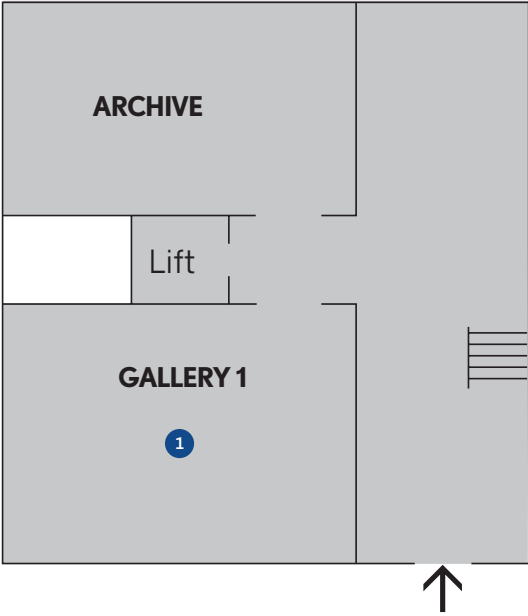
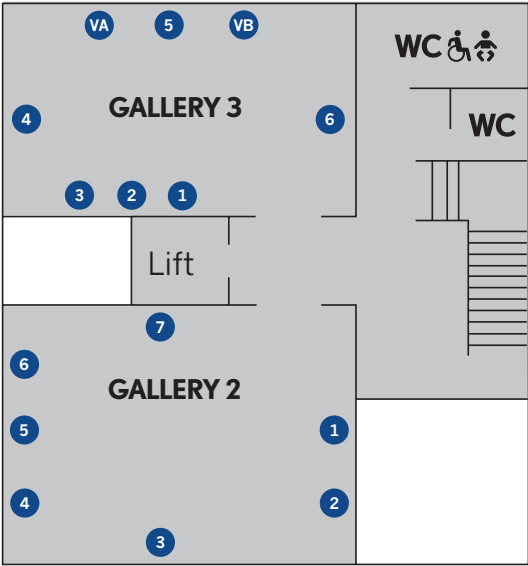


LIST OF WORKS

GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



GALLERY 1

1.  
*Trophies Revised*, 2021  
Mixed media installation  
Dimensions variable

*Trophies of Empire*, 1992  
Video, 6 minutes  
Colour (looped)

*Rites of Passage*, 1991  
Video, 7 minutes  
Colour (looped)

*Outfit*, 1999  
Video, 6 minutes  
Colour (looped)

*Somewhere Between  
There and Here*, 2021  
Video, 13.52 minutes  
Colour/sound (looped)

GALLERY 2

1.  
*Self-portrait in Garden*,  
c.1994  
Oil on canvas with lace  
border  
81.3 × 96.4 cm  
Collection of  
Dr Janice Cheddie.

2.  
*Hommage to Frida Kahlo*,  
1987  
Oil on canvas  
71 × 71.6 cm

3.  
*Red Me*, 1986  
Oil on canvas  
72.5 × 64.7 cm

4.  
*Self-portrait with Benin  
Queen Mother*, 1985  
Oil on canvas  
66.7 × 56.3 cm

5.  
*Father with Benin  
Background*, 1985  
Oil on canvas  
66.7 × 56.3 cm

6.  
*Mother with Benin Brooch*,  
1985  
Oil on canvas  
66.7 × 56.3 cm

7.  
*Views from the Interior*,  
1983–1986  
30 photocopy collages  
mono-prints on sugarpaper  
30.4 × 21.5 × 2 cm each

GALLERY 3

1.  
Keith Simon  
*Untitled (figure with foot  
on surface)*, 1997  
Pastel and charcoal on  
white paper  
68.5 × 56 cm  
Collection of  
Lorraine Brooks

2.  
Keith Simon  
*Untitled (figure with  
hand on hip)*, 1993  
Acrylic and chalk on  
brown paper  
65.5 × 56 cm  
Collection of  
Lorraine Brooks

3.  
Keith Simon  
*XITLE*, 1993  
Acrylic on white paper  
65.5 × 56 cm  
Collection of  
Lorraine Brooks

4.  
*Family Histories*, 1998  
Digital print on  
transparency, lightbox  
64 × 92.5 cm

5.  
Lorraine Brooks  
*The Art of Keith Simon*,  
2021  
Video, 6 minutes  
Colour/sound (looped)

6.  
*Family Unit*, 1998  
Digital print on  
transparency, lightbox  
61 × 43.5 cm

Vitrine A  
Rita Keegan, archival  
materials and ephemera

Vitrine B  
Keith Simon, archival  
materials and ephemera.  
Collection of  
Lorraine Brooks

All works unless  
otherwise stated,  
courtesy the artist.

