

Abstracts and Biographies

Panel 2: Collective Organisation

Panel Chair: Alina Khakoo

Panel Chair: Alina Khakoo is a PhD Candidate in Criticism and Culture at the University of Cambridge. She is interested in the South Asian diaspora in the British black arts movement, in British black intellectual production, and in British black feminist and lesbian organising from the 1950s. Her PhD – supervised by Priya Gopal, and advised by Amy Tobin – focuses on the 1980s. Alongside her doctoral studies, she has worked as a Curatorial Assistant at Kettle's Yard.

Imaginative-Revolutionary Potential: Black Feminist Organising as Creative Practice **Lola Olufemi**

This paper will argue that grassroots political organising is a form of creative practice and when read as such; it reveals the workings of the imagination as a tool that seeks to erode oppressive organisations of social life. Against the figure of the 'individual artist,' and the diagrammatic social field (Deleuze, 1988) defined by discipline, punishment, and individualism under Thatcher; black feminist formations from 1970-80 – often communal in nature and orientated against state institutions illustrated how political struggle was inseparable from creativity through demands, sloganeering, public meetings and direct action which sought, above all, to bring that which did not exist into being. I argue that resistant cultural production is imbued with an imaginative-revolutionary potential and those objects carry with them, a frequency and resonance that is intimately connected to futurity. These cultural products evidence Camp's notion that 'the grammar of black feminist futurity is a performance of a future that hasn't yet happened but must.' (2017)

Reading the cultural production and actions of black feminist organisations such as OWAAD, The Brixton Black Women's Group and the Blk Art Group, this paper aims to demonstrate that artistic approaches that eschew the political or attempt to detach creativity from systems of oppression (namely race, class and gender) do so by ignoring that every political demand is already an artistic one. It seeks to explore the ways that the groups in question orientated themselves against the state whilst simultaneously thinking beyond it and in doing so cultivated a creative practice that helped them evade, confuse, destroy and subvert dire material conditions.

Lola Olufemi is a black feminist writer and CREAM/Stuart Hall foundation researcher from London. Her work focuses on the uses of the feminist imagination and its relationship to cultural production, political demands and futurity. She is author of *Feminism Interrupted: Disrupting Power* (2020), *Experiments in Imagining Otherwise*, forthcoming from Hajar Press in 2021 and a member of 'bare minimum', an interdisciplinary anti-work arts collective.

Responding to Women and Creativity

Catherine Grant

This paper explores a number of collaborative works by the British artist and filmmaker Annabel Nicolson, with a series of tape recordings known as ‘Women and Creativity’ (1978-80) being the focus. My thesis is in two parts: first that these tape recordings, alongside a number of collaborative exhibitions and publications that followed, continue the legacies of consciousness-raising from the women’s liberation movement. Second, but equally important, is that the artworks *themselves* created spaces for politicised feminist dialogue. To explore the implications of this, I have invited contemporary responses to the tapes, continuing the questions posed about the politics of being creative in a feminist context, as well as attending to the different political moments in which these questions are being asked. I will put these responses alongside the growing interest in Nicolson’s work by a number of feminist curators and artists.

Central to my argument is that the move from feminist life to feminist art was not one way for artists during the 1970s and early 1980s whose practices were informed by feminist organising, and this holds true for our contemporary moment as well. Nicolson herself has noted how some of the feminist protests that took place in the UK were ‘art forms in themselves’ (Nicolson, notes on the 1983 ‘Stock Exchange Film’). Through collaborative works by Nicolson, the ways in which the legacies of consciousness-raising and group work fed into artistic practice will be explored, as well as the ways in which different vehicles (listening sessions, publications and exhibitions) were used to create artistic, feminist communities. The ways in which these works are being engaged with in the contemporary moment will form a counterpoint to my historical analysis, a response separated by time that reworks feminist communities for the present.

Catherine Grant is Senior Lecturer in the Art and Visual Cultures Departments at Goldsmiths, University of London. She is currently working on the legacies of feminist histories in contemporary art. The project includes the essays “Fans of Feminism: re-writing histories of second-wave feminism” (2011) and “A letter sent, waiting to be received: queer correspondence, feminism and Black British art” (2019). She is the co-editor of *Fandom as Methodology* with Kate Random Love (2019), as well as the collections *Girls! Girls! Girls!* (2011) and *Creative Writing and Art History* (2012). She co-edited the questionnaire “Decolonising Art History” with Dorothy Price for *Art History*, February 2020.

Power in Numbers: Black Artistic Networks and Collectives since the 1960s

Anjalie Dalal-Clayton

Collective action amongst visual artists has a long and varied history in the UK, and no less so than amongst black and Asian diaspora artists. Anjalie Dalal-Clayton discusses three key moments in this history - the 1960s, 1980s and 2010s. During these critical decades, black and Asian diaspora artists came together in variant formations and for divergent reasons, but all for the purpose of furthering their practices and, most crucially, claiming a space for themselves in the art world. Dalal-Clayton focuses her discussion on the Caribbean Artists Movement, the Blk Art Group, Lubaina Himid's work as a curator, QTIPOC Creative Collectivity, SorryYouFeelUncomfortable, Gal-Dem, Museum Detox and The White Pube. She considers what motivated the collective action of these artists and artist groups/networks, the strategies they employed, and what they were able to achieve through collaboration.

Dr Anjalie Dalal-Clayton is an art historian with a specialism in the work of British artists with African and Asian heritage. She is a research fellow at University of the Arts London's Decolonising Arts Institute (DeAI), where her research focuses on how anti-racist and decolonial modes of un/ thinking and un/doing can be taken up by public museums, collections and in the discipline of art history. Before joining the DeAI, Anjalie was a researcher on the Black Artists & Modernism project, where she led the first nationwide audit of work by artists with African and Asian heritage in UK public collections. She is currently working on an exhibition histories monograph, *Curating Black British Art: Exhibition Cultures Since the 1980s* (Bloomsbury).