

# TATE FILM

**HELEN CAMMOCK  
BLACK AUDIO FILM COLLECTIVE  
ANDREA ARNOLD**

**Artist Film & Video at Tate Britain  
Clore Auditorium, Tate Britain  
Monday 19 January 2015  
19.00–21.00**



Helen Cammock, screenshot from *The Singing Will Never Be Done* 2011 © Helen Cammock



Helen Cammock, screenshot from *The Singing Will Never Be Done* 2011 © Helen Cammock

**UPCOMING SCREENINGS  
IN THE CLORE AUDITORIUM**

**CAREY YOUNG AND JILL MAGID**  
Monday 9 February, 19.00–21.00

**DARIA MARTIN AND MASSIMILIANO MOLLONA**  
Monday 30 March, 19.00–21.00

Artist Film & Video at Tate Britain is curated by Zoe Whitley, Curator and Jenny Lund, Assistant Curator, Contemporary British Art at Tate Britain. With thanks to the artists.

[tate.org.uk/film](http://tate.org.uk/film)  
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Visual artist Helen Cammock explores how the legendary Black Audio Film Collective's *Handsworth Songs* and Oscar-winner Andrea Arnold's *Wasp* have influenced her approach to narrative and her understanding of the relationship between the individual and society.

BRITAIN  
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In 2015, Tate Britain continues its newly launched monthly programme of artists' films and videos. Held in the Clore Auditorium one Monday evening per month, this winter series brings to the screen new and recent works by contemporary artists exploring self and society. Each screening features the artists in conversation, allowing the audience to engage directly with their practice.

## PROGRAMME NOTES

### WASP

**Andrea Arnold, 2003**

**35mm film transferred to video, 26 min**



Andrea Arnold, still from *Wasp* 2003 © Andrea Arnold

I first saw 'Wasp' after finishing my BA in photography. It was the first contemporary short that I had seen that for me explored a family – its situation and its struggle - while speaking about much wider issues. I had been working as a social worker for ten years by the time I decided to change career and to study photography. This family and its experiences resonated heavily with many that I had seen first hand. It was not reducing the struggles of a woman down to her failure to parent – but for me considered the wider issues of gender, class and poverty in relation to individual human needs. – Helen Cammock, 2014

*Wasp* is a powerful realist portrait of a teenage mother of four and her struggle to make everyday life cohere. Andrea Arnold captures with painful vividness the mother Zoe's desperate attempts to fulfil her own desires and needs as she simultaneously serves as sole carer for her young children. The film, set in a deprived neighbourhood of Dartford, Arnold's hometown, creates an image of a society deeply divided by class where women in particular are in vulnerable positions. *Wasp*, Arnold's directorial short film debut, won multiple awards including the Academy Award for Live Action Short Film and Short Filmmaking Award at the Sundance Film Festival in 2004.

### HANDSWORTH SONGS

**Black Audio Film Collective, 1986**  
**Single channel SD video, 60 min**  
**T12862.008**



Black Audio Film Collective, still from *Handsworth Songs* 1986. Courtesy of Black Audio Film Collective and LUX, London

'Handsworth Songs' spoke to me as a young black British woman who was trying to make sense of her thoughts and feelings. It wasn't a sociological text and it wasn't a novel and it wasn't my experience, but it spoke of a shared understanding of alienation and offered up different experiences stemming from these shared concerns. – Helen Cammock, 2014

*Handsworth Songs* is a portrait reflecting on the notorious 1985 Birmingham race riots. The film is a montage of live interviews with bystanders and active participants in the riots, press images, still photography and everyday events in the neighbourhood. The film portrays the riots as tragically logical outcomes of years of racial oppression Black people have suffered in British society. Through a sophisticated enactment of parallel story lines, *Handsworth Songs* reveals the media's reductive and biased image of the riots and the complex social and political issues facing Black and Asian communities in England. A disorientating mosaic structure of music, images, and diegetic and non-diegetic sounds serves to invoke the chaos of the riots.

