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Ceyda Oskay:

INK, Inc: Pasajist \* /

Ceyda Oskay and Henry Nicholson:

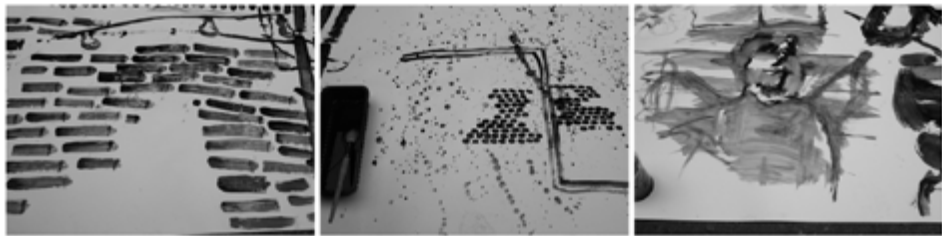
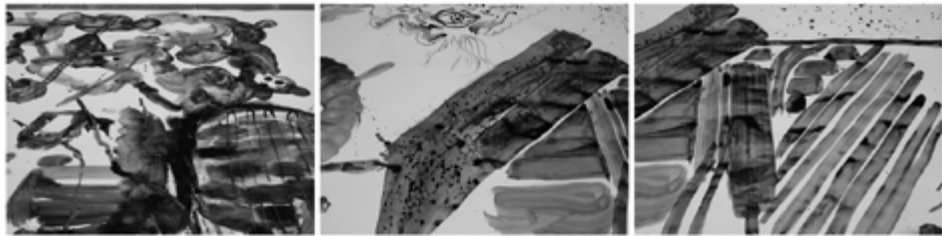
Viola Thompson - A Visit  
to Viola's Home and Studio.  
Ways of Collaborating.

\* PASAJ [en.pasaj.org](http://en.pasaj.org)

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above and previous images:  
 Project organized by Ceyda Oskay, 25 May 2018 at Five Years.  
 participants: Lisa Widemann, Eda Sarman, Zeynep Agirbas



above: Participants from the Tarlabasi district of Istanbul participating in the INK project organized by Ceyda Oskay and hosted by Pasajist, April 2018. Istanbul, Turkey.

overleaf images:  
 Project organized by Ceyda Oskay, 25 May 2018 at Five Years  
 and placed in Archway, London, 25 May 2018















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Ceyda Oskay

## Viola Thompson: A Visit to Viola's Home and Studio

On a visit to Viola Thompson's home and studio in East Dulwich, in late October 2019, Viola talks to artist and humanitarian worker Ceyda Oskay and Henry Nicholson of the London based Organization of Blind Africans and Carribeans (OBAC).

Viola Thompson's work is often whimsical, religious, and colorful. "It's behind the wall, and it's got a hat on," she says with giggles, as she describes with humor – a bird that she hasn't drawn into the artwork. "At this moment, I'm behind a wall... me going blind, it's like a wall coming in front of me, and beyond that, it is also the night," she explains further, asking Henry if he agrees that that is what the experience has been like for him as well. Henry agrees, and further interprets that the unseen is also the hidden perspective in the work, and about depth and possibility.

"The faces in the windows, that's the light coming through..." Viola continues, "light to pierce the darkness," Henry finishes her sentence, and Viola agrees.

Having recorded parts of the interview sound, on my phone, I sit in another location and time, and re-listen to it, with my eyes closed, imagining back to the event. I think of Viola's drawings, where we can't see certain things she has drawn into the work, keeping it hidden from us – and remembering back to this invisible bird in the drawing... "behind the wall, [with] a hat on..." Viola thus, makes us, the viewers, unable to initially notice certain aspects in the drawing whether these are hidden birds, cats, or donkeys, or the layers of symbolism – religious or otherwise, within the work.

Viola draws with crayons and pencil colors, the colors marked in braille. Her work and home include a lot of animals, which she says bring her joy, and which she has always been able to trust. Beside her, in her home, is a green and yellow, outspoken, and witty parrot, Afro, who apparently chimes into conversations at the most unexpected moments, as parrots do, and said, "Viola, whatcha doing? Ohhh, pretty! Pretty!" once when Viola was drawing.

Viola's drawn work is on thick A2 size paper, and often the title is marked on the page- written by Viola herself. Her recent work will be exhibited in Birmingham. Viola initially didn't date her drawings because as she drew one another, one came to her mind and she didn't want to break this flow. Recently, though she has been dating the drawings and noting the titles onto the drawings themselves, preparing them for her exhibition. Viola also knits.

Viola was blinded by illness at around age 10, so the images in her artwork are what she remembers seeing from her childhood. She marks out points of objects and composition across a page with her fingers, then matches up lines and thus creates scale and composition between and within images.

Coming from a musical and religious family, Viola also sings in a choir in her neighborhood. Four of her immediate relatives have religious professions.

