


Institution: UAL		
Unit of Assessment: 32		
Title of case study: Uncovering Black Artists: Britain's Hidden Art History		
 <p>Brenda Emmanus (left) and Sonia Boyce (right). <i>Whoever Heard of a Black Artist? Britain's Hidden Art History</i> © Lorian Reed-Drake. BBC Studios</p>		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2005–2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Professor Sonia Boyce OBE RA Professor Paul Goodwin Professor susan pui san lok Dr David Dibosa Dr Anjalie Dalal-Clayton Hammad Nasar	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Chair in Black Art & Design Director, TrAIN Director, UAL Decolonising Arts Institute Reader, TrAIN Research Fellow, UAL Decolonising Arts Institute Principal Research Fellow, UAL Decolonising Arts Institute	Period(s) employed by UAL: 2008–present (previously P/T lecturer, 2002) October 2012–present June 2018–present September 2004–present June 2015–present May 2020–present/BAM contract 2017–2018
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015–2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) UAL's commitment to driving social, cultural and institutional change in relation to inequalities in the arts that result from issues around ethnic and national identity has had—and continues to have—extensive impact. UAL has enabled this by establishing within the University a range of influential academic positions and research projects, as well as research centres in the field, which are impacting the wider discourse. Key to this is UAL's Black Artists and Modernism (BAM) project, which, by uncovering and making visible Black-British artists and their work, has impacted on national collections' development policy and strategy; archiving and accessions management; exhibition curation; the interpretation of works within museum and gallery settings, and supporting events in the UK and internationally. The project has changed public, professional and academic discourses, with these artists beginning to be properly positioned within narratives of historical and contemporary art.		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		

Key to expanding knowledge in the area of the representation of Black-British artists in the UK and internationally was the publication of **Boyce**, Bailey and Baucom's *Shades of Black: Assembling Black Arts in 1980s Britain* (2005), the outcome of research into the previous 20 years of Black Art in Britain. [3.1.] Focusing particularly on the Thatcher period and the explosion of the Black Arts Movement in the wake of civil unrest and rioting in British cities, the book created a dialogue between leading artists, curators, art historians and critics. Combining cultural theory with anecdotal testimonies and experience, it examined how Black-British artists of the 1980s might be viewed historically and explored the political, cultural and artistic developments that sparked the movement. The book built on papers presented at a Duke University conference (2001) and included a comprehensive timeline of Black-British art from 1960 onwards. Awarded the Historians of British Art Book Prize (2007), the first publication focused exclusively on Black arts to win the prize since it was established in 1996, *Shades of Black* has become an established point of reference for the study of Black Art and British cultural developments during the period.

UAL's *Black Artists and Modernism* research project (2015–2018, AHRC, GBP722,681.00) continued the University's work in this area. The project recognised that, despite the fact that Black-British artists have made a fundamental contribution to modernist discourse internationally, at that point, only a handful of references related to this field of practice directly. As part of the investigation into the impact of Black-British art on the broader narratives of modern and contemporary art practice, the research team (**Boyce**, **Iok**, **Dibosa** with **Goodwin**, **Dalal-Clayton** and **Nasar** as fellows) developed the hypothesis that publicly funded galleries, museums and collections in the UK held works by artists of African and Asian heritage that are at best rarely and at worst never seen by the public or have become 'lost' or 'hidden', and that the quantity of this work and the artworks themselves needed to be scrutinised. A major question for the research was how to counter the tendency for contemporary discourse focused on the ethnicity of the artist and the general problematics of race and identity politics within the art establishment, thus deflecting attention away from how these artworks relate to or have influenced the development of 20th-century art. [3.2.]

The project comprised four interlocking areas. The 'BAM Audit', led by **Dalal-Clayton**, researched artworks by artists of African, Caribbean, Asian and MENA Region (Middle East and North Africa) descent held in public collections in the UK. 30 UK collections were surveyed including the Government Art Collection, Pallant House Gallery and the Royal Academy of Arts. BAM's monographic strand examined the relationship to modernism of artworks by Black-British artists; a museological strand examined the decision-making and procedures of the public institutions in acquiring the artworks, and the interpretive strategies used to contextualise them within the wider narratives of the collections, while curatorial research reviewed key exhibitions, mainly from the 1980s, that involved Black-British artists as curators.

