

# PAST



# FUTURE



## AN EXHIBITION OF WORK BY KEITH PIPER

JUNE 7 - JULY 22 1984

OPENING TIMES:  
Tues Wed Thur 11-7  
Fri 11-9 (Late night)  
Saturdays 11-7 Sundays 2-7  
Closed Mondays

### The Black-Art Gallery

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

Pariminder Vir OBE BLACK & ETHNIC ARTS ARCHIVE  
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## ABOUT THIS EXHIBITION

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PAST-IMPERFECT, FUTURE-TENSE, is the seventh exhibition to be staged at this gallery since its opening in September 1983. It presents an exhibition of Black-Art by one of the foremost visual communicators in Britain today, Keith Sekou Piper. The exhibition has been conceived and arranged in its entirety by Sekou with the fullest support of the OBAALA organisation. As usual, music accompanies the visual images, as our art\* is not to be separated and compartmentalised to suit European traditions.

\*art: creative expression



# 'PAST - IMPERFECT, FUTURE - TENSE'

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## KEITH PIPER ~ PUBLIC STATEMENT.

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"Let another generation deal with the niceties of beauty and art. This generation of Black men and women has its work cut out for it."

So wrote JULIAN MAYFIELD in his essay 'YOU TOUCH MY BLACK AESTHETIC, AND I'LL TOUCH YOURS'. The brother broke the soil there and left his marker, as a result we need argue no further at this time around the issue of 'art'.

The 'work' of which the brother was speaking is the task of definition, the task of analysing and defining our Blackness, past, present and future, and understanding the social and economic forces which have shaped us. It is also the task of us sharing our findings with each other, the raising of consciousness necessary for the organisation of collective activity and coherent struggle.

What then is the role of the artist, the Black-artist within this process? A next brother named RON KARENGA put it this way;

"All art must reflect and support the Black Revolution, and any art that does not discuss and contribute to the Revolution is invalid."

This 'Revolution' is as much a revolution of ideas, as it is the inevitable clash between vested economic interests, and those whom those interests exploit worldwide. It is the task of the Black-artist to involve him or herself in this revolution of ideas, seizing upon issues from within that revolution, and returning them to that revolution; giving dry theoretical concepts - rich material and visual form.

The forms which we use should be taken out of our own traditions. We reject the Western concept of the 'avant-guard' with its constant demand for new trends to titillate bored 'trendies'. Instead we use, and re-use what they would call 'cliches', but what we know to be the symbolic building bricks of our struggle; The colours, Red, Gold,

## PUBLIC STATEMENT.

Green and Black; The image of Afrika - our common denominator; The five pointed star of the socialism which we advocate. The socialism which Malcolm X was nearing when they cut him down. The socialism which was to find expression within the programme of the Black Panther Party, and the writings of George Jackson. The socialism of Kwame Nkrumah and Kwame Toure, of Fanon, Walter Rodney, and C.L.R. James. The internationalist socialism which links our struggle to the struggles of the dispossessed worldwide. From the Sandinista's to the P.L.O to S.W.A.P.O, it is all a piece. As JULIUS LESTER put it:

"Those who advocate Black Power\* today are not isolated 'extremists' as the press and the powers that be want us to believe. They are inheritors of a proud tradition of resistance."

It is this 'tradition' which has shaped our struggle, and from which we draw our inspiration. It is also to this tradition which we as Black people in this time, must return our contributions.

\*BLACK POWER: The ability of Black people to actively control their own economic, political, social and cultural actions, and in so doing, determine their own destinies.



AS ARM IN ARM THEY ENTER THE GALLERY...  
"THIS NIGGER IS SURE AS HELL STRETCHING MY LIBERALISTIC TENDENCIES" 1-1986

# TO MY BLACK BROTHERS & SISTERS.

What I have tried to do here is to fling out art for its own sake, what some white people proudly call 'art for arts sake', and usher in art for our sake; art for the sake of Black people. You may love it, or you may hate it; but you must pass judgement on it, and on what it says because it exists for you to reason over, as a starting point for thought and discussion.

Some of you may feel that the work is technically too rough. I work quickly and I work violently because I aim to capture a certain energy which I feel that working a thing until its well slick can kill. I believe that our African fore-fathers understood this, capturing an energy in their works which Europeans lost in their dry 'classical' art.

