



Silverstreet

Everything Human, Social and
Political termly.

Third Edition - 'Beginnings'

Contemporary Cave Painting at the Rebecca Hossack Art Gallery: Beginning Painting



Frankie Cherry

On the streets of Fitzrovia this coming January, beginnings will be felt in more than one sense of the word. Not merely in the primitive darkness of the frozen weeks, nor in the desperate commitments to the new year new starts, but in the warm, wooden, pillar-box red enclave of the Rebecca Hossack Art Gallery on Charlotte Street. For one month, it will become a prehistoric cave adorned with ochre drawings. Here, the beginnings of painting will play out.

Contemporary Cave Painting is the gallery's first solo exhibition from CASS Prize winner and Threadneedle Prize finalist Thomas Allen. Inspired by the Surrealist technique of automatic drawing, the exhibition will be both active and interactive. Blacking out the gallery and re-inventing it for the public as a 'contemporary cave', Allen will work daily by the light of a single lamp, as did our early predecessors. Over the course of a month, he will adorn the gallery space with ochre, charcoal, sanguine and graphite drawings in homage to the prehistoric cave art of Lascaux, Pech Merle and Font de Gaume, working on an organic surface of paper made from elephant dung and hand-stained with tea.



Finishing touches - Frankie Cherry

Evoking beginnings in the rawness of his materials, the way that the artist uses them also enacts a return to a more fundamental form of aestheticism. To enrich his mural, Allen will walk around the streets of Fitzrovia and invite the public and visitors to the gallery to contribute their own scribbles and imagery, which will inform his own etchings within the space. With the free act of doodling unimpeded by any conscious inhibitions, the cave will be born out of immediate artistic impulses that have not been impeded by social constructs. In this way, Allen hopes to undermine the concept of beginnings as much as to explore it. He has said:

"I've found the idea of beginnings to be a rather dubious one. Of course, superficially, it's a useful concept and I wouldn't advocate that we stop using it. Various strands of hominid have stretched out across the globe in complicated, overlapping paths and their creative expressions have developed in fits and starts. I hope to subvert the idea of beginnings and progress in art. Some might like to think we're the pinnacle of evolution and are therefore superior to prehistoric humans; others might be inclined to believe those prehistoric humans were living in a sort of Arcadia. But maybe we're just different, and there is no hierarchy."



Through the artist's drawing process, aspects of Jungian psychology will be explored, and a contemplative arena will be created in which all can imaginatively connect to their most basic origins. To guide this retrospection, the gallery also plans to host several complementary talks led by leading academics.

Over the duration of Allen's painting, the gallery walls will come to reflect the collective unconscious of a community, a unique record of a society: a portrait of its mind.

Contemporary Cave Painting runs from 7 January to 8 February 2015, at the Rebecca Hossack Art Gallery, 28 Charlotte Street, Fitzrovia, London, W1T 2NA, Monday- Saturday 10-6 pm. For further enquiries, please contact press@rebeccahossack.com , www.rebeccahossack.com
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Thomas Allen
Homage to Pre-historical cave art.