



PRESS RELEASE

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DENZIL FORRESTER PRESENTED WITH FELLOWSHIP AT MORLEY COLLEGE LONDON

Morley College London has awarded the second Morley Fellowship to artist Denzil Forrester, one of the most prominent figures of the contemporary British art scene, in recognition of his service of over 30 years as a Painting and Drawing tutor at the College.

The Fellowship was awarded at a special event held in Morley's historic Emma Cons Hall, where Denzil was presented with a plaque by Principal Dr Andrew Gower and Chair of Governors Dr Stuart Edwards. Also in attendance was Ela Piotrowska, OBE, who was Principal of Morley during Denzil's time as a tutor at the College, and Professor Julian Henriques from the Department of Media, Communications and Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London; Julian presented his film, *Denzil's Dance*, about Denzil's practice and inspiration during a visit to the dance halls of Jamaica, as part of the Fellowship event.

"In terms of the cultural life of the College, painting and drawing is in the DNA of Morley, as Emma Cons, the founding force of the College, was a trained artist herself," said Dr Gower in his welcome address. "So throughout the history of Morley, painting and drawing have been a very large part of what we do. So one of the great delights of this evening is to recognise a very long-established and influential colleague, in the form of Denzil Forrester. He has given to our students through his skill, his expertise, his generosity, and his interest in learning. So we're really pleased to have this opportunity to recognise Denzil's contribution."

Speaking to Morley staff and his former students at the event, Denzil said, "It's great being back, and I'd like to just say thank you to everyone who works at Morley - cleaners, management, Head of Morley, all the tutors, and of course you - all the students, which is most of you here. The main person I would like to thank is John Flemons, who saw my Royal College MA show over 40 years ago in 1983. And he really liked my work, so that's why he gave me the job at Morley. So thank you to John Flemons, thank you to Morley, and thank you to London for providing me my backdrop for my paintings."

Particularly known for his paintings depicting black British culture from the late '70s onwards, Denzil taught Painting and Drawing at Morley for 30 years before finally retiring in 2016. Today, Denzil's painting *Boys in the Hood* features as part of the Morley Art Collection at the College. He has most recently been honoured with the installation of a mural, *Brixton Blue*, which was commissioned by Art on the Underground and can be seen now at Brixton Underground station. The awarding of the Morley Fellowship acknowledges Denzil's long service of outstanding teaching at Morley and

continued close engagement with the College since his retirement. Commenting on the event, Dr Edwards said, "In making these awards, we look at a person's contribution to the Morley mission of empowering individuals and strengthening communities through adult education in arts, culture and applied sciences. Denzil was a highly respected tutor at the College for over 30 years before retiring in 2016. I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to recognise the contribution that Denzil has made to Morley College and to confer on him one of our first Morley Fellowships."

A selection of press images from the event are available for download from the Morley College London Media Centre at <https://www.morleycollege.ac.uk/media-centre>. For further information, please contact Morley College London's PR and Marketing Officer by phone on **020 7450 1803**, or by email on leah.holmes@morleycollege.ac.uk.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

About Denzil Forrester

Denzil Forrester was born in Grenada and moved to the UK at age 11. He went on to earn a BA degree from the Central School of Art & Design, then became one of a small number of black artists to earn an MA in Fine Art (Painting) from the Royal College of Art. Following scholarships that took him to both Rome and New York, he won two awards from the Royal Academy, including the Korn/Ferry International Award in 1987.

Forrester's vision is influenced by both his Caribbean roots and his life in the UK. From the late 1970s to date, his work has focused on group activity: billboard imagery, Ridley market, blues clubs, carnival, crocodiles, and family life. His paintings frequently contrast the dark, moody settings of nightclubs and dance halls with bright, vibrant colours that invoke the spirit of Carnival.

His body of work was described by fellow artist Eddie Chambers as "perhaps inadvertently creating a series of historical documents related to the making of Black Britain". Forrester's depictions of black British culture during the '80s captured the racial tensions and police brutality of the time, whilst still reflecting the joy and passion of the uniting spirit of music and dance.

His new touring exhibition, "Itchin an' Scratchin", opens at Nottingham Contemporary Gallery on 8 February 2020, before moving on to Spike Island Gallery in Bristol.

About Morley Fellowships

Morley Fellowships are awarded to individuals who have been members of the College community as students, members of staff, or governors. They recognise these individuals' outstanding contribution to the life of the College, and how, during their time at Morley and through their public profile and professional engagement, they have upheld and promoted the College's mission, vision and values.

The first Morley Fellowship was awarded in July 2019 as part of the College's Student Awards; it was presented to Linda Gainsbury in recognition of her eight years of service on Morley's Board of Governors. The second will be presented to Denzil Forrester in November 2019.

About Morley College London and Morley Gallery

Founded in 1889, Morley College London is one of the UK's leading centres for adult education. Morley is best known for music and the visual arts, with over 13,000 students studying with us each year. Morley is all about the joy of learning and the positive impact it has in bringing out personal

potential, restoring self-belief and creating new opportunity. The Morley staff team are specialists in adult education, with considerable subject expertise in arts, culture and applied sciences.

Morley provides an exceptional range of enrichment opportunities for students and the wider community, maintaining a high-profile programme of performances and events, including public exhibitions at Morley Gallery. Morley Gallery was established in 1968 and is a professional exhibition space open to the public. The gallery is currently closed for refurbishment but the Morley Gallery team continues to run a busy programme of exhibitions at external venues throughout the year, showcasing a range of art forms. The Gallery also maintains the Morley Art Collection, which features pieces by a variety of artists including Edward Bawden, Maggi Hambling, Denzil Forrester and Bridget Riley.

For information visit www.morleycollege.ac.uk.