

# SLG

## PRESS RELEASE

### THE PLACE IS HERE

Thu 22 Jun – Sun 10 Sep 2017



Donald Rodney, *The House That Jack Built*, 1987. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield. Photo Andy Keate.

The starting-point for *The Place is Here* is the 1980s: a pivotal decade for British culture and politics. Spanning painting, sculpture, photography, film and archives, the exhibition brings together works by 25 artists and collectives across two venues: the South London Gallery and Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art. The questions it raises about identity, representation and the purpose of culture remain vital today.

The exhibition traces a number of conversations that took place between black artists, writers and thinkers as revealed through a broad range of creative practice. Against a backdrop of civil unrest and divisive national politics, they were exploring their relationship to Britain's colonial past as well as to art history. Together, they show how a new generation of practitioners were positioning themselves in relation to different discourses and politics – amongst them, Civil Rights-era “Black art” in the US; Pan-Africanism; Margaret Thatcher's anti-immigration policies and the resulting uprisings across the country; apartheid; black feminism; and the burgeoning field of cultural studies. Significantly, artists were addressing these issues by reworking and subverting a range of art-historical references and aesthetic strategies, from William Morris to Pop Art, documentary practices and the introduction of Third Cinema to the UK. As Lubaina Himid – one of the artists in the exhibition and from whose words the title is borrowed – wrote in 1985, “We are claiming what is ours and making ourselves visible”.

At the South London Gallery, where a number of the artists exhibited in the 1980s and 90s,

the focus is on how artists drew on myriad forms of representation and storytelling to interrogate race, gender and sexual politics. Different forms of self-portraiture and representations of the body can be seen throughout the show, a recurring device used by artists as a means to explore intersecting questions of identity, belonging and desire. The 1980s saw the emergence of important discussions relating to black feminist and queer positions. Striking representation of the body in works by Claudette Johnson and Isaac Julien for example, as well as documentation relating to significant exhibitions, are included here. Finally, the context of London as a site for political and cultural action emerges across the galleries, whether through documentation of Mona Hatoum's performance *Roadworks* in the streets of Brixton following the 1985 uprisings, or Black Audio Film Collective's video essay *Twilight City* which explores the effects on London of Thatcher's urban regeneration programme.

For many of the artists, montage allowed for identities, histories and narratives to be dismantled and reconfigured according to new terms. This is visible across a range of works, through what art historian Kobena Mercer has described as 'formal and aesthetic strategies of hybridity'. *The Place is Here* is itself conceived of as a kind of montage: different voices and bodies are assembled to present a portrait of a period that is not tightly defined, finalised or pinned down.

*The Place is Here* is curated by Nick Aikens. Archival displays are curated in collaboration with June Givanni, Lubaina Himid, Andrew Hurman and Marlene Smith. The exhibition was originally presented at the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (2016) and recently shown in an expanded version at Nottingham Contemporary where it was co-curated with Sam Thorne (February – April 2017). It runs concurrently at Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art until Sunday 8th October.

Artists and archives:

Rasheed Araeen, Martina Attille, Zarina Bhimji, Black Audio Film Collective, Blk Art Group Research Project, Sonia Boyce, Brixton Art Gallery Archive, Ceddo Film and Video Workshop, Eddie Chambers, The June Givanni Pan African Cinema Archive, Joy Gregory, Mona Hatoum, Lubaina Himid, Making Histories Visible Archive, Gavin Jantjes, Claudette Johnson, Isaac Julien, Chila Kumari Burman, Dave Lewis, Pratibha Parmar, Maybelle Peters, Keith Piper, Ingrid Pollard, Donald Rodney, Marlene Smith.

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## **ACCOMPANYING EVENTS**

Iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts) has devised a public programme for *The Place is Here* in collaboration with curators Adelaide Bannerman and Annie Jael Kwan. The programme explores ideas around history as a fragile construction where 'lessons' of the past, present and future have collapsed one into the other. By focusing on artistic practice, the historical and contemporary critiques of the work, this collision of time and space attempts, in this moment, to reset what is known and how we come to know it.

iniva 

### **Artist led tours**

**Sat 22 Jul & Sat 19 Aug, 3pm, Free, Clore Studio**

Artist led tours of *The Place is Here*.

