

MUSEUM
MAUD SULTER



OLDHAM ART GALLERY

11 April - 2 June 1990

In MUSEUM Maud Sulter creates an altered reading
of notions of the great painting.

A great painting
of a great subject
of a great moment
of European history.

The shift
from East
to West
Black
to White
Power to
Powerlessness.

In expressing the fracture of the expected reading
of a multiple greatness the artist seeks to allow
the viewer the space to negotiate the tree terrain.
Reinvest terms with another meaning, resonance,
reverberation.

The sheen of the clean. Refreshed layers of paint
over canvas. Creating a re-imaging of this re-
presentation. Figures prefigured by notions of
necrophilia, racism and overt sexism. Expressed
in the sexualisation of death. Of a moment in
herstory. Of a black queen. In a black country.
Of a moment in herstory. Of a black queen. In
a black country.

HISTORICAL OBJECTS

Cave drawings 1715k years old
humanities oldest representation
of our form Blackwoman her soul
sits uneasy in a Viennese prison.
Egyptian mummified bodies stolen
rot uneasily in European hells
of culture. So sets the scene
of us Blackwomen in Europe.
We read pornographic versions
of African Jeanne Duval as muse
destroyed by Baudelairean pox
les fleurs du mal black venus.
Slavery days. And here I find
you still on the plantation now
differently guised yet still
a bondage. And Freedom freedom
has an empty call when I see you
still chained to their supremacist
belief in themselves. They cannot
be allowed any longer to rewrite
our experience; call it marxist
or feminist, history or herstory
no-longer no more. Ka is rising.
Ka is rising. Listen. Listen
you can hear her call. For Ka
is rising. Ka is rising. Hear
come hear her call.

From somewhere over the Isle of Cloves
the Watcher rises from the stool and chants
an incantation. The air hung heavy with the
scents of sweet smelling plants – lemon grass
jasmine a spiced edge of cinnamon and mace.

The Ka is risen.

MaShulan who cursed Livingstone. That trip
was his last. Damned his house. We must make
it no more than ashes. Bring the tower to the
ground. And we shall not mourn its passing
when still from Tanzania to Scotland the child
learns on his *good christian* intent. Mud huts
they show as proof of their *civilisation*. Over
our infinite cultures. Civilisation can never
be written in the blood and bones of slavery.

Maud Sulter
From Zabat
Poetics of a
Family Tree

Maud Sulter is an artist and writer who was born and brought up in Glasgow. Currently lecturing in the theory and history of photography at the University of East Anglia. She divides her time between West Yorkshire and London. Zabat, her most recent commission is in the Mayfest exhibition at Streetlevel Gallery Glasgow and will tour as part of New North from the Tate Gallery Liverpool in 1990.

SUGGESTED READING

Uses of the Erotic as Power, Audre Lorde, Kitchen Table Press.

The Pornography of Representation, Sue Kappeler
Black Codes – Notes from the Underground, Maud Sulter
FAN 150 years of photography issue

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Two collections of Maud Sulter's poetry are published by Urban Fox Press. For a free copy of the current catalogue send a s.a.e. to Urban Fox Press, PO Box 2, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire HX7 6LW.