

VOYAGES *crossing the lake of fire*

17 May – 12 June 2007

The global movement of people has always been a source of fertility, growth and creativity; the vital pulse of humanity. But if a voyage is inflicted on others as an act of violence, how should it be remembered? In the final stage of a major project to mark the 2007 bicentenary of the abolition of Britain's slave trade, the October Gallery presents works by four artists reflecting on the notion of the 'Voyage', in particular that most laden of historical journeys, the movement of slaves across the Atlantic 'Middle Passage'.

Julien Sinzogan's fine pen and ink works refer to the 'Gates of No Return' – the ports of the West African coast through which millions of enslaved Africans passed. By picturing these ports not as a site of loss, but as the arrival point for the homeward return of lost spirits, Sinzogan's work offers a message of potential redemption and healing.

Tapfuma Gutsa's work as an artist and workshop leader transformed artistic practice in Zimbabwe and beyond. His sculptures narrate voyages, migrations, life cycles and battles in both the physical and spiritual worlds, exploring the shamanistic possibilities of natural materials.

Pierrot Barra (1942-99) worked from Port-au-Prince's Iron Market, Haiti, with his wife Marie Cassaise, creating Vodou repositories from toys, glass, sequins, Christmas ornaments and other discarded materials. His works were primarily intended to serve as 'little altars' for the diverse members of the Vodou pantheon, including the beautiful and seductive Lasiren, *Iwa* of the ocean waters.

The work of **Gérard Quenum** draws on the *Fá* and *vodun* traditions of the Republic of Benin which have resonated across the Atlantic in Haiti, Brazil and Cuba. His new work 'Femmes Peul' evokes not only these oceanic migrations, but also the historic movement of people and ideas within Africa, referring in particular to the Peul or Fula, nomadic pastoralists of West Africa and the Sahel.

24 Old Gloucester Street, London WC1N 3AL. Gallery open hours: 12:30-5:30 Tuesday through Saturday.