



John Akomfrah is a hugely respected artist and filmmaker, whose works are characterised by their investigations into memory, post-colonialism, temporality and aesthetics and often explore the experiences of migrant diasporas globally. Akomfrah was a founding member of the influential Black Audio Film Collective, which started in London in 1982 alongside artists David Lawson and Lina Gopaul, who he still collaborates with today alongside Ashitey Akomfrah as Smoking Dogs Films. Their first film, *Handsworth Songs* (1986) explored events surrounding the 1985 riots in Birmingham and London through a charged combination of archive footage, still photos, newly shot material and newsreel. The film won several international prizes and established a multi-layered visual style that has become a recognisable motif of Akomfrah's practice. Other works include the three-screen installation *The Unfinished Conversation* (2012), a moving portrait of the cultural theorist Stuart Hall's life and work; *Peripeteia* (2012), an imagined drama visualising the lives of individuals included in two 16th century portraits by Albrecht Dürer and *Mnemosyne* (2010) which exposes experiences of migrants in the UK, questioning the notion of Britain as a promised land by revealing the realities of economic hardship and casual racism.

In 2015, Akomfrah premiered his three-screen film installation *Vertigo Sea* (2015), which explores what Ralph Waldo Emerson calls 'the sublime seas'. Fusing archival material, readings from classical sources and newly shot footage, Akomfrah's piece focuses on the disorder and cruelty of the whaling industry and juxtaposes it with scenes of many generations of migrants making epic crossings of the ocean for a better life. In 2017, Akomfrah presented his largest film installation to date, *Purple* (2017), at the Barbican in London, which addresses climate change, human communities and wilderness. More recently, Akomfrah debuted *Precarity* (2017) at Prospect 4 New Orleans, following the life of forgotten New Orleans jazz trumpeter Charles 'Buddy' Bolden. In 2018, Akomfrah participated in the UK wide World War One arts programme 14-18 Now, with his multiscreen installation *Mimesis: African Soldier* (2018), which commemorated African and colonial participants who fought, served and perished during The Great War. In 2019 Akomfrah presented *Four Nocturnes* (2019) in the Ghana Pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennale, a three-channel piece reflecting on the intertwined relationship between humanity's destruction of the natural world and our of ourselves. In 2023, he premiered two major five-channel pieces at the 15th Sharjah Biennial: 'Thinking Historically in the Present': *Arcadia* (2023), reflecting on 'The Columbian Exchange' between the Americas, Afro-Eurasia and Europe from the 1400s onwards; and *Becoming Wind* (2023), an allegorical representation of the Garden of Eden and its disappearance.

Akomfrah (born 1957) lives and works in London. His works have been presented in solo exhibitions at The Box, Plymouth, UK (2023); Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Frankfurt, Germany (2023); Smithsonian National Museum of African Art (2023) and Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C., USA (2022); Remai Modern, Saskatoon, Canada (2022); Towner Eastbourne, Eastbourne, UK (2021); Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona, Spain (2021); Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Sevilla, Spain (2020); Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA, USA (2020); Secession, Vienna, Austria (2020); BALTIC, Gateshead, UK (2019); ICA Boston, MA, USA (2019); Museu Coleção Berardo, Lisbon, Portugal (2018); New Museum, New York, NY, USA (2018); Bildmuseet, Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden (2015, 2018); SFMOMA, San Francisco, CA, USA (2018); Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, Spain (2018); Barbican, London, UK (2017); Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, UK (2017); Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, São Paulo, Brazil (2017); Perth International Arts Festival, John Curtin Gallery, Curtin University, Perth, Australia (2017); The Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia (2017); Centre of Contemporary Art, Christchurch, New Zealand (2016); Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK (2016); Nikolaj Kunsthall, Copenhagen, Denmark (2016); STUK Kunstcentrum, Leuven, Belgium (2016); Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, Michigan, USA (2014); Tate Britain, London, UK (2013-14) and a week long series of screenings at MoMA, New York, USA (2011). His work has been shown in international group exhibitions including 'Entangles pasts, 1768-now', Royal Academy, London, UK (2024); 'Sharjah Biennial 15: Thinking Historically in the Present', Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (2023); 'Global Ghana', The Africa Institute, Sharjah, UAE and Accra, Ghana (2022); 'Fault Lines', North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, USA (2022); 'Posteriority', Museum of Contemporary Art Busan, Busan, South Korea (2021); 'Family – Visions of a shared humanity', Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia (2021); 'Am I Human To You?', Art Museum KUBE, Alesund, Norway (2021); 'Affect Machine: Self-healing in the Post-Capitalist Era', Taipaei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, Taiwan (2021); 'Terminal', City Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand (2020); Ghana Pavilion, 58th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (2019); 'Strange Days: Memories of the Future', New Museum x The Store, London, UK (2018); 'Histórias Afro-Atlânticas', Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo, Brazil (2018); 'From where I stand, my eye will send a light to you in the North', Te Tuhi Museum, Auckland, New Zealand (2018); Prospect 4, New Orleans, LA, USA (2017); 'Restless Earth', La Triennale di Milano, Milan, Italy (2017); 'Unfinished Conversations', Museum of Modern Art, New York City, NY, USA (2017); 'British Art Show 8' (2015-17); 'All the World's Futures', 56th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (2015); 'History is Now: 7 Artists Take On Britain', Hayward Gallery, London, UK (2015); 'Africa Now: Political Patterns', SeMA, Seoul, South Korea (2014); Sharjah Biennial 11, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (2013); Liverpool Biennial, UK (2012) and Taipei Biennial, Taiwan (2012). He has also been featured in many international film festivals, including Sundance Film Festival, Utah, USA (2013 and 2011) and Toronto International Film Festival, Canada (2012). He was awarded the Artes Mundi Prize in 2017 and a Knighthood for services to the Arts in the 2023 New Year Honours.