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Black urbanism can be seen as a schizoid sign that haunts and inhabits urbanism and the myth of the 'white city'. It is the *ghost in the machine* that is capable of inducing the urban machine into moments of paranoid breakdown (riots, moral panics over crime) while also reconfiguring the machine into new modes of innovation, creativity and expression (music, arts, architecture).

rising n 1 a rebellion > adj 2 increasing in rank or maturity

Peckham Rising

An exhibition of photography, sound and text with artists Daniele Tamagni, Thabo Jaiyesimi and Janine Lai. Curated by Paul Goodwin.

4th September - 9th September 2007

The Sassoon Gallery

Peckham Rising explores the other city submerged beneath the morass of lurid, obfuscatory images and headlines regularly purveyed in the media and policy circles. Peckham has emerged in the last few years as an undconstructed, mythical symbol of all the ills of urban society: gun crime, feral youth, sink estates, moral and family breakdown etc. This almost metaphysical image of Peckham's urban pathology has remained unchanged despite the arrival in the area of a huge regeneration programme and new public spaces such as the library and town square. Deploying a critical assemblage of urban street photography, sound and text, Peckham Rising aims to launch a



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What I call the *paradox of black urbanism* pertains to the contradictory nature of the present conjuncture where 'blackness' is informing what it means to be 'urban' in a cultural sense but at the same time, in economic and social terms, many black communities are still living in marginal and precarious conditions throughout the world.

Peckham Rising

Paul Goodwin

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Peckham Rising
Paul Goodwin

counter intuitive and deconstructive *re-visioning* of the area. The complex and little understood social ecology of 'street life' on Rye Lane is the focus of the evocative and impressionistic images of Daniele Tamagni and Thabo Jaiyesimi. Framing the images, Janine Lai's sound interventions give voice to the largely unheard 'shouts in the street' of Peckham residents and market users. Paul Goodwin's textual interventions bring theory into the gallery space where it can dialogue with images and sound. Peckham Rising creates a temporary space of contemplation about the nature of contemporary urbanism and its 'other': the so-called ghetto. The exhibition invites critical reflection about the need to creatively engage the cosmopolitan, diverse and complex nature of a great metropolis such as London in the 21st century. Peckham Rising attempts, in a modest but bold gesture, to open one of the many paths of creative thinking and action to build the city of the future. The exhibition speculates on the notion that Peckham, with all its contradictions, afflictions and creative energies, may emerge as a Capital of the 21st Century.

Paul Goodwin

Curator



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From Harlem to Chicago, from Brixton to Peckham, black people and immigrants have created their own urban worlds; their own *urbanisms*. There is not just one unified urbanism. Until now these emergent urbanisms - suburban urbanisms, underground urbanisms, excluded urbanisms - have been largely understood through the ideologically loaded prism of *the ghetto*. This concept has limited our understanding of not only how these spaces are produced but also how or what they represent and signify; in other words, their complexity and diversity. This shift of understanding is not just

Artists:

Daniele Tamagni is an art historian and freelance photographer from Italy / www.photodantam.com

Thabo Jaiyesimi is a photographer based in London / www.thabojaiyesimi.co.uk

Janine Lai is a filmmaker and artist based in London / smell.the.media@gmail.com

Curator:

Paul Goodwin is a geographer and urban theorist based at Goldsmiths, University of London / www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/cucr

Further Information:

www.myspace.com/peckhamrising

www.thesassoongallery.co.uk

www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/cucr

Peckham Rising eBook, Copyright Paul Goodwin, 2007.

academic or conceptual. It has major implications for the way we deal with 'black', immigrant or 'ghetto' spaces in terms of policy and intervention in the real world.



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The history of otherness and blackness needs to be incorporated and written into the heart of the history of urbanism. Studies of racism and the 'race relations paradigm' do not cover the totality of the black urban experience. Black people are not just victims. Histories of community building, the making and remaking of cultures, art and creative practices, the construction and



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deconstruction of urban landscapes, and their relationship to black and dissident urban communities, all need to be addressed by urbanists today. This crucial nexus - the relationship and contribution of black people to the construction of urban landscapes - has been one of the least researched in urban studies.

The global lexicon used to describe, map and conceptualise the black urban condition is depressingly familiar: slums, ghettos, barrios, favelas, banlieues, marginal spaces, squatter camps, cardboard cities, tent cities, projects,



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done so much to help revive. In other words, black urbanites and the expressive *dissident* cultures they help produce, must be seen as active participants and innovators in the production of urban spaces not just passive victims of urban decay or a 'culture of poverty'.



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housing estates, high rises, prisons, urban renovation zones, no go areas, environmentally unsound sites, bidonvilles, badlands etc., the list goes on and on. Obviously many black people, especially in the United States and to a lesser extent in Britain, in the post civil rights era, have made tremendous gains in economic wealth and social class. There is a steady movement of the black middle classes to richer suburban areas and even evidence of black gentrification of certain formerly run down inner city neighbourhoods (Harlem in Manhattan and Fort Greene in Brooklyn, New York). Any study of black urbanism certainly needs to factor this development into its analysis. The fact remains, however, that relative black urban disadvantage, particularly when considered on a global scale, far outweighs black suburbanisation, gentrification and upward urban mobility.

My intention is to create a discourse of 'black urbanism' as a form of urban culture and experience of city life from a black perspective but also, in a more active sense, as a *process of engagement and building* of urban spaces - real and imagined - by black communities in cities and neighbourhoods all over the world. The implication of this is a more active definition of black urbanism; one in which black communities are and should be more engaged in the process of designing and creating the very neighbourhoods and spaces of the metropolitan areas they have

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As urbanism is being defined more in terms of 'blackness' - especially in a virtual sense (video games, music videos, internet sites etc) - so more black people, especially black youth, are defining themselves through a rather narrow conception of 'urban culture' that often translates as 'ghetto' or 'street' culture (eg. BBC radio's black music station *1Xtra* defines itself as a purveyor of 'street culture'). In both cases, 'urban' and 'blackness' are being re-defined in narrow, stereotypical ways that excludes many positive, diverse and enriching experiences of both 'city life' and 'blackness'.

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