

LIZ JOHNSON ARTUR
IF YOU KNOW THE BEGINNING,
THE END IS NO TROUBLE



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14 JUN – 1 SEP 2019

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."

*Generously supported by
Christiane Monarchi*

"the only way for me to understand...
why I took all these pictures...
I was hungry... but I didn't know...
that I was... it's like when you start
eating... you realise how hungry
you are... and when it came down
to pictures... I now realise...
how hungry I was..."

Liz Johnson Artur

BIOGRAPHY

Liz Johnson Artur (b. 1964, Bulgaria) lives and works in London. 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, Germany; and a 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.

Overleaf: a new text work by Tamar Clarke-Brown in response to the exhibition. Layout and typography by Emanuela Gherasim

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

Event details correct at time of publication. For more information on all events and to book please visit
southlondongallery.org/exhibitions/lizjohnsonartur

Groundings in the air / whilst elated

SOFT HOLD.

so many inside my face.
meeting you.

VECTORS

Cheeks puff and
Breathe a little deep.
Mouth so full of air.
Swallow it down and float.

Ep not wrist
half-height
half-life
half-flight

DIVINE FLOAT.

1 COMMANDMENT.

Bounced up on air
Or life
that is air

: Ep

Your hand inside my pocket
and we move.

— — —

«the air inside the balloon will have a greater air pressure
than the original atmospheric air pressure.»

SOFT HOLD

TO FLOAT.

Bounced up on vectors of:

BLACK BALLOONS.

«Some balloons are used for decorative purposes or
entertaining purposes,
while others are used for practical purposes

such as meteorology, medical treatment, military defence, or transportation.»

— — —

Charge?

Still here.

Put my hand on your soul to see if it still beats.

Find a pulse and draw a circle around it
hold it closer

Ep

no light thing.

— — —

COMMANDMENT.

Float;
bounce up
and
charge.

Ep

the most air

IMAGINABLE.

— — —

TWO COMMANDMENT.

And you are here with some others.

«consent not to be a single being»

(FRED MOTEN)

SOFT HOLD;

CODES OF CONGREGATION

Ep

AFFIRM THE ENTANGLEMENT:

I do know

develop into focus
the lightest constructions;

— — —

Once upon a time we were inflated.

«A Cloud Nine could be tethered, or free-floating, or
manoeuvrable so that it could migrate in response to climatic and
environmental conditions, such as providing emergency shelters.» (BUCKMINSTER FULLER)

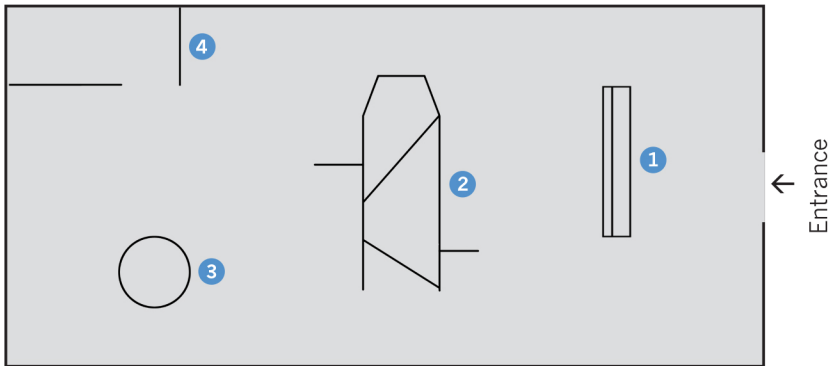
COMMANDMENT THREE IS

you do know.

And Mylar.

Ep

GALLERY MAP



1. Library

the library represents the heartbeat of the archive... it's the place...where I try to learn... how to preserve my photographs...for the test of time

Java and black bamboo, felt, leather and fabric

2. Peckham

...is a love letter...

Bamboo, tracing paper, cardboard, C-Type prints, silver gelatin prints and acetate

3. Community

...is home...weddings... churches...and most of all... people

Bamboo, tracing paper, cardboard, C-Type prints, silver gelatin prints and acetate

4. Women's Corner

...a place...to feel welcomed...

appreciated...warm...and safe
Bamboo, wood, fabric, tracing paper, cardboard, C-Type prints, silver gelatin prints and acetate.

Hair sculpture by Virginie Pinto Moreira.
Oral histories collected by Jade Onojeruo and Zezi Ifore

Bamboo structures fabricated by Martin Cottis

SLG

South London Gallery

Main Building: 65–67 Peckham Road, London SE5 8UH

Fire Station: 82 Peckham Road, London SE15 5LQ



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