

20th Feb – 16th Mar 1985

'CRAFTWORK?'

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The Black-Art Gallery

225 SEVEN SISTERS ROAD LONDON N4 TEL: 01-263 1918
(Finsbury Park Station, Opposite Rainbow Theatre)

Partnership with OFF BLACK & ETHNIC ARTISTS
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'CRAFTWORK?'

The dubious distinction between art and craft treads a very thin line, but nevertheless, it has been used to marginalise and ignore a wealth of the creative talent of many artists.

OBAALA recognises that a lot of Black women are working in this field and their work is often not given the same opportunities for exposure as other areas of artistic expression.

Through this exhibition, (the tenth at the Black-Art Gallery), OBAALA intends to highlight this area of art and also to redress a situation whereby women's work has generally been under-represented in art exhibitions.

The show features intricate bead work by a group of three women working under the name of 'Shikisha', vivid 'Fabric Pictures' by Margaret Cooper, the strikingly beautiful textiles of Elizabeth Eugene, furniture and architectural designs by Fyna Dowe, a variety of ceramics by Gaulia Reeves and Madge Spencer and other excellent artists.

International Women's Week occurs during the exhibition and OBAALA has arranged a programme of events to complement the exhibition and celebrate the week:-

Friday 8th March 7.30pm

A discussion evening on
'The false distinction between arts and crafts
and how this affects women artists'.

Tuesday 12th, Wednesday 13th and Thursday 14th March 3pm to 6pm

Three practical demonstrations of the various skills and procedures
employed in the work on display
by artists taking part in the exhibition.

Friday 15th March

Drama, poetry and songs from a Black women's group, 'Nsenga'.
The group will explore issues concerning Black women today.
The performance will be followed by a discussion
of the topics raised in the show.

For more details ring OBAALA on 263 1918.

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SHIKISHA

(Beadwork by Julia Mathunjwa, Betty Boo Hlela and Nomfa Caluza)

"We are a group of African Zulu women performers and designers, based in Hackney. We have been performing our shows since 1982 throughout London, Britain and the Continent, also holding workshops in the traditional arts of Africa, e.g. dancing, drumming, costume design and beadwork etc.

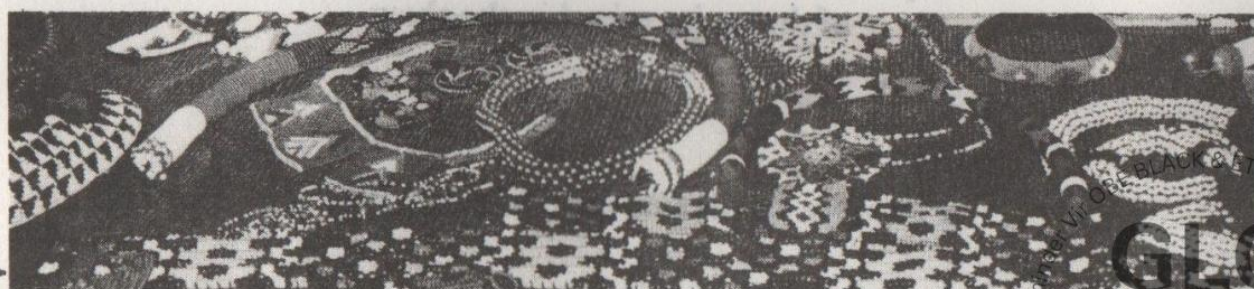
When we first formed, we had to choreograph, design and make costumes ourselves. Beads are part of our costumes, and we became inspired to develop our beadwork as part of our art because it takes us back to our long Zulu history.

Beads have been popular among the Zulu and most of South Africa's tribal peoples for generations, and they use them in profusion. Certain designs, patterns and colours are a symbol of identification (e.g. different clans, meanings, the denoting of the Shembe Christian religion). Zulus send their messages by beads – if a boy proposes to a girl, and she accepts, she will then present him with a string of beads to wear around his neck; they then become lovers. When they become engaged she presents him with a necklace which has a duiker horn as a pendant, and the horn is usually filled with a love potion.

