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Chapter 15

Power in Numbers: Black British Artist Groups, Collectives and Networks Since the 1960s

Anjalie Dalal-Clayton

Grassroots collectivist art activism has a long, varied history but has traditionally been overlooked in the narrativizing of art's histories, as Gregory Sholette observes in *The Art of Art Activism and the Activism of Art* (2022). Thanks to his book and other publications including this volume, work has begun to correct such omissions and oversights, and to expand our knowledge of the artist networks, groups and collectives whose creative and aesthetic practices have positively impacted, and been impacted by, political struggle.¹ My contribution to this endeavour is to examine the precise intersection between collectivist art activism and the anti-racist and anti-imperialist efforts of Black artists working in the UK.² Rather than offering a comprehensive and representative account of the many Black artist collectives that have formed in the UK over the past sixty years, I focus on the specific contexts, concerns and objectives of a small selection, reflecting on the commonalities, differences and overlapping connections between the strategies used by different groups over time, and the influence of historical groups on contemporary Black artist collectives.

I start in the 1960s by considering the work of the amorphous network known as the Caribbean Artists Movement. Then, I move forward to the 1980s and look at the work of the Blk Art Group, and a looser affiliation of women artists brought together in exhibitions curated by the artist Lubaina Himid. Finally, I settle in the current moment of the 2020s and examine the activities of four contemporary groups and collectives – QTIPOC Collective Creativity, Black Obsidian Sound System, Sorryyoufeeluncomfortable and Languid Hands – each of which are grappling with the ongoing, related challenges of artistic and professional isolation, critical and curatorial negligence, and institutional racism and imperialism.

Until the mid-twentieth century creatives from the African, Asian and Caribbean diasporas in the UK had largely been working in isolation, unaware of other practitioners

who shared their racialized and diasporic experiences. Amongst them was Edward Kamau Braithwaite, a Bajan playwright and poet. Recalling his arrival in London in 1950, he said,

I had recently arrived from the Caribbean on study leave to Britain, and as a writer myself, wanted, quite naturally, to get in touch with as many Caribbean artists as possible. But where were they? ... The isolation of West Indian writers from each other and from the society in which they live could eventually only stultify development and could do nothing to contribute to perhaps the most important problem of our times – the problem of the future of race relations in Britain.³

In 1966, Braithwaite contacted two other Caribbean diasporic writers with whom he shared literary and political interests – John La Rose, a young Trinidadian poet, who at the time was in the process of establishing a publishing company titled New Beacon Books, and Andrew Salkey, a London-based, Jamaican-born writer.⁴ Together they founded a multidisciplinary association of Caribbean writers and artists that came to be known as the Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM). Like all artist groupings, its initial purpose was to build a network and to combat the sense of professional and cultural isolation that many of its members had been experiencing after their arrival in Britain. The association flourished between 1966 and 1972, and the many writers, artists and thinkers associated with it included C. L. R. James, Stuart Hall, Ronald Moody, Aubrey Williams, Althea McNish, Errol Lloyd and Linton Kwesi Johnson. They held regular meetings at the West Indian Student Centre in London that enabled writers and artists to exchange ideas and experiences, and these meetings began to include students, creatives from the French and Spanish speaking Caribbean, African artists and writers such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, as well as Asian and white British intellectuals, creatives, publishers and critics. The proceedings of their meetings and conferences were recorded and archived as a resource, which continues to be held at the George Padmore Institute, London.

One of the most interesting motivations for the group was to generate meaningful responses to each other's work. By the mid-1960s, the publishing of Caribbean fiction and poetry in Britain was well under way, and numerous plays by Caribbean-born artists were being performed on London stages, but there had been little critical attention and informed assessment of them.⁵ One of the association's objectives was to develop art criticism and critical criteria appropriate to an emerging, international, Caribbean-derived aesthetic amongst artists and writers that was not solely informed by European traditions and ideas, and to support the development of this new aesthetic.⁶ The association was a way for those involved to network amongst themselves and to give themselves wider visibility. One of the principal routes through which this was achieved was via *Savacou* – a journal of ideas, literature and new writing founded in 1970. Another route was through the publishing house New Beacon Books. As well as publishing poetry and literature, New Beacon Books produced volumes of art and literary criticism, including *Tradition, the Writer and Society: Critical Essays* (1967) by the Guyanese novelist and essayist Wilson Harris. By 1972, many of the group's key participants left the UK to live and work in other parts of the globe and the CAM ceased as a formal organization roughly in the same period as the 'born here, here to stay' generation of Black British creatives was beginning



Figure 15.1a Horace Ové, 'The Lime' (Samuel Selvon; John La Rose; Andrew Salkey), giclée print, 1974, NPG x126733.

