

Untitled: art on the conditions of our time

10 July – 3 October 2021

Exhibition artists: Larry Achiampong & David Blandy, Barby Asante, Appau Junior Boakye-Yiadom, Phoebe Boswell, Kimathi Donkor, Evan Ifekoya, Cedar Lewisohn, Harold Offeh, Ima-Abasi Okon and NT



Production still for NT's *Greta*. Photo: Thierry Bal.

Kettle's Yard is pleased to announce *Untitled: art on the conditions of our time*. This exhibition will bring together work by 10 British African diaspora artists with a focus on how their innovative practices ask important questions about some of the most important cultural and political issues of our turbulent times. The exhibition will feature new commissions by Barby Asante, Appau Junior Boakye-Yiadom and NT, as well as new and recent work by Larry Achiampong & David Blandy, Phoebe Boswell, Kimathi Donkor, Evan Ifekoya, Cedar Lewisohn, Harold Offeh and Ima-Abasi Okon. Painting, drawing and printmaking will sit alongside performance, video and sound installation.

The exhibition title refers to the longstanding art historical convention of leaving artworks 'untitled' in order to encourage attention onto the works themselves, and eliminate reliance upon contextual information. *Untitled* asks viewers to examine the conditions of our time through the prism of Black British artists working today, without reducing the encounter solely to an exploration of Black British identity. By avoiding such over-contextualisation, the exhibition seeks to foreground these artists' practices and show how they create platforms for audiences to explore the connections between art, culture and society.

Themes emerge that speak to shared contemporary concerns: sexuality and queerness; migration and conflict; technology and media; the disintegration of traditional image making and transmission; commemoration and memory. Patterns can also be seen in the artists' choice of media. The exhibition traces an interest in performativity, social participation, immaterial conceptualism, multimedia work and ephemeral practices, alongside more traditional techniques such as drawing, painting and printmaking.

Curator Paul Goodwin has said:

"This exhibition takes a bold curatorial approach to the often paradoxical question of curating 'black survey shows'. Instead of focusing on blackness ahead of the works themselves, Untitled flips this order and focuses on the works first and foremost. Questions of blackness, race and identity are then shown to be entangled in the multitude of concerns – aesthetic, material and political – that viewers can encounter without the curatorial voice obscuring the works."

The exhibition will include three new works that have been commissioned by Kettle's Yard. Barby Asante (b. 1975) will present an ambitious new performance in the

Kettle's Yard House inspired by Audre Lorde's essay *Poetry is not a luxury*, and incorporating music and spoken word. This new video and sound work will flow through the exhibition spaces. Called *To make love is to create and recreate ourselves over and over again - a soliloquy to heartbreak* (2021), it features a group of women who have been asked by Asante to recite Lorde's text collectively, yet separately, and perform everyday rituals in their homes.

Appau Junior Boakye-Yiadom (b. 1984) has made a new work that explores performativity, cultural exchange and abstraction. An installation will fill Gallery 2 with the sound of Kettle's Yard's two grand pianos, engaged in a battle of sorts. Boakye-Yiadom has commissioned musicians to respond to filmic source material collected across a long period, and the work will connect the important role of music at Kettle's Yard to the longstanding weekly ritual of changing the fresh flowers in the House.

NT will present a new three-channel film focusing on their muse Greta Mendez and shot on location in the brutalist surroundings of the Barbican Estate. Mendez is an artist, choreographer, dancer, carnivalist, and film-maker. Other recent works filmed by NT on location in London include *Fox* (2018), a compelling study of a solitary Black youth and their relationship to society and the urban environment, commissioned for Deptford X festival.

The exhibition will also include Larry Achiampong (b. 1984) and David Blandy's (b. 1976) film *A Terrible Fiction* (2019) and *Finding Fanon* (2015–17), a trilogy of video works presented amongst what appears to be the detritus and remnants of society. *Finding Fanon* explores the artists' relationship, as friends and collaborators, to their own colonial histories, played out through their discovery of the lost plays of writer and revolutionary Frantz Fanon (1925-61) whose work explored the psychological impact of colonialism and postcolonialism.

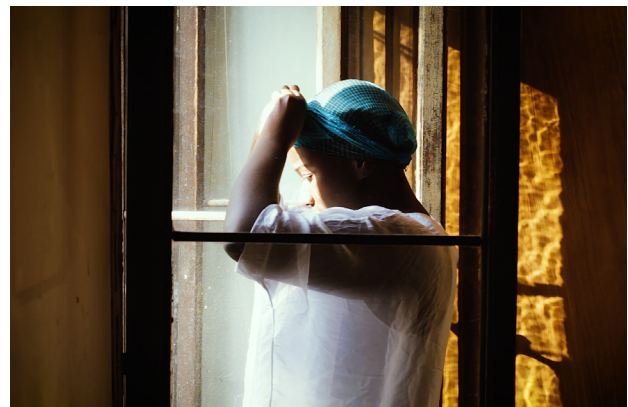
A number of paintings by Kimathi Donkor (b. 1965) will also be shown, reimagining mythic and legendary encounters across Africa and its Diasporas, and exploring the ways in which painting can convey the relevance of history and memory to contemporary life. *Nanny of the Maroons' Fifth Act of Mercy* (2012) references and subverts a painting by Joshua Reynolds (1723–92) which depicts an aristocrat whose family was involved in enslaving people in plantations in Jamaica. Here her role is swapped with her influential adversary, Queen Nanny of the Maroons.



Kimathi Donkor, *Toussaint L'Overture at Bedourete*, 2004, oil on linen, 136 x 183cm, courtesy the artist.



Larry Achiampong and David Blandy, *Finding Fanon Part One*, 2015, courtesy of Copperfield Gallery & Seventeen Gallery, London. Photo: Claire Barrett.



