

## ANN DOWKER :: PAINTINGS FROM THEBES

26 October – 23 November 2018

Private View : Thursday 25 October 6 – 8 pm

[View Exhibition Catalogue on-line](#)

Upper Garden at Tod, 2016, oil on canvas, 142 x 166cm

When Ann Dowker first visited Egypt in the early 2000s she discovered a place that so enthralled her with its natural splendour and human activity that she decided to spend a large part of her life there and allow the place and its people to be the major subject of her work as an artist. She bought a house on the west bank of the Nile at Luxor and now lives and works there with, and within, the community for long periods of the year.

Her excitement has remained undiminished. *'Each time I return Egypt has the same initial impact and freshness as the first visit. The landscape, the people and their clothes lead to a totally different movement of the body; hands, feet, faces have a lively mobility. And there is a strong feeling of the temporary with constant changes everywhere and what was arable land can overnight become a lake.'* And her way of discovering this strange and beguiling place is to draw it which she does incessantly, looking and recording people and places in a search of the *genius loci* and the elusive structures in the landscape that fascinate her so much.

Back in London the process of interpreting the drawings she has returned with takes place and the information once rooted in direct observation becomes the springboard for a leap into the world of her imagination. Canvases are worked and reworked as she probes away in a search for the deeper significance of her Egyptian experience; a search that embraces issues of time and memory that interest her in literature and cinema; a search underpinned by structures inherent in ancient art forms and European painting that she has studied over years of relentlessly drawing from works in the British Museum and the National Gallery amongst many others.

In her catalogue essay the art historian Juliet Wilson-Bareau has written that, *Dowker's work is slowly moving towards abstraction. The tops of submerged walls are realistic but also abstract markers of what lies below, as they regulate the picture surface. The thrust of new growth in fields and gardens is rendered in a condensed and shorthand form, while the interactive geometry of the human form, diving or walking in the waters, is simplified as symbolic shapes, or flattened under a djellaba from which head and hands and feet emerge to express her models' vivid individuality.'*

Ann Dowker was born in Sheffield, and studied at Bath Academy, Corsham and at the Central School of Art and Design. She has exhibited extensively since 1990 and has work in private and public collections worldwide including the Government Art Collection, Manchester City Art Gallery, Australian Embassy and New College Collection, Cambridge. She lives and works in London and teaches drawing at the Royal Drawing School and at the National Gallery and the British Museum.



Egrets, 2017, oil on canvas, 91 x 122cm