



## CSM Alumnus Michael McMillan

Dr Michael McMillan graduated with an MA in Independent Film & Video from Central Saint Martins in 1991. Since studying at CSM, Michael has gone on to work across UAL as a visiting professor, researcher and tutor.

Michael's most recent exhibition *My Hair: Black Culture, Style & Politics (Origins of the Afro Comb)* was at the Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, Cambridge. He is Visiting Professor of Creative Writing at UAL and currently a RAS Researcher and Associate Lecturer at LCF. The Diversity Team caught up with him to talk about his time at UAL – as student, alumnus and member of staff.

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### **What did you enjoy most about your time as a student?**

Discussing independent film culture with practitioners and professionals of like minds.

### **How did your MA help you in your creative practice and academic career?**

Amongst the external practitioners who gave presentations was the director Gurinder Chandha, who came to talk about her early work. She raised interesting questions about identities in terms of being a British Asian. This really resonated with me because I am interested in ideas and questions about migrant narratives. I also got to work with actors in pre-production on Issac Julien's film *Young Soul Rebels* (1992), which provided an opportunity I could build on.

### **Your work explores ideas of migrant narratives and aesthetics, memory and material culture. What draws you to explore these themes?**

These themes have always registered in my work and practice as a dramatist, mixed-media artist, curator and academic. This is in part because of my own background as a second-generation migrant descendent of parents who came as part of the Post War influx of Caribbean migrants from the early 1960s.

I am also interested in the representation of migrant people as 'other', and the struggle to adapt and reconstruct who they are in the UK. This raises relevant questions about how we all experience identity as fragmented and culture as a dynamic ever changing process.

### How did you become involved in working at UAL?

I was a Royal Literary Fund Writing Fellow at London College of Communication from 2000 and was made a Visiting Professor of Creative Writing from 2003. I also work as an Associate Lecturer, teaching predominantly Cultural & Historical Studies at London College of Fashion.

Alongside my teaching work, I have completed two RAS (Retain-Attain-Succeed) action research projects addressing issues affecting BME students and the curriculum at UAL: *The Front Room@Byam Shaw CSM* (2012) & *The Beauty Shop@Wimbledon College of Art CCW* (2013). Both of these projects resulted in group mixed-media exhibitions and publications based on the student's work and address questions of identity, creative practice and cultural background.

### What do you enjoy most about working at UAL?

I enjoy engaging with students who bring fresh and dynamic ideas and experiences as the next generation of practitioners. The sweetest reward is always meeting a student years later by chance who I once taught and who is now doing something constructive with their life and them remembering me in a positive way.



Michael McMillan's first installation 'The West Indian Front Room' exhibited at the Geffrye Museum in October 2005. Since then, Michael has gone on to make and remake the installation in different countries and different cultural contexts.

Image © Geffrye Museum

### What advice would you give to a UAL graduate who may want to follow in your footsteps?

I will say that to become a graduate is an achievement in itself and moving forward, whether one is able to fulfill one's dreams or not, you should try and enjoy life because we only have one.

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