UAL's research into the Hayward Gallery's pivotal 1989/90 exhibition, *The Other Story: Afro-Asian artists in post-war Britain* (curated by Rasheed Aareen), has played an important part in underpinning the University's study of Black-British artists. **Boyce** (with Jean Fisher) examined *The Other Story* as one of three case studies from 1989, a pivotal year for both art and politics. [3.3.]

As a counterpoint to UAL's long-term investigation into Black-British artists and their work, a key element of research in this area has been the consideration of 'the audience'. **Dibosa**'s research considers the audience experience in relation to the work of the art museum. It does this from the perspectives of the art museum itself and of the visitors it seeks to attract. Through the analysis of material gathered from a major collaborative research project carried out at Tate Britain, the project reconfigured the relationship between art, culture and society conceptually in relation to race. [3.4.]

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

3.1. Boyce, Sonia; Bailey, David A.; Baucom, Ian (2005) *Shades of Black: Assembling Black Arts in 1980s Britain*. Duke University Press. In collaboration with the Institute of International Visual Arts (Iniva) and the African and Asian Visual Artists' Archive (Aavaa), edited by Bailey and Boyce (with Ian Baucom), to which the three editors contributed the introduction, 'Shades of Black:

Assembling the 1980s'; and Susan Pui San Lok contributed 'A to Y (Entries for an Inventory of Dented 'I's)'. [5.1.]

3.2. *Black Artists and Modernism: How do artists of African and Asian descent in Britain feature in the story of twentieth century art?* (BAM). (2015–2018) AHRC-funded collaboration between UAL and Middlesex University, Boyce, PI. www.blackartistsmodernism.co.uk.

3.3. Boyce, Sonia 'The Other Story: Afro-Asian artists in post-war Britain'. (Hayward Gallery, 1989–1990). In *Exhibitions and the World at Large* (Tate Britain, 2009), a symposium co-convened by Afterall and TrAIN.

3.4. Dibosa, David, with Andrew Dewdney and Victoria Walsh (2012) *Post-critical museology: theory and practice in the art museum*. Routledge.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

UAL has created a space in which a multiplicity of approaches can be debated, and conflicts in perspectives on Black-British art and artists interrogated. Understanding of the processes involved in how works by Black-British artists have become 'lost' or 'hidden' is increasing. UAL's investment in the research has led to strategic internal appointments as well as UAL scholars being appointed to positions of influence in external organisations and institutions. The University's support for research into issues around ethnic and national identity as they relate to art and design has led to the creation of UAL Research Centres. TrAIN (2004, Research Centre for Transnational Art, Identity and Nation) is a cross-disciplinary hub for historical, theoretical and practice-based research. In 2018, UAL invited Iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts) to relocate to Chelsea College of Arts; award-winning artist and UAL alumnus, Yinka Shonibare MBE, commented that the relocation will "maximise the potential of the Stuart Hall Library whilst making a significant contribution to diverse perspectives within the college, in the community, across London, nationally and beyond". [5.1.] In 2020, Shades of Noir (SoN, established by Aisha Richards in 2009, taking *Shades of Black* as its inspiration) became UAL's Centre for Race and Practice-Based Social Justice, with Richards as Director. The UAL Decolonising Arts Institute (2019) was established to challenge colonial and imperial legacies in order to drive cultural, social and institutional change. Through these centres and a number of key academic appointments, UAL is investing in creating social, cultural and institutional impact—**Boyce** was appointed as UAL Chair in Black Art & Design in 2013. UAL's Decolonising the Arts Institute is working with 15 partners comprising major UK public art collections (including Tate, Arts Council and British Council collections) and arts charities (e.g. Art UK and the Art Fund) to explore potential collaborative ways of working. UAL researchers have been appointed to a range of high-profile positions, which is contributing to the scale of the impact of UAL's work in uncovering Black-British artists—**Boyce** will represent Britain at the Venice Biennale in 2022, the first black woman to do so.

The critically acclaimed Diaspora Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2017 (a partnership with UAL co-curated by David A. Bailey and Jessica Taylor), brought together 19 international artists (including UAL's **Iok**, Kimathi Donkor, Joy Gregory, the late Khadija Saye, and Erika Tan; and Isaac Julien, UAL Chair of Global Art, 2014–2016; UAL Honorary Fellow, Hew Locke; and Abbas Zahedi, TrAIN Co-Lab Artist Research Residency, 2019–2020), whose wide-ranging practices variously expand, complicate and destabilise diaspora as an enduring critical concept. The exhibition was part of a larger two-year programme through which 12 emerging artists were brought together with 10 mentors (including Gregory, Julien and Locke). Director, Tate: "The Diaspora pavilion was the greatest energy source of the whole Biennale". [5.2.]

