

JACQUI DAVIES

PRESS RELEASE:
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 13TH APRIL 2017



PHILOMELA'S CHORUS

We are delighted to announce the four artists and filmmakers commissioned to launch this exciting new project: Philomela's Chorus.

Jacqui Davies is working with software executive, Eric Collins and cultural historian and curator, Michael Prokopow, as well as curator and educator, Karen Alexander, to commission a collection of short films by emergent and early career BAME women and non-binary artist-filmmakers.

Using the Greek myth of Philomela as a point of departure, this ambitious project will give a voice to women and non-binary encounters and experiences often ignored or unseen. Like Philomela, our artists and collaborators will seek inventive devices and find new ways to tell their stories.

This project aims to place BAME women and non-binary people at its centre, while also amplifying and revealing all women and non-binary people's encounters of challenging oppressive and hostile social exchanges. In so doing it will forcibly and creatively challenge the silences on issues and concerns so often rendered unimportant or invisible.

Philomela's Chorus Commissioned Artists:



Jay Bernard

Something Said

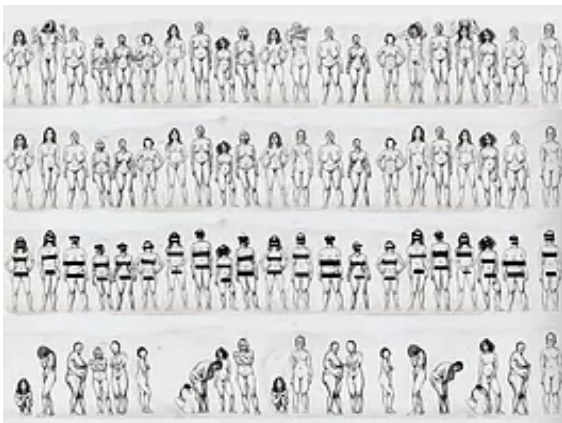
In 1981 the New Cross Fire tragically claimed the lives of 13 young black people and was met with state, media and police indifference. Haunted by that history, and in the context of the recent rise of the far-right, *Something Said* resurrects the spirit of Yvonne Ruddock, whose 16th birthday was being celebrated the night of the fire.



Beverley Bennett

Amine

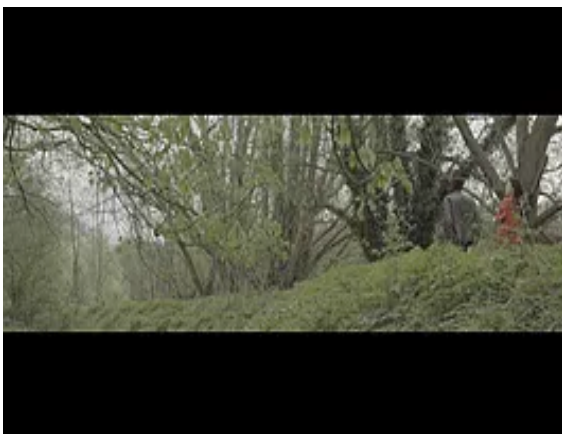
A tapestry of voices reveal the multi-faceted complexities and experiences of what it is to be a black woman today.



Phoebe Boswell

The Words We Do Not Have Yet

A salute to women in history who have used their bodies in protest when they haven't been permitted to use their voices, this film reflects upon the collective strength and subversive potential of women standing together and using their voices in collaboration.



Nicola Thomas

Mel's Lament

Drawing on the ancient Greek story of Philomela and Tereus, Mel's Lament imagines a present-day version of the couple and the complexity of their relationship.

The films are to be launched at an event in London in Summer 2017.

For further information, images and interview requests please contact
info@jacquidavies.com

Notes To Editor:

Philomela's Chorus Commissioning team:

The commissioners are Eric Collins, a software executive, and Dr. Michael J. Prokopow, a cultural historian and curator. Karen Alexander is a curator, writer and educator and Jacqui Davies a curator and producer.

Producer

Jacqui Davies is a London-based producer and curator. Working at the intersection of art and film, Davies works independently across all platforms, producing, commissioning and curating projects for television, galleries, site-specific, stage, cinema and online.

In 2016, Davies was a recipient of the prestigious BFI Vision Award.

