



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **LIZ JOHNSON ARTUR**

#### **IF YOU KNOW THE BEGINNING, THE END IS NO TROUBLE**

14 JUN – 1 SEP, MAIN GALLERY, MAIN BUILDING, FREE

For her first solo show in the UK, Russian-Ghanaian artist Liz Johnson Artur presents new sculptural works incorporating photographs selected from her substantial archive of images documenting the lives of people from the African diaspora.

Artur has taken photographs across Europe, America, Africa and the Caribbean for more than three decades. She calls this ongoing project the Black Balloon Archive, alluding to a 1970 song lyric by Syl Johnson that describes a black balloon ‘dancing’ in the sky, which is how Artur imagines her own movement when taking photographs.

This exhibition focuses on London, where Artur has lived since 1991, capturing the richness and complexity of Black British life. “What I do is people,” Artur says of her work. “But it’s those people who are my neighbours. And it’s those people who I don’t see represented anywhere.”

In the Main Gallery, four hanging and floor-based bamboo cane structures host a body of images taken across the city, including in Peckham Rye, at black-majority churches and at non-binary club nights. One section focuses on still life images taken in the artist’s London studio, which is home to a wealth of reference books, vinyl records and magazines.

Artur shoots exclusively on film, and here her images are printed at various sizes, materialised using traditional photographic techniques onto paper as well as applications onto fabric, tracing paper and cardboard. Artur uses these different techniques in the workbooks she has regularly made since she first picked up a camera, and the exhibition functions as an expanded version of these ongoing journals.

The sculptural structures provide a backdrop for an integrated programme of events, in which artists working across music, poetry and theatre create intergenerational collaboration, performance and discussion. An off-site event at Peckhamplex cinema and a collaboration with Theatre Peckham extend this programme beyond the gallery building. In parallel, ongoing SLG projects respond to and engage with the exhibition, including recording women’s oral histories.

The Black Balloon Archive started from Artur’s very personal desire to connect with people. She now sees the work as characterising a perspective that is “missing when it comes to representing and occupying common ground.”

Artur’s exhibition at the South London Gallery follows her first museum show, opening in May 2019 at the Brooklyn Museum, New York.

*Generously supported by Christiane Monarchi.*

## EVENTS

### **Performances: Ms. Carrie Stacks, Liz Johnson Artur & Tori Handsley**

**Tue 16 Jul, 8pm, Clore Studio, £7/£5**

Singer-songwriter Ms. Carrie Stacks presents a solo vocal and piano recital. Artur and harpist Tori Handsley improvise together using projected imagery and sound. Dress Code: all white.

### **Spoken Word: Flow Fridays**

**Fri 26 Jul, 7pm, Main Gallery, Free**

Akhera Williams hosts invited and open mic responses to the exhibition. Flow Fridays is a spoken word series founded by Williams that aims to shed light on political inequalities and identity politics from the perspectives of young people of colour.

### **Performance: Cõvco: Concient of the Soul**

**Wed 31 Jul, 8pm, Clore Studio, £5/£3**

A performance by artist and musician Cõvco explores the mortality of a woman through rituals addressing limitations of the mind and body and the fear of facing reality. Cõvco invites you to experience rebirth.

### **Performance: NKISI: the cosmos hums in audible and inaudible waves**

**Thu 8 Aug, 7pm, Main Gallery, Free**

Melika Ngombe Kolongo aka NKISI presents the diffusion of a new work within the exhibition space – a disintegration of sound using spectral processing.

### **Screening: Liz Johnson Artur, Deborah Findlater, Josiane Pozi**

**Thu 15 Aug, 8pm, Peckhamplex, £5/£3**

Peckhamplex hosts a special off-site screening of short films selected in response to the exhibition.

### **Performance: smallboydanger**

**Sat 17 Aug, 11.30pm, Main Gallery, £5/£3**

smallboydanger, one of the shifting monikers of artist Curtly Thomas, presents a performance which animates an image by Artur through sound play, gesture and movement. This collectively activated ceremonial space alludes to both carnival traditions of 'playing mas' and Midnight Mass.

### **Performances: SUUTOO, Tabitha Thorlu-Bangura**

**Fri 23 Aug, 8pm, Clore Studio, £7/£5**

A solo performance by artist SUUTOO uses sound, movement, smell and artefacts to explore the potential of becoming the character of one's fantasy. Poet and sound artist Tabitha Thorlu-Bangura presents an audio-visual installation inspired by ideas of commonwealth and longing.

