

**J.D. Okhai Ojeikere: *Hairstyles and Headdresses***

New Art Exchange, Nottingham

Saturday 27 September 2014 – Sunday 11 January 2015

A Hayward Touring exhibition from Southbank Centre, London

New Art Exchange, Nottingham, present Nigerian photographer J.D. Okhai Ojeikere's prolific collection of images of ornate hairstyles and headdresses. The elaborately sculpted hair of Nigerian women is captured in meticulous detail through beautifully composed black and white photographs. The series simultaneously celebrates hairstyling as a monumental yet ephemeral art form and represents an extensive visual archive reflecting Nigerian cultural traditions.

Widely regarded as one of the greatest African photographers of the twentieth century, Ojeikere earned international acclaim through his *Hairstyle* series. This personal project began in 1968 and grew to encompass 1,000 photographs taken over 40 years, only reaching its conclusion following the artist's death earlier this year. The Hayward Touring exhibition from Southbank Centre, curated by Gillian Fox, is the first UK display of the renowned artist's work. Fox explains:

*It is an incredible opportunity for Hayward Touring to exhibit the work of Nigeria's most beloved photographer and we are delighted to be working with New Art Exchange as our first tour venue. All of the works in the show were painstakingly reprinted from the original negatives, and the richness and physicality of these forms a direct connection to the very moment of their capture. Ojeikere's original intent may have been a social document, but what in fact was produced was an extended love letter to his country and its culture.*

To Ojeikere, hairstyles celebrate uniqueness and reflect the diversity of cultural traditions within Nigeria. The ever-evolving designs symbolise key life events such as weddings or birthdays, and often denote social status – with unique family hairstyles being passed down through generations. Preserving the rich heritage, Ojeikere labelled each photograph with the hairstyle's place of origin, meaning, name and its history. This archival approach relates to the artist's photojournalism background, setting the *Hairstyle* series against the backdrop of immense social and cultural change in post-colonial Nigeria.

Melanie Kidd, Director of Programmes at New Art Exchange explains the importance of displaying this celebrated series at the Nottingham-based gallery.

*We are delighted to be exhibiting a hugely influential figure in African photography; an accomplished artist who devoted his life to meaningfully documenting his homeland. Ojeikere's Hairstyle series truly celebrates diverse perspectives in art, exploring culturally significant traditions and the rich history of Nigeria through aesthetically beautiful images. We are excited to share these images with new audiences and stimulate new ideas and conversations around the series.*

Alongside Ojeikere's *Hairstyles* collection, New Art Exchange will present two new research based commissions by local artists. Through spending time in and around the numerous barbershops, salons and beauty stores of the Hyson Green region of Nottingham, the artists will be developing work in response to these spaces and the people they meet. Outcomes from these research based commissions will feature at New Art Exchange in different forms over the course of the Ojeikere exhibition.

Ben Harriott's photography collection will feature inside NAE's pop up hair salon space and will open alongside Ojeikere's installation on 27 September. Harriott is driven to reveal and celebrate the cultural richness of minority communities in Britain. He seeks to create a platform for their documentation and representation. After spending time in West-Indian barbershops of Nottingham, Harriott has looked beyond the service of 'cutting hair' to explore the alternative functions of the all-male, West Indian barbershop. His collection reveals the complexity of these environments and explores the role they play in shaping the lives of those that frequent them.

Also utilising NAE's pop-up hair salon space, performance artist Rachael Young and self-taught hairdresser Richard Hougueuz will set up a hairstyling laboratory on 8, 9, 15 and 16 November. Here, working with a range of voluntary participants, they will use the process of hairstyling to explore the cultural significance of hair and the role persona plays in hairdressing. During the session, participants will reflect on the significance of their current styling choices and create a hairstyle that represents their own Crown of Confidence. The results of the Crowns of Confidence research project will be shared in the pop-up salon from 22 November 2014 – 11 January 2015.