There is another type of necklace called 'love letter', a way for a girl to express her feelings to her boyfriend. The 'pages' are usually in different colours because they have different messages.

A girl from the Shembe religion would wear a greater weight and volume of beads than girls in any other part of Zululand.

Geometrical designs are used a great deal in beadwork. Girls make all their own and their boyfriends' pieces, and among young Zulu men, beads are the most popular romantic symbol."



LESLEE WILLS

Leslee Wills is British born of Guyanese origins. She graduated from Hornsey College of Art in 1979.

Her designs date back to the Sukuya carnival costume band's "African Version" and "Remember Marcus Garvey" of Lion Youth carnival band of which she was a founder with Beti Campbell.

Her designs have been sold in Lagos, Nigeria as well as through Heal's of Tottenham Court Road, London. Textile paintings, African rags and exciting printed raffia mats are part of her current collection now marketed by Damara Designs of Unit 5 Queen Street Tottenham N17 885-2302.





FYNA DOWE

"I have been a creative messenger for as long as I can remember, working in many media, ie, Painting, Drawing, 3D (every description) Printing, Music, Poetry, Textiles, Fashion. I also teach and tutor from time to time, in many subjects as well as art. Art is life and to live life is an art. I approach my work with thought, dedication and determination."

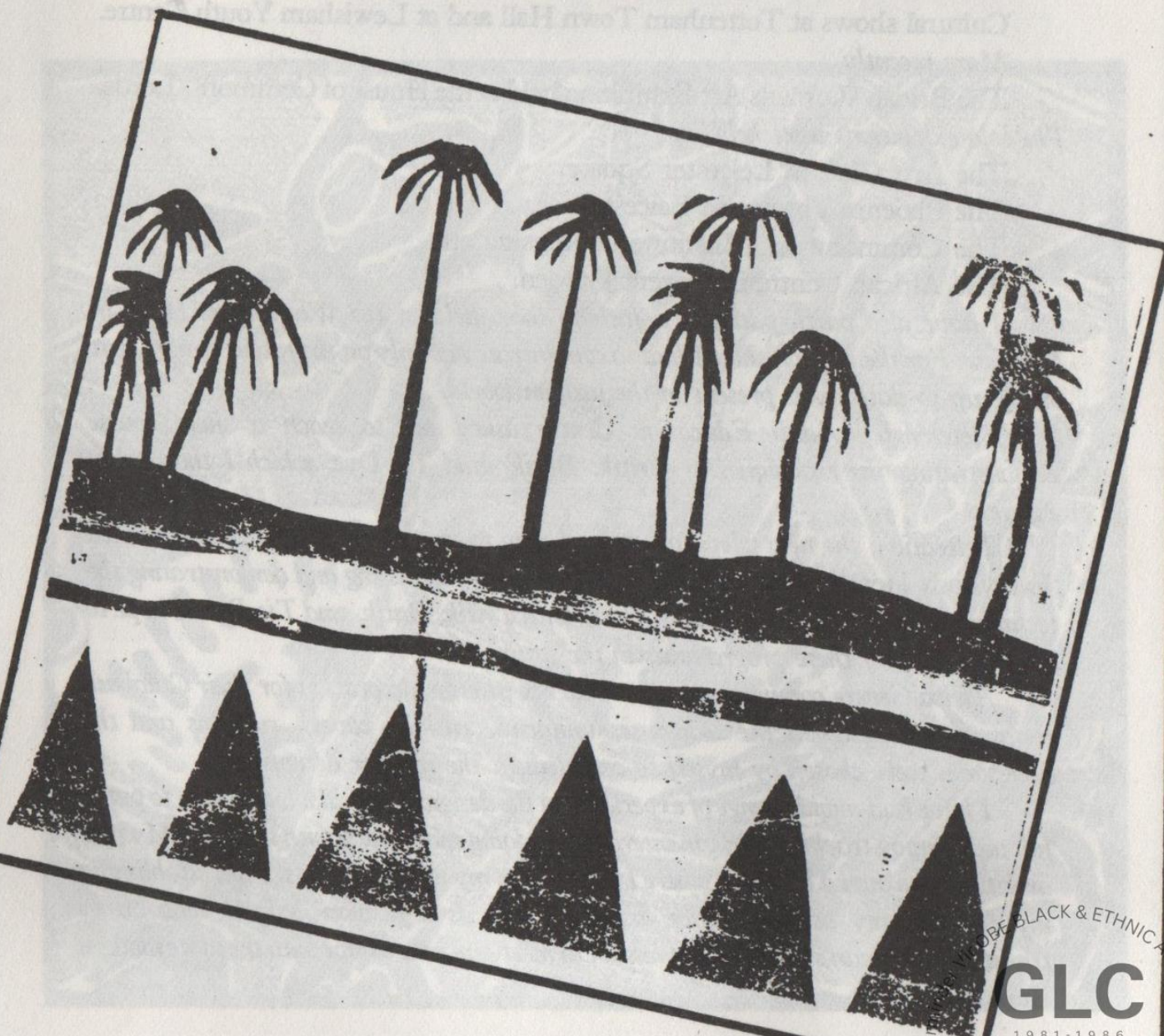
BETI CAMPBELL

Beti Campbell is Jamaican born and graduated in textiles at the Hornsey School of Art in 1974. Her textiles have been part of costume design for RAPP (Radical alliance of poets and players) and she later become co-founder of Lion Youth carnival band (1977).

In Jamaica she has worked with the sisters collective also as a costume designer and textile co-ordinator.

Beti Campbell's specially distinctive designs are also available through the Damara Designs Co-operatives. On show are her wall hangings, though a collection of furnishing accessories are also available.

"My wall hangings and furnishing textiles are a simple version of the tropical settings, i.e. plants and colours, that I feel should be the heritage of all African peoples."



ETHA BRANDON

"I was born and raised in Sierra Leone in West Africa. It was in Africa where I learned and perfected the art of Tritic, Batik and Tie-Dye.