### **Talk Show: Liz Johnson Artur, Tamar Clarke-Brown, Zezi Ifore, Miss Jason**

**Fri 30 Aug, 7.30pm, Clore Studio, £7/£5**

Miss Jason, of web series 'Jason's Closet', hosts a talk show with Artur and guests who reflect on themes in the exhibition. Food will be served.

### **Performance: Kobby Adi & Theatre Peckham**

**Sat 31 Aug, 12–5pm, Main Gallery, Free**

Artist Kobby Adi presents an afternoon-long performance in collaboration with Theatre Peckham, set within and responding to the exhibition.

*Events curated by Alx Dabo*

## NOTES TO EDITORS

**Liz Johnson Artur** (b. 1964, Bulgaria) lives and works in London. For over three decades, her work has documented the lives of black people from across the African Diaspora. She has exhibited internationally, including group exhibitions at Serpentine Galleries, London, UK; David Nolan Gallery, New York, USA; The Photographers' Gallery, London, UK; Kunstverein Leipzig, Germany; the 10th Berlin Biennale; and a forthcoming solo exhibition at Brooklyn Museum, New York, USA. Her monograph with Bierke Verlag was listed by The New York Times in 'Best Photo Books 2016'. In 2017 she was nominated for the Aimia | AGO Photography Prize. chipboard, hair, dust and insects. She arranges the salvaged blades in specific formations suggestive of a language or code, hinting at the existence of underlying narratives.

The **South London Gallery (SLG)** was founded in the 19th century by philanthropist William Rossiter to 'bring art to the people of south London'. Today the gallery comprises its original site at 65 Peckham Road; the Fire Station, which opened to the public in September 2018; Art Block, a space for local children and families on Sceaux Gardens Estate and an artist-designed garden. The SLG has an international reputation for its contemporary art exhibitions by established, mid-career and younger artists and programme of film and performance events. Its highly regarded, free education programme includes a peer-led young people's forum; family workshops; artist-led projects and commissions on local housing estates; and a BBC Children in Need-funded programme for looked after children.

The South London Gallery is a registered charity and raises more than half of its income from trusts and foundations, sponsors and fundraising events.

### Opening Hours

The Gallery is open Tue – Fri 11am-6pm, Sat and Sun 11am-6pm.

Late opening: every Wed and last Fri of the month until 9pm.

Free entry, all welcome.

South London Gallery, 65-67 Peckham Rd, London, SE5 8UH

Fire Station, 82 Peckham Road, SE15 5LQ

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# IMAGE SHEET

## LIZ JOHNSON ARTUR

### IF YOU KNOW THE BEGINNING, THE END IS NO TROUBLE

#### Captions and credits:

1. Installation view of *Liz Johnson Artur: If you know the beginning, the end is no trouble* at the South London Gallery, 2019. Photo: Andy Stagg

2. **Liz Johnson Artur, *Peckham*, 2019**

Installation view at the South London Gallery, 2019  
Photo: Andy Stagg

3. **Liz Johnson Artur, *Women's Corner*, 2019 (detail)**

Installation view at the South London Gallery, 2019  
Photo: Andy Stagg

4. **Liz Johnson Artur, *Library*, 2019**

Installation view at the South London Gallery, 2019  
Photo: Andy Stagg

5. **Liz Johnson Artur, *Women's Corner*, 2019**

Installation view at the South London Gallery, 2019  
Photo: Andy Stagg

6. **Liz Johnson Artur, *Women's Corner*, 2019 (detail)**

Installation view at the South London Gallery, 2019  
Photo: Andy Stagg

7. **Liz Johnson Artur, *Community*, 2019**

Installation view at the South London Gallery, 2019  
Photo: Andy Stagg

8. **Liz Johnson Artur, *Library*, 2019 (detail)**

Installation view at the South London Gallery, 2019  
Photo: Andy Stagg

9. **Liz Johnson Artur, *Peckham*, 2019 (detail)**

Installation view at the South London Gallery, 2019  
Photo: Andy Stagg

10. **Liz Johnson Artur, *Community*, 2019 (detail)**

Installation view at the South London Gallery, 2019  
Photo: Andy Stagg

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