-uncle George Edwards, an officer in the British Navy. The artist's dreamlike voice-over narrates her own journey in and around Zanzibar, a trip that is in part pictured in the video, intercut with still photographs and animated sequences. In the video, Seers follows in her uncle's footsteps, responding to an interest in his story that had been triggered by her discovery of a family photograph depicting George and his crew onboard ship. This image haunted her throughout the making of the piece. According to her narration, her odyssey was marked by several uncanny coincidences. Along the way, she met another George Edwards, whose great-grandfather (also named George) worked alongside Seers's uncle as a liberated slave. During the production of the video, yet a third George Edwards made contact with her, claiming to be writing to her from the future. This sometimes surreal narrative, which veers between fact and fiction, consists of animated sequences, documentary footage, scientific modeling of DNA strands and optical nerves, and interviews. Did she really find her uncle's name carved into an ancient baobab tree in Zanzibar? We'll never know for sure. Coincidence, intuition, and serendipitous discoveries—such as the tin

tabernacle missionary churches Seers first saw in Africa, almost identical to the one housing her show in London—are woven into a complex fable of witchcraft, Masonic ritual, and time travel.

Nowhere Less Now moves between the micro and the macro, the personal and the political, the local and the global in the blink of an eye. Vision—a frequent theme in Seers's work—here looms large. A degenerative eye condition runs in her family: In full sunlight, her uncle would have been rendered colorblind, seeing the world only in monochrome shades of gray. We are presented with an account of this condition in the black-and-white photobook Seers has produced alongside the video, which calls to mind W. G. Sebald's similarly spellbinding photo-essay memoirs.

The archive is both subject and object of Seers's desire. Significantly, this does not mean that she searched for the verifiable historical truth about her uncle's life. The work's narrative structure is close to what might be called parafiction, in which exploring the conditional nature of knowledge itself is privileged over the pursuit of bare facts. Past, present, and future fold into a complicated web, avoiding what Seers calls the "tyranny of linear time" and piecing together another form of narrative that spirals back, time and again, to that single black-and-white photo of her great-great-uncle. While the artist's deft touch dispenses with nostalgia, *Nowhere Less Now* offers a powerfully elegiac paean to the still photograph. It pays heed to images as embodied in fragile yet obdurately physical *things* that bind subjects and places together back and forth across time and space.

—Jo Applin



Lindsay Seers, *Nowhere Less Now*, 2012, still from a thirty-five minute two-channel HD color audio-video component of a mixed-media installation additionally comprising wood, cardboard, and paint.