Eight years ago I came to England to further develop my work. I have increased my line of work from just fashion designing to a full range of products:

Ladies, mens, and childrens clothing; suits, dresses, skirts, bathing suits, T Shirts, etc. Pillow cases, sheets and duvet covers. Table mats, serviettes, table cloths, oven gloves. Cushion covers. Curtains. Mens ties, womens scarves and handkerchiefs. Wall hangings of unique designs, etc.

I work in either cotton or silk.

The past several years I have been participating in many exhibitions throughout London and some in the North of England. Some were group exhibitions and some were solo exhibitions. A few of the group exhibitions were:

The Third World Art Exhibition at the London School of Economics.

Cultural shows at Tottenham Town Hall and at Lewisham Youth Centre.

More recently,

The British Womens Art Exhibition held at the House of Commons/Lords.

The solo exhibitions were held at:

The Arts Club in Leicester Square.

The Phoenix Theatre in Leicester City.

The Commonwealth Institute in Kensington.

The African Centre in Covent Garden.

I have also participated in a fashion show held at the Washington Hotel in Mayfair. For the fashion show I had to concentrate not only on the textile designs, but on the up-to-date styles present in the fashion world.

Bletchingley Adult Education Centre asked me to teach a short course demonstrating the techniques of Tritic, Batik, and Tie-Dye, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

Telecation, the new television channel soon to emerge, have a programme called 'Everybody Here'. I was taped for the programme discussing and demonstrating the techniques and limitless design possibilities with Tritic, Batik, and Tie-Dye. I hope to be doing more of these programmes in the future.

Africa Centre commissioned me to do the interior decoration for their Calabash restaurant. I designed the waitresses uniforms, cushion covers, curtains and the accessories were chosen by myself to complement the interior designs.

I have had a wide range of experience in the designing world which I plan to put to full use. I enjoy teaching and am interested in doing more work with students. My true ambition is to own a boutique where I can pursue my many interests. I am establishing myself, not only as an interior decorator, but as a fashion designer who brings traditional African styles and expression to meet and interweave with the more modern European styling.

