

# LINA IRIS VIKTOR

## SOME ARE BORN TO ENDLESS NIGHT — DARK MATTER

CURATED BY RENÉE MUSSAI

13 SEPTEMBER 2019 — 25 JANUARY 2020

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Curatorial project management:  
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Courtesy of the artist and  
Mariane Ibrahim Gallery  
unless otherwise stated.

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**Merging photography, painting, performance, and sculpture with the ancient practice of gilding with 24-karat gold, Lina Iris Viktor's arresting visual vernacular explores historical, cultural and material implications of 'blackness' — as colour, value and socio-political consciousness.**

This immersive exhibition, which continues on the second floor, presents an elaborate mixed-media installation dominated by polyvalent black opacities, luminescent gold and opulent ultramarine blue hues — brought together in a singular style Viktor describes as 'minimal decadence'. Cast as the sole performer in a meticulously created, artistic universe, the artist's body-as-canvas is abstracted through lustres of black and centred as the universal human form: a vessel through which narratives are woven, histories entwined, and possible futures imagined. For Viktor, gold is both symbol and substance, a spiritual conduit of transcendence... with black conjured as 'the proverbial *materia prima*: the dark matter that birthed everything'.

**Gallery 1** presents *Dark Continent* (2015–19) in the main hall and gold enclave: fifty-four works on paper, including large-scale variations and a new Artist Commission entitled *Dark Testament* (2019). An imaginative riposte to nineteenth century myths of Africa as a sinister place of danger, chaos and dis-ease, the series' darkened, tropical foliage is liberated from the confines of the painted image as floor-based sculptures and wall stencils in *Black Botanica* (2019). The architectural installation *The Black Ark* (2018–19) further contemplates colonial histories and politics of ownership — its latticed, modular design inspired by the nets of Liberian fishermen — leading to three variations of *Materia Prima* (2016–19) and *Constellations IX* (2019): intricate, densely layered canvas works imbued with a maze of coded, labyrinthine symbols alluding to subliminal modes of communication and visceral forms of expression.

**Gallery 2** on the second floor presents the Blue Void, an invitation to experience the unique frequency of ultramarine blue. Inside, one single work: *Syzygy* (2015); outside, three works from *A Heaven. A Hell. A Dream Deferred.* (2018).

"A gifted alchemist, Viktor skilfully conjures layers of visible darkness and chromatic nuance: potent mediations on blackness and being, enveloped in a *Cosmology of the Dark Sublime* where there is no *Other*, only variations of the *One*... In a glorious equilibrium between aesthetics and politics, history is creatively reimagined through an emphasis on the circularity of time, and affirmative, remedial excavations of our collective pasts. Merging abstraction and figuration with a performative engagement of the self, Viktor's evocative practice is deeply rooted in the concept of unruly visual pleasure as a politics for refusal — Beauty, in Viktor's world, is forged from and within a restorative praxis of disavowal, as a radical method of transfiguration."

