

Vermillion coloured stories

Exhibition Guide

**“That night I had a very explicit vermillion colored dream,
a dream of the allegory of D-I-S-E-A-S-E.”
- Donald Rodney.**

Extract from the sketchbook number 9 (c1986) of artist Donald Rodney
Page 109, Part of preliminary work for Blood In My Eye, 1986, from the Tate Archive.

This exhibition showcases the work and curatorial narrative developed during a 4-day intensive workshop with curator Ian Sergent. During the workshop participants explored the themes of home, access, and belonging in the work of Donald Rodney and other leading members of the BLK Art Group.

The exhibition includes Artists and Curators; Corinne, Rachel Doughty, Sherrie Edgar, Orphée Kashala, Shorna, and Tammy Woodrow.

"Throughout our whole existence, most of us have experienced Loss, Isolation, Discrimination, and been denied access to places and people we love. Over the last two years, the entire planet had a glimpse of this reality. Therefore, we will no longer tolerate ignorance as an excuse to turn a blind eye to the daily struggles facing people who are on the margin because of their stories.

We are reclaiming ownership of our identity - which is deeply rooted in our stories - by choosing to give people access to one another and to all of life. This access to each other's reality has long been denied by the neoliberal way of life in an attempt to define us, distance us from our humanity and reduce us to mere data for the computer of capitalism.

We choose to cure the symptoms of this universal disease by raising awareness of one another's journey. Therefore, restoring our right to feel empathy, which is the key that opens our hearts to welcome the emergence of new connexions, new friendships, new homes, and new stories."

- Orphée Kashala

Blk Art Group (1979-84)

The groundbreaking work of BLK Art Group was a response to the socio-political climate of the time and paved the way for what is regarded as Britain's Black Art Movement of the 1980s.

Ian Sergent

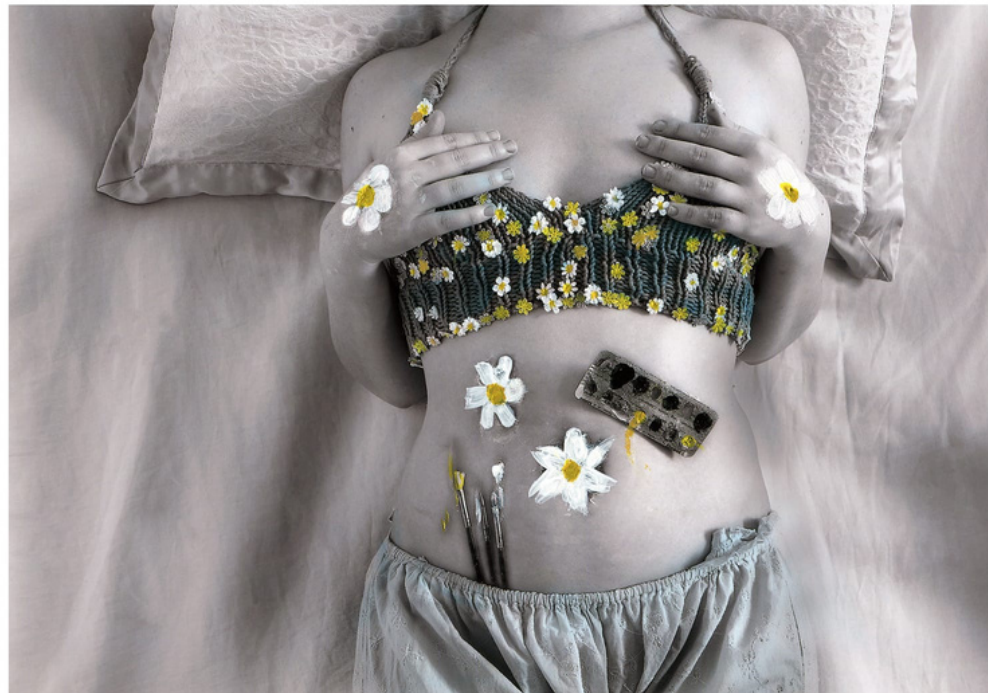
Is a Midlands3Cities ahRC PhD Researcher at Birmingham City University where he is researching the Visual Representation and Cultural (RE)Constructions of Black British Masculinity in the 21st Century Birmingham.



