

UFUOMA ESSI FROM WHERE WE LAND

23 JUN - 5 SEP 2021
GALLERY 1, FIRE STATION
FREE

EXHIBITION GUIDE

South London Gallery
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SLG

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UFUOMA ESSI FROM WHERE WE LAND

The SLG's Postgraduate Artist in Residence, **Ufuoma Essi**, presents *From Where We Land*, a newly commissioned film in the ground floor gallery of the Fire Station.

In her ongoing practice, Lewisham-based Essi works predominantly with film and moving image as well as photography and sound. Her work revolves around Black feminist philosophy and the configuration of displaced histories. The archive forms an essential medium for her practice and it is through explorations of the archive that she aims to interrogate and disrupt the silences and gaps of the historical narrative.

Her new experimental film, *From Where We Land*, examines second-generation Black British women and their relationship with identity, feelings of cultural displacement, and their shared histories. Informed by contributions of the 1980s Black feminist movement in England and the legacies of first-generation children of African and Caribbean immigrants, the film incorporates archive, VHS and 16mm footage.

Her research for this new work has drawn on archival material from the 1980s, focusing on the political organising, and shared legacies and experiences between first- and second-generation Black women in London. *The Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain* by Beverley Bryan, Stella Dadzie, and Suzanne Scafe has been a central point of reference for Essi. First published in 1985, the book is a powerful testimony of the lived experience of Black British women, self-recording their place in history and sharing a collective experience of personal and political struggle, shaped by Britain's long history of slavery, empire and colonialism. The film incorporates oral history interviews from the Black Cultural Archives' collection *The Heart of the Race: Oral Histories of the Black Women's Movement*.

“Water is the first thing in my Imagination” *

Taking further inspiration from Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Essi chose to film in Margate and south London, using water and the sea as starting points to imagine and locate these shared and dispersed histories that connect us across borders and generations.

Essi has also drawn on the London Community Video Archive, which preserves, archives and shares community videos made in the 1970s/80s in London and the South East. *From Where We Land* incorporates footage from *Girls in Conversation*, a fly-on-the-wall recording created by community video maker and Director Maggie Pinhorn, captured in the 1980s.

Through workshops and discussions with peers and the actors of the film, Essi examined intergenerational histories/herstories and reflections on identity in relation to citizenship and national belonging. By locating and holding these specific histories, Essi considers the ways in which we carry and interact with history as a constant embodied presence; looking at the ways we define and redefine ourselves as a continual process of identity, kinship and a collective endeavour.

**Dionne Brand, A Map of the Door of No Return, Vintage Books Canada (17 Sept. 2002)*

Video, 19 minutes, colour/sound

Please speak to a member of the FOH team about accessing a subtitled version.

CREDITS

Excerpt footage from *Girls in Conversation*, created by Maggie Pinhorn.

Oral Histories courtesy of Black Cultural Archives and Stella Dadzie.

Additional 16mm footage by John Barlow.

BIOGRAPHY

Ufuoma Essi (b. 1995, London) is a video artist and filmmaker from Lewisham, south-east London. Essi studied at University College London, 2014–2018 and the University of Pennsylvania, 2016–2017.

Previous exhibitions and screenings include Lisson Gallery, London; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Maysles Documentary Center, New York; Black Star Film Festival, Philadelphia; South London Gallery; and Chisenhale Studios, London. Essi was selected for Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2020, and Syllabus VI (2020–21) a collaboratively produced alternative learning programme that supports ten artists across ten months.

THE ARTIST WOULD LIKE TO THANK

Helen Essi, Francyne Jumu, Nambi Kiyira, Vanessa Lyall, Rachael Harlow, Maggie Pinhorn, Beverley Bryan, Suzanne Scafe, Stella Dadzie, Black Cultural Archives and London Community Video Archives.

The artist would like to especially thank; Paul, Louise and Clemmie Cooke; the South London Gallery and all of the staff for their help and support throughout the residency.

RESIDENCY

Since 2011, a six-month residency at the SLG has been available to postgraduate artists. This opportunity is open to artists who have recently completed an accredited or non-accredited programme of study from an institution, collective or art school in the UK. Application details are advertised on SLG website every summer.

The Postgraduate Residency is supported by the Paul and Louise Cooke Endowment.

ALSO ON AT THE SLG

Christina Quarles: In Likeness

18 Jun – 29 Aug 2021
Main Gallery, Main Building
Free

Sarah Staton: SupaStore, Southside, Slingbacks and Sunshine

9 Jul – 5 Sep 2021
Gallery 2, & 3, Fire Station
Free