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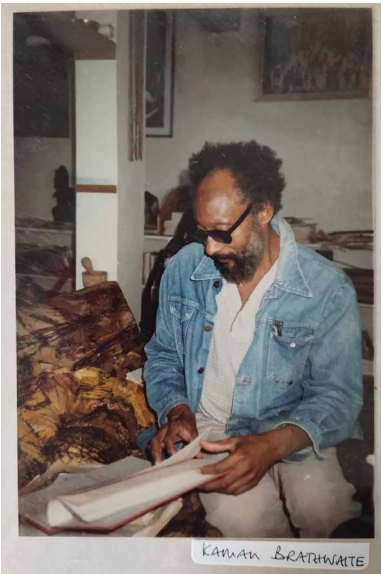


Figure 15.1b–c Photograph of Kamau Brathwaite; and photograph of copies of *Savacou*. Photographs by Anjalie Dalal-Clayton. Courtesy of the George Padmore Institute.

to emerge. But, during the time of its existence, CAM influenced artistic trends within British Caribbean art and acted as a bridge between Caribbean migrants and those who would later describe themselves as Black Britons.⁷

CAM is just one example of Black and Brown artists clustering around often enforced or assumed ethno-geographic designations in the 1950s and 1960s, which, as artist, curator and art historian Eddie Chambers has observed, increasingly began to count for more than their unique capabilities as individual practitioners in the eyes of the British art world.⁸ This meant that, by the 1970s, few opportunities were given to such artists to exhibit individually in solo shows or alongside their white peers in group shows. Foreign-born, racialized artists had little choice but to continue to draw together for mutual support. One example of this can be found in the Rainbow Art Group, founded in 1978.⁹ The impetus for the group was the difficulty its members had found in 'getting their work considered seriously and supported through established channels'.¹⁰ Their aim, like that of CAM, was to 'create a climate of knowledge and appreciation that will allow the work of the future generation to be admired and sought after'.¹¹ The year after this group was established, another Black artists group was to form with a far more radical agenda and set of political and aesthetic strategies.

In the late 1970s, unemployment, the collapse of the coal, steel and ship building industries, racial tension and the rise of the far right were significant characteristics of life in Britain. In this same moment, the first appreciable generation of British-born Black artists were attending and graduating from the nation's art schools, and like the foreign-born generations before them, beginning to organize themselves in the face of widespread invisibility and to engage in a varied range of activist strategies against exclusionary institutional practices and racial oppression in the world at large. Arguably the best known and most impactful among them was the Blk Art Group – a broad cohort of Black British early-career artists who burst onto the scene via a series of self-initiated group exhibitions and conferences that, unlike Black artist groups and collectives of the past, articulated a politicized Black and British attitude to artmaking. Eddie Chambers, Claudette Johnson, Keith Piper, Donald Rodney and Marlene Smith were the core members of this group, drawn to each other through student networks, social connections and chance encounters, but its membership was porous and variable between its 1979 formation and eventual dissolution in 1984.

The Blk Art Group specifically focused on addressing racial injustice in Britain and across the world, and its members contended that, as Black art students, they could not simply pursue art for art's sake like many of their white art school peers or engage in abstraction as some Black artists of the preceding generation had. Instead, they felt obliged to acknowledge and characterize the issues affecting Black people through highly representational work, which they termed 'Black Art'. Rather than collaboratively producing artworks, they worked individually using cheap and easily accessible materials, and combining texts with images to convey clear and direct messages, which they then exhibited together under the banner of the Group. Their objective was to raise Black consciousness amongst Britain's Black communities by displaying their work in contexts where Black audiences were most likely to encounter it, including Black community-based art centres such as the Black Art Gallery in London. As Rodney expressed in 1984,



Figure 15.2a-c Reception desk, First National Black Art Convention 1982, Marlene Smith, Eddie Chambers and Keith Piper; Members of the Blk Art Group with Sonia Boyce 1982, Left to Right: Claudette Johnson, Donald Rodney, Sonia Boyce, Keith Piper and Marlene Smith; and Members of the Blk Art Group 1983, Left to Right: Marlene Smith, Keith Piper, Donald Rodney and Eddie Chambers. All images courtesy of Keith Piper.