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ELIZABETH EUGENE

1979-80 East Ham College of Technology: Foundation Art/Design

1980-83 Loughborough College of Art/Design: Printed Textiles BA (Hons)

Exhibitions

July 83 'New Life' Abacus Gallery

Nov 83 'Black Woman Time Now' Battersea Arts Centre

Nov 83/4 'Young Blood' Barbican Arts Centre

Jan/Feb 84 'Textiles Meaning and Making' Brixton Art Gallery

"My work involves the use of various textures of a variety of fabrics combining both batik and printing, many of which derive from ethnic art, in particular pre-Columbian and African art whereby designs and geometric shapes taken from African art and that of ancient Mexican masks and wall paintings, the result being abstract images held together by bold geometric shapes."



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GAULIA REEVES

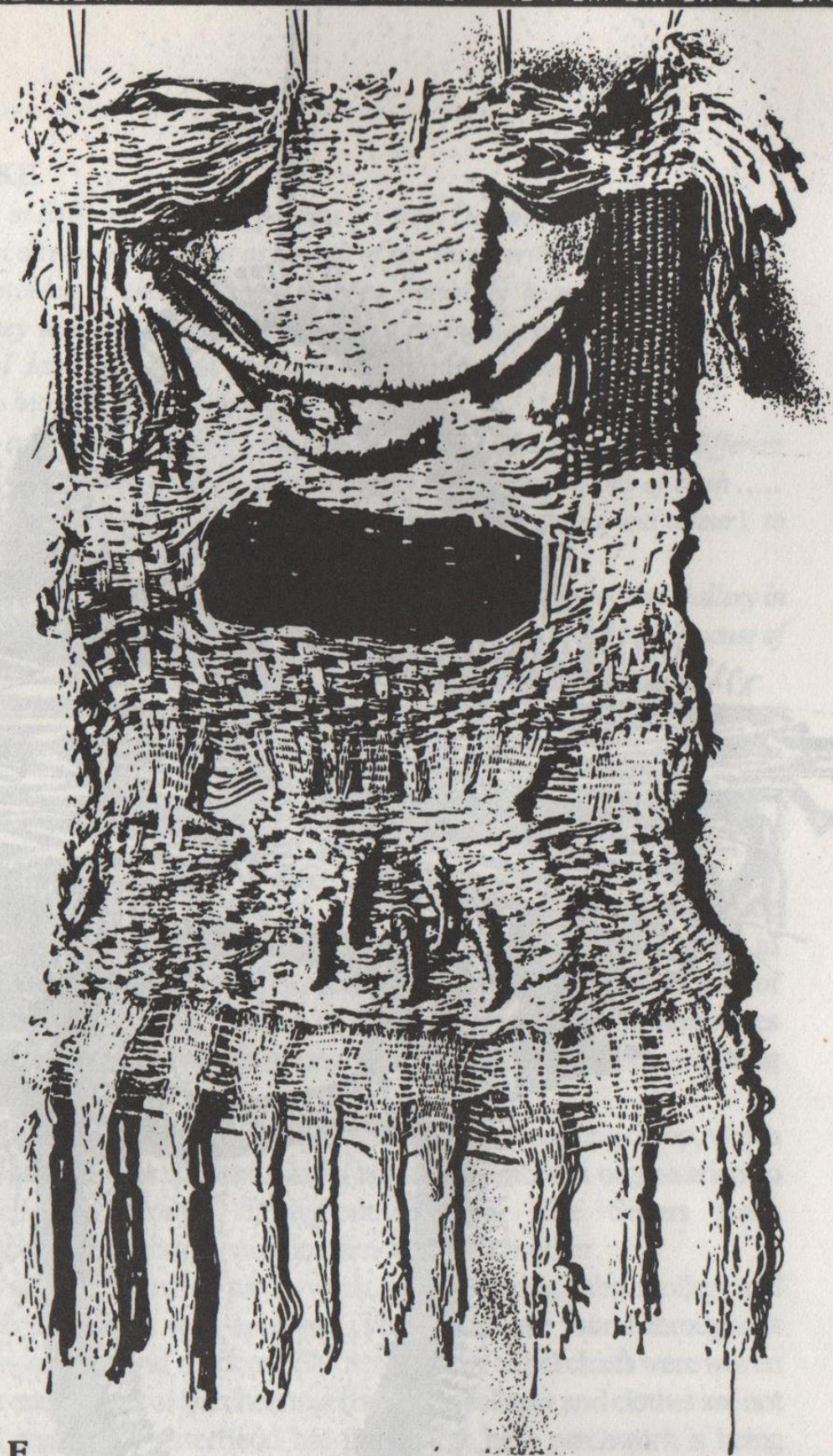
"I started ceramics part-time at Hornsey Road Adult Institute five years ago. After the first two hour lesson I immediately increased my hours to four per week. The increased time continued to grow to three days per week over the following three years.

