

The Time Is Now?

Screenings of Black and Asian
films from 1980s-today curated
by June Givanni

Sat 25 March 2017
Nottingham Contemporary



Rahm Films Ltd

What is it about the film, arts, cultural practices and products and social debates of the decades of the 80s/90s that make them resonate so closely with contemporary life in the UK today?

The Time Is Now? programme runs together with our exhibition *The Place Is Here*. The title of the show is borrowed from a line in a poem inscribed onto the surface of Lubaina Himid's work *We Will Be*, as a call to root the powerful set conversations and practices that emerged in 1980s Britain within the context of Nottingham and the UK. The Time is Now? encourages opportunities to experience and to engage with these in relation to the strident voices in film of that time, and of now.

During this last event of the series we will screen two films relating to Sufism, a concept in Islam defined by scholars as the inner, mystical dimension of Islam. Others contend that it is a perennial philosophy of existence that pre-dates religion, the expression of which flowered within the Islamic religion.

We are very fortunate to have a special preview screening of the new Jamal brothers' film *Rahm*, which has just been released in the UK. It's also, a rare opportunity to see the short film *Utterance* made 27 years ago by Birmingham filmmaker Pervaiz Khan featuring the Sufi music of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

The screenings will be followed by a Q&A with *Rahm* director Ahmed Jamal and writer/producer Mahmood Jamal, chaired by June Givanni (Pan African Cinema Archive).

Programme

2.00pm – Introduction

2.10pm – Films:

Utterance (1990) dir. Pervaiz Khan. (22 min)

Rahm (2016) dir. Ahmed Jamal. (103 min)

4.20pm – Q&A

About the films

***Utterance* (1990) dir. Pervaiz Khan**

A film about Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan (1948-1997), a Pakistani musician and leading singer of Qawwali, which is the devotional music of the Sufis and Sufism (the inner mystical dimension of Islam). Extending the 600-year old Qawwali tradition of his family, Khan is widely credited with introducing Qawwali music to international audiences.

Rahm (Mercy) (2016) dir. Ahmed Jamal

A Sufi adaptation of Shakespeare's 'Measure for Measure' is described as 'a plea for tolerance from the heart of the Muslim World'. A virtuous woman has to choose between her honour or saving her brother's life in a story of reconciliation and forgiveness. In Urdu and in Arabic, 'rahm' means mercy, compassion. The film, like the play, explores justice and mercy, strength and tyranny, individual courage and complex moral choices. 'A plea for tolerance from the heart of the Muslim world', Rahm could hardly be more timely. Adapted for the screen by writer and producer Mahmood Jamal who asserts that when Shakespeare wrote Measure for Measure, the historical situation in England was similar to that of the contemporary Muslim world – with the Puritans of Shakespeare's days finding their equivalent in the Islamists of today with their obsession with punishment and uniformity of belief, almost a suffocating denial of diversity.

Speaker Biographies

Ahmed Jamal studied film at the London International Film School. He recently directed 'Run for Glory' which is entirely cut to Beethoven's 9th Symphony without dialogue. He produced and wrote 'Defusing Human Bombs' (BBC, ARTE and ZDF) in Oct 2013. His documentary 'The Journalist and the Jihadi: The Murder of Daniel Pearl' for HBO got two Emmy nominations in 2008 and won the Indian National Film Award for best documentary, 2008.

Mahmood Jamal is the writer and producer of Turning World, a major drama serial for Channel Four Television, featuring Roshan Seth and Art Malik and Directed by award winning director David Blair. He was the lead writer on Family Pride the first Asian soap produced by Central Television and Channel Four. In 2013 he adapted Thomas Hardy's Mayor Of Casterbridge for Pakistan Television in Urdu. A renowned poet and translator, he is the editor and translator of Islamic Mystical Poetry (Penguin Classics 2009).

Bindi Kalsi was involved with the making of the film Utterance

June Givanni is a film curator, archivist and international consultant in African and African diaspora cinema, with Black British Cinema at its core. A leader in this sector for more than 30 years, she has worked at major institutions including the British Film Institute and with the Toronto International Film Festival. June is the director of the Pan African Cinema Archive, a by-product of her decades of film curating an archive collecting based in London. June is currently an Honorary Research Fellow at Birkbeck College of Art.

Forthcoming events at Nottingham Contemporary

Keith Piper Guest Lecture

Thu 27 April, 6-7.30pm

Artist Keith Piper presents his work in the context of Nottingham's 1980's Black Arts Movement and his exhibitions at New Art Exchange and Nottingham Contemporary.

Please note this event is at Nottingham Trent University: Lecture Theatre 2, Newton building, NG1 4BU

The Study Sessions: Fanon, alienation and freedom.

Tue 24 April, 6.30-8.30pm

In 2015 Jean Khalfa and Robert Young published a 700-page critical edition of texts by Frantz Fanon that had never been published, or were barely accessible. These texts will be published in English by Bloomsbury in 2017. In this lecture Jean Khalfa will explore how these texts shed a new light on Fanon's writings on alienation and freedom and reveal his understanding of problems to come, some of which we are experiencing now.