

CHISENHALE



Dan Guthrie

Empty Alcove / Rotting Figure

6 June – 24 August 2025

Opening: Thursday 5 June, 6:30–8:30pm

Chisenhale Gallery presents *Empty Alcove / Rotting Figure*, a major new commission and first institutional exhibition in London by artist Dan Guthrie. Working primarily with moving image, Guthrie's practice explores representations and mis-representations of Black Britishness. By deliberately experimenting with form and language, Guthrie probes the limits of visual representation – questioning not only what is shown, but what remains unseen or unsayable on screen. This exploration encompasses the politics of visibility itself, asking how race, memory, and subjectivity are shaped by the act of looking.

This new commission continues Guthrie's long-standing engagement with the Blackboy Clock, an object of contested heritage publicly displayed in his hometown of Stroud, Gloucestershire. The clock, which incorporates a wooden blackamoor figure in its design, was originally assembled by a local watchmaker in 1774, during the height of the transatlantic slave trade. Relocated to a specially constructed alcove on the front of a former schoolhouse in 1844, the clock was restored in 1977 and 2004, and has remained a constant presence in Stroud throughout Guthrie's life.

Empty Alcove / Rotting Figure presents two videos that put forward the 'radical un-conservation' of the clock – a new theoretical concept proposed by Guthrie to describe the strategic acquisition of an object in order to destroy it. Across both videos, audio description and captions reject standardised, impersonal modes of description in favour of poetic interpretation and emotionally resonant dialogue – embedding access deeply into the aesthetic and political fabric of Guthrie's commission.

Central to this body of work are questions about what society chooses to memorialise and its methods for doing so. Alongside this exhibition, Guthrie has developed a new online platform documenting the clock's timeline – from its historical origins to current debates over its future. This digital archive is accessible at www.earf.info

Notes to the Editors:

Press images can be downloaded through [this link](#).

Dan Guthrie lives and works in the UK. Selected exhibitions and screenings include: *Absent Forces*, Open City Documentary Film Festival, 2024; *Two Films*, VOLT, Devonshire Collective, Eastbourne, 2023; *Spirit Messages touring programme*, aemi, 2023–2024; *Selected 13 touring programme*, FLAMIN and videoclub, 2023; *wave 4*, Prismatic Ground, New York, 2023; Forum Expanded, Berlinale, Berlin, 2023; *Right of Way*, LUX, London, 2023; and Short Film Programme, Whitstable Biennale, Whitstable, 2022.

Chisenhale Gallery was founded by artists. The same experimental vision and spirit of possibility that changed an empty veneer factory and brewery warehouse into an art gallery guides our work today. We commission new works of art, supporting artists at every stage of project development, from concept to completion. The gallery has an award winning, 40-year history as one of London's most innovative spaces for contemporary art. As we build on this rich and varied legacy, we continue to place artists at the centre of everything we do.

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Wednesday to Sunday, 12–6pm

Registered charity no.1026175

Image: Dan Guthrie, production image, 2024.
Commissioned and produced by Chisenhale Gallery,
London, and Spike Island, Bristol. Courtesy of the artist.

Empty Alcove / Rotting Figure is commissioned and
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