Corinne (she/they)

A Bedtime Story #6 - 2020 (Self-portrait of the artist) Digitally projected photograph on the artist's bedsheet.

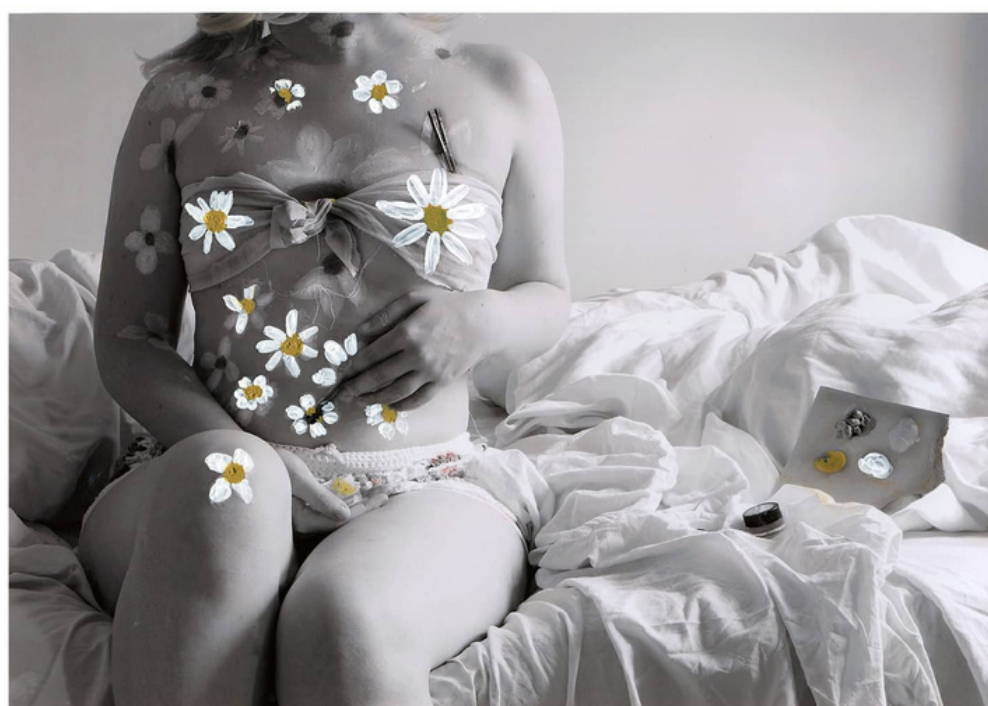
Description: After a long time spent bedbound Corinne built the courage to gather daisies from her front garden - even though her voices forbid her - and included them within this piece. It was the first time she'd been alone in the garden for more than a year, so the experience left her feeling fragile, to depict her anxiety she stuck the 'Fragile' tape and a plaster upon her skin.



Corinne (she/they)

A Bedtime Story #5 & #7 - 2020 (Self-portrait of the artist) C-Type photographic print in a wooden frame.

Description: Corinne is a disabled self-portrait artist. Her distinctively dark and evocative self-depictions, intimately reflect her ongoing struggles with severe mental illness. A Bedtime Story #6 was produced in response to the debilitating effects the pandemic had upon her already fragile mental health.



She is currently bedbound, so she produces all of her work within the 2 by 1.5-meter space. She loves daisies but feels afraid and unable to visit them, as her voices told her she is not allowed to leave home. So she paints the nature she longs to be within upon her skin and her bedsheets.

Her use of the daisy flowers both relates to her desire to be within nature and her wish to remain close with her only childhood and imaginary friend 'Daisy'.

Her life and art have become inextricably entwined."