You see, today what we are looking for is a Black visual aesthetic, a way of making works which is exclusive to us, in the same way as our musicians have invented many musical forms which are totally 'Black'. We need a Black visual aesthetic because as Black-artists we still depend on forms and ideas about art borrowed from European art history. It is that history, and the dominance of its values over us which we need to reject because they can not serve us in our struggle.

My work may look rough because I have attempted to engage it in this process of aggressively rejecting eurocentric 'fine art' values, and trying to build something new out of its ruins. This process is experimental, and we all may have to experiment alot more before we develop a visual aesthetic which can truly serve us in our struggle; as long as we learn by our mistakes: 'Each one, teach one - and together we'll find a way'.

# LIST OF WORKS ON SHOW.

1. AS ARM IN ARM THEY ENTER THE BLACK-ART GALLERY. 1983.

2. MOST WANTED PERSONS. 1984.

WANTED: Solemn, dedicated Black people to undertake the dangerous task of reclaiming the shattered psyches and culture of the Black race.

3. PAST IMPERFECT - FUTURE TENSE. 1984.

"We have an understanding of karma,  
What goes around...  
Comes around."

GILL SCOTT-HERON.

4. WHO'S BEEN TELLING YOU LIES THEN? 1984.

7% of the population of this country own 84% of its wealth. It is wealth gained off the backs of the peoples of Africa, and the peoples of Asia, and off the backs of the European working classes. It is wealth maintained through the various institutions of the capitalist system.

OUR VERDICT: NOT WANTED.

5. THE MIGRANT. 1983.

When the migrants came, popular myth warned English fathers to lock up their daughters.  
As usual popular myth got it wrong; a different type of rape, a different form of colonialism.

6. MOST WANTED PERSON. (WHO WAS THE BLACK ASSASSIN?). 1984

"This monster - the monster, they've engendered in me will return to torment its maker, from the grave, the pit, the profoundest pit."

GEORGE JACKSON.

7. THE BLACK ASSASSIN SAINTS. 1982

"My friend was one of those who believe we Black artists should beat our saxophones and typewriters into spears and daggers, and each pick out a white pelt and be recorded in history as The Black Assassin Saints."

From 'BLACK MAGIC, BLACK ART'  
RON MILNER.

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Painter VIOBEE BLACK & ETHNIC ARTS ARCHIVE

# LIST OF WORKS ON SHOW.

## 8. THE BLACK ASSASSIN SAINTS - NEXT CHAPTER. 1984.

What we could not see in 1982 becomes clear in 1984. The contradictions between the impotence of 'art' and the hard necessities of struggle are settled as the Assassins return with a new creative creed. 'Art' as an integral component of struggle; communicating the terms and tactics of that struggle in the most concrete and objective of terms.

## 9. THE SEVEN RAGES OF MAN. 1984.

Huey P. Newton once wrote: "Life does not begin at birth, my life was forged in the history of all Black people, it is all of a piece."

The highest spiritual expression of PAN-AFRIKANISM says that we are all one person...and we have all lived and died through the struggles of all Black people worldwide, past, present and future.

George Jackson wrote: "Down here we hear alot of talk about 'killing all the niggers'. Well, they've been killing all the niggers for 400 years now and I'm still around...I must be the most resilient of dead men."

## 10. NGOZO SABA. (A PAN-AFRIKAN VALUE SYSTEM). 1981.

As defined by the brother IMAMU AMIRI BARAKA.

## 11. WE PROUD BUILDERS OF BLACK NATIONS. 1984.

For all of their contributions to our thinking.  
We would do well to go home and study their writings,  
and then to share our findings with one another.

Beyond these brief notes, I hope that these works speak for themselves.

## TO OUR WHITE COMRADES, FRIENDS & ENEMIES.

To those of you who sincerely wish to support us in our struggle; our first demand is simple, and by virtue of that simplicity is totally non-negotiable. We demand total power of definition over our selves, and over our activities. View this demand in the light of the fact that by virtue of imperialism, Europeans exercised, and continue to exercise as their automatic birthright, the power to judge and define everything that existed elsewhere on the globe relative to their own value system. We say this now, and we say this most forcefully, this assumption ends here! You are not equipped to judge Black-art, Black politics, or Black activities in general because the values by which these activities operate exist inspite of, and in many cases in overt rejection of the values which you have been taught to impose over the world.

