

KEITH PIPER

Moseley Road Art School 1972 - 1976 & Highgate Comprehensive School

Artist, Curator, Academic & Founder Member of Blk Art



Keith Piper is a leading contemporary British artist

Born 1960 he was a pupil at the School during its turbulent closure. He studied at Trent Polytechnic and was a founder member of the Blk Art Group in 1982, an association of young black art students in the West Midlands. The group was instrumental in raising the profile of black artists in the UK. In a series of exhibitions entitled 'The Pan-Afrikan Connection', they exposed institutional racism with a manifesto:

"Let us bend our art into an ensign around which to rally the people. Let it raise our consciousness... as to how most effectively we can conduct our struggle, inspire organised self-defence, expose our enemies and seize justice."

His provocative use of borrowed images and critical texts drew media attention. Controversy surrounded one exhibition in 1983 around his canvas 'Another Nigger Died Today' that led to adults only being allowed entrance.

Keith was the first black artist to have work purchased by the Arts Council

'Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse' takes the form of four painted panels showing human figures with horses' heads. Each figure

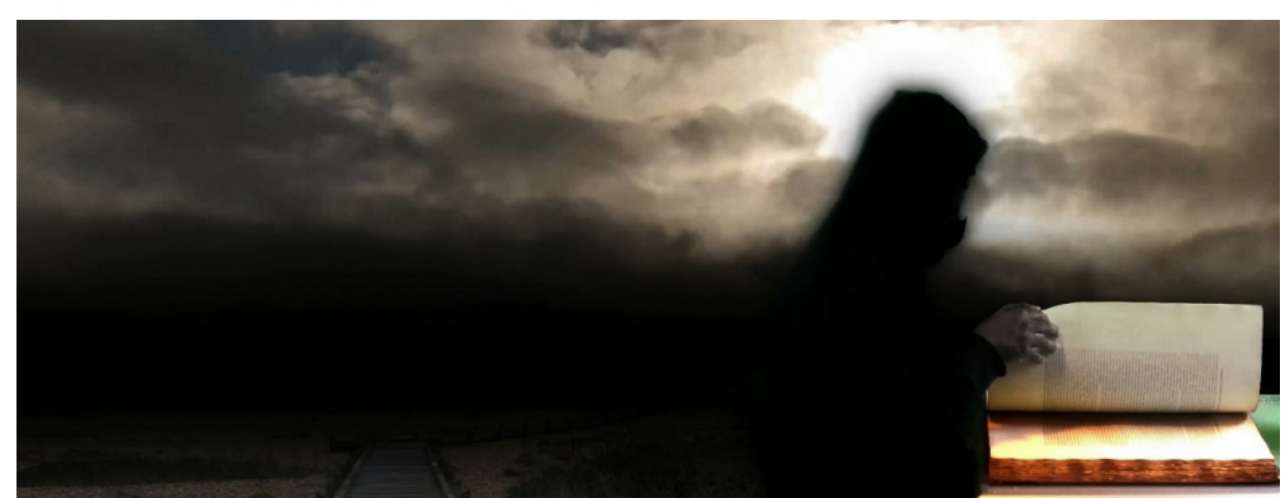
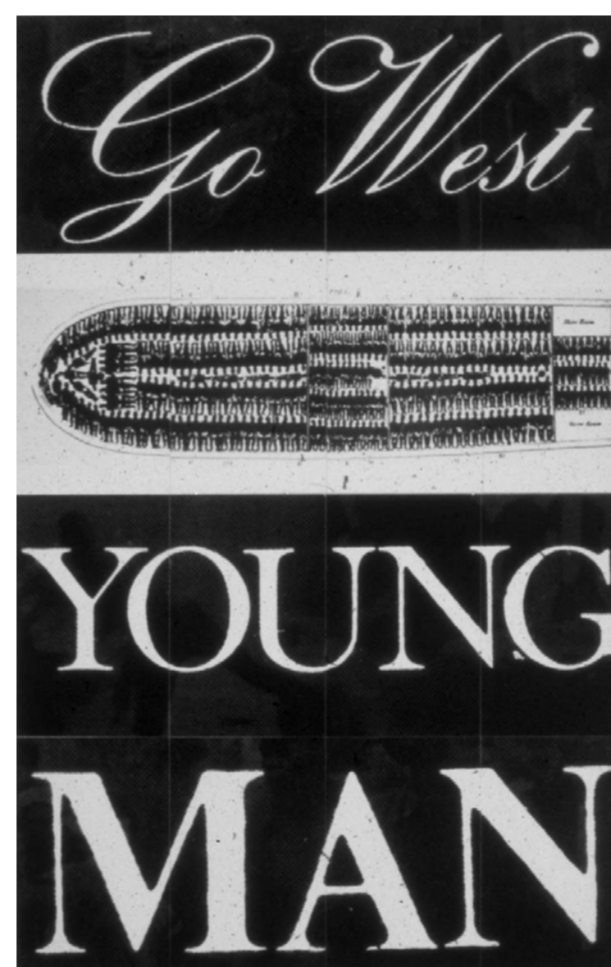
comments on the corrupt domestic or international political system. The first, a middle-class Tory voter ticking the ballot box; the second, a policeman employed to beat up striking miners; the third, an American army officer charged with installing nuclear weapons at Greenham Common; and the final figure is of Ronald Reagan, the US president in charge of the nuclear button.

Over the last 30 years using a wide range of media, from painting, sculpture and printmaking, through to interactive and digital media installations, he has explored the issues of race, gender and class identity. He uses visual allusions to help understand and subvert the dominant views of British culture and Imperialism.

In 2016 the Arts Council Collection commissioned 'Unearthing the Bankers Bones' a 10 minute looped video projection exploring global capitalism:

"I am attempting to employ visual montage to play with notions of landscape and history painting... played out across three video screens. The story that unfolds will be one of exploration, excavation and autopsy as a way of examining the present from an imagined future."

Keith Piper is currently a Visual Artist and Reader in Fine Art and Digital Media at Middlesbrough University.



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