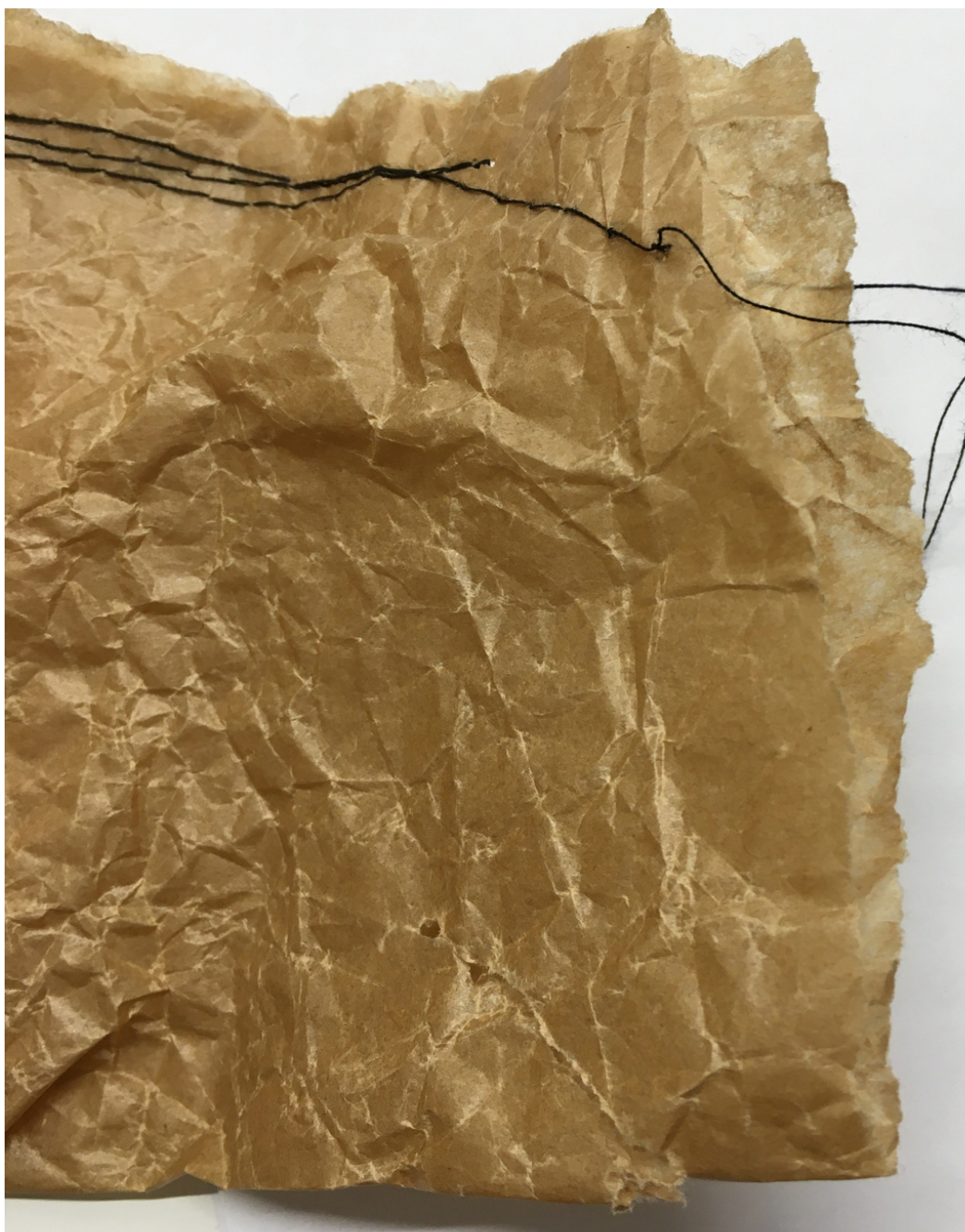
Corinne (she/they)

Visible / Invisible - 2022 (Ode to Donald Rodney) Wheelchair tracks on bedsheet.

Description: For this artwork, Corinne uses her own wheelchair to create mud tracks on a bedsheet as a tribute to Donald Rodney in reference to his personal challenges and his creative work around disability and access .

