

Haunted Beauty with Nadine Talalla

27th January - 5th February
Dissenters' Gallery, Kensal Green Cemetery

Chapel



16. The Huntress 2016
Oil on Canvas
120 x 180 cm
£3,950



19. Sorrow 2016
Acrylic on Canvas
110 x 160 cm
£3,500



17. Catherine Tylney-Long's Downfall 2016
Oil on Canvas
120 x 180 cm
£4,200



20. Rise to Fame 2016
Oil and Chinese Ink on Canvas
120 x 180 cm
£3,800



18. The Annunciation
2016
Oil, Charcoal and Pigment on Canvas
120 x 180 cm
£3,950



21. The Wealthy Land Owner 2016
Oil and Acrylic on Canvas
120 x 180 cm
£3,800

Gallery



1. Past, Present & Future 2016
Oil on Canvas
40 x 50 cm
£1,800



2. Scarlet Lady 2016
Oil and Chinese Ink on Canvas
110 x 160 cm
£4,200



3. Catherine Tylney-Long 2016
Oil on Canvas
40 x 50 cm
£1,800



10. The Victorian Circus 2016
Acrylic on Canvas
110 x 190 cm
£2,900



4. Living Memory III 2016
Oil on Paper
30 x 42 cm
£920



11. Despair 2016
Oil on Paper
21 x 30 cm
£520



5. Living Memory II 2016
Oil on Paper
30 x 42 cm
£920



12. Dr James Barry 2016
Acrylic on Canvas
76 x 102 cm
£2,400



6. The Courtship 2016
Oil on Paper
30 x 42 cm
£920



13. Catherine has Second Thoughts 2016
Oil on Paper
30 x 42 cm
£920



7. Walking into the Future 2016
Oil on Paper
30 x 42 cm
£920



14. Catherine Tylney-Long I 2016
Oil on Paper
21 x 30 cm
£520



8. Walking into the Future 2016
Oil on Paper
30 x 42 cm
£920



15. Catherine Tylney-Long Greets Death 2016
Oil on Paper
21 x 29 cm
£520



9. Living Memory II 2016
Oil on Paper
30 x 42 cm
£920

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Nadine Talalla

Nadine Talalla paints larger-than-life women with tenacity and drama, their physical and emotional strain almost palpable on the surface, that they seem impossible to contain on canvas. When they are not involved in mystic, otherworldly rituals, they are enveloped in the cycles of life — love, ecstasy, shame, childbirth, loss — or they return our gaze in a knowing way that comes so naturally to women, who spend their life being looked at.

By contrast the artist's earlier canvases were populated with animals, monsters and beasts, that pop out of colourful vortex or appear to meld together into the background. If not taken from personal introspection, the creatures are inspired by stories. Talalla had grown up between two cultures — Australia, where the artist was born and lived from time to time, and Malaysia where she studied at an international school and Muslim boarding school. Her studies took her also to a boarding school in at Stowe, England, that was the former seat of the Dukes of Buckingham and Chandos.

Before she'd even begun her BA in Painting at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in 2000, her mind was full of folklore, myths and classical tragedies acquired from living in both the Australian outback, the Malaysian jungle, and the neo-classical palace in Stowe. The year before this she'd moved to Beijing to study traditional Chinese painting, the influence of which is felt not only in the sometimes spare composition of her portraits and the elegance of her brushstroke.

