

# THE FANTASTICAL WORLD OF LINDSAY SEERS

Fact and fiction blur in the artist's diverse work

BY ELIZABETH FULLERTON

British artist Lindsay Seers endows her work with a touch of magic. Her video installations transport the viewer to a cacophonous wonderland inhabited by shamans, fortune-tellers, transgender ventriloquists, and people with strange medical conditions, where multiple narrative voices and film projections dissolve all sense of anchorage. In her 2012 work *Nowhere Less Now*, a historical photograph of Seers's seafaring great-great-uncle George triggers an odyssey across generations and geographies, featuring blood sacrifice, Zanzibari slave trade, and Victorian secret societies, interwoven with themes of identity, memory, and veracity.

"It's as if a whole universe could unfold from a photograph," says Seers in her North London studio. "It was this idea of the mythology of a photograph."

A version of *Nowhere Less Now* is part of the group exhibition "MIRRORCITY: 20 London Artists," opening at the Hayward Gallery on October 14. Seers also has shows scheduled for later this year at the Sharjah Art Foundation and the Cricoteka museum in Krakow. Her photographs sell for upward of £6,000 and her installations fetch up to £50,000.

The artist photographs, films and self-critiques her multilayered works, which are packed with philosophy, art theory, theology, and science. "The work is so dense, it tells you about itself, and I try to leave no gaps to be filled in by another—by an author, by a critic, by a reviewer," says Seers, who trained in fine art at the Slade and at Goldsmiths College in London.

Prior to creating her elaborate installations, Seers transformed herself into a "human camera." Placing photographic paper in her mouth, she exposed it using

her lips as an aperture to produce oddly compelling images. Her installations retain that sense of performance, set in locations such as an inverted battleship in a former church, a Norwegian boat hut, and a peep show-style booth.

"I like to think of the audience member as one of the protagonists within the piece. By entering onto the stage, with them immersed, they become implicated somehow," she explains.

That collusion in Seers's poetic universe is vital to appreciating her work. Her vision of the world, influenced by the French philosopher and mystic Henri Bergson, is one of interconnectivity, blurred reality and fantasy, and shifting concepts of self, time, and consciousness.

It is futile, then, to wonder if, as claimed in her works, Seers really was mute until she was eight, grew up in Mauritius, and had a step-sister named Christine who went missing after losing her memory in a moped accident. Autobiography becomes a vehicle for exploring authorship, the unreliability of photography, memory, and perception as documentary tools, and the uncanny coincidences of existence.

"I'm staging the pieces as full of artifice but I want you to feel the truth behind the artifice, and so the idea that the voices and the stories are really people's stories," she says. "Something of the flux between what is metaphor, what is created, and what is actual is where I think the pivotal points of the work lie." ■

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