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Our work is for a huge audience – a Black audience, specifically – to educate them. And the white art scene, as I see it, is basically a small elitist audience of quite rich people who can afford these valuable items. I don't think our work is precious or valuable and it is only there to serve the people. We call ourselves simply Black artists because we try to deal specifically with those issues of imperialism and colonialism and the wider issues which affect Black people throughout history.¹²

The group's efforts were not limited to making and displaying art, however. A key strategy was to write letters to public art galleries to express the urgency of their mission and demand spaces to exhibit their work. This resulted in several exhibitions including *Black Art 'An Done* at Wolverhampton Art Gallery in 1981 and *The Pan Afrikan Connection* at the Ikon Gallery, Birmingham in 1982. They also staged two intergenerational conferences to unite students and artists of various ages to network and offer support to one another and, most crucially, to discuss the form, function and future of 'Black Art'. The Group had the foresight to archive correspondence, exhibition ephemera, the art criticism they received and the notes and proceedings of their conferences, so that this documentation might later aid in writing their work into history.¹³

Although the Group disbanded after a mere five years, its impact and legacy has been significant. Participation in their exhibitions brought visibility to a new generation of visual artists and established long-lasting relationships between several public art galleries and

young Black artists, several of whom have since achieved national and international critical acclaim, including Sonia Boyce.¹⁴ Its activism and radical stance was arguably central to the development of what would become known as the British Black Arts Movement (BBAM) of the 1980s, and its critique of institutional practices provoked a better engagement with the work of Black artists, in turn, spurring the careers of several of today's best known Black British artists, including Johnson and Piper themselves.¹⁵ In 2018, Johnson, Piper and Smith met for a conversation as part of the BBC3 documentary *Whoever Heard of a Black Artist?* In it, Johnson commented, 'There was a desire to work collectively – to come together in a group and to feel like it was a powerful way to work ... the aim was to get the work out there and get the conversation going and so in that way we succeeded'.¹⁶ It was at the Blk Art Group's *First National Black Art Convention* at Wolverhampton Polytechnic

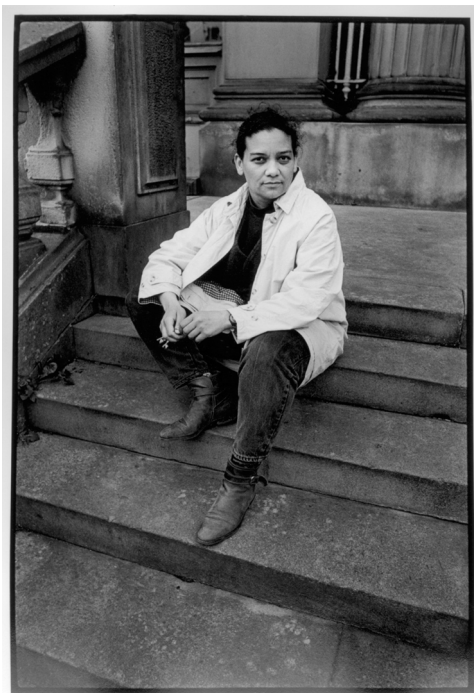


Figure 15.3 *Lubaina Himid* by Sam MacLaren, 1995. Bromide print, NPG x88953, 39 x 26.4 cm. All rights reserved © Sam MacLaren/National Portrait Gallery, London.

in 1982 that another loser, unnamed affiliation of artists was initiated by the now well-known artist Lubaina Himid. Himid was a student at the Royal College of Art and had submitted an artwork to the all-women exhibition *Women's Images of Men* (1980) at the Institute of Contemporary Art, London. Her submission was rejected, prompting her to pull back from the conversations she was having with white feminists and instead seek out other Black women artists who she felt 'were constantly a footnote in that bigger story'.¹⁷ This brought her to the convention in Wolverhampton, where many of the women broke away into a separate space, feeling that the discussions were being dominated by the men in the room. Artists including Nina Edge, Maud Sulter, Claudette Johnson, Marlene Smith, Sonia Boyce, Ingrid Pollard and Himid herself introduced themselves to one another and to each other's work and concerns. But

Himid was motivated to take action: 'How could we get anything done if too much talking went on? ... I'm also someone who thinks "Let's just do something" ... I could see in that room there were women that had so much to say, coming from completely different viewpoints ... I could see a way of really making a difference.'¹⁸ After the convention, she resolved to start organizing exhibitions of work by Black women artists and made several studio visits to the women she had met. They began making connections to other Black women artists and this quickly developed into a supportive, informal network with Himid as one of its leading figures.