I feel that I am very fortunate to have found something that I enjoy doing where I am making the decisions as to what I do and how I do it.

My work consists primarily of functional pieces but I also make non-functional pieces.

I am still learning my craft at present and I hope it will make me a living in the future."

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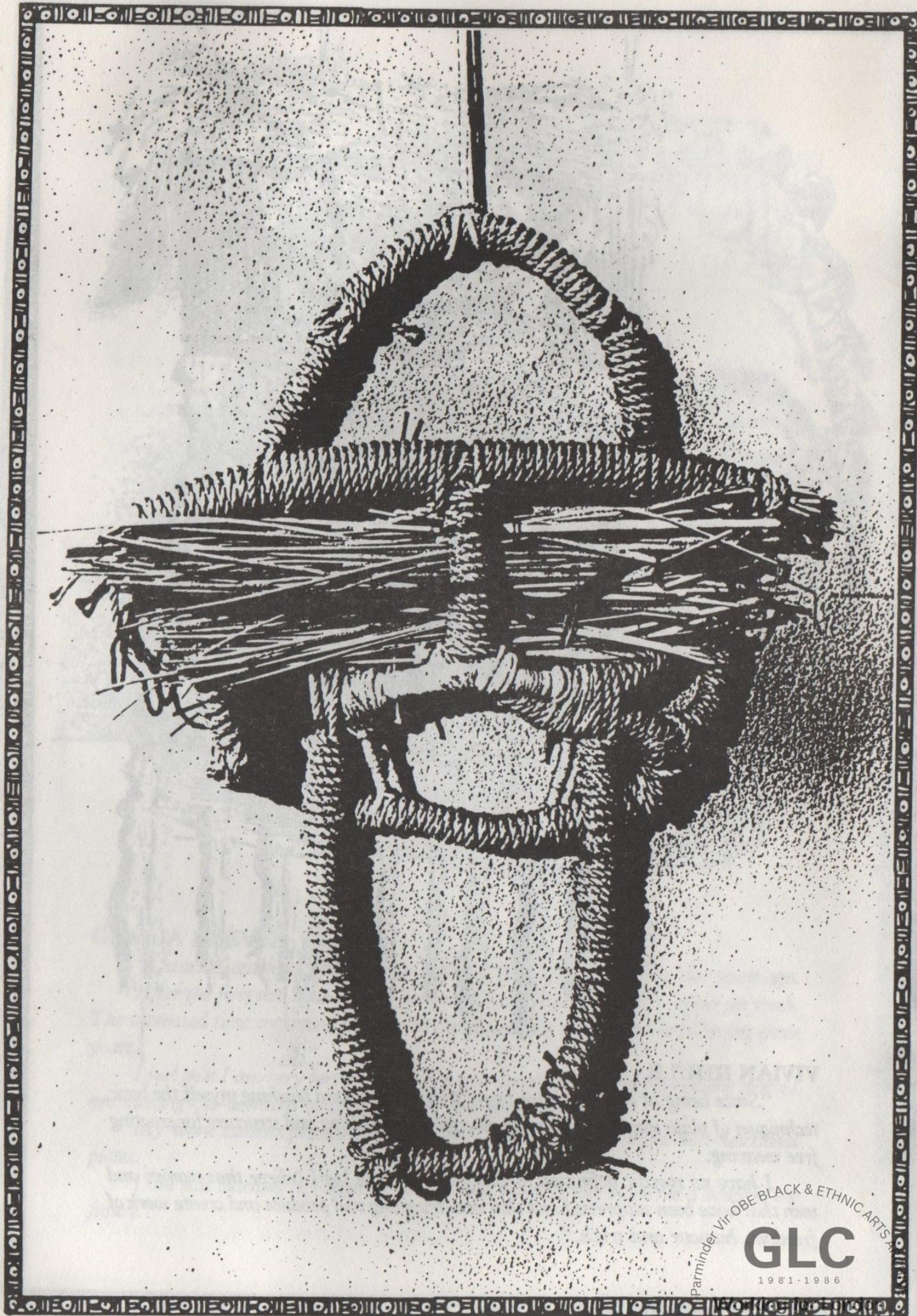