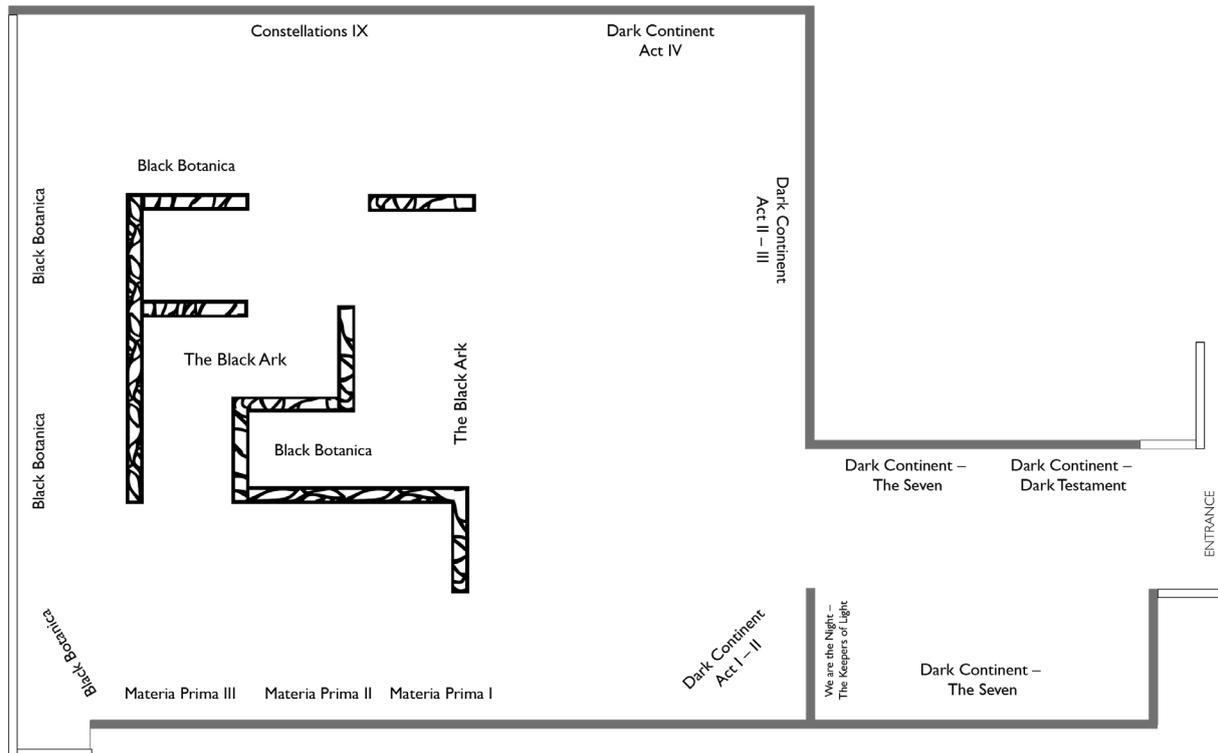
— Renée Mussai, Curator

AUT  GRAPH



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# GALLERY 1



**The Black Ark** (2017–19)  
Fourteen carved wood panels  
Each 152.4 x 365.76 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Mariane Ibrahim Gallery

**Materia Prima** (2015)  
Pure 24-karat gold, acrylic, gouache,  
print on matte canvas  
101.6 x 132.08 cm (Artist Proof)  
Courtesy of the artist

**Materia Prima II** (2017–18)  
Pure 24-karat gold, acrylic, poly resin,  
print on matte canvas  
101.6 x 132.08 cm  
Collection of Guillaume Clignet

**Materia Prima III** (2019)  
Pure 24-karat gold, acrylic, poly resin,  
print on matte canvas  
101.6 x 132.08 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Mariane Ibrahim Gallery

**Constellations IX** (2019)  
Pure 24-karat gold, acrylic, poly resin,  
print on matte canvas  
152.4 x 213.4 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Mariane Ibrahim Gallery

**Black Botanica** (2019)  
Flora floor sculptures  
Foliage, faux plants, spray paint, acrylic  
Dimensions variable

**Black Botanica** (2019)  
Flora wall drawings  
High gloss lacquer on diamond matt  
black paint  
Supported by Omni Colour

## DARK CONTINENT— THE SEVEN

**II – For Some are Born to  
Endless Night. Dark Matter.**  
(2019)  
Pure 24-karat gold, acrylic, copolymer  
resin, print on cotton rag paper  
106.7 x 132.1 cm  
Collection of Robert and  
Dr Jane Clark

**III – We Dream of Primordial  
Futures. Deo Optimo Maximo.**  
(2015-19)  
Pure 24-karat gold, acrylic, copolymer  
resin, print on cotton rag paper  
106.7 x 132.1 cm  
Collection of Ariel White and  
Warwick Saint

## DARK CONTINENT – DARK TESTAMENT

**I – After the Long Sleep we now  
Wake ...** (2015-19)

**II – Our Re-memories –  
sheer acts of Rebellion.** (2019)

**III – For a time we hid from  
ourselves. Our Dark Testament.**  
(2019)

Pure 24-karat gold, acrylic, gouache, ink,  
print on cotton rag paper  
43.2 x 36.8 cm  
Collection of Autograph  
New Artist Commission

**We are the Night –  
The Keepers of Light** (2015-19)  
Pure 24-karat gold, acrylic, copolymer  
resin, print on cotton rag paper  
62.9 x 75.6 cm

Courtesy of the artist  
New Artist Commission

## DARK CONTINENT ACT I – IV

Series of 48 works on paper  
Pure 24-karat gold, acrylic, polymer varnish  
Printed on cotton rag paper  
21.6 x 25.9 cm. All works Artist Proofs  
Courtesy of the artist

### ACT I - GENESIS

No. I  
We Descended from a  
Darkness that Belongs to  
no one . . .

No. II  
Still, you hold no claim here.

No. III  
If we be Shadows cast upon  
cave walls, it is that we are  
Light Keepers.

No. IV  
We met the World halfway,  
then merged infinitely

No. V  
A Blackness so complete  
the Shadow ceases to exist.

No. VI  
Each day we drink of the Sun.  
The Great Deluge.

No. VII  
To be Light-filled.  
The Grandest of illusions.

No. VIII  
For a precious thing is  
never laid to bare.

