

“The Sitter” by Carmen

I find myself disappointed. In Phil May's observational drawings he has a careful eye, almost respectful in comparison to the expected inhumanity of the standard old images of blackness. So when he draws people of colour, they are that people, alive and honoured.

But the Negress is a short hand, lacking in detail and in that way it is inhuman. An idea or a concept of a black woman, a stereotype realised. To me it echoes the exaggeration and assumption of the black body that reference minstrelsy. So I am disappointed personally that this 'bohemian' artist would fail to communicate the humanity of black womanhood.

The Negress demonstrates that May's preoccupation with uniqueness does not absolve him of the othering nature of the white gaze when it represents people of colour.