SOCIAL FABRIC  
PARTICIPANTS

Ajamu  
Raelene E. Ash  
Charlie and Kate Boxer  
Pat Brown  
Sayge Carroll  
Catherine Grant  
Althea Greenan  
Joy Gregory  
Hiroko Hagiwara  
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Virginia Nimarkoh  
Georgina Obaya Evans  
Elizabeth Oniri  
Ingrid Pollard and Olive Pollard  
Raju Sachi Singh  
Ego Ahaiwe Sowinski  
Michelle Williams Gamaker  
Jacqueline Wright  
Keegan Xavi  
Rehana Zaman



Please scan this QR code to read the  
stories behind each patch.

RITA KEEGAN:  
SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THERE AND HERE





RITA KEEGAN:  
SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THERE AND HERE  
17 SEP – 28 NOV 2021

Combining digital animation, textiles, painting and copy art with experiential media such as scent, the tactile practice of Rita Keegan (b.1949, Bronx, New York) grapples with the elusive and enduring powers of memory, often drawing on her extensive family archive: a photographic record of a Black middle-class Canadian family from the 1880s to the present day. With these images, Keegan charts the politics of dress, adornment and self-definition, bringing this personal history to bear on self-portraits and conceptual clothing that create affirmative and complex representations of Black female identity.

As Keegan articulated in a 1987 interview: ‘What else do we have? We have no property, no money, no bodies of our own. We have to work from ourselves and speaking from my own experience it is not easy for large, Black women to celebrate ourselves!’ In this exhibition, Keegan seeks to redress the scarcity of resources and respect referred to in this statement, assembling artworks that evidence the abundance of her heritage and the generosity of her practice.

**Gallery 1**  
In this new mixed-media installation Keegan revisits her work *Cycles*, 1992 originally presented at the Bluecoat arts centre, Liverpool as part of the exhibition *Trophies of Empire*, 1992, curated by the artist Keith Piper during the

quincentenary of Columbus’s 1492 arrival in the ‘New World’. Keegan describes this installation as an attempt to ‘personalise issues of the African diaspora’, collaging family photographs with historical images relating to the enslavement of African people, sourced from her own collection of books, and postcards acquired at the Museum of Mankind (home to the British Museum’s Ethnography Department from 1970–1997).

These pictures are transferred onto acetates which float like ghosts in front of the viewer. The same haunting images also appear in Keegan’s film *Trophies of Empire*, 1992, which is included here, together with the films *Rites of Passage*, 1991, *Outfit*, 1999 and a new film, *Somewhere Between There and Here*, 2021.

Keegan created this last film using Avenue software, adding effects with a touchpad to produce images that ebb and flow, swirling past and present, maternal and paternal family histories together. She conceived the original installation as site-specific: at the Bluecoat, tar-stained ropes from Liverpool’s docks hung from the ceiling, and when it was shown in Mexico City in 1994, sand from Cancún was scattered on the floor. In this new iteration at the South London Gallery, mounds of sand and spices are mixed with woody herbs such as bay, rosemary and sage, their combined aromatic scents mingling to create an olfactory portrait of colonialism and global trade.

At the heart of this assemblage is a conceptual costume, featuring wax print fabric designed by Europeans for the African market. Fitted to Keegan’s body, this ceremonial robe displays fabric stencils of the artist’s hand, a recurring motif, illustrating a desire to touch and be touched by history. Supporting the costume is a train, described by Keegan as a ‘social fabric’ constructed from A4 patchworks donated by a global network of friends, family and collaborators whose names are listed overleaf. (To read the stories behind each patchwork please scan the QR code in this guide).

This collectively crafted textile makes material the many threads of Keegan’s creative kinship relations, while also calling for more communal understandings of artmaking and identity. As Keegan acknowledges: ‘I’m made of many places, people and things’.