The following year, Himid organized an exhibition at London's Africa Centre titled *5 Black Women* (1983), which displayed work by Houria Niati, Sonia Boyce, Veronica Ryan, Claudette Johnson and herself. Later that year she staged the show *Black Woman Time Now* at the Battersea Arts Centre. As with the Blk Art Group, it was a vital and intentional initial strategy to stage these exhibitions in arts centres rather than in more formal gallery spaces so that as wide a public as possible could become aware of their existence. Reflecting on this approach years later she asserted, 'That's important. None of these spaces were galleries or museums. They were art centres, where theoretically ... you could have a chance encounter with what was there.'¹⁹

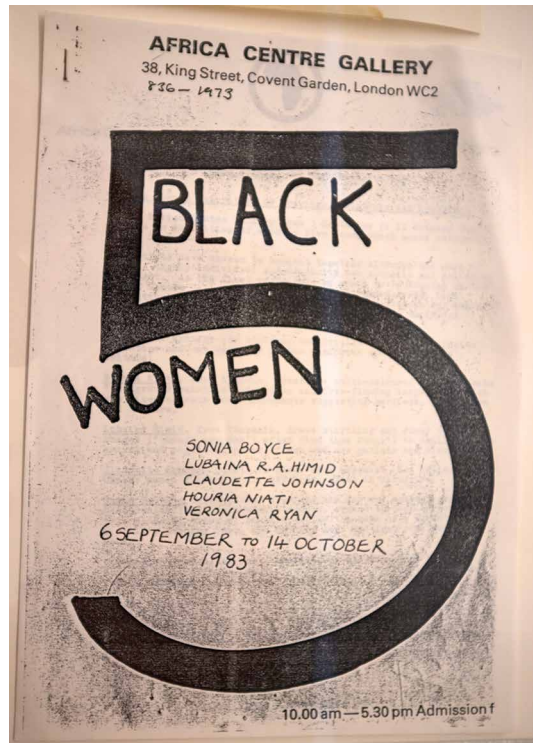


Figure 15.4 Lubaina Himid, *5 Black Women* poster, 1983. Lithograph.

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Figure 15.5a–b Lubaina Himid, Installation views of *The Thin Black Line*, 1985.
All rights reserved © Lubaina Himid.

Soon after, however, she turned her attention to the formal gallery space she had been rejected from five years previously, staging what would be one of her best-known exhibitions, *The Thin Black Line* (1985) at the Institute for Contemporary Arts. Himid had submitted an ambitious proposal for an exhibition that would take over the entire building and although it was accepted, the space she had requested was not. Instead, she was offered only a corridor space, stairway and small room at the top of the stairs within which to hold her exhibition. Her response was to take a maximalist approach to using the minimal space she was given, using every square inch she could to show as many artists as possible to evidence their number and breadth of practice: 'I thought if I could show that there were eleven artists then you could assume that there were eleven or 2,011.'²⁰

transgender, and intersex people of colour) Collective Creativity. In their words, the group was ‘formed out of necessity, to carve collaborative space outside of the institutional framework where a specific Black queer or trans voice and experience can be nurtured’.²⁴

The group powerfully explained that,

It started as a journey researching Britain’s history of radical political Black art, as so many of us found it had been missing in our own art education ... There is a very specific distilled isolation, that describes the art student experience, being perhaps only one of very few people of colour at very white, and largely very privileged art institutions in the UK. With scarce support, validation or affirming politics – amidst the abundance of racism and micro aggressions – it is an experience that so many artists of colour now and from the past still describe as a trauma they had to endure and fight through for survival ... How do we change this cycle, and reach out with intergenerational conversations, that re-situate the British narrative of Black art history and its knowledges?²⁵

