

BLACK CHRONICLES II

Project Space 1

12 September – 29 November 2014

Curators:

Renée Mussai and Mark Sealy

Produced by Autograph ABP in collaboration with the Hulton Archive, a division of Getty Images.

All photographs taken by the London Stereoscopic Company, courtesy of ©Hulton Archive/Getty Images. Printed in 2014 from original glass plate negatives by Mike Spry.

Text excerpts

Keynote lecture by Professor Stuart Hall, from the inaugural archive symposium *The Missing Chapter: Cultural Identity and the Photographic Archive*, Rivington Place, 21 May 2008.

Autograph ABP would like thank

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For a full list of credits, visit

www.autograph-abp.co.uk/exhibitions/black-chronicles-ii

Special Thanks to our volunteers:

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About Autograph ABP

Established in 1988 with the mission of advocating the inclusion of historically marginalised photographic practices, Autograph ABP is a charity that works internationally in photography and film, addressing politics of cultural identity, race, representation and human rights.

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Autograph ABP presents *Black Chronicles II*, a new exhibition exploring black presences in 19th and early 20th century Britain through the prism of studio portraiture – continuing our critical mission of writing Britain's black photographic history.

For the first time a comprehensive body of portraits depicting black people in Britain prior to the beginning of the second world war is brought together in this exhibition – identified through original research carried out in the holdings of national archives and by examining privately owned collections.

Many of the images on display have very recently been unearthed as part of Autograph ABP's current archive research programme, *The Missing Chapter* – a three-year project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

A highlight of the exhibition is the 'discovery' of thirty individual portraits of members of The African Choir, who toured Britain between 1891-93. These extraordinary portraits by the London Stereoscopic Company have not been seen for over 120 years. They are presented alongside those of other visiting

performers, dignitaries, servicemen, missionaries, and many as yet unidentified sitters - their presence bearing direct witness to Britain's colonial and imperial history and the expansion of Empire.

The second in a series of exhibitions dedicated to excavating archives, *Black Chronicles II* showcases Autograph ABP's commitment to continuous critical enquiry into archive images which have been overlooked, under-researched or simply not recognised as significant previously, yet are highly relevant to black representational politics and cultural history today.

'They are here because you were there. There is an umbilical connection. There is no understanding Englishness without understanding its imperial and colonial dimensions.' Stuart Hall, 2008

Black Chronicles II is dedicated to the memory of Stuart Hall (1932-2014).

'The curatorial premise of Black Chronicles II is to open up critical enquiry into the archive, continue the debate around black subjectivity within Britain, examine the ideological conditions in which such photographs were produced and the purpose they serve as agents of communication.'

Curators' note

The Missing Chapter aims to augment the photographic narratives of migration and cultural diversity in relation to Britain's past, and disseminate a visual heritage that is fragmented and often dislocated.

Working in partnership with major cultural institutions and other collaborators, Autograph ABP are researching examples of photographic evidence of black presences in Britain dating back to the earliest images produced since the invention of photography in 1839.

The Missing Chapter builds on the concept of 'animating the past to imagine the future', bringing the photographic archive out of the gallery/museum context and into direct engagement with different communities. A dedicated programme over three years includes a series of temporary large scale image projections in public spaces, pop up and gallery based exhibitions, the development of digital learning tools, online portfolios, an interactive app for mobile devices and a forthcoming publication.

Black Chronicles II represents the first public showcase of this ongoing research programme 2013–2016.

The exhibition continues in Project Space 2, with a display of original albums and prints featuring Autograph ABP's 1996 commission 'Effnik' by Yinka Shonibare MBE, as well as works from the collections of the Hulton Archive, Jenny Allsworth, Paul Frecker/The Library of Nineteenth-Century Photography, Michael Graham-Stewart and Val Wilmer. A digital slideshow is presented in partnership with The National Army Museum.