

Sarah Woodfine

Originally trained in sculpture, Sarah works with the medium of drawing but her drawings retain a sculptural quality and her most recent works, encased in vitrines, directly reference sculpture. She is concerned with the illusionistic representation of three-dimensional form. Her drawings are meticulously delineated, emerging millimetre by millimetre as the details of surface and form are mapped out. She seeks to create surfaces that look printed rather than hand drawn, creating the illusion the image has been embossed into the surface. She produces sharp incisions with her pencil, repeating the process, incising but not tearing the paper in a process that is slow and painstaking, bordering on the obsessional. The result is a highly worked, immaculate surface, requiring close inspection and attention from the viewer. Her current works is taking two forms: She has been approaching the concept of "flatpacks", sourcing her ideas predominately from architecture and has used found images, buildings she has photographed herself and imaginary buildings. Intriguing is the way in which the three dimensional aspect of her drawing lies in contradiction to the flatness of the overall object depicted. She is also playing with perception and perspective, making three-dimensional models incorporating landscape, buildings and figures. The fascination for the viewer lies in exploring the notion of flatness and space and how the images reveal themselves from different viewpoints. The objects are never fully completed, Sarah leaves a window of interpretation open, permitting the viewer to complete the artwork. She has just completed a residency in Denmark, where she has produced *Caravan*, a series of lithographs presented in portfolio form with a story, *Three Point Perspective* by Leslie Forbes. She is currently exhibiting these in *Staged*, a group show at Danielle Arnaud contemporary art, together with a snow dome of a haunted castle and a perspex box containing a canoe and teepee drawing. As the viewer peruses the objects, the image changes at every angle making moving around the work part of the seeing.

Sarah, was interested in working with a museum collection and using it as an inspiration for her work. I introduced her to Matthew Sheldon, the Curator of the Royal Naval Museum and he invited her to use both the displayed and the reserve collection of Lily Lambert McCarthy Collection of Nelson paintings, artefacts and memorabilia as source material for her work. He suggested doing an intervention either in the existing vitrines or by creating her own vitrine. She is likely to do a piece for the Nelson Gallery where this part of the collection is displayed. We visited the Royal Naval Museum together and she commented on the huge differences in and discrepancies between the Nelson portraits. She was also fascinated by the models of 19th sailing ships and the physicality of shipbuilding as well as the naval tactics and battle formations and is interested in making work connected to the fleet and naval tactics. Sarah and I had a conversation about her practice recently in the Model Room of the Royal Thames Yacht Club in London - I invited her there knowing of her interest in models, sailing and boat-building. I had lent her the catalogue of the Lily Lambert McCarthy collection and she had blown up photocopies of 19th C ships and battle formations, revealing intricate details that are otherwise lost. She is fascinating by etchings and engravings of the period and describes her practice of drawing as being similar to these techniques.

In her work she does not seek perfect or accurate representations of objects, but is rather concerned to suggest just enough detail for the viewer to complete the narrative. She is considering constructing a three-dimensional diptych vitrine drawing – a re-enactment of the Battle of Trafalgar – which would be accessible to the viewer from all sides. This is likely to take the form of a shallow model, possibly 1.20 x 90 x 5 cms. It will explore the formal decay of the post-battle phenomenon, referencing the maquettes used by chiefs of command planning battle strategy. Its inspiration is derived from an engraving, *Battle of Trafalgar – Conclusion of the Battle* by James Walker, based on a sketch by Midshipman George Herbert, who was present at Trafalgar. She proposes to place the model on white legs, permitting the viewer to circumnavigate the piece, allowing for interactivity in that the viewer would be able to observe the battle from all sides and scrutinise Sarah's meticulous delineations. She is considering using folding paper as this would enable her to create the decks of ships, creating another level of complicity in her sculptural drawings. There will be no figurative elements as she has no wish to reference the Chapman brother's *Hell* piece – the human hand in the battle will be invisible and the viewer will just witness its effects.

Victoria Preston, July 2005