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Olivia Plender  
*The Thames*  
*Whale*

2009

Ink on paper  
42 (h) x 29.7 (w) cm

Estimate:  
£1,000 — £1,500

British, 1977  
Lives and works in London;  
BA (Hons) Fine Art, Central  
Saint Martins College of Art  
and Design, London, 1998

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Drawing from the fields of social history and historiography, Olivia Plender's work interrogates the methods used to record, interpret and recount historical events, thereby considering the ways in which society produces knowledge. Her work takes the form of lectures, performances, installations, videos and publications that deliberately use non-establishment voices, such as that of the amateur historian, to suggest alternative historical scripts. Plender often uses fictional narratives or seemingly incongruous historic occurrences as starting points for her work – in this case, the death of a whale in the Thames in 2006 – and a faux-naïve approach to challenge the system from within. Beyond its playful surface, her work offers critical positions which expose the mechanisms and systems of knowledge production and transmission in which they operate.