

PRESS RELEASE

Helen Cammock
Che si può fare

13 October 2019 – 16 February 2020



Helen Cammock, winner of the 7th Max Mara Art Prize for Women and nominee for the 2019 Turner Prize, after a premiere at Whitechapel Gallery in London (25 June – 1 September 2019) will be presenting her new exhibition *Che si può fare* (What can be done) at Collezione Maramotti, which is acquiring the works on view. The show will be adapted to the different space and also include an additional piece, an artist's book made in July at the Istituto Centrale della Grafica in Rome.

These works by Helen Cammock interweave women's stories of loss and resilience with seventeenth-century Baroque music by female composers, exploring the concept of lament in women's lives across histories and geographies. In addition to the new artist's book, the exhibition includes a film, a series of vinyl cut prints, a screen-printed frieze, and a research room with books and objects that Cammock collected or was given while in Italy.

The show is the result of a six-month bespoke Italian residency organized by Max Mara, Whitechapel Gallery and Collezione Maramotti. Travelling from Bologna to Florence, Venice, Rome, Palermo and Reggio Emilia, Cammock set out to explore the expression of lament and uncover hidden female voices. Across the country, historians, musicians, artists and singers opened their archives and shared their stories and research. The split-screen film at the heart of the exhibition features interviews with some of the women Cammock met on her travels, including social activists, migrants, refugees, a nun and women who fought the dictatorship. It memorializes the power of women's

voices from the Baroque period to Italy today. Their testimonies are layered with music and footage shot across Italy in a complex oral and visual collage.

Five colour-saturated prints depict music and voice through line drawing, and a long hand-painted frieze contains words and images drawn from the women Cammock encountered in Italy.

Che si può fare takes its title from a 1664 pre-operative lament by Italian composer Barbara Strozzi (1619-1677). Cammock took classical singing lessons to learn the aria and rehearsed it throughout the residency.

The music recurs in the new video work and as a live performance at the opening: the artist will perform Strozzi's music with a jazz trumpeter, reviving the composer's legacy through her own voice. The music of fellow Italian composer Francesca Caccini (1587-1641) is incorporated into the performance as the soundtrack to an accompanying movement piece. Both Strozzi and Caccini were celebrated in their day but have since fallen into obscurity, with their compositions only now beginning to be rediscovered.

A visual poet whose drawings, prints, photographs and films juxtapose word and image, Cammock's multimedia practice embraces text, photography, video, song, performance and printmaking, and is motivated by her commitment to questioning mainstream historical narratives around blackness, womanhood, wealth, power, poverty and vulnerability. Mining her own biography in addition to histories of repression or resistance, and incorporating influences from jazz, blues, poetry and dance, as well as the words of other writers – like James Baldwin, Maya Angelou and Audre Lorde – Cammock excavates lost, unheard, or buried voices.

For Cammock, music – from Nina Simone and Alice Coltrane to seventeenth-century Italian pre-opera – can further this endeavour to complicate the concept of history.

Private view by invitation only: 12 October 2019 at 6.00pm, with the artist present.

The exhibition can be visited, free of charge, during the opening hours of the permanent collection.

13 October 2019, 2.30 – 6.30pm

17 October 2019 – 16 February 2020

Thursdays and Fridays, 2.30 – 6.30pm

Saturdays and Sundays, 10.30am – 6.30pm

Closed: 1 November, 25-26 December, 1 and 6 January

Info

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Notes

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated publication with contributions from: Whitechapel Curator Laura Smith, Guest Curator Bina Von Stauffenberg, independent writer and curator Taylor Le Melle and Assistant Professor of History of Art and African American Studies at Yale University Rizvana Bradley.

The judging panel for the seventh Max Mara Art Prize for Women was chaired by Iwona Blazwick OBE, Director of the Whitechapel Gallery, who was joined by gallerist Vanessa Carlos, Carlos/Ishikawa, London; artist and previous recipient of the Prize Laure Prouvost; collector Marcelle Joseph and art critic Rachel Spence.

The Max Mara Art Prize for Women is a collaboration between Whitechapel Gallery, Max Mara and Collezione Maramotti. It has been awarded in alternate years since 2005 to support UK-based female artists who have not previously had a solo survey exhibition. Known for launching major careers, it is the only visual art prize for women in the UK and aims to promote and nurture female artists, enabling them to develop their potential with the gift of time and space. The winner is awarded a six-month Italian residency tailored to fit the artist and winning proposal. During the residency organized by Max Mara, Whitechapel Gallery and Collezione Maramotti, the winner has the opportunity to realize an ambitious new project, which is then presented in major solo exhibitions at the Whitechapel Gallery in London and Collezione Maramotti in Reggio Emilia, Italy. Each year a jury, chaired by Whitechapel Gallery Director Iwona Blazwick and including a gallerist, critic, artist and collector, agrees upon a shortlist of five artists before the winner is decided based on a winning proposal. The Max Mara Art Prize for Women was awarded the British Council Arts & Business International Award in 2007 and has enabled winning artists to take major steps in their careers.

The winners of the Max Mara Art Prize for Women have been Helen Cammock (2017 – '19), Emma Hart (2015 – '17), Corin Sworn (2013-'15), Laure Prouvost (2011-'13), Andrea Büttner (2009-'11), Hannah Rickards (2007-'09) and Margaret Salmon (2005-'07).

Artist bio

Helen Cammock

Helen Cammock was born in the UK in 1970 and is based in London.

She has a BA (Hons) in Sociology from the University of Sussex (1992), a BA (Hons) in Photography from the University of Brighton (2008) and an MA in Photography from the Royal College of Art (2011).

In 2018 she was named winner of the seventh (2017-2019) Max Mara Art Prize for Women, and she is shortlisted for the 2019 Turner Prize.

Her most recent solo exhibitions include: *Che si può fare*, Whitechapel Gallery, London (2019); *Shouting in Whispers*, Reading Museum, Reading (2019) and Cubitt Artists, Islington (2017); *The Long Note*, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2019) and *Void*, Derry (2018).

She has taken part in many group shows and other projects involving readings, performances, screenings, and residencies, including: *Precarious Art: Artificial Boundaries I and II*, London/Berlin/Beirut (2017); *Beyond Words*, Book Works, London and Freedom Festival, Hull (2016-2017); *Intimate Trespass: Hapticality, Waywardness and Practice of Entanglement*, Serpentine Galleries, London (2017); Open Source Contemporary Arts Festival (2016); Fresh Milk International Residency, Barbados (2016); *Transform*, Tate Britain, London (2015).