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Tuesday 21st March 2006, 6.30pm, London Metropolitan University

41 Commercial Road, 1st Floor Lecture Theatre

(Nearest tube: Aldgate East) The event is free but booking is advised

In recent years, much has been made of 'cultural diversity' in Britain.

At both local and national

levels of government, 'cultural diversity' has become a defining element of social inclusion and

the means by which Britain declares itself to be a 'tolerant'

multicultural society. Yet what precisely

do we mean when we talk about 'cultural diversity'? Is it the

proliferation of so-called 'equal

opportunities' policies? Is it the greater visibility of Black and Asian people in television

programmes and commercials? Or is 'cultural diversity' chicken tikka

massala being described as

symbolising modern day British culture? Might the act of separating and defining British people

according to notions of 'cultural difference' be particularly

problematic? Could it be that the

seemingly obligatory institutional embrace of 'cultural diversity'

hinders and ultimately prevents

a greater understanding of the dilemmas and problems facing Black and Asian people in Britain

today? Do the celebratory notions of 'ethnic' difference and diversity

that have become an integral

part of our 'inclusive' society need some critical examination? Why are

certain people regarded

as being more 'ethnic' than others?

What is Cultural Diversity? will attempt to explore these questions and take a critical look at what

we mean by the term 'cultural diversity' and its relation to the broader cultural and political terrain.

The speakers will also critically discuss the ways in which 'cultural diversity' manifests itself within

the visual arts and other sectors. In recent years, 'cultural diversity'

has arguably become one of the

major issues concerning arts funding within the public sector. Whilst such concerns have a legacy

dating back to the 1970s, the current proliferation of policies and

initiatives related to 'cultural

diversity' is typified by the Arts Council's 'flagship' projects, such as

'decibel' appear ever more

reflective of New Labour's agenda of social inclusion. To this end,

significant sums of money are

allocated and spent in the name of 'cultural diversity'. However, might

accepted definitions of
cultural diversity be acting as a constrainer rather than a
facilitator of artistic and societal
development? What sort of effects, positive, negative or otherwise, are
such Arts Council initiatives
having on the programming and employment policies of publicly funded
galleries and arts
organisations? Is there a place for the arguments and positions of those
who are uncomfortable
with defining themselves along the lines of apparent or perceived
cultural difference?

Professor Sarat Maharaj was born in South Africa and educated
in one of the segregated universities of the Apartheid era. He
became Professor of History and Theory of Art, Goldsmiths
College, University of London in 1997 where he is now
Research Professor. He is currently Professor of Visual Art
and Knowledge Systems, Lund University, Sweden. He was
a co-curator on the Documenta XI team (Kassel, 2002) and
is also on the board of inIVA.

Tamara Sivanandan is a Principal Lecturer in the Sociology
and Criminology Group, School of Health and Social Sciences
at Middlesex University. Her research and teaching interests
are in race and representation, Black British and Third World
politics and culture, and education in Britain. She has written
on postcolonial literatures and on issues of race in education.

Richard Hylton is the curator of Unit 2 Gallery, London
Metropolitan University. Over the past fifteen years, he has
curated a wide range of national and international exhibitions
including Landscape Trauma in the age of Scopophilia and
Imagined Communities. His forthcoming independent project,
The Nature of the Beast: cultural diversity and the visual arts
sector. A study of policies, initiatives, and attitudes, is soon to
be published by the Institute of Interdisciplinary Arts (ICIA)
at the University of Bath.

Eddie Chambers's work encompasses the roles of artist, curator,
archivist, writer and lecturer. Based in Bristol, he is currently
Research Fellow in Curating at London Metropolitan
University and Writer in Residence at Spike Island, Bristol.
He is also a Visiting Professor at Emory University, Atlanta,
Georgia. His current exhibition is Curator's Eye II, Identity
& History: Personal and Social Narratives in Art in Jamaica,
at the National Gallery of Jamaica, Kingston from 11
December 2005 to 18 March 2006

For additional information or to book please call Unit 2
Gallery on 0207 320 1970 or go to www.unit2.co.uk
What is Cultural Diversity? is organised by Eddie Chambers

and Richard Hylton.

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Mute-social mailing list
Mute-social@lists.metamute.org
<http://lists.metamute.org/mailman/listinfo/mute-social>