National Portrait Gallery unveils fascinating new exhibition



Albert Jonas and John Xiniwe of the African Choir, by the London Stereoscopic Company, 1891 Hulton Archive/Getty Images

An important display of photographs revealing stories of Black and Asian lives in Britain from the 1860s to the 1940s opens next Wednesday (18 May) at London's National Portrait Gallery.

Black Chronicles: Photographic Portraits 1862-1948 is a free exhibition which has been supported by £400,000 from HLF. Organised in collaboration with Autograph ABP, it brings together some of the earliest photographs of Black and Asian sitters in the Gallery's collection. These will be exhibited alongside recently discovered images from the Hulton Archive, a division of Getty Images.

Watershed moment

The display of over 40 photographs will highlight an important and complex Black presence in Britain before 1948, a watershed moment when the *SS Empire Windrush* brought the first group of West Indian migrants to Great Britain.

New purchases on show

[quote=Liz Smith, NPG Director of Participation and Learning]“The partnership with Autograph ABP will enable the National Portrait Gallery to provide a rich programme for schools, families and young people.”[/quote]

The exhibition will also highlight new acquisitions including a series of portraits by Angus McBean, of Les Ballets Nègres, Britain’s first all-black ballet company, and a selection of photographs of the pioneer of classical Indian dance in Britain, Pandit Ram Gopal, by George Hurrell.

Liz Smith, Director of Participation and Learning, National Portrait Gallery, says: “Beyond the significant display, the partnership with Autograph ABP will enable the National Portrait Gallery to provide a rich programme for schools, families and young people and a one-day conference. This will enable a fuller exploration of perspectives on identity and representation and for the images to reach a wider audience.”

More information

Black Chronicles: Photographic Portraits 1862-1948 runs from 18 May - 11 December 2016. The display is shown across three collection rooms: Rooms 23, 31 and 33 on Floor 1. Admission is free. Find out more on the National Portrait Gallery website.

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