You must also understand the necessity for any oppressed group to analyse and organise against that oppression independently. We are all keen to see capitalism and neo-imperialism dismantled, and within this process Black people must and will take a vanguard role. However the task of radicalisation within any particular community demands measures specific to the needs of that community, and it is members of that community who are best equipped to judge and furnish those needs. Therefore, just as for instance, women must deal with the radicalisation of women, independently, so must Black people exercise total control over their own political education and organisation. This is not racism. It is a necessary expression of the social and economic self-determination which must be the hall-mark of any future juster world society.

# ~~WANTED~~



# tolerated

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## KEITH PIPER - BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

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Born 1960. Raised and mis-educated in one of Birmingham's many inner-city, third-world colonies.

At the age of 19, all else having failed, I was sent to Coventry to do a foundation course in Art & Design. It was there that I met EDDIE CHAMBERS, who at the time was already committed to the theory and practice of political Black-art.

It was a year however before I began to absorb his influence, first gaining an interest in the ideas and historical development of Black resistance from such books as 'SOUL ON ICE' (Eldridge Cleaver) and 'REVOLUTIONARY SUICIDE' (Huey P. Newton), and comparing their experiences with the realities of Black life in this country at that time, a period of riots and resistance to police repression.

I began to grapple with the problems connected with absorbing and communicating these ideas in my work from around mid 1980, but enjoyed little success until I saw the work of a Rasta artist named RAS LUCAS at a show in Birmingham. The brother was using a combination of image and text to make direct and powerful statements.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

By the time I moved to Nottingham that autumn to study Fine Art I was ready to set about attempting to absorb his influence into my own working style.

It was at about this time that EDDIE CHAMBERS began organising a small number of young Black-artists from Wolverhampton with a view to staging an exhibition at the local art gallery. I managed to involve myself in this project which found fruition in a show entitled 'BLACK ART, AND DONE' held in June 1981.

12 months later, and with a line up which now included CLAUDETTE JOHNSON, we staged a show at the AFRICA CENTRE, Covent Garden, entitled 'THE PAN-AFRIKAN CONNECTION'. It was a label which was to stick, and our group exhibitions for the next 2 years were to bear it as their title. Their venues included:

IKON GALLERY, BIRMINGHAM. June/July 1982.  
MIDLAND GROUP, NOTTINGHAM. Jan/Feb 1983.  
HERBERT ART GALLERY, COVENTRY. Feb/March 1983.  
AFRICA CENTRE, COVENT GARDEN. May 1983.  
BATTERSEA ARTS CENTRE, LONDON. Feb 1984.

Today the group, now including MARLENE SMITH, and DONALD RODNEY, and known as THE BLK ART GROUP continues to involve itself in a wide range of activities as the interests of its members diverge.

Although I've taken part in two past exhibitions at THE BLACK-ART GALLERY, namely: 'HEART IN EXILE' and 'BLACK ART NOW', this is my first solo show, and I'd like to thank O.B.A.A.L.A for recklessly entrusting this space to these works for a while. I'm hoping they won't regret it.



\*OBAALA: THE ORGANISATION FOR BLACK ARTS ADVANCEMENT & LEISURE ACTIVITIES was founded in 1981 by Shakka Dedi and Eve-I Kadeena. A pioneer organisation in the field of Black visual arts development and promotion, OBAALA established THE BLACK-ART GALLERY in 1983 as a permanent venue for Black artists to share their work with their audiences.

(More information about OBAALA's work can be obtained by writing to:

The Administrator, OBAALA HOUSE, 225 Seven Sisters Road, London N4 2DA.)

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# WANTED!



FOR UNDERMINING COLONIALISM THROUGH  
THE REEDUCATION OF BLACK PEOPLE

# WANTED!



FOR UNDERMINING RACISM THROUGH THE  
ORGANISATION OF BLACK PEOPLE

# WANTED!



FOR UNDERMINING NEO-IMPERIALISM THROUGH  
THE RADICALIZATION OF BLACK PEOPLE

# WANTED!



FOR DESTABILIZING CAPITALISM THROUGH THE  
REVOLUTIONARY MOBILIZATION OF BLACK PEOPLE  
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*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**