"I don't like to draw adults because they're too simple, and animals and children are more to heart," Viola notes. "With children and animals – what you see is what you get. 'Of adults, much is expected, but they often disappoint,'" finishes Henry, quoting someone in the last sentence as we look at her work, "A rabbit on skis." Viola draws from inspiration, sometimes waking up in the middle of the night to draw. Henry observes that the work is expressive of inner feelings.

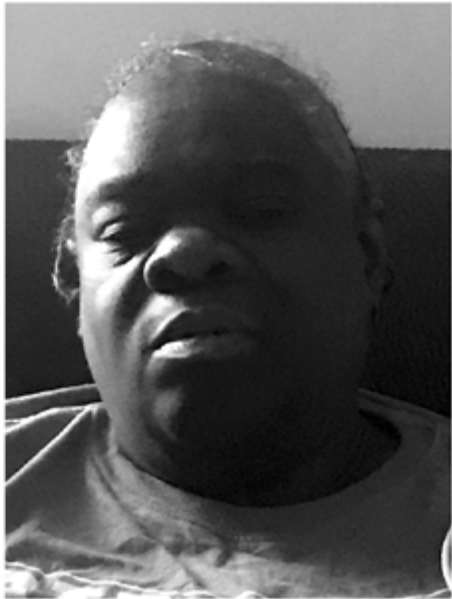
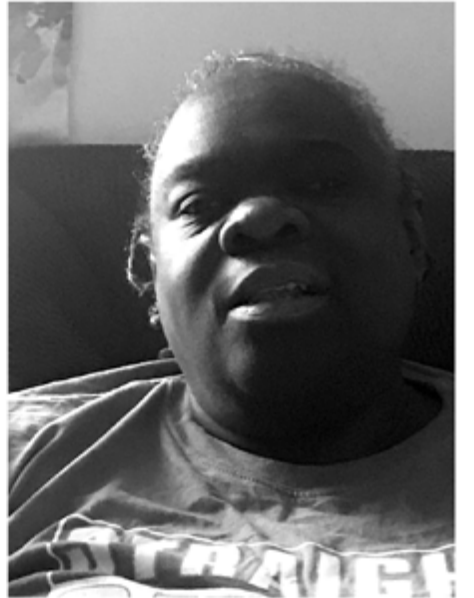
Among stacks of hundreds of drawings, some laminated, we move on to other set of artwork, Viola explains, "I've drawn, a horse, a horse in a field, and a flying horse with wings." Like a unicorn? "a Pegasus, it's from Greek mythology" says Henry, as we discuss how it's also an airline. Much of Viola's work is in series' – multiple depictions of a similar event, each with a slightly different angle and variation in color, adding to the layering and multi-interpretive nature of the work. "They're like stories, have you thought of putting them together to make a book or animation film?" I ask, and both she and Henry agree with this possibility, and this might be a next project.

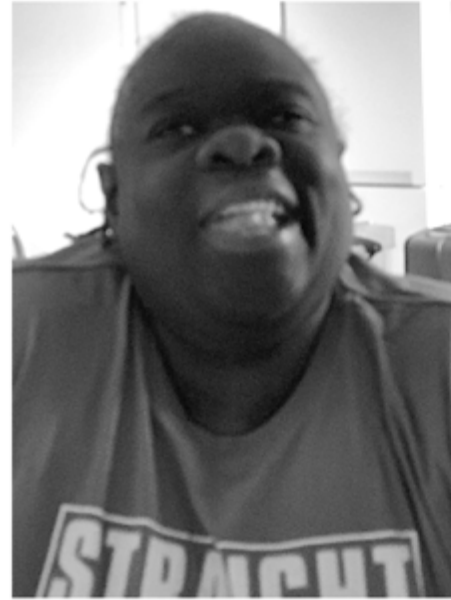
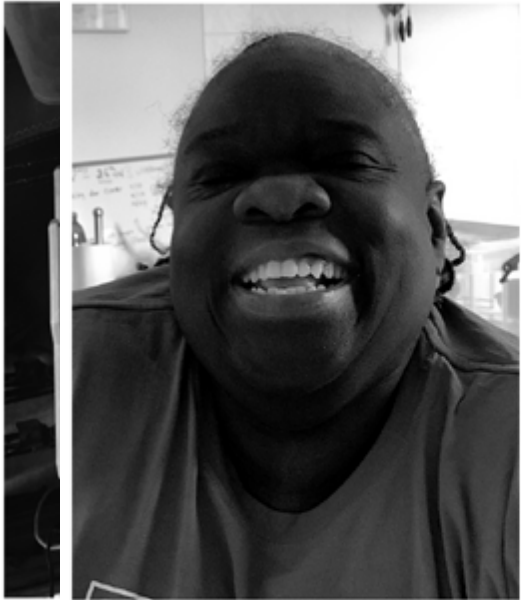
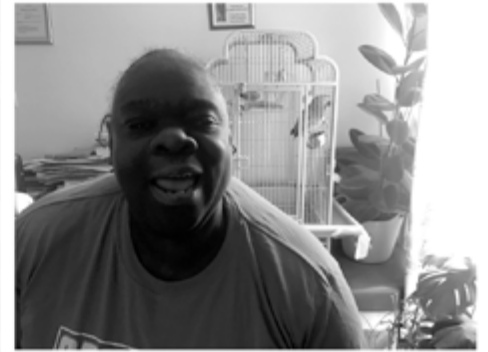
We look at a house series. "There's something in the windows, that could be flowers, faces, or other... You can read other things into it," says Henry, noting that this quality is what opens up the work to the viewer. In another work, I read the title, "The fall of the Human Race," and we notice a snake wrapped around the tree.