Clearly the isolation experienced by creatives such as Edward Kamau Braithwaite in the 1960s, which prompted him to connect with other Caribbean diasporic artists in the UK, persisted into the 2010s, and the racism experienced by Black artists working in the 1980s, which motivated them to take collective action, had far from subsided. In the art school environment, it continues to manifest in the form of more subtle but no less harmful micro-aggressions that intersect with, and are compounded by, underlying

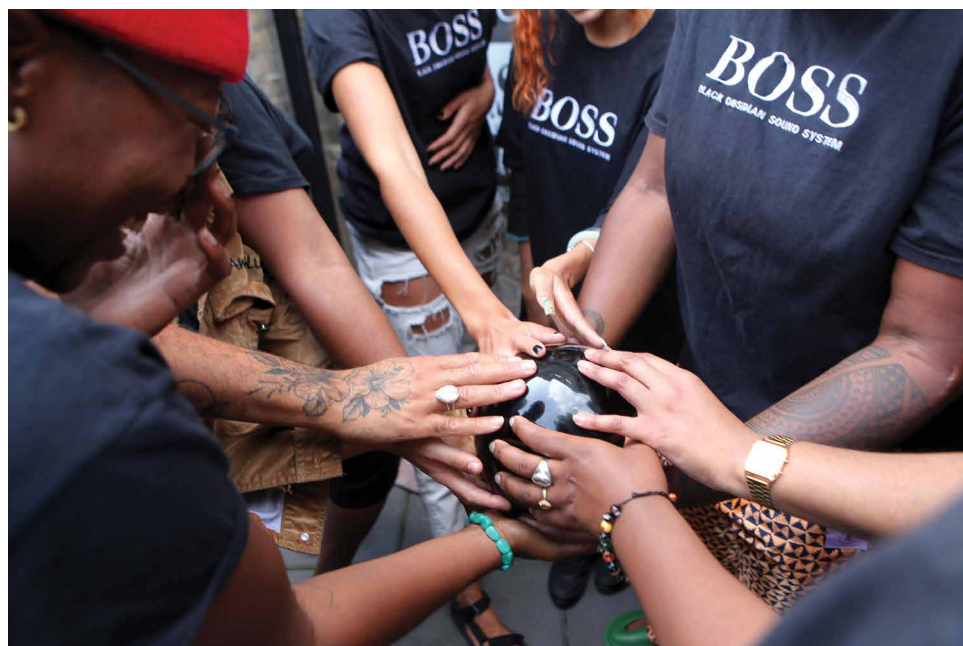


Figure 15.7 Image of B.O.S.S., 2021. Photograph by Yasmine Akim.

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homophobic and transphobic hostilities. The issue identified by QTIPOC Collective Creativity is that the impactful work of Black grassroots activist collectives of the past is largely absent in art school curricula, leading today's artists of colour to experience a lineal disconnect with art's histories and to suffer the very isolation their forbears worked so hard to tackle. As well as hosting intergenerational reading and discussion groups, the collective's response was to create a free, online publication titled *Surviving Art School: An Artist of Colour Toolkit*.²⁶ Effectively a digital booklet, the toolkit offers interviews with artists who participated in the British Black Arts Movement of the 1980s, letters written by the collective's members to their younger selves, lists of artists of the BBAM for students to look into, reading lists, and transcripts of intergenerational group discussions. This textual approach to grassroots activism is reminiscent of the strategies deployed by the Blk Art Group some thirty years previously, and by CAM another twenty years before that (letter writing, publishing, self-documentation), evidencing the perennial significance of the text as a tool for surviving marginalization within the art world.

In 2018, the year after QTIPOC Collective Creativity published its toolkit, Ifekoya was involved in establishing another collective of queer, trans and non-binary Black people specifically involved in art, sound and radical activism. Titled Black Obsidian Sound System (B.O.S.S.), its objective is to create a sound system (a collective of DJs, sound engineers and MCs) that can be hired at subsidized rates or for free, primarily to Black communities, for technical workshops, live performance events, club nights, art installations and creative commissions, with the purpose of amplifying and connecting those communities.

