

Genealogies of Black Curating in Britain

A programme of roundtables, films and interviews convened for the British Art Network by Prof. Paul Goodwin with project curation from Rahila Haque



Comprising a programme of round tables, films and interviews, this series of events convened for the British Art Network by curator and researcher Paul Goodwin (TrAIN, University of the Arts London) focuses on the emergence, strategies and agency of Black curatorial practices in Britain over the past 40 years.

Genealogies of Black Curating will trace a fragmented history of Black curating in British art: from the pioneering 1980s generation of artist-curators and the rise of institutional and global curators, to the more recent turn to anti-racist activism, collectives, decolonial and QTPOC practices. The genealogical approach suggests a discontinuous and multi-perspectival take on the emergence, development and futures of Black curatorial voices in British art. The discussions will open up new perspectives and cross generational dialogues on disputed histories, urgent presents and (im)possible futures. How can we account for the contributions of Black and Asian curatorial practices and voices that have been marginal until recently in British art histories? And how can we understand the complexities and contradictions of these practices and discourses in relation to the 'expanded field' of the curatorial?

BRITISH ART
subject specialist
NETWORK

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The British Art Network is supported by Tate and the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, with additional public funding provided by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.



Paul Goodwin is a curator, researcher, urbanist and educator based in London. His multidisciplinary research and curatorial practice revolves around exploring the creative potential of both cities and artistic production as sites of aesthetic, socio-cultural and political intervention. Within the

urban field this has been framed around understanding how the Black and migrant presence in cities in the West has shaped and in turn been shaped by formations of urban aesthetic and socio-cultural modernity. Within the field of contemporary art the focus has been on the dynamics of how processes of migration, race, globalisation and transnationalism are yielding new forms of radical and transformative artistic and curatorial practices worldwide. He is the Co-Lead Investigator (with Prof Ming Tiampo) of the *Worlding Public Cultures* international research project as well as co-founder of the Transnational and Transcultural Arts and Culture Exchange network (TRACE). Goodwin's recent curatorial projects include: *W.E.B. DuBois: Charting Black Lives* (House of Illustration, London, UK, 2019), *We Will Walk: Art and Resistance from the American South* (Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK, 2020) and *Untitled: Art on the Conditions of Our Time, Chapter 2* (touring, Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, UK, May 2021). Goodwin teaches on the MA Fine Art programme at Chelsea College of Arts and is a professor and the director of TrAIN Research Centre (Transnational Art Identity and Nation) at University of the Arts London.



Rahila Haque is a curator and researcher and currently a PhD candidate at the centre for Transnational Art, Identity and Nation (TrAIN) at Chelsea College, University of the Arts London. Her doctoral research centres black, postcolonial and decolonial feminist knowledges as discursive frameworks in developing an intergenerational study of diaspora artists in the UK. With Sayantan Maitra Boka, she is co-author of a forthcoming publication about the Dhaka-based artist-led initiative Britto Arts Trust. She was previously Residencies Curator at Camden Art Centre where she organised residencies with Walter Price, Phoebe

Collings-James, Adam Farah and Zeinab Saleh. She was also Assistant Curator of the 58th Venice Biennale exhibition *May You Live in Interesting Times*. From 2009-15 she was Assistant Curator at the Hayward Gallery and curated the Hayward Project Space exhibitions *Jananne Al-Ani: Excavations*; *What's Love Got to Do with It*; and *Dineo Seshee Bopape: slow-co-ruption*. She was awarded a Gasworks/Triangle Network Fellowship in 2018 and holds an MFA in Curating from Goldsmiths, University of London.

Roundtable Session 1

Emergence of Black Curatorial Voices

Thursday 1 July 2021, 14:00–16:00

Panel discussion with Shaheen Merali, Rita Keegan and Hassan Aliyu.

This panel will focus on the 1980s and early 1990s when a variety of Black and Asian curatorial practices, projects and spaces came to light. How can we account for the emergence of Black curatorial practices? How to name them? And how did they transform the landscape of British art at the time?



Shaheen Merali is an independent curator and writer and is currently a PhD candidate at Coventry University. He has held positions at Central Saint Martin's School of Art (2003-1995); visiting lecturer and researcher at University of Westminster (2003-1997) and Head of Department of Exhibition, Film and New Media at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2008-2003), where he curated several exhibitions accompanied by publications, including *The Black Atlantic – Modernity and Double Consciousness*; *Dreams and Trauma- Moving images and the Promised Lands (Palestine and Israel)*; *New York States of Mind* (toured to Queens Museum, NY) as well as leading the curation and global research for five years of programming. At the HKW he co-curated with Professor Wu Hung, *Re-Imagining Asia, One Thousand years of Separation* (toured later to the New Art Gallery, Walsall) and the 6th Gwangju Biennale, Korea (2006). Between 2009-8 he was the artistic director of Bodhi Art (Berlin, Mumbai, New York, and Singapore).