To bury my struggles deep within would allow them to thrive, but through my use of art as therapy, I am offered a cathartic release."

- Corinne



Tammy Woodrow (she/her)

EPIDERMIS: Thick Skin - 2022

Baking parchment, thread, pins, sketchbook pages

Description: The sculpture is inspired by Donald Rodney's 'In The House Of My Father' (1996-7). The crumbling sheets of parched paper resemble the piece of his skin that he lost due to his illness. Skin color, the way he looked has often created barriers for him as a human being but also as an artist. His lived experiences are situations the artist relates to as a mixed heritage woman.

The artist pinned sketchbook pages as a reference to Donald's sketchbooks. They are part of a process to make her art practice more about her existential self and not about materiality. The sheets are hung in such a way that they are the beginnings of a maze. A maze which is a metaphor, symbolic of denied access.



Shorna (she/her)

Garden of the Universe - 2022

Acrylic on canvas.

Description: The artist is referencing our presence on the planet and in the universe while comparing humans to flowers and our planet to a garden. The flowers are also a tribute to Donald Rodney's reference of sunflowers and the daisies are a nod to Corinne - an artist who is part of this project - who has a particular interest in the flower.



Shorna (she/her)

Spice of the Universe - 2022

Acrylic on canvas.

Description: Here the artist is referencing the diversity of ethnicities and races through a comparison between people and spices while highlighting the beauty in the contrast.



Rachel Doughty (she/her)

The Old Nursing Chair - 2022

Recycled Textiles, polyester stuffing, thread, and rope.

Description: This artwork is a homage to the artist's parents who both passed away in 2021 within six months of each other. Not only did she lose her parents but she also lost her home, her go-to place for comfort and strength, a place where she always felt welcome and safe.

The artist uses her mother's nursing chair to create a sculpture while reminiscing the memories of her childhood. The artwork is an attempt to depict her grieving process and immortalize this chapter of her life.



Rachel Doughty (she/her)

The Listening Project - 2022

Recycled textiles.

Description: The artist explores her interest in people's stories; the ways in which they are different from her own and yet so similar. This artwork uses knots in reclaimed textiles, each knot honors and represents a story she has heard over the years and creates a visual reminder of our shared experiences. "I believe cloth is a universal signifier, we all wear clothes and those clothes get to sit next to our skin and absorb something of us. Stories are in our very clothes and that is why I choose to work in recycled textiles." - Rachel Doughty



Sherrie Edgar (she/her)

Touch and Go - 2022

Digital Film.

Description: In this experimental short film the artist uses different variations of the colors red and green as a tribute to Donald Rodney. The artist uses the juxtaposition of the two colors in time and space to reference Donald's experience with these colors during his time spent in hospitals where the medical staff wore the color green to dim the color red from his blood and to refresh their sight during surgery.

The colour red is also used as a symbol for denied access and the colour green is used to represent access.