VIVIAN RHULE

"Since being at college I have found that learning and teaching myself the basic techniques of plain weaving is going to give me more backing and structure for creating free weaving."

I have no specific definition of Black-Art as such but I believe that women and men that have been suppressed and that are struggling will produce and create work of freedom, humour and truth."

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SANDRA LUKE

"I was born in England, both my parents are from Dominica, in the West Indies. The work on display came about as a result of me 'discovering?' Caribbean fruits, flowers and vegetables. I thought they were so naturally beautiful but found it surprising that they were not especially bright in colouring i.e. oranges were actually green, yet ripe! I later discovered that most of the fruits here, in England, are artificially bright because of colourants and fertilizers.

After these enlightening periods, the rest of my time was spent using different mediums (such as newspaper articles, perspex sheets, water paints, bits of cloth anything that can make a shape or lend itself to my ideas of shapes and colour), to produce different expressions of fruit, vegetables and flowers.

I have sold work of the same kind in this exhibition to The Liberty Art Gallery in Regents Street, in 1982. I have, since then, undertaken very little artwork because of other commitments.

I am presently self-employed in the rag trade and wish to use this exhibition as an inspiration to continue doing more pieces."

ZAMANI SOWETO SISTERS

The Zamani sisters are women of Soweto — a huge complex outside Johannesburg where two million Black people live. Most of them work in Johannesburg and are forced to live in Soweto due to the racist apartheid laws of South Africa (Azania). For years, women of Soweto have supported themselves and their children by sewing, working long hours for pitiful wages in clothing factories.

Six years ago, a small group of women started a clothes-making co-op, which operated from a garage. The Zamani sisters act as an umbrella organisation to many small self-help groups throughout Soweto. The Sisters teach representatives of smaller groups, who in turn teach each other.

Their work takes the form of patch-work quilts, clothing, fabric collage and textile crafts such as crochet and applique. These skills are found throughout African culture — ancient and modern. Clothes worn by tribal chiefs were woven on narrow looms and pieced or patched together. The collages and clothes are not the fundamental reason the sisterhood has flourished: here patchwork is being used in its traditional sense as a sharing experience between women struggling for economic and personal independence.



MADGE SPENCER

"I am from Jamaica. I began potting there but I have worked in Derbyshire for seventeen years.

My clay is stoneware and the glazes are all of my own devising. I love clay-work because one can take the material through every stage oneself. I dig it, strain it clean, throw it and then fire it in a home-built kiln. Thus any pot is totally original, made from raw 'dutty'.

Hopefully, one has a distinctive personal style.

I like to think my pots have natural organic shapes and lively glaze colours which recall the Caribbean sun. But one acquires other influences too: the 'ribbing' on the big monkey jar, for instance, is an African decorative style I once saw."

