



Athena

Cultural Crusader

Old and new can share a space

THE juxtaposition of contemporary and historic art feels like a theme of the past two weeks. There have been the art fairs of Frieze and Frieze Masters set in their separate marquees at opposite corners of Regent's Park; the dedication of David Hockney's new window celebrating The Queen's reign, which adds brilliant colour to the generally sober interior of Westminster Abbey; and the unveiling of Mat Collishaw's *The Mask of Youth*, a response to the Armada portrait of Elizabeth I at the Queen's House at Greenwich.

Athena has enjoyed all these things and they've made her think about the current relationship between the art of the present and of the past. At Frieze and Frieze Masters, her impression was

of two distinct worlds necessarily divided (partly for commercial ends), which seemed slightly impoverishing for both. Contemporary artists and their patrons are generally striving both after novelty and the celebration of counter-cultural ideas. For an artist at Frieze, therefore, actually to fit into a historical tradition would be an act of professional suicide. How sad.

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Of course, that made the new window at Westminster seem all the more remarkable. For a contemporary artist to install art in somewhere as ancient and as Establishment as Westminster Abbey and get away with their reputation intact is a comment on Mr Hockney's stature.

Nor should the degree to which the Abbey has accommodated the artist be overlooked; it has accepted a stained-glass window dedicated to the reign of the leader of the Church of England from an artist with no record of making religious

art and including no devotional reference. If Athena has a criticism of the Hockney window, it is that, aesthetically, it doesn't obviously fit within the Abbey. For some, of course, that is a positive virtue, because it advertises that this institution is no longer hidebound by tradition.

Added to which, Westminster Abbey is filled to overflowing with historic sculpture and art—mostly in the form of tomb sculpture—that no less determinedly ignores the building that contains it. Time alone will tell whether, in the long term, Mr Hockney's contribution will be judged as a masterpiece in its own right.

This was not a criticism, however, that could be levelled at Mr Collishaw's *The Mask of Youth*, which takes the form of an animatronic and highly realistic mask of the face of Elizabeth I. It has been carefully created from the evidence of portraits and documentary descriptions and is installed against a mirror immediately facing the Armada Portrait in the gallery. As a result, when it intermittently blinks and moves, it makes the startled viewer think harder about the face and personality of the 16th-century portrait.

Athena warmly approves: this is a democratic relationship between past and present that renders both more interesting.

Fred van Deelen; Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri/Rebecca Hossack Art Gallery

What to see this week

Oceanic: Land and Sea; Gods and Men is at Rebecca Hossack Art Gallery, 2a, Conway Street, Fitzroy Square, London W1, until November 24 (020-7436 4899; www.rebeccahossack.com) For 30 years, Rebecca Hossack has been championing Aboriginal artists. Now, to complement 'Oceania' at the Royal Academy (see page 124), the gallery is showing paintings (*right: Woman's Dreaming*, 1988, by Aboriginal desert-artist Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri), prints, sculptures, textiles, *tapa* cloths, basket-works and carvings by contemporary artists from Australia and the Pacific islands. Most are for sale. Also featuring, in the gallery's 'Songlines' season, are works by Damien Coulthard rooted in the traditions of the Adnyamathanha people of southern Australia.



Anni Albers is at Tate Modern, London SE1, until January 27, 2019 (020-7887 8888; www.tate.org.uk) This long overdue UK retrospective demonstrates, through the textiles, drawings, found-object jewellery, prints and writings of Anni Albers (1899-1994), the pivotal contribution she made to Modern art and design. Born in Berlin, she took up weaving as a student at the Bauhaus (where she met her husband, the artist Josef Albers; they moved to the USA in 1933) and redefined the traditional craft of the handloom as a medium expressive of modern life and art. Among the themes explored are Albers's interest in the relationship between weaving and architecture; the influence of Central and South America on her textiles; and her later printmaking.

Darkness into Light: The Emotional Power of Art is at the Millennium Gallery, Arundel Gate, Sheffield, October 20-January 13, 2019 (0114-278 2600; www.museums-sheffield.org.uk) More than 80 paintings, sculptures and works on paper from three private collections—the Ingram, the Jerwood and the Fleming—explore human emotions, from fear and anxiety to joy and serenity. Artists include David Bomberg, Peter Howson, R. B. Kitaj, Eric Ravilious, Anne Redpath, Graham Sutherland, C. R. W. Nevinson and Fiona Rae.

Leigh Davis: A New Perspective is at The Nine British Art, 9, Bury Street, St James's, London SW1, until October 26 (020-7930 9293; www.theninebritishart.co.uk) Leigh Davis's abstract paintings and quasi-architectural sculptures take inspiration from Cornish coasts, Welsh pitheads and old aircraft. Comparing the mediums, he says: 'I don't really like flat painting. I want to see its guts, so... it's the method which is similar, creating a framework for the composition [then adding] layers, panels and colour.'