

## Recent inspirations

Tomos Sparnon

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#### Translation from the Welsh

I am sure we have all missed visiting galleries and art exhibitions over the last few months. It has been hard not being able to see our favourite works, as well as new ones, in the flesh. However, we are grateful for technology that allows us to view virtual exhibitions and join online events, which helps us to fulfil this desire.

Three pieces of artwork have been on my mind in recent months and have been an inspiration to my recent artwork. The first is Auguste Rodin's *The Walking Man*. The statue was cast in 1903 and was very modern in its time.

I love the contrast in this sculpture. The torso is bruised and messy but the legs are smooth and perfect in appearance. Despite this though, there is unity and balance in the piece and the stance is strong. While some would say the piece is unfinished because it has no head or arms, this in my view adds to it and can suggest a lot. Looking at the sculpture gives me the feeling that the body does not know where it is going, and this reminds me of the current state of our world – moving onwards without knowing to where it is going. The fact that the figure does not have a head also removes any identity it has, suggesting it can represent any person. This work was of great inspiration to me when I recently created a sculpture of a walking figure.

The second piece of artwork that has been on my mind lately is Chaïm Soutine's *Landscape at Céret* (c. 1920-1921). I saw this painting in the Columbus Museum of Art while I worked as an artist in resident in Rio Grande, Ohio in 2017. I remember the sudden impact the painting had on me. I was drawn to it for several reasons. The first was the mysteriousness of the painting – it took several minutes for me to understand what exactly the subject of the painting was and that caught my attention. I also love the dark palette (which creates a mystical atmosphere) and the thickness of the paint on the canvas. Soutine has captured the rough and unpredictable behaviour of nature – the wind and the movement of the trees can be felt. Only a few pieces have affected me as quickly as this painting – I felt it difficult to leave the room. There is certainly something about the spirit of this piece that excites me every time I look at it.

The last piece I want to refer to is *Interior, Night*, 2009 by Celia Paul. Celia Paul's work has inspired me greatly over the last few years. This is a painting of one of her rooms in her flat. The only obvious objects in the piece are a bed, with the BT tower in the background. It is an intense and sad painting in my opinion, which conveys absence and solitude. Although there is no figure in the painting, for me, it expresses Paul's inner emotions and thus makes it a self-portrait. The painting feels relevant to us today in suggesting the loneliness many have experienced in being isolated because of COVID-19 and the constant practice of staring at the walls of our rooms.

There is a lovely use of paint in this piece, especially the way turpentine is used to create shadows and expressive marks. There is also a skilful use of light and darkness.

I was inspired by this painting to create a series of paintings on my grandmother's grief. I wanted to convey the feeling of loss she had experienced but also convey the hope Paul does so brilliantly in her paintings.

My latest painting – *A search for a contemporary figure IV* has been inspired by the physicality of Rodin's sculptures, the movement and mysteriousness of Soutine's paintings and the spirituality of Paul's work. We are grateful for works of art that move and touch us and continue to inspire.

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