A collaboration between UAL and Middlesex University, Black Artists and Modernism (BAM) examined the artworks and practices of artists of African and Asian descent. One of the most impactful elements of the project has been the audit, which identified and catalogued a total of 2,085 works by over 300 Black-British artists. The institutions that took part in the audit report ongoing impact on practices including collections and acquisitions management, archiving policy and methods, and curating practice. Database search functions and terms in many audit institutions have been reviewed. Selections from the extensive positive feedback from 14 audit participants include the Government Art Collection: "The impact of GAC having been part of the original BAM project in 2016 is illustrated in several important and continuing strands of our work..."

Most significantly of all, the GAC's Representation of the People Project, was established in 2018 [creating] a seismic shift that has, and is, influencing and informing all aspects of our work. It is a ten-year commitment to challenge and review under-representation in the Collection across identities related to age, disability, gender, race, sexuality, and socio-economic background." [5.3.] Citing the audit during the period after the death of George Floyd in the US and the resurgence of Black Lives Matter, curator and writer Aindrea Emelife (*The Independent*, June 2020) identified how "The place where real change begins is in the storage units. What museums have and acquire into their permanent collections matters because museum acquisitions form the canon of black art". [5.4.]

As part of the dissemination and the development of the thinking generated by the project, and to enable comprehensive interrogation of the issues, the BAM team created a series of events including two international conferences, a UK-based symposium, study days and exhibitions. (Selected activities were video-documented and are available on the UAL Decolonising Arts Institute YouTube channel.) This activity included a specific event addressing the impact of *The Other Story*, which was to form the basis for content in the digital archive of Afterall (UAL Reader, Lucy Steeds' *Retelling "The Other Story"—or What Now?*, 2018), and a dedicated microsite, supported at the outset by a Digital Project Grant from the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art (2015–2016) and, subsequently, by two awards from the Teaching and Learning Exchange at UAL (2016 and 2017). Association of Research Institutes in Art History (ARIAH, 2017–2018) funding enabled publication of the first essay on this site to analyse the exhibition. [5.5.]

Workshops at a one-day symposium (Tate Britain, 2016), *The Work Between Us: Black-British Artists and Exhibition Histories*, addressed the issue of exhibition texts and labels presenting work by artists of colour through a prism of identity, race and ethnicity. The Public Collections Study Day (MAG 2018), the concluding event of the BAM project, engaged with curators of museum collections. Focused on the research that the BAM team had conducted on public collections and their curation, the day featured papers given by speakers including **Dalal-Clayton**, **Dibosa** and **Nasar**. An international conference, 'Conceptualism—Intersectional Readings, International Framings: Situating 'Black Artists and Modernism' in Europe' (7–9 December 2017), in collaboration with Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, proposed and developed new understandings of Conceptualism produced by artists based in Europe after the political and social upheavals of 1968, focusing on Europe in order to highlight the specificities and limits of discourses on 'Blackness' and Conceptualism between neighbouring contexts. Co-convened by **lok**, Orlando and Aikens, speakers included **lok**, **Boyce**, **Dibosa**. The revised conference papers were edited by the convenors as a 444-page e-publication (Van Abbemuseum, 2019). [5.6.]

A special issue of the *Journal of Art History*, presenting essays that examine a range of artists looked at during the BAM project, is due (summer 2021), edited by **Boyce** and Dorothy Price. A book on the BAM project is forthcoming (Duke University Press). Kenneth Montague, Tate trustee: "This project is a long-overdue, absolutely essential resource. For too long the importance of this work to the British arts scene has been overlooked. This initiative is about legacy, setting the record straight." [5.7.] **Dalal-Clayton's** article, published by *The Double Negative*, 'Developing more representative art collections could not be more urgent' offers an overview and a continuing call for action, post-BAM. [5.8.] **lok** secured the commissioning of a one-hour BBC4 documentary, *Whoever Heard of a Black Artist? Britain's Hidden Art History*, which followed the research activity and elaborated on what was uncovered, through interviews and by outlining the historical context. (Presented by **Boyce** and Brenda Emmanus, and featuring **Dibosa**, **Goodwin** and **Nasar**, and Melanie Keen, Director, Iniva. First screened in July 2018: 160,000 viewers; 30,000 iPlayer views. Repeat screenings in July and September 2018: approximately 6,000 viewers.)