No. IX  
Recall, the Gold sifted from  
dirt . . .

No. X  
The ubiquitous shrouding  
an undeniable luster.

No. XI  
We have rested.  
The air reverberates with  
our resurrection.

No. XII  
The Dark Continent? . . .  
And here there is a pause.

### ACT II - THE FALL

No. XIII  
Pause . . . Pause for a Paradise  
Lost then found.

No. XIX  
The New Old world  
within reach.

No. XV  
We utter histories of everything  
you were never told.

No. XVI  
Counter Memories  
of the Healer.

No. XVII  
The exaltations before Time.  
She . . .

No. XVIII  
Amidst the Wolves of Empire . . .  
lying down with the Lambs of  
God.

No. XIX  
Came the Devil  
so shrewd in all his ways.

No. XX  
A prophecy.  
And The Scramble began . . .

No. XXI  
Stolen season. Black world.

No. XXII  
For if they take you in the  
Morning, we'll be coming for  
you at Night.

No. XXIII  
The Wheel turns between  
the Great Ages.  
This mere moment . . .

No. XXIV  
The Massacre of the Innocents.

### ACT III - THE WAKE

No. XXV  
We once sought refuge there.

No. XXVI  
Refuge from the aftermath . . .  
A Reckoning to come.

No. XXVII  
On that fateful day —  
as one we would Rise.

No. XXVIII  
Rise up from the Silence  
of a Thousand Years . . .

No. XXIX  
The thick, forced quietude that  
wouldn't let us breathe . . .

No. XXX  
And so on for Ages, ions,  
Tens of Thousands of  
Rememberings — or so it felt.

No. XXXI  
Buckled beneath the weight of  
Glory's Judgement.  
We ate in the Sin.

No. XXXII  
Enamoured with the Circularity  
of Time . . .

No. XXXIII  
It is our Birth Rite to be great.  
To be Great — a burden.

No. XXXIV  
Yet, we recall when you would  
Call me by my Name.

No. XXXV  
In the Spent Light of a day Long  
Past — you dare utter it.

### ACT IV - ABSOLUTION

No. XXXVI  
Now back at the Beginning..  
I beckon you for the  
Long Journey into Night.

No. XXXVII  
Paradiso Perduto.  
Paradiso Trovato.

No. XXXVIII  
Fear not the Dark. Its heavy  
Black Mass envelops you.

No. XXXIX  
You are in the Womb of Time,  
when so cradled.

No. XL  
We, the Night —  
the Giver of all Presences.

No. XLI  
For that long, brief violent  
time . . . we Gods had hidden  
from ourselves.

No. XLII  
Dark Matter enveloped us  
in temporal entropy. . .

No. XLIII  
In suspension we built a World  
in my image — a cornerstone.

No. XLIV  
From this Black Iris  
came a Black Monolith.

No. XLV  
A Black World.  
Black & Sacrosanct.

No. XLVI  
Black Temple for all Seasons.

No. XLVII  
Evident now, to you, for We are  
coming back into ourselves.

No. XLVIII  
Yet, None will dwell here  
but We.

