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# 'IT'S NEVER REALLY OVER': TAVARES STRACHAN ON HIS NEW, ROSALIND FRANKLIN-INSPIRED SHOW

BY Ella Coon POSTED 11/12/15 9:30 AM



Tavares Strachan, *The Invisibles (Cricket bat)*, 2014–15, Cricket bat, mineral oil, Plexiglas, glass, wood, 43 x 13 x 13 inches, 109.2 x 33 x 33 cm.

PHOTO:TOM POWEL, NEW YORK/COURTESY THE ARTIST ANSD ANTHONY MEIER FINE ARTS, SAN FRANCISCO

*Tavares Strachan, the Nassau, Bahamas-born artist, makes conceptual works that tackle science, sociology, history, and technology. His latest exhibition, "Seeing is Forgetting the Thing that You Saw," is on view now at Anthony Meier Fine Arts in San Francisco through December 11. Its focus is on Rosalind Franklin—the historically overlooked scientist who laid the groundwork for Francis Crick and James Watson's discovery of DNA's double-helix structure. I spoke with Strachan on the phone about the show, the nature of time, and his own motivations for making art.*

**ARTnews: So, the show's ostensibly about Rosalind Franklin, right?**

TS: Yeah, yeah. She's a cool chick.

**Yeah, totally. But why her? Why now?**

I think it's this kind of challenging of history, or investigating a history. I think it's something that's swirling around in the zeitgeist these days. For me, time's not linear. So, in a way someone like Franklin I guess presupposes a premise that someone who might not have been validated in a particular kind of way might be in due time. It's not really over. It's never really over. So, someone who has

been left out of something can still be included in something 200 years from now. It's more like an Einsteinian kind of way of conceptualizing time.

**So it's a process of reinserting a figure back into the present time? Or calling attention to the fact that the figure never really left the present time?**

Exactly. I mean I think John Mosier really gets at it with the quote, which I think was: All works are good at pointing at things.

**Is time a theme in some of your other works? A lot of your previous work has been about geography, and questioning what this means through notions of displacement and relocation. How do these subjects of time and geography relate or overlap?**

I think the perspective is more of this inherent paradox that exists within our culture. Like in relation to geography, for example, we're naturally more nomadic yet we have homes. We like the idea that it's for our protection—through borders, through drawing lines around places. But, all of us must die at some point. I think our way of wrestling with that kind of anxiety is to draw lines around things. So my sense of geography comes from this position of: we're trying to corral something that might not be corral-able.

**So it's more of an existential question.**

[Laughs] We're getting heavy. You're getting heavy. Yeah, well maybe.

**Could you speak a bit about your process?**

You know, listen. At the end of the day, I really love making things. And, sometimes the language that surrounds the work is really just excuses for the fact that I can spend time making things. So, I think there's that. I think no artist really wants that to be lost. Ultimately, it's a body of paintings and sculptures, and I think that's a central element to not be ignored or denied.

**Is that a conversation that you end up having often?**

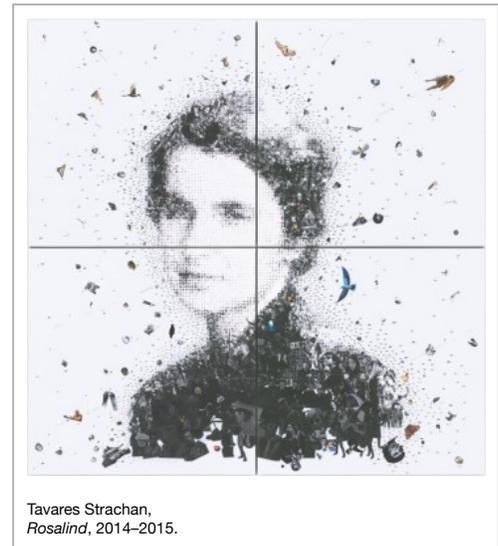
Well, I think it's the flaw of any conversation about work, when the work isn't physically present. Then what are you going to do? Language has to fill the gaps. So between the time that we are born and the time that we die, we need to eat and drink water—but then, what else is there to do? Let's just make up a bunch of reasons why we're doing things.

**[Laughs] That's great. Also, I understand there's an encyclopedia in the show?**

For me, an encyclopedia is a fundamental paradox: the premise of it is it's a place where most knowledge will be kept. So, we just went through the process of looking and seeing what has been left out of encyclopedias to examine how cultures are really constructed, you know what I mean? And long story short, I ended up working on a project having to do with this idea, where we create our own encyclopedia, amassing the nonentities and giving them somewhere to go. So, [the] work [is] finding a place for these nonentities.

**So the encyclopedia then relates back to the theme of invisibility?**

Invisibility. Franklin. Nonentities. Things that might not have a fully formed shape or are part of a larger cultural conversation.



Tavares Strachan,  
*Rosalind*, 2014–2015.



**Is there anything else you think our readers should know?**

I hope California gets water soon.

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