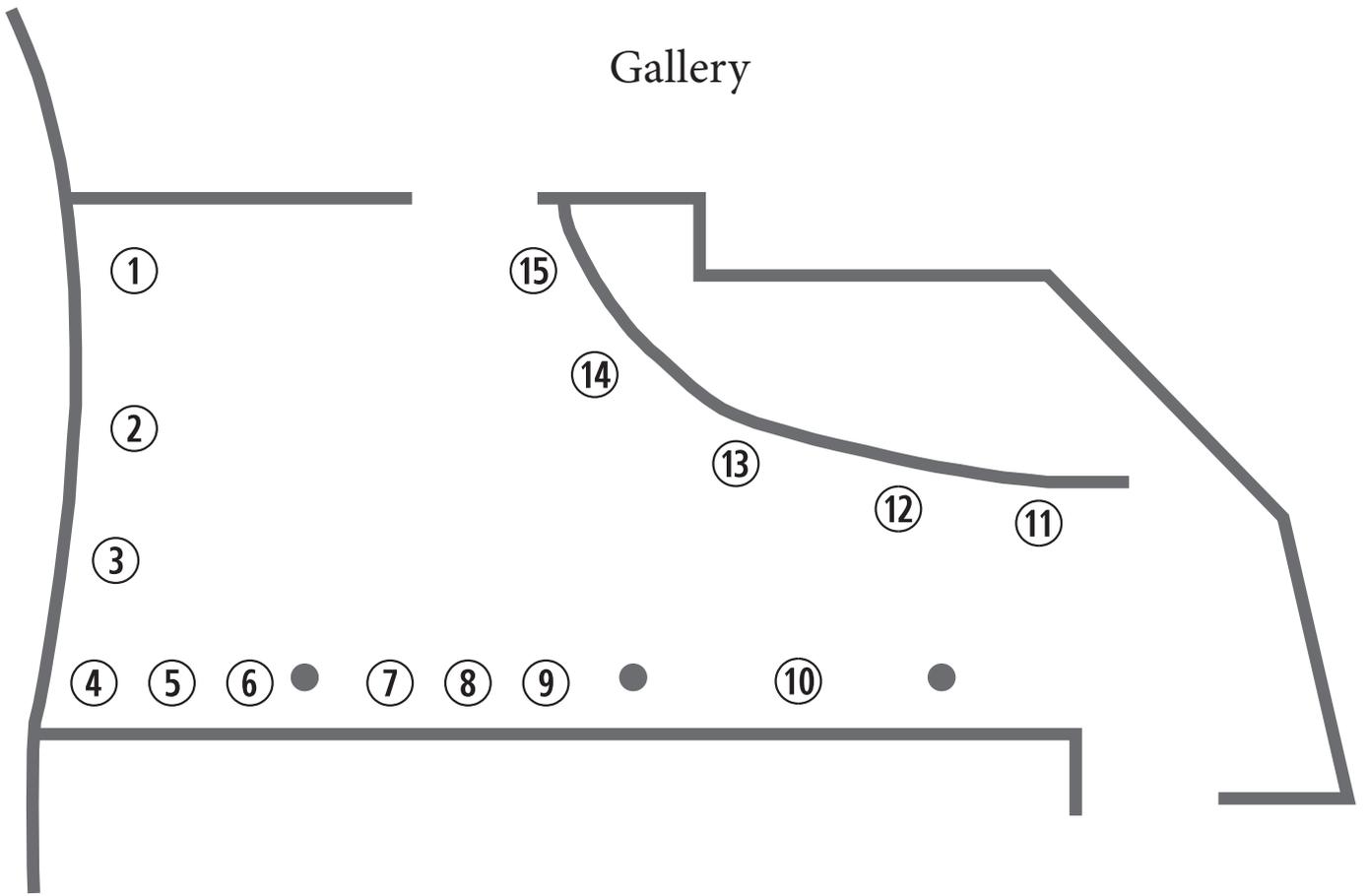
In later paintings Talalla's creatures are woven into narratives with a female protagonist. The Annunciation (2016) shows the meeting of woman and daemon, Christianity and paganism, the mortal world and spiritual realm. In works painted during Talalla's time at the Turps Banana painting programme in London, the female figure is always presented with her back to the viewer — her face indistinguishable, her stance guarded to hide her vulnerability — as if the creature standing before her is really a projection of her own mind. If Talalla used beasts to personify human emotions, since then she's turned to painting women to draw out the peculiar qualities of being female, inspired by goddesses from classical mythology. Yet, her most recent paintings no longer separate the mortal and spiritual. These are suffused into the female subject, who is presented as both a corporeal and spiritual being and, like Talalla, a mediator of multiple worlds.

The Scarlet Lady (2016) emanates this legendary presence: swimming in her opulent red gown that echoes courtly portraiture, she's Joshua Reynolds's Lady Talbot and John Everett Millais's Ophelia. On the other hand, she refuses to be inert, to be gazed at, by floating like a spectre from Malaysian folklore or a phoenix rising out of the ashes. In Dissenter Gallery's exhibition Haunted Beauty, the Scarlet Lady joins works made especially for and inspired by Kensal Green Cemetery, that explore the threshold between life and death even further. Following group shows at Bermondsey Project Space, Tannery Arts, Edel Assanti Gallery, among others, as well as having work featured in Pimlico Underground as part of the 2014 edition of Art Below, Haunted Beauty will be the artist's first solo exhibition. The show is especially timely as Talalla will be in the eighth ninth month of her first pregnancy and looking forward to bringing her daughter into the world.

Where The Scarlet Lady's allure rests in her mystery and anonymity, the women in Talalla's most recent works are drawn from radical but little known women connected to Kensal Green Cemetery. The women that Talalla pays tribute to in this latest series had all defied the expectations for their sex, albeit not without sacrifice: the illegal spouse of the last Duke of Cambridge, Sarah Fairbrother, rose to fame playing male roles in the theatre, unlike many women of her time Catherine Tylney-Long was a wealthy landowner signified in the painting by the presence of a grand lake and estate; while James Barry posed as a man to become a surgeon, the first female in her field, found out only at death.

Though these painting are in many ways memorials, they are no less reflective of Talalla's own emotions and psyche as she navigates her changing role from woman to mother, all the while moving forward as an artist in what is still a male-dominated sphere. The portrait of Barry is especially evocative, showing a figure with a male countenance examining her pregnant body in the mirror. For a woman who would have kept her pregnancies a secret throughout her life, here we catch her in a private moment confronting her changing body unashamedly. If you look at the rest of Talalla's portraits in the show, you'll notice women whose faces and bodies morph and multiply. What the artist does so well is rather than presenting woman as a fixed and defined entity, she's painted as always on the verge of becoming.

Gallery



Chapel

