



Spike Island

DONALD RODNEY
VISCERAL CANKER

25 MAY TO 8 SEPTEMBER
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Donald Rodney was born in 1961 in West Bromwich to Jamaican parents, and grew up in Smethwick, on the outskirts of Birmingham. He studied art in Bournville, Nottingham and London throughout the 1980s, and first gained visibility as a member of the BLK Art Group: an association of young Black artists, critics and curators formed in Wolverhampton in 1982.

Rodney's practice was marked by a commitment to artistic experimentation, and so he worked with new materials and technologies throughout his life, from drawing, painting and installation to photography, animatronics, and digital media. His work is known for being incisive, acerbic and evocative in how it addresses issues around racial identity, Black masculinity, chronic illness, and Britain's colonial past.

Rodney suffered from sickle cell anaemia throughout his life, which meant persistent pain, regular invasive treatments and increasing immobility. Though these were extremely challenging experiences, he chose to actively incorporate them into his work, often as a metaphor for the illnesses and injustices of society at large.

Developed with the support of the Donald Rodney Estate since 2020, *Visceral Canker* brings together nearly all that survives of Rodney's work from 1982 to 1997, the year before he passed away. Also on view are sketchbooks, rare archive materials, a video by the Black Audio Film Collective, and a digital artwork completed posthumously by a group of Rodney's close friends.

Spike Island is an international centre for the development of contemporary art, located in Bristol's harbour area.

Admission to the gallery is free.
Spike Island, 133 Cumberland Road
Bristol BS1 6UX
spikeisland.org.uk

The exhibition aims to introduce a new generation of audiences to Rodney's life and work, cementing his place as a vital figure in British art. The title comes from a 1990 work by the artist, which exemplifies both the viscosity of his work and politics, and his persistent scrutiny of the canker, or disease, at the heart of society.

Visceral Canker is curated by former and incoming Spike Island Directors Robert Leckie and Nicole Yip. This exhibition is part of the West of England Visual Arts Alliance programme and is generously supported by the Henry Moore Foundation and the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art. Loans are supported by the Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund. It is presented in partnership with Nottingham Contemporary and Whitechapel Gallery, where it will tour during 2024-25.

The exhibition would not have been possible without the guidance and support of Diane Symons and Keith Piper from the Donald Rodney Estate.

Image: Donald Rodney, *Britannia Hospital 3* (1988). Detail. Oil pastel on x-ray. Courtesy the Estate of Donald Rodney and Sheffield Museums



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