



PRESS RELEASE:

Hurvin Anderson exhibits prestigious new Arts Council Collection commission

Fragmented memories of unresolved spaces inspire the art of Hurvin Anderson. Growing up between two cultures, Anderson - a Birmingham-born artist of Jamaican heritage- uses painting to explore cultural meanings, identities and our fragile sense of belonging.

Hurvin Anderson launches a solo-exhibition at New Art Exchange this summer, *Dub Versions* - featuring new, existing, and unseen works. The exhibition unveils a prestigious new painting commission for the 70th Anniversary of the Arts Council Collection; the UK's widest seen collection of influential modern and contemporary British artists. His new commission, *Is It Okay To Be Black?* (2016), marks a pivotal point in the artist's career, as he enters this illustrious collection for the first time.

In producing *Is It Okay To Be Black?* (2016), the artist revisited his renowned *Barbershop* series - inspired by the entrepreneurial hair-cutting spaces set up in homes of new Caribbean immigrants in the 1950s. The barbershop represents what Anderson describes as "*being caught between two places at once,*" in moments and spaces where the UK and the Caribbean come together. His late return to the renowned series, leads it in a compelling new direction.

Anderson's new painting continues exploring his fascination with 'in between' spaces, whilst also taking inspiration from the eclectic decoration often found in barbershops. The provocative question, "is it ok to be black?" reveals the musings of a hypothetical barbershop customer who is surrounded by the owner's curated assortment of images. Beyond pictures of hairstyles, the images include an assortment of iconic figures – politicians, musicians and sportsmen - some of which are fully identifiable through Anderson's brushstrokes, and others you are left to imagine. In the mirrored barbershop, one's own reflection becomes mounted among heroes, questioning a personal sense of cultural identity in relation to history.

Is It Okay To Be Black? will first be enjoyed by the public at the co-commissioners venue, New Art Exchange - the largest centre for culturally diverse arts in the UK – before it becomes available for loan to museums, reaching diverse new publics across England. Melanie Kidd, Director of Programmes at New Art Exchange and exhibition curator, explains why *Dub Versions* is a significant exhibition for the Nottingham-based gallery.

"We're incredibly proud to be presenting the work of an artist who has emerged from the Midlands region of the UK, and is now celebrated on a global scale. Anderson's paintings can be enjoyed for his masterful use of colour and composition; however it is the relatability of his practice that we particularly value at New Art Exchange."

"Our venue primarily serves the local communities of Hyson Green, an important neighbourhood in Nottingham that has been home to many different migrant communities over the last 70 years. Dub Versions explores themes of dislocation, identity, belonging and race - pertinent issues within 21st century society that continue to require our attention and engagement."

Accompanying *Is It Okay To Be Black?*, Anderson reworks his *Grafting* series, based around his vivid childhood memory of his older brother scrumping for fruit. The artist was interested in the ordinariness of this uneventful moment, which stands in contrast to other exoticised representations of black men in art history and popular culture. After migrating from Jamaica to Birmingham in the 1970s, Anderson's brother continued the everyday activity of scrumping - replacing mango trees for English apple trees. The series' title represents the grafting together of environments, whilst his brother and his hobbies remained constant.

The exhibition also traces a history of how *Is It Okay To Be Black?* and the *Grafting* series were conceived, through a range of sketches, preparatory materials- paintings, collages, drawings - never displayed before in the UK. These materials provide a fascinating insight into Anderson's forensic making process, where seemingly fluid and spontaneous abstract images are carefully constructed through a vigorous analysis process.

The exhibition runs until 18 September 2016

Exhibition Details

Launch Event: *Dub Versions*

1 July 2016, 6pm - 9pm

New Art Exchange, Gregory Boulevard, Nottingham, NG7 6BE

Editor Notes

A selection of images can be downloaded from Dropbox: <https://goo.gl/Dgbdxq>

For further images and to arrange interviews/photo opportunities contact Laura-Jade Vaughan: laurajade@nae.org.uk, 0115 924 8630

About New Art Exchange

A contemporary art space committed to stimulating new perspectives on the value of diversity within art and society. New Art Exchange is the largest space in the UK dedicated to culturally diverse contemporary visual arts, and is rooted in the community with a strong history of working with minority communities. Past exhibitors include: Yinka Shonibare, Zarina Bhimji, John Akomfrah, Rashid Rana, Zineb Sedira, Nari Ward, Christian Marclay and Elizabeth Price (British Art Show 7), Leo Asemota, Raghu Rai, Lindsay Seers, J. D. 'Okhai Ojeikere 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 worldwide, creating thriving creative businesses, and engaging minority ethnic communities as audiences and patrons of art.

The Arts Council Collection

The Arts Council Collection is the largest national loan collection of modern and contemporary British art. With nearly 8,000 works it is one of the most widely circulated of all national collections and can be seen in exhibitions and public displays across the UK and abroad. Founded in 1946, the Collection has continued to grow, acquiring innovative works each year and includes paintings, sculptures, original works on paper, prints, photographs, film and video and installation works. The Collection includes important work by many of the most influential British artists from the mid-twentieth century to the present day.

New Art Exchange receives support from Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation.

Dub Versions has been supported by Thomas Dane Gallery.