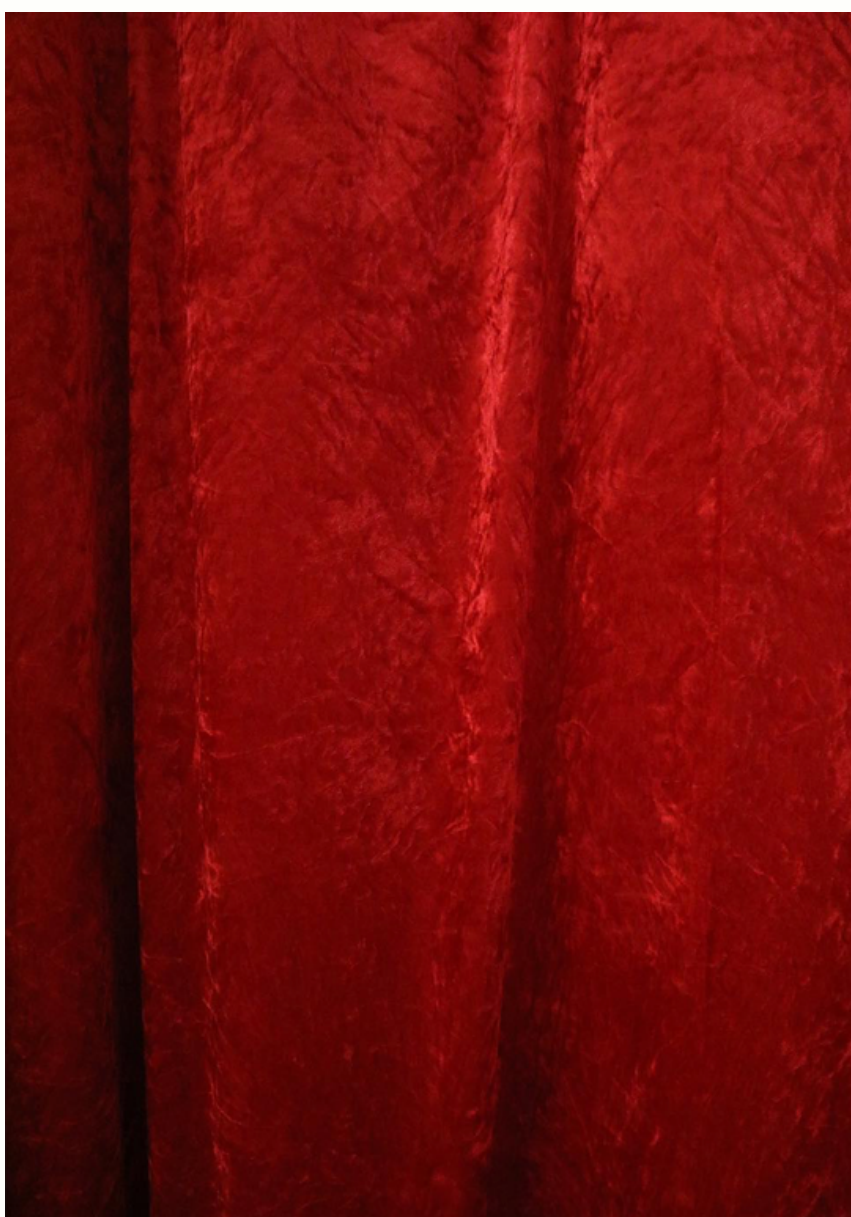
Sherrie Edgar (she/her)

Access Process - 2022 (31 minutes duration)

Collated Digital audio file.

Description: The audio is a recording of some of the conversations from the curatorial process of this exhibition. The group chose to practice what they preach by giving the audience access to their creative process and their personal stories.

The installation includes a couch, a carpet and a false wall to create an enclosure as a space where the audience is allowed comfortable access.