Artists

Jay Bernard is a programmer for BFI Flare: London LGBT Film Festival. They are the author of two books, *English Breakfast* (2013) and *Your Sign Is Cuckoo, Girl* (2008); their work has been featured in magazines such as *Magma*, *Dazed & Confused*, *MsLexia* and *Poetry London*. They have performed at festivals such as Homotopia, Queer Up North, Spit Lit and Latitude.

Beverley Bennett is an artist and her work has been shown nationally. Venues include: The Bluecoat, Global Studio's and The National Portrait Gallery, London. Bennett is also the Founder and Co-Director of London-based art collective TBC, who self-publish a 12-page magazine and work on exhibition projects that interrogate individual members' creative identities and further explore the potential of collaborative works.

Phoebe Boswell was shortlisted for the Art Foundation's Animation Fellowship, 2012 and was the first recipient of the Sky Academy Arts Scholarship in 2014. *Dear Mr Shakespeare*, her *Guardian* / British Council commissioned short film collaboration with filmmaker, Shola Amoo, was nominated for Best International Short at Sundance 2017. Boswell received the Future Generation Art Prize 2017.

Nicola Thomas (AKA NT) was awarded the Augustus Martin Prize and the Royal College of Art Graduate Jealous Print Prize in 2013. She is also the recipient of the London Print Studio New Graduate Award 2013. Exhibitions include *Multiplied* at Christie's; *Carousel* at Aspex Gallery; and *Parallax*, at CG Projects. Nicola's prints are included in the V&A Special Print Collection and form part of the RCA Special Print Collection. Her book art (under the name of COFA) is included as part of the Chelsea College of Art and Design Artist's Books Collection. Thomas has shown her films recently in Paris, Berlin and Miami.

The Myth of Philomela

The most complete and extant rendering of the story of Philomela, Procne, and Tereus can be found in Book VI of the *Metamorphoses* of the Roman poet Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso) (43 BC – AD 17/18), where the story reaches its full development during antiquity. It is likely that Ovid relied upon Greek and Latin sources that were available in his era such as the *Bibliotheca* of Pseudo-Apollodorus (2nd century BC) or sources that are no longer extant or exist today only in fragments—especially Sophocles' tragic drama *Tereus* (5th century BC). According to Ovid, in the fifth year of Procne's marriage to Tereus, King of Thrace and son of Ares, she asked her husband to "Let me at Athens my dear sister see / Or let her come to Thrace, and visit me." Tereus agreed to travel to Athens and escort her sister, Philomela, to Thrace. King Pandion of Athens, the father of Philomela and Procne, was apprehensive about letting his one remaining daughter leave his home and protection and asks Tereus to protect her as if he were her father. Tereus agrees. However, Tereus lusted for Philomela when he first saw her, and that lust grew during the course of the return voyage to Thrace. Arriving in Thrace, he forced her to a cabin or lodge in the woods and raped her. After the assault, Tereus threatened her and advised her to keep silent. Philomela was defiant and angered Tereus. In his rage, he cut out her tongue and abandoned her in the cabin. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Philomela's defiant speech is rendered (in an 18th-century English translation) as:

Still my revenge shall take its proper time,
And suit the baseness of your hellish crime.
My self, abandon'd, and devoid of shame,
Thro' the wide world your actions will proclaim;
Or tho' I'm prison'd in this lonely den,
Obscur'd, and bury'd from the sight of men,
My mournful voice the pitying rocks shall move,
And my complainings echo thro' the grove.
Hear me, o Heav'n! and, if a God be there,
Let him regard me, and accept my pray'r.

Rendered unable to speak because of her injuries, Philomela wove a tapestry that told her story and had it sent to Procne. Procne was incensed and in revenge, she killed her son by Tereus, Itys (or Itylos), boiled him and served him as a meal to her husband. After Tereus ate Itys, the sisters presented him with the severed head of his son, and he became aware of their conspiracy and his cannibalistic meal. He

snatched up an axe and pursued them with the intent to kill the sisters. They fled but were almost overtaken by Tereus at Daulia in Phocis. In desperation, they prayed to the gods to be turned into birds and escape Tereus' rage and vengeance. The gods transformed Procne into a swallow and Philomela into a nightingale. Subsequently, the gods would transform Tereus into a hoopoe.

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