The members include Adedamola Bajomo, Kiera Coward Deyell, Phoebe Collings-James, Onyeka Igwe, Marcus Macdonald, Shamica Ruddock, Shenece Oretha and Gin Wilson. Speaking about the purpose and ethos of the group, Collings-James has highlighted the collective's resistance to the capitalist individualism around which the art world is structured and how being an artist 'can become quite an insular practice if you go by the guidance of what is set out by museums and institutions and the art industry. So in terms of push back, if "resistance" and "radical" can sometimes mean pushing back [against that] ... these moments of collectivism really do speak to that.'²⁷ This anti-capitalist sentiment is definitive of artist collectives that have formed during the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and echoes the assertions of the Blk Art Group, the members of which frequently took capitalism to task in their work as having developed off the backs of enslaved Black people between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.²⁸ But what distinguishes B.O.S.S. from the Blk Art Group and other Black grassroots activist art groups of the past is its intentional and insistent commitment to collectivism and community-building, whereby the group is prioritized over the individual, as evidenced by the fact that, at one point, B.O.S.S. worked with a conflict resolution facilitator to resolve disagreements and help maintain its collective vision.²⁹

In 2014, the year after QTIPOC Collective Creativity was formed, another group emerged in London consisting of thinkers, creators and activists including Rabz Lansiquot, Imani Mason Jordan, Jacob V. Joyce and Anni Movsisyan. Under the collective title of Sorryyoufeeluncomfortable, they gathered to investigate social inequalities by hosting concerts, exhibitions and conversations and by self-publishing their own critical writing. Perhaps amongst the most interesting of their initiatives was their staging of *BBZ BLK*

BK: The Alternative Graduate Show at Copeland Gallery in 2018. Displaying work by artists who identified as queer, trans and/or non-binary people of Black ancestry and who had also recently graduated from a practice-based arts degree, the motivations behind the show echoed the concerns that QTIPOC Collective Creativity had expressed about the experiences of Black and queer art students. Speaking to *Dazed* magazine, Lansiquot and Mason Jordan explained, 'In our conversations with the artists, it became clear that each one of them had experiences during art school which, in some way, limited their ability to make and exhibit the work they wanted to share.'³⁰ *The Alternative Graduate Show* provided the artists involved with the opportunity to present their work precisely as they wished and with absolute freedom of expression, knowing that they need not mute themselves in order to appease sensitive tutors, worry that the tone and content of their work might make their white peers uncomfortable, or translate their practices for those not sharing the same lived experience. Lansiquot and Mason Jordan asserted that 'This isn't just about how the work is curated, or about the physical space ... but about how the space feels, and the conversations and provocations that are allowed into the alternative graduate show'.³¹

Lansiquot and Mason Jordan have since formed a separate curatorial partnership known as Languid Hands. Continuing the work they started as part of Sorryyoufeeluncomfortable, their curatorial practice is influenced by a Black and queer radical politics, focusing on collaboration and fostering highly inclusive opportunities for Black artists to present their work. They describe the spaces that they open out as ones in which Black and queer artists are not confined by 'white-defined expectations of Black creativity'. A particularly inspiring aspect of their practice is what they describe as a 'curatorial ethics of care in defense of Black life', in which they place the same emphasis on caring for Black artists that art institutions traditionally place on caring for art objects.³² They state that,

As black curators, our care must extend beyond the material production and handling of the work itself, to supporting the conditions in which black people might survive in a world that does not care for them, in a world aggressively indifferent to their safety ... We have often felt that our role is in part to try to protect black people from white institutions and to defend the wellbeing and capabilities of black people by any means available. We must be ambassadors who usher in the possibility of black life lived to its fullest, to understand the conditions within which the black artist comes to us, to provide a kind of care that recognises the fullness of black life and the callousness of the violence that shrouds it.³³

This attitude and approach was evident in their curation of the exhibition *Dead Yard* by the artist R.I.P. Germain at London's Cubitt Gallery in 2020, which presented a sound piece and a range of sculptures exploring death and mourning in relation to Black life in the UK.³⁴ As Black curators sharing some of the racialized lived experiences of the artist, Languid Hands did not require R.I.P. Germain to explain the nuances of their work in order for them to curate the exhibition. As writer and critic Ravi Ghosh observes, 'This affinity transcends the typical artist-curator relationship; the result is that Languid Hands only



Figure 15.8 Portrait of Languid Hands (2019), commissioned by Jerwood Arts. Photograph by Hydar Dewachi.