*Handsworth Songs* was made for the Channel 4 series *Britain: The Lie of the Land*. The film has gone on to win several international awards including the BFI John Grierson Award for Best Documentary in 1986.

**THE SINGING WILL NEVER BE DONE**  
**Helen Cammock, 2011**  
**DV Pal, dual screen projection, 9 min**

I often use my family and my own story as a conduit for exploring the relationship between lived experience and society's norms and structures. – Helen Cammock, 2014

Taking the story of her parents as the starting point for her film *The Singing Will Never Be Done*, Helen Cammock addresses the changing composition and dynamics of the British family from the late 1960s to our contemporary moment. The dual-screen projection alternates disjunctively between images of her Cuban-born Jamaican father and white British mother in their domestic settings and images of beautiful green parakeets that have formed a colony in a park near Wormwood Scrubs Prison in North London. The exotic birds become a metaphor for immigration as the film's narrator interweaves fragments of poems, political speech and personal writing to create a complex presentation of the way race manifests in Britain.

Anecdotes detailing the history of the birds' settlement of the park, including a description of their purported escape from the London film set of *The African Queen* (1951), are interweaved with stories of her parents' working life in Britain and quotes from Conservative MP Enoch Powell's notorious 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech. Cammock cites Powell's xenophobic criticism of the supposed economic burden visited on England through immigration, including Powell's fear that single immigrants would marry, multiply, and forever alter the fabric of the country. Through these visual and aural juxtapositions of private stories and public speech Cammock invites the viewer to reflect on how social and political discourse informs an individual's sense of identity and belonging.

The very title *The Singing Will Never Be Done* invites viewers to think of film as song and to perceive Cammock's work as a continuous flow of associations and memories as opposed to a story with a beginning, middle and end. It highlights the importance of sound in filmmaking, and in that way links coherently and provocatively to *Handsworth Songs'* complex interplay of sound and vision.

*The Singing Will Never Be Done* was screened previously in the exhibition *You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows*, Hollybush Gardens Gallery, London in 2014.

### ABOUT THE ARTISTS

#### Helen Cammock

(born 1970, London)

Lives and works in London

Helen Cammock studied Photography at University of Brighton and the Royal College of Art where she received her MA in 2011. She was the Co-Director of the Brighton Photo Fringe from 2008–2012 and is currently on the Board of Trustees. She has taught at Brighton University's Photography BA course and lectures on participatory photographic practice and curating. While Cammock started out working with photography, she has for several years made videos in order to more fully explore narrative forms and the relation between aural and visual perception. Her video works include *Character Building* (2008), *The Singing Will Never Be Done* (2011), *17 Hastings Ave* (2011) and *Changing Room* (2014).

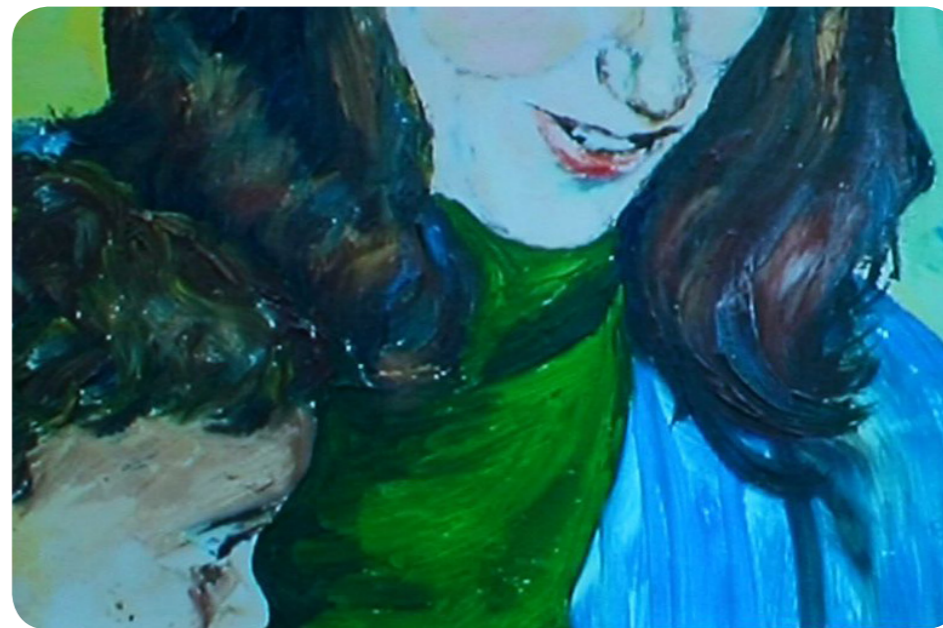
Helen Cammock's work has been shown in numerous group exhibitions. The most recent exhibitions include *Common Place*, 4th Floor Collective, Brighton Photo Fringe, *Scene* at Pitzhangor Manor Gallery, London, and *You don't need a weather man to know which way the wind blows* at Hollybush Gardens (all 2014). She is currently working on an exhibition and publishing project titled *Carte de Visite* curated by artist and Professor of Contemporary Art Lubaina Himid (born 1954). Together with the artists Ingrid Pollard (born 1953) and Claudette Johnson (born 1959), Cammock has been invited to make a body of new work taking its starting point in the archive Making Histories Visible and the Print & Drawing Study Collection at the Centre for Contemporary Art, University of Central Lancashire. Cammock is also about to begin a photography project with Open School East London.