Merali has contributed to numerous publications, including monographs by Michael Wutz (Galerie Klaus Gerrit Friese), Probir Gupta (Anant Art) and Rita Keegan (SLG) also editing *Tavares Strachan, I AM* for Desert X (Isolated Labs), and *JJ XI* (Carrots Publishing).

He was the co-convenor of *This is Tomorrow: de-canonisation and decolonisation* at the Courtauld Institute, London in November 2019. Merali is the curatorial consultant, anchoring a series of conversations for the AHRC's *Towards a National Collection* programme, the Provisional Semantics Case Study, on Panchayat Collection held in the Special Collections of the Tate Library.



Rita Keegan is an artist, lecturer, and archivist from the Bronx who has lived and worked in London since 1980. Her work explores memory, history, dress, and adornment, often through the use of her extensive family archive—a photographic record of a black middle class Canadian family from the 1890s to the present. She co-founded the Brixton Art Gallery in 1982, established the Women of Colour Index (WOCI) in 1987, and was Director of the African and Asian Visual Arts Archive (AAVAA) until 1994. For many years, she was a lecturer in multimedia arts at Goldsmiths.



Hassan Aliyu, FRSA is a prominent British-Nigerian artist working in the UK. His practice is informed by race, equality, diaspora and identity. Having begun his career in Lagos at the onset of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), a significant body of his work is created in a range of alternative, found and inexpensive materials. Deeply thought provoking, his collages respond to the geo-political and socio-economic upheavals that afflict Nigeria, including its civil war and the excesses of Western and Eastern religions.

Born in Barnet, his family relocated to Nigeria in his early childhood. Subsequently Hassan attended Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, graduating as best Final Year Student in Fine Art in 1986. Returning to the UK in 1990, Hassan worked with the Caribbean Crafts Circle, London whilst establishing his art practice in the UK. He joined the 198 Gallery as curator in 1992 and co-founded the Norwood Art House in 1996.

The incumbent president of the Nigeria Art Society UK (NASUK), Hassan works from his studios and private gallery in Rainham, Essex. Among his recent projects include the NASUK *Nigeria@100: Transforming a British Experiment* exhibition at WAC Gallery Waterloo, London 2014; and the international touring exhibition, *Legacies of Biafra*, which originated at Brunei Gallery London in 2018.

Hassan is a doctoral researcher on the University of East London Professional Doctorate in Fine Art programme.

Roundtable Session 2

Ambivalent Mainstreaming: Black Curators and Institutions

Thursday 8 July 2021, 14:00–16:00

Panel discussion with Dr Nima Poovaya-Smith, Gilane Tawadros, and Mark Miller.

“When you go through the door (...of ambivalent mainstreaming) it is a dangerous territory; it is an incredibly tricky territory and all sorts of monsters are waiting on the other side to assimilate you up”. Stuart Hall’s 2006 observation about the challenges faced by Black artists and curators in mainstream institutions serves as a provocation for this panel. How have Black and Asian curators navigated this tricky territory and how have their practices helped to reshape British art institutions?



Dr. Nima Poovaya-Smith OBE is a curator, writer and speaker. As Director of Alchemy until 2019, she undertook major artistic programmes in partnership with cultural, academic and public sectors. She has contributed to numerous publications, on subjects including contemporary art, Indian jewellery, textiles, and curatorial practice. Recent projects include *A Sense of Line* on the drawings of poet and artist Imtiaz Dharker and *Black Waters Heritage* for Phoenix Dance Theatre. Nima’s role in building Bradford Museums’ acclaimed textile collections was celebrated, along with the work of six other curators, in the exhibition *Unbound* at 2 Temple Place, London, 2020. Nima is: Senior Visiting Research Fellow, School of Fine Arts, Leeds University; Trustee of Harewood House; patron of The Leeds Library.

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Gilane Tawadros is the Chief Executive of DACS, a not-for-profit visual artists rights management organization and is Co-Director of the Art360 Foundation which she established in 2016. She is a curator and writer and was the founding Director of the Institute of International Visual Arts (Iniva) in London, chaired by Professor Stuart Hall, which, over a decade, achieved an international reputation as a ground-breaking cultural agency at the leading edge of artistic and cultural debates nationally and internationally. She has written extensively on contemporary art and curated a number of international exhibitions. She was the first art historian to be appointed to the Blanche, Edith and Irving Laurie Chair in Women's Studies, Rutgers the State University of New Jersey, USA. She is Chair of the Stuart Hall Foundation and Trustee of the Stuart Croft Foundation.

Her most recent book *The Sphinx Contemplating Napoleon: Global Perspectives on Contemporary Art and Difference* is published by Bloomsbury.