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collaborate with artists with whom they have an intimate friendship. Without this bond, work simply cannot cohere in the same way.³⁵

In many ways, Languid Hands' efforts has echoes of the work undertaken by CAM in the 1960s. Like Languid Hands, the CAM artists identified a dearth of critical recognition

and reception of work by Caribbean diasporic artists in Britain, and also took matters into their own hands by organizing their own exhibitions, publishing their own writing, and seeking to develop critical criteria that was appropriate to the kind of work they were producing and which, crucially, the white art establishment was not intellectually or experientially equipped to deal with. Similarly, the solidarity and peer-support offered by QTIPOC Collective Creativity to fellow Black art students is comparable to the work of the Blk Art Group, particularly in terms of the opportunities for networking that it created through its conferences. And although the Blk Art Group did not articulate their motivation for organizing their events in terms of facilitating survival (as QTIPOC Collective Creativity did), Marlene Smith has since commented,

The Blk Art Group was essential to me to get me through the first couple of years of being an artist. I don't think I would have been able to survive it if I had been working in the way the institution expected which is to be a solo artist working alone ... and having only the students at the college to be my sounding board. So, I always say that the Blk art Group wasn't the reason that I went to art school, but it was the reason I was able to finish art school.³⁶

These cross-generational approaches and connections are undoubtedly sustaining for a younger cohort of Black artists who are finding not only safety, but power, in numbers. However, that the same strategies are required now is a damning indictment on the current state of affairs for racialized and minoritized artists trying to work within the established art structures. But change is often made incrementally, and rarely without the collaborative support of other people. As Himid reflected in 1986,

I have to look at the art world as something that can be changed. If I decide that ... white people are racist when it comes to making decisions about sharing things ... what do you do? You could end up doing nothing. In order to work, you have to change your attitude to those people and keep calling their bluff again and again.³⁷

Notes

- 1 See, for example: Nato Thompson, *Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the 21st Century* (New York: Melville House Publishing, 2016); Stephanie Hartle and Darcy White, eds., *Visual Activism in the 21st Century: Art, Protest and Resistance in an Uncertain World* (London: Bloomsbury 2024); and Afonso Dias Ramos and Tom Snow, eds., *Activism, Documents of Contemporary Art* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2023).
- 2 When using the term 'Black' I am typically referring to individuals with African and Caribbean ancestry, and although I do not personally subscribe to political Blackness in the contemporary moment (an umbrella term and notion that arose in the UK during the 1970s and which referred to all people experiencing discrimination on the basis of their skin colour), there are instances when political Blackness will be invoked, specifically in cases where the groups discussed use the term 'Black' in this way. The contemporary artist collectives

discussed in this chapter largely use the term 'people of colour' instead of 'Black' in cases where they refer to people of both African and Caribbean descent and Asian descent.

