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Vivienne Koorland

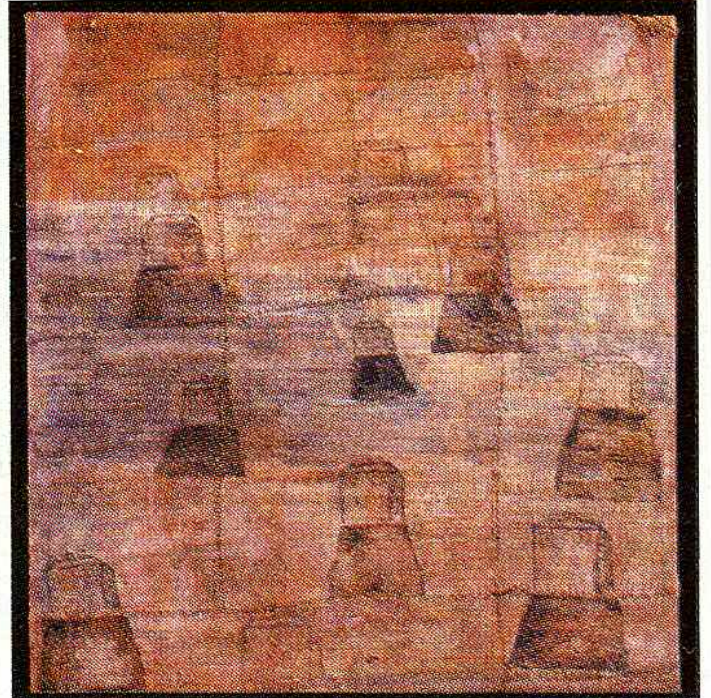


Freud Museum Museums

Any excuse to revisit the Freud Museum, really. Still, the South African-born, New York-based painter Vivienne Koorland's heady paintings offer an uncommonly persuasive pretext. They typically use stitched burlap as their densely active bases; supports that alchemise with what's upon them, melding into a messy attempt at utterance that feels both antiquated and new. Painted on these brownish planes in the colours of tobacco and mud, there are torrents of cleanly looping handwriting, often describing a distant lover through idiosyncratic terms of endearment ('my wild strawberrie (sic)... my care-chaser'). There is odd, stuttering imagery, some evidently copied or adapted from drawings made by children in WWII ghettos. A Passover meal ringed by expressionless adults and

children combines two such sketches into a pale hallucination of Jewish childhood, blackened by historical awareness. Isolated, tombstone-like houses perch on lone cliffs. Men are brought down by mounted soldiers before an ominous line of boxcars.

The travails of South Africa, too, filter through Koorland's paintings, some of which feature maps using Apartheid-era place names, since changed. There isn't too much direct connection to this museum's dedicatee. The territory – displacement, desire and the mishaps of travel alluded to in the show's title, *'Reisemalheurs'* (or Travel Woes), which comes from one of his letters – is all Freud's, admittedly. But Koorland's paintings take you out of the jostling, relic-rich space they're situated in, convincingly into the divisions caused by past catastrophes and, furthermore, into the landscape of the common mind.
Martin Herbert



'Butterfly Hunt' and 'Dream Painting' both by Vivienne Koorland