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ONIA SALMON

Onia Salmon was born in Jamaica, but grew up in Britain. She works as a nursery Organiser at a Black community nursery in Hackney. She says:

"I've been knitting since I was about nine years old, making garments for friends and relatives. Having children of my own and trying to make ends meet, I decided to set up a small business from my home – knitting by hand as well as machine. I not only produce garments, but also soft toys for children which always have a Black dimension. Being involved with the children at the nursery I see the importance of making toys like these. There just aren't any on the established market, but they are so important in the growth and development of our children."



GRACE BOYCE

"My greatest asset has always been my artistic and creative ability. It is within this area that my main interest lies.

After leaving school I went to work in two of London's main fashion stores, Harrods and Top Shop. I was employed as a general assistant. Aspects of this included Display, Personnel and Customer Service.

Actually working in a high fashion environment made me realise that I could utilise my skills in a more personal and rewarding way. Thus, I applied to the London College of Fashion and was accepted onto a full time Fashion Designer course. After two years of studying Art and Design, I qualified as a Fashion Designer.

I was brought up in the West Indies and my childhood was always full of colour. The West Indies is a marvellous place to see nature at its most flamboyant.

The bright, varied and exotic colours of the flowers, plants, birds, carnivals and culture have had a significant influence on my designs. This I capture in my paintings which in turn inspire fabrics designs.

The vast contrast between my early life and now living in London has convinced me that fashion can pull together different cultures and create totally new, exciting clothes for all ages and races.

My clothes combine fabric, colour and style to bring a feeling of individuality to whoever wears them. A lot of my designs use masses of fabric: flowing, draped, gathered, giving a feeling of luxury.

The fabrics that I design are beaded, printed chiffon and silks."

MABINTE CYRUS

"I have trained as a textile designer, specialising in Tapestry Design and Weaving. I make jewellery using beads and general jewellery techniques, selling privately or at festivals etc, as well as shops. I am also interested in photography and film."

MARGARET COOPER

Born in Jamaica 1951 and came to England in 1969 to study Fashion/Textile at Ravensburn College of Art. Now teaching part time in I.L.E.A. schools and colleges.

Exhibitions:

Several group shows in London including craft events with Caribbean Craft Circle. Also 'Take 5' Huddersfield Sports Centre Feb 1974. Two one-woman shows — 'Caribbean Flavours' West Norwood Library Gallery April 1983 and 'Street Dances' University of West Indies Creative Arts Centre, Mona, Kingston, Jamaica August 1984.

"I am basically a textile designer so my work is decorative and mostly inspired by Tropical colours and images.

I make 'Fabric Pictures' to hang on the wall or as cushion covers and garments. These are really applique, but I use the fabrics for colour and pattern like paint rather than in a 'craft' like way."



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PHAYE BLAKE

"I was born in London and went to live in Jamaica in 1970. It was while I was there that I learnt the art of decorating and carving leather. I experimented widely with different skins such as goat, snake, lizard and cow and also a variety of dyes and pastels.

The reason why I became interested in leather as a medium is because it is one of nature's gifts. Leather allows ventilation, absorption and evaporation of moisture, in other words, it 'breathes'.

It is quite stimulating to create 3 dimensional drawings or reliefs on everyday articles such as handbags, wallets, purses and belts etc.

Leatherwork offers an almost limitless horizon.

The main skins I concentrate on now are cow and snake as they provide satisfactory results."



Presents

The Black-Art Gallery

**a permanent venue for the works of
afrikan artists world-wide**

to be

**exhibited
seen
appreciated
shared
developed
bought
sold
etc**

a permanent place to inspire you

OBAALA is funded by The London Borough of Islington & the G.L.C.

PUBLISHED BY OBAALA (ORGANISATION FOR BLACK ARTS ADVANCEMENT & LEISURE ACTIVITIES)
OBAALA HOUSE, 225 SEVEN SISTERS ROAD, FINSBURY PARK, LONDON N4 2DA. TEL: 01-263 1948
DESIGN & ARTWORK: OBAALA STUDIO

OPENING TIMES:
Tues-Saturday 11-7
Sundays Talks & Shows
Closed Mondays
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