- 3 Edward Kamau Braithwaite, 'The Caribbean Artists Movement', *Caribbean Quarterly* 14, no. 1/2 (1968): 57.
- 4 For more information see *New Beacon Books*, <https://www.newbeaconbooks.com> (accessed 22 October 2024).
- 5 Philippa Ireland, 'Laying the Foundations: New Beacon Books, Bogle L'Ouverture Press and the Politics of Black Publishing', *Revue Electronique D'Etudes sur le Mode Anglophone* 11, no. 1 (2013): <https://doi.org/10.4000/erea.3524>; Roxy Harris and Sarah White, 'A Short History of Black Publishing: The Roots of Independent Black Publishing', *Bocas Litfest*, <https://www.bocaslitfest.com/celebrating-black-britain/black-british-publishing/> (accessed 22 October 2024).
- 6 Anne Walmsley, *The Caribbean Artists Movement, 1966–1972: A Literary and Cultural History* (London: New Beacon Books, 1992).
- 7 Angela Cobbinah, 'A Caribbean Hothouse for the Arts in a Cold Climate', *Camden New Journal*, 25 October 2007, https://www.thecnj.com/review/2007/102507/feat102507_01.html
- 8 Eddie Chambers, *Black Artists in British Art: A History since the 1950s* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 41.
- 9 The group's members were Indira Ariyanayagam, Uzo Egonu, Lancelot Ribeiro, Taiwo Jegede, Errol Lloyd, Yeshwant Mali, Gordon V. de la Mothe, Durlabh Singh, Suresh Vedak, Ibrahim Wagh and Mohammad Zakir.
- 10 Quote from a leaflet produced for a Rainbow Art Group exhibition at Action Space, London, 1979, https://www.diaspora-artists.net/display_item.php?id+980-&table+artefacts (accessed 22 October 2024).
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 *Ebony*, aired 1984, BBC. Rodney is speaking as part of an episode in which a segment focuses on the Blk Art Group and an exhibition they were staging at the Black Art Gallery in 1984.
- 13 Several of these documents were displayed as part of the 2023 exhibition *The More Things Change: an exhibition of works by key artists of the Blk Art Group* at Wolverhampton Art Gallery.
- 14 In 1983, Chambers wrote to the Bluecoat Art Gallery requesting an exhibition. Two years later the Bluecoat staged the exhibition *Black Skin/Bluecoat* (1985) which included works by two Blk Art Group members (Chambers and Piper) as well as other artists associated with the Group though not formally part of it, including Sonia Boyce. Boyce has retained a relationship with Bluecoat since that exhibition, as detailed in Anjalie Dalal-Clayton and Julie Sheldon, "'A Dissident View": Bluecoat Exhibitions, 1967–2005', in *Bluecoat, Liverpool: The UK's First Arts Centre*, eds., Brian Biggs and John Belchem (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 145–74.
- 15 In 2024 Johnson was shortlisted for the Turner Prize and Piper received a major commission by Tate.
- 16 Johnson in *Whoever Heard of a Black Artist? Britain's Hidden Art History* (2018), directed by Alex Harding, aired 30 July 2023 on BBC Four, <https://youtu.be/IMXxDXQMEgs>
- 17 Lubaina Himid, 'Lubaina Himid in Conversation with Paul Goodwin', Afterall Exhibition Histories Talks, Whitechapel Gallery, London, 3 March 2016, <https://www.afterall.org/videos/exhibition-histories-talks-lubaina-himid-video-online/>
- 18 Ibid.

- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Courtney J. Martin, 'Lubaina Himid: Curator, 1983–2012', in *Lubaina Himid* (London: Koenig Books, 2018), 59.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 QTIPOC Collective Creativity, 'Collective Creativity Workshop', Glasgow Centre for Contemporary Art, 10 March 2017: <https://www.cca-glasgow.com/programme/collective-creativity-workshop>
- 25 QTIPOC Collective Creativity, *Surviving Art School: An Artist of Colour Toolkit*, 2016, https://issuu.com/rudyloewecomics/docs/surviving_art_school_as_artists_of_, 2.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 'The more things change ... Collectivism, Community and Collaboration', Blk Art Group Research Project', public conversation programmed as part of the launch event for *The More Things Change: An Exhibition of Work by Key Artists from the Blk Art Group* at Wolverhampton Art Gallery, 29 April 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6FoM2cKZdlg>
- 28 See, for example, Keith Piper's 1984 polyptych *Most Wanted Persons*.
- 29 'The more things change ... Collectivism, Community and Collaboration'.
- 30 Cited in Ashleigh Kane, 'The Alternative Graduate Show Liberating Black, Queer Artists', *Dazed*, 2 August 2018, <https://www.dazeddigital.com/art-photography/article/40863/1/bbz-blk-bl-sorryyoufeeluncomfortable-alternative-graduate-black-queer-artists>
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Languid Hands, 'Languid Hands on Curation and Care During this Moment', 2020, <https://www.cubittartists.org.uk/languid-hands-on-curation-care-during-this-moment>
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 For more information, see: <https://www.cubittartists.org.uk/rip-germain-dead-yard?fbclid=IwAR20dayjvWXufhQm0pRFzYymnudSzJ8h2hvyPpDwPNhqnvMUH7vESU4RnfM> (accessed 22 October 2024).
- 35 Ravi Ghosh, 'Languid Hands: Curating Under White Supremacy', *Elephant*, 20 October 2020, <https://elephant.art/languid-hands-curating-under-white-supremacy-20102020/>
- 36 'The more things change. Collectivism, Community and Collaboration'.
- 37 *State of the Art: Ideas and Images of the 1980s*, episode 6: Identity, directed by Geoff Dunlop, aired 1986 on Channel 4.