Young and Hougueuz's project at NAE builds on their ongoing *Intersections* commission with Primary Studios, Nottingham. For more information on Primary and *Intersections* see:  
[www.weareprimary.org](http://www.weareprimary.org)

Ojeireke's work is held in a variety of public and private collections, including the Tate (London), Getty Museum (Los Angeles), Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain (Paris), Musée du Quai Branly (Paris), Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain (Geneva), National Arts Council (Lagos), Guggenheim Museum (Bilbao), Collection Agnes b. (Paris), Jean Pigozzi Collection (Geneva), Smithsonian Institution (Washington) as well as the Walther Collection (New York). This collection was presented in the International Pavilion in the Venice Biennale 2013.

A Hayward Touring exhibition from Southbank Centre, London developed in collaboration with Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris

The exhibition tours to De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea from 28 February - 26 April 2015

### **Notes to Editors:**

**What:** J.D. Okhai Ojeikere: Hairstyles and Headdresses

**When:** Saturday 27 September 2014 – Sunday 11 January 2015

**Launch Event:** Friday 26 September 2014, 6pm – 9pm

**Where:** New Art Exchange, Gregory Boulevard, Nottingham, NG7 6BE

Images and photo credits are available through following the Dropbox link... <http://bit.ly/1tsToqV>

For more information, or to organise interviews please contact Communications and Marketing Officer, Laura-Jade Klée, on [LauraJade@nae.org.uk](mailto:LauraJade@nae.org.uk) or 01159248630.

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## **About New Art Exchange**

New Art Exchange is a contemporary art gallery committed to stimulating new perspectives on the value of diversity within art and society. A RIBA award winning building, New Art Exchange is the largest space in the UK outside of London dedicated to culturally diverse contemporary visual arts, and is rooted in the community with a strong history of working with minority communities.

NAE presents major international exhibitions, launching the British Art Show in 2010, and every season presents work from the highest quality, world-renowned artists. NAE partners locally, nationally and internationally, connecting audiences and artists from all over the world with new and innovative collaborations and opportunities. Past exhibitors have included: Rashid Rana, Zineb Sedira, Hurvin Anderson, Nari Ward, Christian Marclay and Elizabeth Price (as part of British Art Show 7), Leo Asemota, Raghu Rai, and Hetain Patel.

NAE's mission is to raise the impact, profile and development of culturally diverse contemporary visual arts and artists in a global context by:

- Nurturing and promoting creative talent locally and world-wide
- Creating thriving creative businesses
- Engaging minority ethnic communities as audiences and patrons of art

## **About Hayward Touring:**

Hayward Touring produces exhibitions that tour to galleries, museums and other publicly-funded venues throughout Britain. Hayward Touring collaborates with artists, independent curators, writers and partner institutions to develop imaginative exhibitions that are seen by over 750,000 people in around fifty cities and towns each year. Acting as a laboratory of ideas and nurturing new curatorial approaches, Hayward Touring's exhibitions feature a thought-provoking mix of subjects and artists, intended to complement our partner-galleries' programmes and engage a wide audience. Exhibitions range in scale from the British Art Show - the largest and most ambitious survey of recent British art, organised in different cities around the country every five years - to international group exhibitions produced with guest curators, artists and writers. The programme also extends to smaller monographic print and photography exhibitions, touring to a variety of venues including galleries, libraries, schools, universities and arts centres.

Hayward Touring exhibitions currently on the road include Curiosity: Art and the Pleasures of Knowing, curated by Brian Dillon, and All That is Solid Melts Into Air, curated by Jeremy Deller. The third Curatorial Open exhibition, Listening, curated by Sam Belinfante, will open at BALTIC's project space at B39, Newcastle-upon-Tyne on 26 September. British Art Show 8 opens at Leeds Art Gallery in October 2015, and tours to Edinburgh, Norwich and Southampton.

## **About Southbank Centre:**

Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre, occupying a 21-acre site that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. Southbank Centre is home to the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and the Hayward Gallery as well as The Saison Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. For further information please visit [www.southbankcentre.co.uk](http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk).