

# Artist & Empire

25 November 2015 – 10 April 2016

Room 6

Legacies of Empire

Large Print Guide



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## 6 Legacies of Empire

The profile of British artists from the former Empire peaked during the 1960s, encouraged by the Commonwealth Institute and networks such as the Caribbean Artists Movement. In 1965 Avinash Chandra's **Hills of Gold** became the first modernist work by an Indian artist to enter the national collection at the Tate Gallery. However, in the years following the breakup of Empire, many Black and Asian artists found their work judged according to preconceived notions of authenticity and difference. A growing sense of marginalisation led to the landmark exhibition **The Other Story** at the Hayward Gallery in 1989. This included works by Chandra, Khanna, Williams and Ronald Moody, alongside exhibits by younger artists such as Sonia Boyce. It was during this period that Donald Locke's **Trophies of Empire** assumed iconic status.

In recent years a post-imperial generation of artists has felt able to engage more directly with the visual culture of Empire. Each piece in this section reprises a theme or type of art presented elsewhere in the exhibition. Ranging from the critical and reflective to the ironic and playful, these works are indicative of the ways in which objects and images continue to speak to us about the histories and legacies of Empire.

Work captions and labels  
Clockwise from right of wall text

Rita Donagh b.1939

**Shadow of Six Counties (c)**

1980

Graphite and acrylic on paper

Reworking a printed map of the north of Ireland, Donagh's work belongs to a series using cartography to reflect on the province's history of political and sectarian division. The tinted shadow corresponds to the shape of the Six Counties of Ulster (Armagh, Antrim, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone) named as Northern Ireland (1921, 1925).

The shadow falls on a magnified area around Belfast, excluding some parts of the counties. For Donagh, their shape 'began to haunt my imagination [as] an image of topographic beauty at odds with the fate of the province ... as the arena of violence and death'.

Tate. Purchased 2006. T12291

Hew Locke b.1959

**Edward Colston and Edmund Burke from Restoration**  
2006

C-type photographs with mixed media collage

These two photographs from Hew Locke's **Restoration** series record his embellishment of statues of figures from Bristol's history with gold coins, chains, shells and trade beads.

Edward Colston (1636–1721) was a slave trader and Deputy of the Royal African Company which held the trading monopoly and made Bristol a prime slaving port. Bristol MP Edmund Burke (1729–1797) was an internal critic of Empire and began the process that ended the British slave trade in 1807.

Courtesy of the artist and Hales Gallery, London  
X54394–5

The Singh Twins b.1966

**EnTWINed**

2009

Poster, gouache and gold dust on mountboard

Inspired by traditional Indian miniature painting, the Liverpool-based artists the Singh Twins have consistently used their art to explore the impact of imperialism on the political, social and cultural formation of modern day Britain. This work was commissioned by the Museum of London in response to the themes suggested by Henry O'Neil's **Home Again**, 1858 on display in Room 3. It is a similar disembarkation scene detailing the entwined histories of two cultures stemming from the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and successive waves of the Sikh diaspora.

Museum of London. X53581

Sonia Boyce b.1962

**Lay Back, Keep Quiet and Think  
of What Made Britain so Great**

1986

Charcoal, pastel and watercolour  
on paper, 4 parts

'History was always one of my worst subjects at school,' Sonia Boyce recalls, 'all these English kings and fewer queens were absolutely remote from my daily life – a girl of West-Indian parentage, growing up in east London during the 1970s.' In this painting, Boyce adapts Victorian wallpapers commemorating Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, and depicting scenes of Australia, South Africa and India. Boyce's self-portrait replaces that of the queen in one original design.

Arts Council Collection, South Bank Centre, London  
X52729

Andrew Gilbert b.1980

**All Roads Lead to Ulundi (British Empire Map  
as 'Paterson's Camp Coffee' Advert)**

2015

Fine liner, watercolour and  
acrylic paint on paper

Based on Walter Crane's **Imperial Federation Map** on display in the opening room, Gilbert's map plays with the iconography of imperial triumphalism found in popular history. The border is decorated with vignettes depicting key British defeats. On the left 'heroes' from British history face deposed leaders from various campaigns on the right. Three swags proclaim the Paterson's Camp Coffee trademark slogan uniting the motifs of commerce and war illustrated below.

Courtesy of the artist. X55841

Brook Andrew b.1970

**The Island I (Red Mound)**

2007

Mixed media on canvas

Since 1995 the Australian artist Brook Andrew has studied anthropological collections in Britain with the aim of revivifying overlooked depictions of indigenous people. The source for this work is an illustration adapted from the frontispiece to Charles Sturt's **Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia**, 1833, which the artist found in an album compiled by the natural historian William Blandowski. In selecting an obscure print that acknowledges Aboriginal landscape architecture (in this case a mortuary monument), the artist memorialises a lost past by magnifying the image and rendering it mysterious.

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge. X52721

Judy Watson b.1959

**Our hair in your collections**

1995

Etching on paper

**Our bones in your collections**

1995

Etching on paper

**Our skin in your collections**

1997

Etching and chine collé

This set of three prints referring to bones, skin and hair, was made after Watson visited British collections and found material, from human remains to artefacts, from areas in northern Australia occupied by her Aboriginal ancestors.

Her prints critique the dispersal and displacement of such objects, and the collections which now hold them. By blurring or layering these remains, Watson distances them from the view of their original collectors, as if restoring their mystery and power and returning them to their past.

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology,  
University of Cambridge. X53615, X53616, X53614

Tony Phillips b.1952

## **VI. British Punitive Expedition 1897**

1984

From the series 'History  
of the Benin Bronzes'

Etching

Courtesy of the artist. X61083

## **XII. Face to Face**

1984

From the series 'History of the Benin Bronzes'

Etching

Victoria and Albert Museum, London. X54226

These prints come from a cumulative 'History of the Benin Bronzes', inspired by a meeting between the artist and Effa Okupa, a Nigerian campaigner for the restitution of those treasures. Phillips shows their seizure by the British during the 'punitive expedition' and then (by reworking the same plate) objectified under a Western gaze.

Phillips wanted to 'take the story beyond the historical premise of the imperialistic tragedy' and show the sculptures surviving 'plunder', 'dispersal' and 'representation'.

Donald Locke 1930–2010

## **Trophies of Empire**

1972–4

Ceramics, wood, metal, glass and other materials

The British Guiana-born Donald Locke studied art in Britain in the 1950s. He returned in 1971 to work on mixed media and ceramic sculptures which evoke memories of plantations and what the artist termed 'the colonial condition'. Here phallic and bullet-like ceramic cylinders are displayed like prizes or museum objects and suggest multiple associations including violence, hierarchy and categorisation. First exhibited at the Commonwealth Institute Gallery in 1975, this work became a talisman for younger artists in the following decade.

Tate. Purchased 2015. T14319