

## Abstracts and Biographies

### Panel 1: Operable Infrastructures

Chair: Mora Beauchamp-Byrd

**Panel Chair: Mora J. Beauchamp-Byrd, Ph.D.**, is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Art and Design at The University of Tampa, where she teaches courses in Modern & Contemporary Art and in Museum Studies. An art historian, curator, and arts administrator, she specializes in the art of the African Diaspora; American Art; Modern and Contemporary art, including a focus on late twentieth-century British art; Museum & Curatorial studies; and representations of race, class and gender in American comics. She has organized numerous exhibitions, including *Transforming the Crown: African, Asian and Caribbean Artists in Britain, 1966-1996*; *Picturing Creole New Orleans: The Photographs of Arthur P. Bedou*, and *Little Nemo's Progress: Animation and Contemporary Art*. She is currently completing a manuscript that examines David Hockney, Lubaina Himid, and Paula Rego's appropriations of William Hogarth's eighteenth-century satirical narratives.

### From Resistance to Institution: The History of Autograph ABP from 1988 to 2007

Taous R. Dahmani

Since its creation in 1988, Autograph ABP has aimed at defending the work and supporting author-photographers from Caribbean, African and Indian diasporas, first in England and then beyond. Initially a utopian idea, then a very practical and political project and finally a hybrid institution, Autograph ABP has presented itself in turn as an association, an agency, an archive, a research centre, a publishing house and an exhibition space. To tell the story of Autograph ABP is to tell the story of its evolution, that of a militant space having become a cultural institution. To tell the story of Autograph ABP is also to tell the story of the people who created and crafted it.

This paper is an initial proposal both to tell the story of the creation of the institution and begin to conceptualise its stages, and as such, recognise three essential moments in the history of the institutionalisation of Autograph: the first encompasses the 1980s and the events that introduced the creation and structuring of the project, which took the form of an association in 1988; the second, from 1991, corresponds to the restructuring of Autograph, its professionalisation and its progressive establishment in the British and international cultural landscape; the third and final period begins in 2007 with its definitive installation as an artistic and cultural institution, and the inauguration of its building in East London.

These three moments in the evolution of Autograph ABP have distinct — though sometimes overlapping — stakes. The early stages were mainly about the creation and formalisation of an artistic and intellectual community (identification of peers, grouping, joint projects); they fostered a sense of belonging, solidarity and nourished a strong opposition to the *status quo* imposed by traditional artistic institutions such as Tate or the V&A. The second moment existed primarily through the idea of giving back to its original community of photographers and making it known to the

established art world. It focused on a long quest for legitimacy, since until the end of the 20th century, Black British photographers were practically absent from the official circuit as producers and authors. The third phase, inaugurated at the turn of the new millennium, was that of inscribing its space in the long term as an ‘established counter-power’, oscillating between a formal artistic institution and the impediment of going against the grain.

**Taous R. Dahmani** is a PhD candidate in the History of Art Department at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. She is doing a thesis in history of photography under the supervision of Prof. Michel Poivert and taught the history of 20th century photography for three years. She was a recipient of the Prix de la Chancellerie and was based in Oxford at the Maison Française (CNRS/University of Oxford) between September 2019 and November 2020. Her thesis is entitled : "*Direct Action Photography*": *a typography of the photographic representation of struggles and the struggle for photographic representations (London, 1958-1989)*. In November 2018, she published an article entitled "Bharti Parmar's "True Stories": *Against the grain of Sir Benjamin Stone's photographic collection*", in *PhotoResearcher* (no°30). Her chapter on *Polareyes*, a 1987 Black British female photographic journal is forthcoming in *Feminist and Queer Activism in Britain and the United States in the Long 1980s*, SUNY (2021). In October 2020, as part of the Photo Oxford Festival, in collaboration with the Bodleian Libraries, she organized a conference entitled *Let Us Now Praise Famous Women : women's labour to uncover the works of female photographers*.

## **Do not Tape Over: AIDs Activist Video in the UK**

### **Ed Webb-Ingall**

By the mid-1980s, the introduction of compact and affordable video camcorders allowed for the democratisation of video production and distribution by those impacted by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The prolific use of video as a tool to challenge the misrepresentation of People With AIDS (PWAs) by AIDS Activists in the USA has received critical and historical attention. This includes the establishment of a specific AIDS activist video archive, the publication of various books and a number of high profile documentaries about groups such as ACT UP. Conversely, the use of video by and for AIDS activists in the UK remains largely unexplored. In 1987, the distribution catalogue for London-based community video group Albany Video lists eleven videos available for hire under the heading 'HEALTH, AIDS'. Since then, the majority of these have been lost or are no longer in circulation.

