

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Frieze – 200th Issue: A Tribute to Enthusiasm
Emheyo Bahabba, aka Embah
Lisa Brice
February 2019



*Emheyo Bahabba (Embah), Retrospect, 1993, acrylic on canvas, 1.3 × 1.6 m.
Courtesy: The MacLean Mouttet Collection; photograph: Geoffrey MacLean*

'Arrival Day' (1996) **By Embah**

From somewhere else all of us came
To face a challenging change of life and destiny
Some had no choice in the matter of their slavery
Others chose, it was all the same
Those who had a partial say found it was no say
Those who had full say without the means succumbed
To the ones whose say was law come whatever may
All who started did not arrive
The hazards of the enterprise claimed many souls
To lament now about the loss is not the best goal
Praise the most high, give thanks and live
Live the thanks and write the praise grateful and humble
To lament now about the loss is not the best goal
Praise the most high, give thanks and live
Live the thanks and write the praise grateful and humble
Strive to be here what you could not be there with zest
And do this in peace with the rest who knew trouble

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Frieze – 200th Issue: A Tribute to Enthusiasm
Emheyo Bahabba, aka Embah
Lisa Brice
February 2019

Trouble ends and trouble begins
Oftimes the trouble did not begin in this time
If it is handed down know it must end sometime
Lest to it we just keep adding
Then love of strife becomes the life we are living
Are we here to do once more what was done to us –
So here we are as yet to arrive; let's arrive!

I have chosen this painting and poem by the late, great Trinidadian artist, poet and musician Emheyo Bahabba – aka Embah – to pay tribute to a much-loved friend and mentor who died in 2015. Born in 1937 and self-taught, he was in turn an important teacher and role model to many. Profoundly intelligent, playful and serious in equal measure, he moved effortlessly between the realms of the seen and unseen. His complex works embody both figurative social realism and mystic spiritual abstraction, placing them in conversation simultaneously with the likes of Jacob Lawrence or Gerard Sekoto and Hilma af Klint. His personal and artistic integrity underpins all of his output, which continues to inspire.

***Lisa Brice** is an artist based in London, UK. This year, she will have a solo show of paintings at Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, and her work will be included in two exhibitions curated by Alvaro Barrington: 'Dread of Self Love' at Karma, New York, USA, and 'Ways of Seeing' at Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London.*