



BACKGROUND

A solo presentation of works by Alma Laura

FEBRUARY 14 - APRIL 14 2020. LONDON, UK.

Background, 10 oil paintings executed between 1980 and 2013, provides a selective survey of works by outsider artist Alma Laura.

Rarely does art world recognition come to female artists when it is due. Moving to London from Lima in 1968 (aged 19) Alma Laura has painted from creative compulsion without formal training for the last 50 years, only exhibiting for the first time in 2019. The subtle complexity of the figurative style she has developed is reflective of her prolonged dedication to a single body of work.

As this presentation's title suggests, references to historical contexts feature prominently throughout Alma Laura's paintings, either as allusions to the artist's own childhood or to Peruvian history more generally. *Black Heart* (1980), re-imagines a sixteenth-century colonial street scene through a lens of vibrant distortion. Combining a heaviness of line (reminiscent of Joan Brown's early self-portraits) with a sophisticated treatment of spatial plane, Alma Laura explores the improving alterations that memory makes to figures and environments from our past.

Three Eyes (1994), a raw and affecting portrait of the artist's aunt-in-law, registers a stark melancholy countenance with Van Dongen-esque features. Fauvist colouring of flesh reproduces the unsettling experience of looking at Matisse's *Green Stripe* (1905). And whilst a sense of fertile vitality bursts from the flowers that surround the central bride, these only serve to accentuate the guarded, reticent interiority we glimpse in her expression.

Shaded by a veil of painterly artifice, Alma Laura's work reminds us that we rely on surface representations to gain access to the inner lives of other people. The real experience of a human consciousness separate to our own remains permanently out of reach, hidden somewhere in the background of the images we observe.

Alma Laura's exhibition history consists of solo shows at Zakura Gallery (Islington) and the United Kingdom's Embassy of Peru (both 2019). The artist lives and works in London.