



After All That Happened Darkness Did Not Win

BARBARA MOURA

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After All That Happened Darkness Did Not Win, Barbara Moura's first solo exhibition in Paris, is a semi-autobiographical portrait of a woman, combining self-portraiture and iconographic reference, without clear limits of time and space. The series is an ode to female empowerment delivered by the artist on the foundation of women's political heritage over the last few centuries, which today enables her posture.

Drawing from works of old Masters, as well as from more contemporary references, she looks at the path of women's struggles over the centuries through the prism of a woman who claims her place and in doing so shows us that women have always laid claim, it is society that has had to catch up.

Barbara borrows the title of her solo, and one of the works presented in it, from one of artist Jenny Holzer's (b. 1950) truisms: the short sentences, inviolable statements of truth, that Holzer placed in public spaces, calling upon the passerby to stop and think. With her eponymous work, Barbara asks of us the same in order to observe the darkness that has not won, the light revealing the revindications that have always been. Though largely obscured throughout history, the female subject in her work floats above the darkness, looking at the viewer with an effortless gaze.

Lucretia is Barbara's interpretation of the eponymous work by Artemisia Gentileschi (b. 1593). Lucretia was an ancient Roman woman who was raped and committed suicide in order to save her honour. The legend is that her suicide sparked the passage of Rome from monarchy to republic. The story of Lucretia is one of female agency. In her definitive decision to take her fate into her own hands rather than leave it at the hands of a patriarchal society, Lucretia claimed the freedom to take control over the course of her life and in doing so, changed the course of history. Barbara's Lucretia is an ode to the courage of this woman born five centuries before her; today, wearing pants and heeled boots in an upright posture, she is triumphant.

In *Nude* and *Nude with Boots*, Barbara delves into the paintings of Suzanne Valadon (b.1865), drawn by the vulnerability and empowerment of her predecessor's female nudes. As in Valadon's works, Barbara's subject – is she a model or the artist or a figment of her imagination? – looks directly at the viewer, entirely comfortable in her own body. She is not attempting to seduce, she simply is. While in Valadon's time, it was rare for nudes to be painted by a female artist rendering the work transgressive and radical, Barbara's subjects seem aware of their epoch, their nudity not a transgression but a state of being.

Without limiting herself to female Masters, Barbara also draws her inspiration from male painters as in *Two Girls Walking* and *Studio*. Tapping into post-impressionist painter Edouard Vuillard's (b.1868) intimate portrait, *Walking Girls*, Barbara blurs the lines between sisterhood, friendship and sensuality, while clearly defining the lines of her brush strokes, contrasting her colors and outlining her subjects, who instead of melting into the background are pulled into the foreground, unashamedly at ease in not having to define themselves. In *Studio*, Barbara reclaims the artist's studio, historically attributed to the male artist, by referencing works by Matisse but also Picasso, whose relationship with women and their status is now being called into question.

BIOGRAPHY

BARBARA MOURA was born in 1989 in Lisbon, Portugal. She graduated in Film at the National Film School of Portugal and then moved to London where she did her MA with distinction at Central Saint Martins School. She currently lives and works in Vienna.