

The Opinion Makers 2.

When Art criticism occurs the Artist is vulnerable, the critic is vulnerable and the patronage system is vulnerable and this creates a space, a clearing. *The Opinion Makers 2* makes reference to artist-led initiatives and I would like to clarify how I understand this critical space by adding a context: that of Walter Benjamin's essay, *Author as Producer*. He describes a situation where an artist is not produced by the culture industry; on the contrary artists contradict or reverse the existing set of social relations through technique, approach or writing and thereby produce themselves. Furthermore art only achieves high aesthetic value, Benjamin argues, when it is intrinsically critical and conscious of its own means of production. This I feel is reiterated by George Orwell in his book *Why I Write* when he says, 'And the more one is conscious of one's political bias, the more chance one has of acting politically without sacrificing one's aesthetic or intellectual integrity'.

From this position, I considered the effect of subject matter and scholarship when making and selecting work for such a space. A transition of the role of scholar into what Sartre has described as a public intellectual is in effect.

For my part, my large scale drawing ***Fisherman, 2014*** reflects and speculates upon ways of looking at history also using historical models. The subject matter of the drawing is an ancient fragmented sculpture, the *Aphrodisias Fisherman*, AD 150. The unusually realistically rendered sculpture represents an old fisherman who is of peasant class. This sculpture interests me in the context of Geoffry De Ste Croix's scholarly work, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World*. De Ste Croix elucidates ideas of economic determinism associated with Marx by drawing a parallel with the ancient historian Thucydides' reference to human nature understood as patterns of behaviour, whose predictability is subject to chance and the unforeseeable: 'In every situation in which one is making a judgement there are some factors which cannot be changed and others which can only partly be modified, and the better one understands the situation the less forced and unfree one's judgement becomes. In this sense 'freedom is the understanding of necessity'.

The process of drawing then is therefore important because it is intrinsically both historical and material. Tar, turps, and linseed oil are used to crudely sketch then saturate an image of the Fisherman onto paper. This is left to absorb and form patterns at a rate determined by the vagaries of the topography of the studio floor amongst other variables. The drawing the viewer sees is the reverse side, the patterns and feint image of the tar bleed. The process has however led to a surprising result where the image appears akin to a shroud, yet the figure remains active and subtly dynamic, carrying his basket of fish.

Stephen Lee 2014