## GALLERY 2

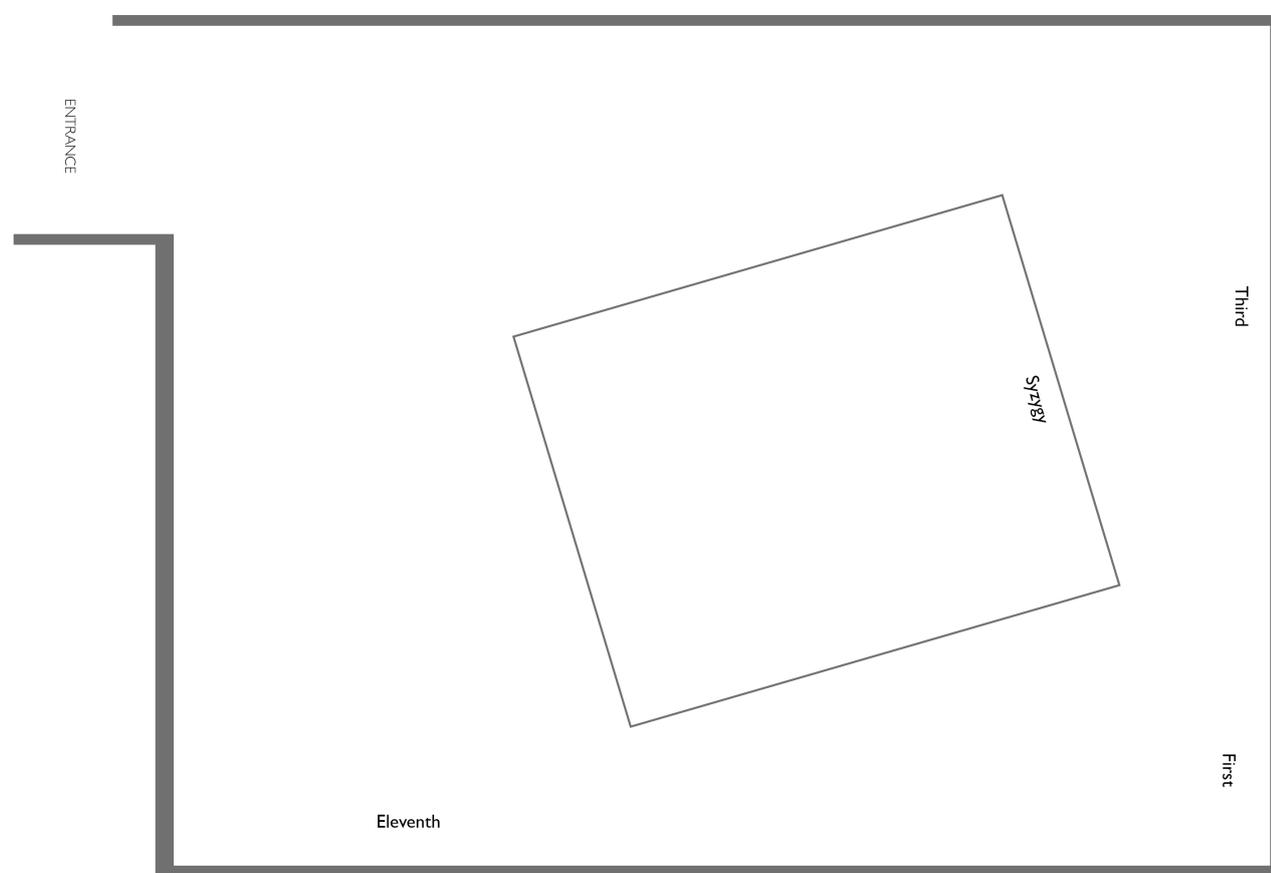
Continued from the ground floor, Gallery 2 presents the **Blue Void**: inspired by the artist's studio in New York, this site-specific installation offers an invitation to experience the unique frequency of ultramarine blue.

Shown alongside Viktor's celebrated first multi-layered figurative work *Syzygy* (2015) — on display inside the cube room — are three works from the series "*A Haven. A Hell. A Dream Deferred.*" (2018): *First*, *Third* and *Eleventh*. Here, Viktor contemplates the notion of lost histories and the complex founding story of Liberia, re-imagining a fraught narrative of migration, colonialism and oppression through the mercurial figure of the Libyan Sybil, a prophetess from antiquity invoked by eighteenth-century abolitionists as a mythical oracle who foresaw the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The full series consists of eleven large-scale works and was first shown at the New Orleans Museum of Art in 2018/19.

*"A big impetus to create the Blue Void was to replicate this duality of space that I experience every day in my studio: a parallel space for immersion and reflection: blue urges you to reflect. Displaying work in the space becomes almost secondary to the experience..."*

*For centuries, blue has been recognised as supremely powerful; just like gold. In my studio you experience it palpably: the frequency is different, the atmosphere is different, the sound is different – it literally transforms the entire energy of the space... because ultramarine blue has a very particular frequency, a very particular vibration and energy field: it is potent, ethereal and otherworldly. Highly concentrated colour has this ability to affect consciousness. Its power derives from the intense hue of deep [ultramarine] blue."*

— Lina Iris Viktor



### **Syzygy** (2015)

Pure 24-karat gold, acrylic, gouache, print on matte canvas  
101.6 x 132.08 cm

Collection of Hessel  
Museum of Art

### **Eleventh**

From the series *A Haven. A Hell. A Dream Deferred.* (2017–18)  
Pure 24-karat gold, acrylic, ink, gouache, copolymer resin, print on cotton rag paper  
127 x 165.1 cm

Collection of Dr. Anita K.  
Blanchard and  
Martin H. Nesbitt

### **First**

From the series *A Haven. A Hell. A Dream Deferred.* (2017–18)  
Pure 24-karat gold, acrylic, ink, gouache, copolymer resin, print on cotton rag paper  
101.6 x 132.1 cm

Collection of Tiana and  
Vikram Chellaram

### **Third**

From the series *A Haven. A Hell. A Dream Deferred.* (2017–18)  
Pure 24-karat gold, acrylic, ink, gouache, copolymer resin, print on cotton rag paper  
101.6 x 132.1 cm

Collection of Josef Vascovitz  
and Lisa Goodman