#### Black Audio Film Collective

(1982–98, London)

Black Audio Film Collective was a cine-cultural film group formed in 1982 by seven former college friends in Hackney, London. The group wrote theoretical papers, ran screenings of experimental and third world cinema, held filmmaking workshops and produced films that explored identity politics, representation and filmmaking aesthetics. The Collective became renowned for its pioneering multidisciplinary work and its creation of space for Black British cinema to develop and flourish.

The Collective's members included John Akomfrah, Reece Auguiste, Lina Gopaul, Eddie George, Avril Johnson, David Lawson



Helen Cammock, screenshot from *The Singing Will Never Be Done* 2011 © Helen Cammock

and Trevor Mathison, and together they made fourteen films and two slide-tape installations. In addition to *Handsworth Songs* (1986) their films include *Twilight City* (1989) which contrasts the reality of the life of Black migrants in London with the perception of the city as an ideal space for a new beginning, and *Who Needs a Heart* (1991) which explores the emergence of Black Power in Britain in the 1960s and 70s. Two of their experimental documentaries are on iconic civil rights figures - *Seven Songs for Malcolm X* (1993) and *Dr Martin Luther King - Days of Hope* (1997).

The group's groundbreaking work received a number of awards at major international film festivals through the 1980s and 90s. The Collective has also served on selection boards for key international film festivals, including the Cannes, Berlin, Melbourne, Venice and Bombay (Mumbai) festivals. While Black Audio Film Collective dispersed as a group in 1998, several of its members continue to work independently.

#### Andrea Arnold

(born 1961, Dartford)

Filmmaker Andrea Arnold is known for her deeply moving social realist films. Arnold started her career working in television, first as presenter and actress for the children's show *No. 73* (1982–88) and then scripting her own shows including the youth series *A Beetle Called Derek* (1990–91). After ten years in television she studied directing at the American Film Institute Conservatory in Los Angeles and trained in screenwriting at the PAL Labs in Kent.

Her feature film directorial debut *Red Road* (2006), portraying a woman CCTV operator's search for revenge and resolution, won the Jury Prize at Cannes as well as a number of Scotland BAFTAs and the Sutherland Trophy at the London Film Festival in 2006. Her film *Fish Tank* (2009) about a young teenager's life on a council estate also won the Jury Prize at Cannes (2009) and a BAFTA Award for Outstanding British Film in 2010. In addition to *Wasp* (2003), Arnold's short films include *Milk* (1998) and *Dog* (2001). She directed a feature film based on Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* in 2011. In the same year she also was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for her services to the film industry.

Arnold is currently working on her first feature outside the UK – a road movie titled *American Honey* about a rebellious teenage girl who runs away and experiences a series of picturesque adventures across the US.