Barby Asante, *As Always a Painful Declaration of Independence - For Ama. For Aba. For Charlotte and Adjob: Intimacy and Distance*, 2017, Diaspora Pavilion, Venice. Image: Jess Harrington.

In addition the exhibition will include new large-scale drawings by Phoebe Boswell (b. 1982) depicting fisherman on the African island of Zanzibar whose livelihoods have been impacted by the climate crisis and globalisation; Harold Offeh's (b. 1977) *Covers Playlist* (2016) in which the artist uses his body to re-enact well known album covers, as well as his new film *Down at the Twilight Zone* (2020) documenting Offeh's 12-hour performance for Nuit Blanche, Toronto, that looked at the rich histories of LGBTQ2S peoples' experiences of Toronto's nightlife; Evan Ifekoya's (b. 1988) immersive six-hour sound installation *Ritual Without Belief* (2018), Cedar Lewisohn's (b. 1977) new series of handmade prints *The Marduk Prophecy*; and Ima-Abasi Okon's (b. 1981) installation *Put Something in the Air: The E-s-s-e-n-t-i-a-l Mahalia Jackson Blowing Up DJ Pollie Pop's Chopped and Screwed Rendition of Wagner's Ride of the Valkyries — Military-Entertainment Complex Dub [Jericho Speak Life!]*(Free of Legacy)** (2017).

This exhibition is a new iteration of *UNTITLED: art on the conditions of our time*, originally produced by New Art Exchange, Nottingham in 2017, and curated by Paul Goodwin and Hansi Momodu-Gordon. At Kettle's Yard it is curated by Paul Goodwin with Guy Haywood. The exhibition is financially supported by Arts Council England.

The exhibition will be accompanied by an online events programme, including performances streamed live from Kettle's Yard, talks, screenings and a panel discussion.



Harold Offeh. *Down at the Twilight Zone*, 12 hour event. Toronto, Canada, 2018. Commissioned by Toronto Nuit Blanche, 2018. Photo: Priam Thomas

Notes to Editors

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About Kettle's Yard

Kettle's Yard is one of Britain's best galleries - a beautiful and unique house with a distinctive modern art collection, and a gallery exhibiting modern and contemporary art. Supporting this is an established learning and community engagement programme, archive, and programme of chamber concerts. In February 2018, Kettle's Yard reopened after a two-year development by architect Jamie Fobert. The new Kettle's Yard includes state of the art new exhibition galleries, generous education spaces, a café and new welcome areas. Kettle's Yard's mission is to contribute to society by inspiring and engaging audiences through art, learning and research of the highest quality. We believe that great art should not be the privilege of the few, but for everyone. Our values reflect Kettle's Yard's creator Jim Ede's support for artists and belief in art's power to make us look again and change how we act in the world.

www.kettlesyard.co.uk

About New Art Exchange

New Art Exchange (NAE) is a contemporary arts space in Nottingham that celebrates the region's cultural richness and diversity. With two galleries, a café-bar, performance space and a number of workshop rooms, NAE presents an ever-changing programme of art exhibitions and creative activities including, family workshops, film screenings, symposiums, lectures, festivals and a live performance programme of music, dance and theatre. As the largest gallery in the UK dedicated to culturally diverse contemporary visual arts, NAE defines its purpose and outputs from the experiences and needs of its inner-city neighbourhood of Hyson Green, and the culturally diverse communities living across Nottingham. As such, beyond the temporary exhibitions and national/international touring programme, NAE places a strong emphasis on social practice that takes these communities as their starting point. This includes focussed activity strands for schools and education, young people and families, community engagement and importantly, talent development. NAE's artistic programme presents culturally diverse talent, ranging from internationally celebrated artists to local and emerging practitioners. Amongst others, past exhibitors have included: John Akomfrah, Zarina Bhimji, Larissa Sansour, Hardeep Pandhal, Shiraz Bayjoo, Sarah Maple, Phoebe Boswell, Larry Achiampong, Ima-Abasi Okon, Zineb Sedira, Mahtab Hussain, Hetain Patel, Sonia Boyce, Hassan Hajjaj, Rashid Rana, Sethembile Msezane, Zanele Muholi, and Christine Sun Kim.

www.nae.org.uk

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About Paul Goodwin

Paul Goodwin is a curator, researcher and urban theorist based in London. Goodwin's research and curatorial interests span the fields of transnational art, urbanism and curatorial practice with a focus on African diaspora art and visual cultures. As a curator at Tate Britain from 2007-2012 he directed the Tate Cross Cultural Programme, a multi-disciplinary curatorial platform exploring the impact of race, migration and globalisation on contemporary art in Britain. He has worked with generations of Black British and international artists in exhibition projects such as Thin Black Line(s) (Tate Britain, 2011), Migrations: Journey's Into British Art (Tate Britain, 2012), Transfigurations: Curatorial and Artistic Research in an Age of Migrations (MACBA, Barcelona 2014), Chila Kumari Burman: This is Not Me – Autoportraits, (Cook House Gallery, Chelsea College of Arts, 2014), Ghosts: Technologies/ Subjectivities, (Hangar Centre for Art and Research, Lisbon, Portugal, 2015) Goodwin's recent curatorial projects include: W.E.B. DuBois: Charting Black Lives (House of Illustration, London, UK, Nov. 20, 19), We Will Walk: Art and Resistance from the American South (Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK, Feb - May 2020) and Untitled: Art on the Conditions of Our Time, Chapter 2 (touring, Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, UK, May 2020). Professor Goodwin is Chair of Contemporary Art & Urbanism and Director of TrAIN (Transnational Art, Identity & Nation) Research Centre at University of the Arts London.