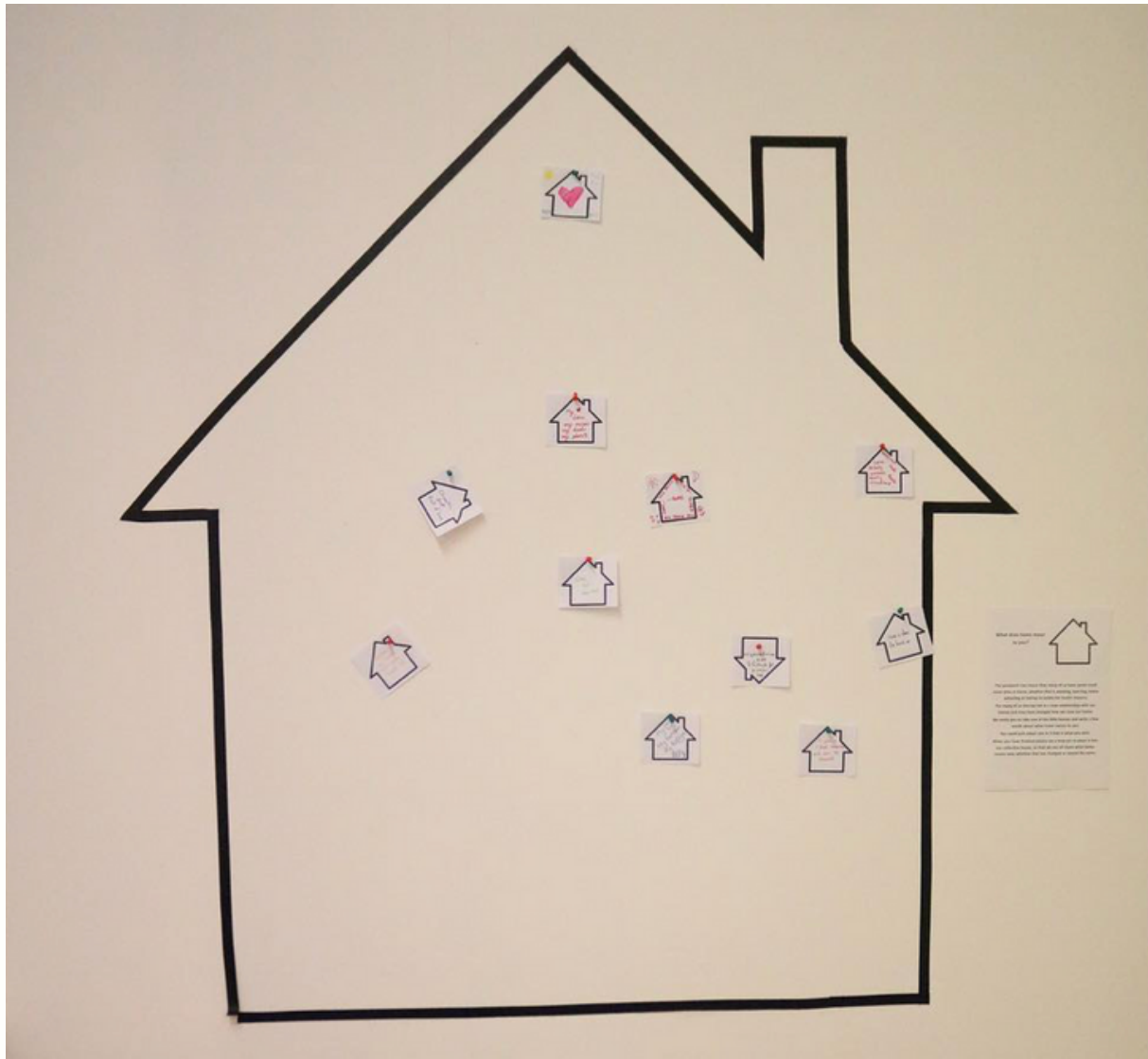
Sherrie Edgar (she/her)

Behind the Scenes - 2022

Red velvet curtain.

Description: The artist uses this installation of a red curtain to draw attention to barriers facing people in their day-to-day lives. It is an attempt to give the audience a feeling of being denied access to the other side of the curtain to remind them of this reality.

This installation is also a nod to the presence of the color red in Donald Rodney's work.



Rachel Doughty (she/her)

What does home mean to you ? - 2022

Electric tape, map pins, markers, and paper.

The artist is inviting the audience to add to the interactive wall; a word, a sentence or a colour that signifies home.

"The pandemic has meant that many of us have experienced a lack of access; a restricted life and a love-hate relationship with our homes. By sharing our universal experiences and stories of the last couple of years, we can reconnect with our communities and humanity as a whole." - Rachel Doughty



The Curatorial team (They)

Access granted - 2022

The welcome mat is placed at the entrance of the gallery by the team as a statement to reaffirm our stance on access and accessibility for all to all of life.

"Every day is a new struggle to tell your story as an artist, every day you have to overcome constructs of society that let some people in and leave other people out. Just because of the way they look, because of where they come from, because of what they believe. Their stories have the right to be heard so you can empathize with them. Their stories need to be heard so they can challenge you to leave your own comfortable box and make connections with a new world. "

- Tammy Woodrow

Thank you for your visit !

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