

PRESS RELEASE | VICTORIA BURGHER - SWEET STRENGTH - SCULPTURAL INSTALLATION IN A NEW CONTEMPORARY ART PROGRAMME AT ST AUGUSTINE'S CHURCH, HAMMERSMITH

Victoria Burgher - Sweet Strength

31 January to 24 February, 2019

Private view: 31 January, 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm

Sweet Strength - the exhibition

Sweet Strength is a new site-specific work by Victoria Burgher that combines the artist's interest in a conceptual use of materials with a need to address the political context of our times. The sculptural installation consists of three freestanding female figures hollow-cast using bagasse – a delicately strong, honey-coloured fibre processed from the sugarcane plant. Burgher employs this innovative sculptural material for its historical and symbolic resonances, and its use in this artwork embodies the resilience of women with ancestral origins in the sugar-producing islands of the Caribbean.

Created specifically for the Austin Forum art space in St Augustine's Mother of Good Counsel shrine, this work seeks to highlight the contribution of generations of women and their daughters who survived the brutal middle passage from Africa, bore the brunt of plantation slavery and left their homes to help rebuild post-war Britain. The spirit of these mothers survives in and will be passed on by today's generation of women who share their roots.

This work is part of an ongoing series considering the connections between the forced movement of people around the world and the capitalistic exploitation of resources. Sweet Strength seeks to portray a sense of endurance and hope and the sustenance of having faith in this. The recently highlighted issues of the Windrush generation made the realisation of this work increasingly urgent for the artist.

Burgher applies a conceptual use of colonial commodities as a way of visually re-examining whitewashed areas of history, to encourage discussion and engage with the past in order to better understand and negotiate the present. The siting of this work in an active church aims to remind us of Christianity's role in the transatlantic slave trade and colonisation of Africa, as well as how this faith continues to sustain many of its descendants.

It is worthwhile noting here two aspects of the original Mother of Good Counsel fresco. Firstly folklore tells of a miraculous journey where the fresco flew from Albania to its current home in the Augustinian church of Genezzano, Italy. So it too is something of an immigrant. Secondly, it is the image of a strong mother with child. A fitting context then for Victoria's installation.



Victoria Burgher - the artist

Victoria Burgher is a multi-disciplinary, award-winning artist with an MA from Goldsmiths College. Often having ephemeral outcomes, her practice is largely sculptural, underpinned by thorough contextual research and sensitive response – to spaces, objects and contexts. Taking a site or situation as a starting point, she is drawn to 'poor' materials and craft processes, often ritualistically and laboriously repeated, to translate and embody the voices emanating from it.

Austin Forum / The Catholic Church and Modern and Contemporary Art

Austin Forum aims to reestablish a strong and creative relationship between the Catholic Church and the Arts, especially within contemporary visual art. In the twentieth century, the Catholic Church invited its members to “read the signs of the times”. In response to that, Austin Forum is working with artists whose artistic expressions say something about the world and the human condition today. Austin Forum is delighted to announce the fifth exhibition of an Art programme in the church building at St Augustine’s, Hammersmith. We celebrate the creativity and practice of emerging and established artists and invite them to engage and respond to our sacred space. We invite them to enhance our worship and contemplation in this church.

Curators

Curated by Fr Gianni Notarianni O.S.A. - Parish Priest of St Augustine’s Church, Director of Austin Forum
& Marie Marin la Meslée

Visitor information

Admission: free

Opening times: Monday-Friday: 7 am to 7 pm, Saturday: 10:30 am to 7 pm, Sunday: 8 am to 7:30 pm

Address: St Augustine’s church - 55 Fulham Palace Road - London. W6 8AU

E: info@austin-forum.org T: 020 8748 3254

Nearest London Underground Station: Hammersmith

Press information

For more information, interviews and images, contact:

Marie Marin la Meslée - Austin Forum Communications Manager

E: marie@austin-forum.org T: 020 8748 3254

Follow Austin Forum: austin-forum.org | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [LinkedIn](#)