

## Two artist films reveal the dreams, concerns and activism of young Londoners

### A Glittering City: Ayo Akingbade with Duchamp & Sons

19 May – 15 August 2021

Galleries 5 & 6

*A Glittering City* presents two films by London based artist **Ayo Akingbade** (b.1994, UK); a new Whitechapel Gallery commission, *Fire in My Belly* (2021), and *Dear Babylon* (2019). In both, Akingbade forges conversations on urbanism, gentrification, power and resilience, her work sharing hopeful dreams for the future as much as they are pragmatic calls to action.

Premiering at Whitechapel Gallery this summer, *Fire in My Belly* is an artist collaboration with the Gallery's youth collective, Duchamp & Sons. Together through workshops, screenings and fieldwork in East London, the group explored ideas of place and belonging, tracing memories of displacement and the meaning of home over a period of six months to create the film.

*Fire in My Belly* brings these young Londoners together to discuss what 'community' means to them. Echoing today's uncertain times, they reveal their present challenges and future aspirations whilst highlighting the complexities of belonging. At Highgate Cemetery they pay homage to the activist Claudia Jones, reflecting on how overlooked migrant legacies can be preserved. The documentary weaves a compelling portrait of London through their voices as they navigate an uncharted road map of the city.

In the adjoining gallery space, a second film, *Dear Babylon*, opens with archival footage of street protests to frame a fictional, dystopian scenario: as a voiceover explains, new legislation will require all social housing residents to pay an £18,000 fee in order to keep their homes. The film essay follows three art students as they question what action they can take to combat this harmful law in their community; speaking to tenants, architects and public sector workers, they create a film of their own, in the hope of forming a sense of communal history and pool of shared knowledge. *Dear Babylon* comes after Akingbade's *Tower XYZ* (2016) and *Street 66* (2018), completing her social housing trilogy, *No News Today*.

**Renee Odjidja, Curator: Youth Programmes, said:** *"An alumna of our projects herself, A Glittering City is Akingbade's return to the Youth Programme which offers young people invaluable hands-on experience, skills and insight into the creative sector. This collaboration and new commission highlights the importance of access to creative opportunities at an early age in shaping the next generation of talent."*

#### Notes to Editors:

- *A Glittering City* (19 May – 15 August 2021) is curated by Renee Odjidja, Curator: Youth Programmes, Whitechapel Gallery.
- Programmed by the Education team since 2009, Galleries 5 & 6 at Whitechapel Gallery are dedicated to showing new exhibitions developed out of innovative collaborations between artists, young people, local schools and community groups.
- The exhibition is accompanied by an episode of the Whitechapel Gallery podcast, *Hear, Now*, which joins curators in dialogue with artists, collaborators and thinkers about ongoing exhibitions and the stories behind them.

#### Press Release

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## About Ayo Akingbade

Ayo Akingbade (b. 1994, UK) is an artist based in London. Her films delve into themes of diasporic identities, gentrification, urbanism and psychogeography through the use of documentary. She has exhibited and screened widely, including presentations at Institute of Contemporary Arts, South London Gallery, Birkbeck University, Walker Art Center, Somerset House Studios and Instituto Tomie Ohtake, amongst others. She is nominated for the Kleinwort Hambros Emerging Artist Prize (2021), is a recipient of the Arts Foundation Futures Awards (2021) and the Sundance Ignite Fellowship (2018) and has exhibited in Bloomberg New Contemporaries (2018). Akingbade is a graduate of London College of Communication and is completing her postgraduate studies at Royal Academy Schools.

## About Duchamp & Sons

Initiated in 2009, the Whitechapel Gallery's youth collective, Duchamp & Sons provides a platform to share, discuss and experiment with new ideas. It aims to give young people aged 15-24 the practical experience, skills and behind the-scenes insight into the Gallery, while working alongside artists and creative practitioners. Recent projects have included *Home: Live > In Room* (2020), a digitally curated exhibition exploring the Hiscox Collection; *Sound* with artist and musician Rosie Ridgway (2019-20); *Youth Takeover: Visions of the Future* with architectural collective STORE Projects, Community Music, and Siobhan Davies Dance Young Artists Collective (2019). Whitechapel Gallery's Youth Programme is generously supported by the Aldgate Connect BID, Dorota and Olivier Audemars, and the Worshipful Company of Grocers.

## About Whitechapel Gallery

For over a century the Whitechapel Gallery has premiered world-class artists from modern masters such as Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Frida Kahlo and Hannah Höch to contemporaries such as Zarina Bhimji, Sophie Calle, William Kentridge, Eduardo Paolozzi and Michael Rakowitz. Its historic campus houses exhibitions, artist commissions, collection displays, historic archives, education resources, inspiring art courses, talks and film screenings, the Townsend dining room and the Koenig Bookshop. It is a touchstone for contemporary art internationally, plays a central role in London's cultural landscape and is pivotal to the continued growth of the world's most vibrant contemporary art quarter.

## Visitor Information

Admission: Free

Opening times: Tuesday – Sunday, 11am – 6pm; First Thursdays, 11am – 9pm

Whitechapel Gallery, 77 – 82 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Nearest London Underground Stations: Aldgate East, Liverpool Street, Tower Gateway DLR

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