

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Donald Rodney – Photo/Montage/Collage**

17-21 January 2018

London Art Fair, Art Projects Section. Stand P24

Business Design Centre, 52 Upper Street, London N1 0QH



Donald Rodney, 'Untitled', 1994. Collage on paper, 385mm x 310 mm. Courtesy of The Estate of Donald Rodney. Photocredit: George Torode.

Iniva's presentation of work by Donald Rodney is an important opportunity to see photographic pieces rarely seen or hitherto unseen in public. A leading British artist of his generation, Rodney was profoundly influenced by the work of artists including Eddie Chambers, Keith Piper, Sonia Boyce and others who were re-examining social and historical narratives from a black perspective. Though his work continually evolved, Rodney always returned to the human form deployed through multiple manifestations. He would often explore recurring themes of black masculinity, the body and the stereotyping of the black man as "public enemy", and an icon of danger, often bristling with unbridled and untamed sexuality.

Retaining their emotional charge, the works on paper presented at London Art Fair were made by Rodney during the many hours he spent in hospital. His illness, sickle cell anaemia an emblematically 'black' disease, resulted in increasing pain, immobility, hospitalisation and isolation. Whilst confined to bed, he produced many sketch books - all 48 now digitised by Tate and available online - which give alluring glimpses into his thought processes. These notations help understand his motivation for making the works on display hardly seen or written about before.

Photography for Rodney was a technical means to subvert images, deconstruct and reconstruct a set of realities mediated by print and broadcast media, advertising and commercial illustration. Viewed online, Rodney's sketchbook number 35 from 1990 shines a slither of light on his view how the 'genuine history of the slave trade' is

perversely romanticised in a form of pulp fiction which eroticised the daily trauma of plantation life.

He used light to distort borrowed imagery revealing a layer (of skin) to see what might lie under a surface or he made a collage overlaying book covers, photographing, disassembling, reassembling and re-photographing to saturate colour and polarise the contrast. Images of people and animals would be cut up, dismembered, and roughly taped together again to create fragile, hybrid, alien and alienated forms. A metaphor perhaps for his own experience of medical incursions transformed poetically through cutting paper creating something more ephemeral and otherworldly.

**Donald Rodney** (1961-1998) studied at the Bourneville School of Art and Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham before undertaking a Postgraduate Diploma in Multi-Media Fine Art at Slade School of Fine Art in London. His solo exhibitions include *9 Night in Eldorado* at South London Gallery (1997), *Cataract* at Camerawork in London (1991), *Critical* at Rochdale Art Gallery, Rochdale (1990) and *Donald Rodney – In Retrospect*, Iniva (2008) and *Reimaging Donald Rodney*, Vivid Projects (2016). Group exhibitions include *Give and Take, Works Presented to Museums by the Contemporary Art Society*, Harris Museum Preston and Jerwood Gallery, London (2000); *British Art Show 5*, Edinburgh, Southampton, Cardiff and Birmingham (2000); *Here to Stay*, Arts Council touring exhibition (1999) and *Inside Out*, East London Gallery, University of East London (1998). In 1996, he was awarded the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Award for Sculpture and Installation. Rodney's work is in national collections including Tate Gallery, Arts Council Collection, Mappin Art Gallery, Sheffield; The National Galleries of Wales, Cardiff; South London Gallery, London; Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield; and Birmingham City Art Gallery.

The display is curated by Melanie Keen, Director, Iniva with generous support from The Estate of Donald Rodney.

### **Public Talks Programme**

#### **Thursday 18 January 2018 – 1pm – 2pm**

Digital Dilemmas, Pt.1: the tale of the artist

How do artists respond to the challenge of archiving their practice particularly if their work borders on physical object-making and born-digital work? What happens to the relationship between artists and audiences when artistic work is digitised or re-imagined in a digital space? Panel discussion chaired by Melanie Keen, Director, Iniva with artist Cherelle Sappleton, Rebecca Sinker, curator, Convenor: Digital Learning, Tate and artist, Gary Stewart.

#### **Saturday 20 January 2018 – 4pm – 5pm**

Digital Dilemmas, Pt.2: the tale of the collector

Digital art can be bought and sold, but are collectors – individuals as well as national collections – resistant to collecting it? If collectors can be seen as custodians of public heritage and purveyors of cultural history, then where does the responsibility lie when it comes to preserving works of art that exist in a digital space? Panel discussion chaired by curator Rose Lejeune with Emma Dexter, Director, Visual Arts, British Council and designer and researcher Lozana Rossenova.

## **Tours in the Art Projects section of the fair**

### **Thursday 18 January 2018 – 6.30pm**

Art Projects Tour led by Rodrigo Orrantia, Iniva board member, curator and art historian.

### **Saturday 20 January 2018 – 3pm – 4pm**

Stand Tour led by Diane Symons, trustee of the Estate of Donald Rodney.

For more information please contact:

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### **Notes to Editors:**

**Iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts)** is an evolving, radical visual arts organisation dedicated to developing an artistic programme that reflects on the social and political impact of globalisation.

With the Stuart Hall Library acting as a critical and creative hub for our work, we collaborate with artists, curators, researchers and cultural producers to challenge conventional notions of diversity and difference. We engage a wide audience, particularly young people, in discourse and debate on issues surrounding the politics of race, class and gender.

Through our programme we work predominantly with British-born and British-based visual artists of African and Asian descent supporting them at different stages in their careers. We offer residencies, commission new work and promote existing practices enabling artistic ambition and development. By cultivating innovative thinking, we are committed to disseminating research across a wide cultural spectrum and geographical network. Our ambition is to build a greater body of knowledge around each of the artists with whom we work to ensure the legacy of their practices for future generations of researchers and audiences.

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