

FELIX & SPEAR

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Press Release
August 30, 2024

Paul Dash

JOIE DE VIVRE

15 Sep – 31 Oct 2024

Opening reception: Sat 14th Sep 12-3pm (RSVP essential)

London, August 30, 2024 – Felix & Spear are pleased to present '*JOIE DE VIVRE*', an exhibition of paintings and works on paper by Paul Dash (b. 1946).

My career in art and design started during the Windrush era and while I was still at school. I felt isolated from other kids as the only Black West Indian student of my age there and arguably in the whole of Oxford. My parents knew most of the West Indian people in the city as my father cut hair at the weekends and was the only West Indian 'barber' in the city. Black people were sensitive about exposing their hair to the gaze of white people then, including barbers, so we got to meet in our home on a regular basis, most 1950s / 60s West Indian men in Oxford and their families.

I became absorbed in painting as a fourteen-year-old. You could say it was the only friend I had, and the art teacher, Mr Goodwill, allowed me to paint whatever I liked during his lessons.

My mother and I went on the bus to shop at Cornmarket in the centre of town each Saturday morning - she would be on the lower deck while I was on the top one. From there I feasted my eyes on the ancient architecture of the university buildings, and was fascinated by the complexity and beauty of it and then the people mingling and interacting with each other: students wearing their long colourful scarves, the various postures many visitors adopted when relaxing or just talking, etc. I drank it all in.

Many years later while visiting a friend in Holland, I saw an exhibition of Eritrean art in Amsterdam and was struck by the aerial views in which most of the compositions were set. They echoed that experience of my travel into central Oxford on the upper deck of a bus. I loved the work and enjoyed the way it allowed the viewer to attain a more complete view of each figure represented. I worked some of their technique into my art.

I have always tried to define myself as an African Caribbean artist and have resolved to make work that speaks from my African identity. In that regard I am inspired by other artists in the African Diaspora who make work in different media, particularly music and the visual arts. I think of musicians who use improvisation as a key factor in making music as in the improvised riffs, say, of John Coltrane and in the 'street art' of Jean-Michel Basquiat.

I never work from sketches though I sketch a lot, so you won't find enlargement grids embedded in my work. Instead, I start from a scheme of semi-abstract mark-making. These could be based on cross-hatching when making large drawings, or a mass of dots and dashes when starting a new painting. Such open beginnings allow me to work freely from what I find in the abstract forms already inherent to the marks in each work. In that sense my art has more in common with Jazz than with traditional European approaches to composition. It also means that each piece is truly unique in that I cannot replicate the route taken to the development and completion of it.

Paul Dash (August 2024)

About Paul Dash

b. 1946, Barbados

Lives and works in London, England

Paul Dash moved to Britain in 1957 to join his parents in Oxford. He excelled at art at school and was enrolled into the Chelsea School of Art in 1965. He joined the 'Caribbean Artists Movement' and began teaching part-time, eventually establishing a successful career in schools and as a lecturer at London University. In his later years in Oxford and at Chelsea, he played in funk rock bands, which inspired some of his artwork, such as 'Dance at Reading Town Hall', which is currently housed in the Fitzwilliam Museum collection. He continued to paint, participating in a variety of renowned exhibitions in important venues, including the Colombia Threadneedle Prize at the Mall Galleries, The London Open at Whitechapel Galleries, 'No Colour Bar' at Guildhall Galleries and 'The Arrivants' Exhibition at the Barbados Museum. He has previously shown at the Royal Academy Summer Shows, most recently in 2023, when the convenor of the Open Exhibition, David Remfry, RA, invited him to present two works. He was also invited to participate in this year's Venice Biennale. Dash held his first one-person exhibition at the 198 Gallery in Brixton in 2019, which was then crowned up by his participation in 'Life Between Islands' at Tate Britain in 2021, a groundbreaking Caribbean and British exhibition. This same exhibition toured the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), where it was on display from December 2023 to April 2024. Paul Dash was invited to present at Kettle's Yard in Cambridge in 2022, together with fellow Caribbean artists Errol Lloyd and John Lyons. Dash's works have been acquired by the Government Art Collection, the Tate, the Fitzwilliam Museum, and Kettle's Yard.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Gallery address: **Felix & Spear, 71 St. Mary's Road, London W5 5RG**

Exhibition Opening Hours: Wed – Fri 11.00 – 18.00, Sat - Sun 12.00 – 15.00

If you would like more information/images about this topic, please contact 020 8566 1574 / press@felixandspear.com

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