Mark Miller is *Head of Programme and Practice*, Learning and Research at Tate Modern and Tate Britain. His role is focused on the vision, strategy, direction and outcomes for creative learning programmes which enables access, participation, and contribution to British culture through the Tate collection and exhibitions.

Since 2006 his work at Tate has been responsible for establishing, creating and the implementation of programmes, projects and events, both national and international, such as *Circuit*, a four year national programme connecting 15–25 year olds to the arts in galleries, *Tate Collective London*, British Council European programme *Youth Art Interchange*. Other recent projects include, the *Hyperlink Festival*, *Undercurrent* part of *The Tanks Art In Action* and the *Turbine Festival* at Tate Modern, *Late at Tate Britain*, *LND WMN Mayor of London*, and *TENT X Tate Rotterdam*.

With an MA from Central Saint Martin, he continues to investigate the interconnecting themes related to urban British culture and interdisciplinary art practice, in the context of museums and galleries through performance, audio and visual culture. He examines the role of collaborative practices as a catalyst for informal creative learning, cultural production that steer critical dialogue and change.

Roundtable Session 3

Collective Futures and the Archival (Re)Turn: Curating in the Expanded Field

Thursday 15 July 2021, 14:00–16:00

Panel discussion with OOMK, Raju Rage and Ajamu.

Moving beyond a narrow focus on exhibition making this panel explores recent contexts for understanding Black and Asian curatorial practices in the 'expanded field'. Curatorial collectives, archival practices, independent publishing and cultural activism are transforming notions of the curatorial and 'Blackness', producing novel and often conflicting articulations. How are these practices building on earlier efforts to make space for radical alternatives to the exhibitionary complex in Britain?



Hudda Khaireh is an independent researcher and artist with a background in Public International Law. Her practice focuses on the position of Black people globally and has shared work at Tate Exchange, Tate Modern and Uncommon Space at Tate Britain, Printroom Rotterdam, Somerset House, Chisenhale Gallery, Whitechapel Gallery and DIY Cultures. Hudda is a part of the Black Feminist artist-collective, Thick/er Black Lines as well as an associate of Numbi Arts and OOMK Zine. In addition Hudda is a founding member of the Somali Museum UK.



Sofia Niazi is a lecturer, artist and member of One of My Kind (OOMK) artist collective. As part of OOMK, she currently runs a community Risograph print workshop, Rabbits Road Press, in Newham. In her personal work, she is currently researching and producing work exploring the visual culture of the housing market. She regularly leads workshops and delivers talks about her work in community, gallery and academic settings.

Image by Arron Leppard



Raju Rage is proactive about using art, education and activism to forge creative survival. Born in Kenya, raised in London and living/working beyond, they explore the spaces and relationships between dis/connected bodies, theory and practice, text and the body and aesthetics and the political substance. Their current interests are around sustainability, economies, care, and resistance. They are a member of Collective Creativity arts collective and are a creative educator and independent scholar with an interest in radical pedagogy.

Raju has a theirstory in activism, self and collective organised queer/ transgender/ people of colour movements and creative projects in London and beyond from which their politics and works draw on and from.

Raju has trained as a pastry chef and baker, worked in several community kitchens and been part of a baker's collective.

Photographer: Marinus Toorman.



Ajamu is a darkroom/fine art photographer and archivist, with over 25 years of experience of exhibiting in museums, galleries and alternative spaces worldwide. Ajamu is also a radical sex activist, independent scholar and co-founder of the award winning 'rukus! Black LGBTQ Archive'.

His work includes portraits and self-portraits, which unapologetically celebrate black queer bodies, the erotic senses, desire, and pleasure as activism. He is also a leading specialist in Black LGBTQ history, heritage, and queer cultural memory in the UK.

The British Art Network

Sharing Expertise, Research and Ideas on British Art

The British Art Network (BAN) promotes curatorial research, practice and theory in the field of British art. Our members include curators, academics, artist-researchers, conservators, producers and programmers at all stages of their professional lives. All are actively engaged in caring for, developing and presenting British art, whether in museums, galleries, heritage settings or art spaces, in published form or in educational settings, across the UK and beyond.

BAN provides a place for sharing expertise, helps forge connections, and creates time and space for critical exchange and debate. Our activities are defined by our membership and reflect a broad range of expertise, experience and viewpoints. At the heart of everything we do there is a collective commitment to expanding definitions of British art, acknowledging complex historical truths and their present-day resonances, and communicating the continuing public value of British art collections and curatorial expertise around the UK.

Membership

Membership of BAN is always open and free. If you are interested in becoming a member, please fill out our [membership form](#).

Members receive a newsletter and regular updates on BAN's activities and have priority access to the annual BAN conference and other events.

Members can apply for annual bursaries including: Research Groups, Seminars and an Emerging Curators Group.

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