**Gallery 2**  
In this series of copy art collages the process of overlaying images from different sources operates as a metaphor for Keegan’s exploration of her own multi-layered identity. Keegan began to make these works in the 1980s, when she was a member of the co-operative print shop Community Copy Art. Using the photocopier as an affordable and accessible medium, Keegan was drawn to its manipulative powers and ability to imbue images with new life.

Three portraits in oils depict Keegan, her mother and her father. Each portrait contains a reference to the Kingdom of Benin, a wealthy, powerful empire established in West Africa before the 11th-century. As Keegan remarks, ‘In this painting I wear a dress made of cotton grown in Africa, produced in Germany, and designed for the African market. To me it symbolises the industrial slavery which the West still holds over other parts of the world. But on another level, with its large woven maps of Africa and head of Idia, the first Queen Mother of Benin, it celebrates the art of a very rich culture’.

The remaining self-portraits reveal how Keegan used this strategy of representation to further experiment with symbolism and performance. *Red Me*, 1986 was originally exhibited at *Transforming the Crown*, 1997 curated by Mora J. Beauchamp-Byrd at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York. The title alludes to the background colour in the painting, but also to Keegan’s maternal, indigenous roots in Dominica. *Hommage to Frida Kahlo*, 1987 acknowledges the influence of the Mexican painter, depicting Keegan’s skin split by cracks to show that ‘no matter how strong you appear, pain doesn’t leave you untouched’.

In contrast to the domestic proportions and portability of Keegan’s copy art collages, *Self-portrait in Garden*, c.1994 was created in Keegan’s former west London

studio in Gunnersbury Park. Access to this expansive space allowed her to work at scale for a brief period in the early 1990s.

**Gallery 3**  
The importance of family histories is explored further here, in a presentation of artworks and archival materials which contemplate the nature of inheritance by tracing artistic roots and unspoken shared influences.

Two lightboxes illuminate computer-enhanced family photo portraits: in one Keegan appears as a baby, in the other she is absent, not yet born. Squares of Kente cloth (a historically sacred Ghanaian textile traditionally woven by hand) are interspersed with images of Keegan’s father leaning casually against his car, and a group portrait with her Aunt Ida, taken at a New York City bar. These works demonstrate how Keegan has reimagined her family archive, interrogating the role of the photograph in constructing modern memory.

As writer and researcher Dr Janice Cheddie has articulated, Keegan’s focus on family dynamics and the home, ‘re-asserts the power of Black love and Black female creativity as an enduring legacy of remembrance and reparation’.

Next to these lightboxes is a selection of paintings by Keegan’s uncle Keith Simon (1922–2014), a contributor to the Harlem Renaissance who lived in London from

1952–1972 and exhibited widely, including at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in *Collages and Objects*, 1954, curated by Lawrence Alloway, and the Commonwealth Art Gallery in *Caribbean Artists in England*, 1971.

Simon’s estate is managed by his niece, artist Lorraine Brooks, described by Keegan as ‘the family historian’, and her partner Jana Michele King. Here, Brooks presents a new short film contextualising Simon’s life and work, as well as a selection of archival materials including exhibition catalogues and poems. The SLG’s presentation of Keegan’s work takes its title from a line in Simon’s poem *Disenchantment*, written in 1944. This gesture of naming draws the two artists’ creative journeys together to coexist in the same time and space.

Alongside the vitrines is a reference copy of *Mirror Reflecting Darkly*, a new essay collection and archival sourcebook edited by Rita Keegan, Matthew Harle and Ego Ahaiwe Sowinski and published by Goldsmiths Press on the occasion of this exhibition. The book is available to purchase from the SLG bookshop.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This exhibiton is curated by the Rita Keegan Archive Project (RKAP), a social history and curatorial collective that seeks to preserve, exhibit, and share the collections of the artist Rita Keegan. Its members include Ego Ahaiwe Sowinski, Dominique Zenani Barron, Lauren Craig, Gina Nembhard and Naomi Pearce. [ritakeeganarchiveproject.com](http://ritakeeganarchiveproject.com)

*The Rita Keegan Archive Project is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.*

**Photography**  
Please note, some of the works on display cannot be photographed.



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*This gallery guide is printed on recycled paper.*

# SLG

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