In this paper, I will present my ongoing research collecting and digitising some of these alternative and activist UK AIDS videos, a number of which have not been screened in public since they were first made. I will explore how the production of these videos engendered new forms of representation that challenged the misrepresentation of HIV and AIDS; creating spaces for activism, discussion and reflection. Through the examination of a selection of the videos that were made in the UK, I will draw connections between alternative AIDS video on both sides of the Atlantic and diversify the history of AIDS activist video outside of North America.

**Ed Webb-Ingall** is a filmmaker and researcher working with archival materials and methodologies drawn from community video. He collaborates with groups to explore under-represented historical moments and their relationship to contemporary life, developing modes of self-representation specific to the subject or the experiences of the participants. He is the participation programmer for the London Community Video Archive and Senior Lecturer on the BA Film and Screen Studies course at London College of Communication. He is currently writing a book with the title *BFI Screen Stories: The Story of Video Activism* and developing a long-term video project on the role of video in response to the housing crisis.

***“their own kind of light”:* The Caribbean Artists Movement and the Postcolonial Politics of Abstraction**

**Maryam Ohadi-Hamadani**

The Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM) had to mediate, as Louis James put it, “between a creative forum and the growing political awareness at the time.” Formed in London in 1966, CAM was a necessity for artistic agency and creative exchange during a period when political and social freedoms, torn down by racialised immigration legislation and racist demonstrations in Britain, were being reconstructed in the countries of a newly decolonized, post-independent Caribbean. The group published a monthly newsletter, and regular meetings were held at the West Indian Student Centre in Earl’s Court, alongside annual conferences and art exhibitions. During meetings and studio visits, CAM attempted to define the parameters of a new literary and artistic tradition that encompassed the diasporic and transnational roots of a pan-Caribbean aesthetic. Alongside its founders, writers Eddie Kamau Braithwaite, John la Rose, and Andrew Salkey, CAM included among its membership sculptor Ronald Moody, painter Aubrey Williams, and textile designer Althea McNish. Transdisciplinary and transcultural, CAM also counted sociologists, cultural theorists, historians, and literary scholars from Britain, the Caribbean, and South Asia among its numbers. A constant topic of discussion was whether or not art should be an agent for social change, and the validity of abstraction or representation as a socially-conscious visual language. Within this context, this paper considers CAM’s discussions related to abstraction, and makes connections between visualizing environment and its destruction, the visibility of labour, and the historical, aesthetic, and cultural impact of colonialism and its afterlife on art-making in the Caribbean and in Britain.

**Maryam Ohadi-Hamadani** is a postdoctoral research associate at the Yale Center for British Art. Her research interests include transnationality and diaspora, and the politics of postwar abstraction and visual culture in Britain and beyond. She has curated exhibitions for the Cleveland Foundation and the Wichita Art Museum, and has held positions at the Cleveland Museum of Art; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland; the Ulrich Museum of Art; and Tate Liverpool. Currently, Ohadi-Hamadani is working on two upcoming exhibitions at the Center, a survey of work by Bridget Riley and an exhibition of prints and drawings from the permanent collection. She has published on artist Denis Williams in *NKA: Journal of Contemporary Art* (November 2019) and her chapter “The Commonwealth of British Pop: Race, Labor and Postcolonial Politics in Frank Bowling’s *Mother’s House* series” in *Pop Art and Beyond: Gender, Race and Class in the Global Sixties* (Bloomsbury, 2021) is forthcoming.

## **'Black Art' Between the Waves**

**Elizabeth Robles**

In a now oft-quoted lecture given in 2004, theorist Stuart Hall outlined the contours of the history of black and brown artists in Britain across the twentieth century. He marked out three distinct 'moments' which he - noting the significant breaks, ruptures and, crucially, continuities across them - characterised as 'waves'. This paper, which arises from a British Academy funded research project entitled 'Making Waves: Black Artists and 'Black Art' in Britain from 1962-1982', takes up Hall's notion of these generational waves to interrogate the places in which they ebb and flow into each other. It will look to the formation of the second wave, that milieu of artists and activities that has come to be known as a British Black Arts Movement and which, for Hall, was differentiated from their predecessors as 'race came home to Britain' in the late 1970s and 1980s. Here, we will examine and interrogate key critical and artistic moments of overlap as key figures of the first wave, including Frank Bowling and Aubrey Williams, actively engaged with the discourses of art and politics that swirled around the artists and activities of the 1980s.

**Dr Elizabeth Robles** is a researcher and Lecturer in Contemporary Art in the History of Art Department at the University of Bristol. She is particularly interested in the formation of ideas around "black art" across the twentieth century and is currently a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow working on a project entitled "Making Waves: Black Artists & 'Black Art' in Britain from 1962–1982."