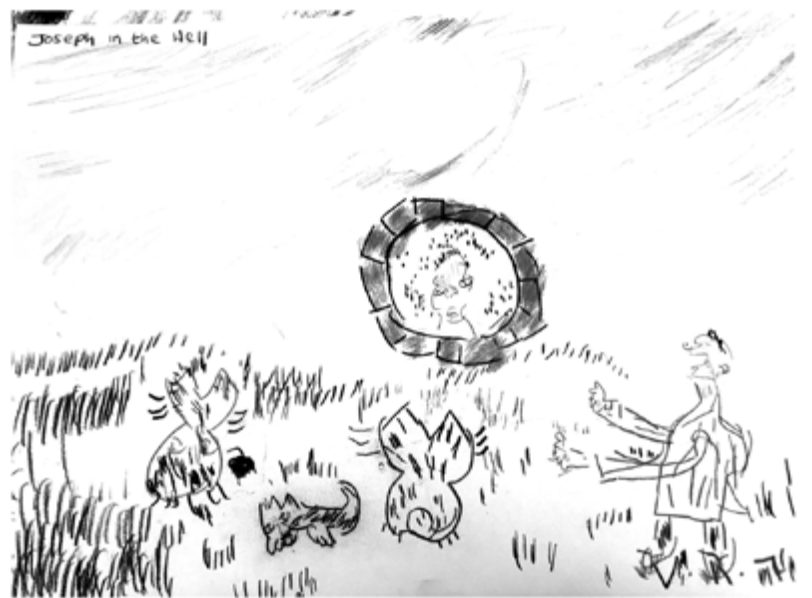
"You still have the essence of a child in your drawings, and I think people identify with that. It's got enough definition to hook you, but it also has enough to open your imagination. Visually it's quite warm... You've captured an age - because I remember work like this, from childhood - but yours is more advanced, because you have had so much more experience," I hear Henry's voice say to Viola, as I listen to our voices again, on a recording where only bits and pieces of the interview have come through, with the images recorded elsewhere.



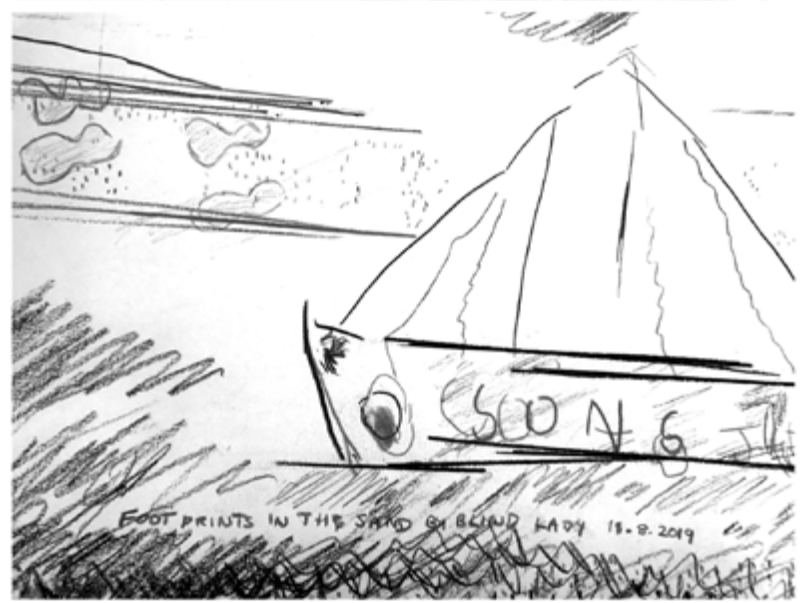
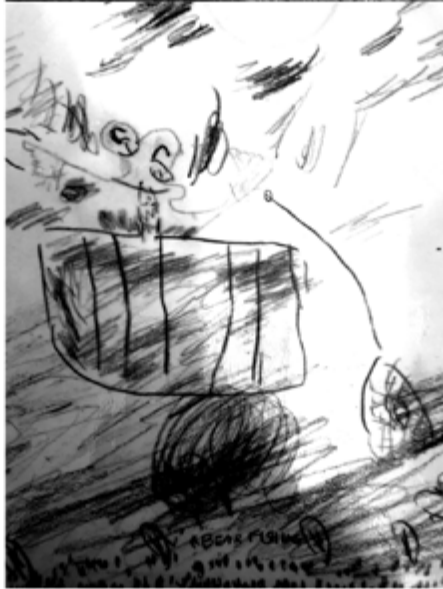














Heading to Desehon