Boyce invited **Nasar** to curate the exhibition *Speech Acts: Reflection-Imagination-Repetition* (2018–19, Manchester Art Gallery, funded by the Paul Mellon Centre. GBP9,462.99) as a response to the BAM project. The exhibition juxtaposed works by canonical white British artists with those by artists of Asian and African heritage, rather than presenting a selection based on the heritage of the artists. *Speech Acts* inspired a series of workshops and conferences in collaboration with institutions including Contemporary Art Society and Iniva. 'The LYC Museum &

Art Gallery and the Museum as Practice', a symposium organised by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art (PMC) and UAL, in collaboration with Manchester Art Gallery and the University of Manchester (with conveners including **Nasar** and Afterall's Steeds), at Manchester Art Gallery (6–7 March 2019), considered the LYC Museum as an extension of artist Li Yuan-chia's (1929–1994) pioneering participatory art practice. The event examined wide-ranging questions such as: How does the example of LYC sit within wider histories of the museum as artwork? What does the LYC Museum contribute to wider considerations of Participatory Art practices? What forms and methodologies allow art historical enquiries into friendships and sites? (The practice of Li Yuan-chia and the LYC Museum were brought into the public domain by the work of BAM, and through the television programme, 'Whoever Heard of a Black Artist? Britain's Hidden Art history'.) From *Speech Acts*, a collaborative exhibition is scheduled at Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge, bringing the LYC Museum and Kettle's Yard together in conversation (2022–2023). **Nasar** works with MAG as a consulting curator, advising on the re-hang of its permanent collection, and is co-curator of *British Art Show 9* (with MAG as his nominee)—one of Britain's most significant exhibitions of contemporary art organised every five years by Hayward Gallery Touring.

Middlesborough Institute of Modern Art's (MIMA) *Why Are We Here?*, a year-long collaboration with BAM, through which the collection was audited for all contributions by artists of African, Asian and Middle East and North Africa Region descent in the UK in the 20th and 21st centuries, revealed new narratives within the collection. Described as "a huge success for MIMA, prompting serious discussion about who and what should be collected for the public good" [5.9.], the project ran from March 2019 to August 2020, with results of this research unveiled as they are uncovered, making new material available to the institution and its publics.

Goodwin worked with artist Hannah Collins to curate *We Will Walk—Art and Resistance in the American South* (Turner Contemporary, 2020), to reveal the little-known history of African-American 'yard art', shaped by the Civil Rights period in the 1950s and 1960s. At a time of widespread protest on the streets, *We Will Walk* was the first exhibition of its kind in the UK. A symposium, 'Art, Roots and The Abstract Truth' (March 2020) and an online discussion, 'We Will Walk: Black Art, Radical Transformation' (July 2020) unpacked the issues further. A virtual tour of the exhibition has had over 11,000 views on YouTube. "The exhibition ... articulates Southernness through the lens of a too-often neglected corpus of African-American artists. In a genre-bursting and affecting assemblage of works, co-curators Hannah Collins and Paul Goodwin have sought to explore how the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and '60s shaped the work of these artists." [5.10.]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 5.1. [UAL press release, 21 September 2018. 'Iniva to relocate to Chelsea College of Arts campus.'](#)
- 5.2. [The Art Newspaper, 5 February 2018, 'The Diaspora pavilion—a hit at last year's Venice Biennale—is reborn in Wolverhampton.'](#)
- 5.3. Testimonial: 14 audit participants including the Government Art Collection. UAL on request.
- 5.4. [The Independent, 13 June 2020. "There is a lot of hard work to be done": How the art world can step up for Black Lives Matter.'](#)
- 5.5. [Afterall. "'The Other Story', 1989'.](#)
- 5.6. Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (2017). *Conceptualism—Intersectional Readings, International Framings: Black Artists & Modernism in Europe after 1968*. UAL on request.
- 5.7. [The Independent, 26 November 2015. 'Forgotten history of black artists to be uncovered in £700,000 curation project.'](#)
- 5.8. [Dr Anjalie Dala-Clayton, The Double Negative, 14 October 2020.](#)
- 5.9. [Corridor 8, 4 May 2020. 'Why Are We Here?'](#)
- 5.10. [Apollo Magazine, 25 February 2020. 'A show of defiance from the African-American South.'](#)