**Articulating British Asian Art Histories: A Lecture by Dr Alice Correia**  
**Tue 18 Jul, 12.30–2pm, Free, Seminar Room, Paul Mellon Centre, WC1B 3JA**

Dr Alice Correia introduces her research project *Articulating British Asian Art Histories*. The project seeks to document and analyse the contributions made by Asian diaspora artists to British art during the 1980s and 90s.

*The Fellows Lunch Series is a series of free lunchtime research talks given by recipients of Paul Mellon Centre Fellowships.*

**History Lessons: Burning Illusions Part 1 & 2**

**Part 1: Wed 26 Jul, 4–8pm, Free, SLG Galleries & Clore Studio**

**Part 2: Sat 29 Jul, 12–4pm, Free, Stuart Hall Library, EC2A 3BA**

A two-part course and workshop curated by Adelaide Bannerman in association with Iniva introduces a selected overview and participatory review of the visual art practices, independent publishing initiatives and specialist archives promoting and discussing the work of established British artists of African, Caribbean and South Asian descent.

*Limited spaces available, priority booking for those who can attend part 1 and 2.*

**History Lessons: Burning Illusions Part 3**

**Part 3: Sat 2 Sep, 11am–6pm, Free, Clore Studio**

A day of workshops and discussions led by Patchwork Archivists, GLC Story and Adelaide Bannerman. The event will close with a screening of *Burning an Illusion* (1981) directed by Menelik Shabazz.

**History Lessons: Fluid Records**

**Sat 9 Sep, 7–9pm, £5/£3 conc, SLG Galleries & Clore Studio**

Live programme curated by Annie Jael Kwan in association with Something Human and Iniva, followed by Q&A. Featuring performances by Libita Clayton and Larry Achiampong which take their cue from the idea that the archive can be fluid and transposed into living people, who bear witness thereby wilfully reconstructing and passing on meaning in the historical present.

*If the ticket charge means you are unable to attend please contact [mail@southlondongallery.org](mailto:mail@southlondongallery.org)*

**Exhibition Tours**

**Daily, 1pm & Last Fridays, 7pm, Free**

Join the SLG's gallery assistants for an informal, drop-in tour of the current exhibition.

Booking for most events is essential, book online or call 020 7703 6120.

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**South London Gallery**

**Exhibition Dates:** Thu 22 Jun – Sun 10 Sep 2017 (Opening preview Wed 21 Jun)

**Address:** 65-67 Peckham Road, London, SE5 8UH

**Opening Times:** Tuesday – Sunday, 11am-6pm

Late opening Wednesdays, 11am-9pm

Last Friday of the month, 11am-9pm

**Website:** [www.southlondongallery.org/theplaceishere](http://www.southlondongallery.org/theplaceishere)

**About the South London Gallery:** Founded in 1891, the South London Gallery (SLG) is a leading contemporary art space with internationally recognised artistic programmes and award-winning education and outreach work. The exhibition programme has included solo

shows by established international figures such as Chris Burden, Ellen Gallagher, Thomas Hirschhorn, Steve McQueen, Roman Ondak, Amie Siegel and Lawrence Weiner, as well as those by younger and mid-career artists such as Alice Channer, Michael Dean, Ryan Gander, Kapwani Kiwanga and Oscar Murillo.

The SLG has recently been donated the former Peckham Road Fire Station by an anonymous benefactor, securing it for public use. Dating from 1867 and the earliest surviving example of a purpose-built fire station in London, fundraising is in progress to transform the semi-derelict, four-storey building into a new cultural centre as an annexe to the SLG's main buildings, opening to the public in 2018. [www.southlondongallery.org](http://www.southlondongallery.org)

T: @SLG\_artupdates  
I: @SouthLondonGallery  
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