

RUDI PATTERSON: FROM JAMAICA TO NOTTING HILL

“I’M A JAMAICAN, I LOVE MY ISLAND AND ITS BEAUTY.”

Rudi Patterson was also a proud Londoner and Briton. His vivid portrayals of home were mostly created from three small painting-bedecked flats in Kensington and Chelsea. At the time of his death in July 2013, almost all the pictures in this exhibition were in his flat next to Trellick Tower.

Rudi was born in September 1933 in the sugar plantation village of Duckenfield, St. Thomas, in the lea of the Blue Mountains, lush and tropical, where rain comes suddenly and often. After studying in Kingston, in the late Fifties he set off to London to become an actor. He took classes at RADA and through the Swinging Sixties and into the Seventies he was frequently on stage and celluloid. He acted in such classics as *Z Cars*, *The Professionals* and the Rolling Stones film *Sympathy For The Devil*. His modelling success was unprecedented for a black man in that era: British Airways, Mr Fish, a big jeans campaign. Appearances in repertory and West End theatre included the ground breaking gay-themed *The Boys In The Band* and in 1977 the world premiere of Michael Tippett’s *The Ice Break* at Covent Garden.

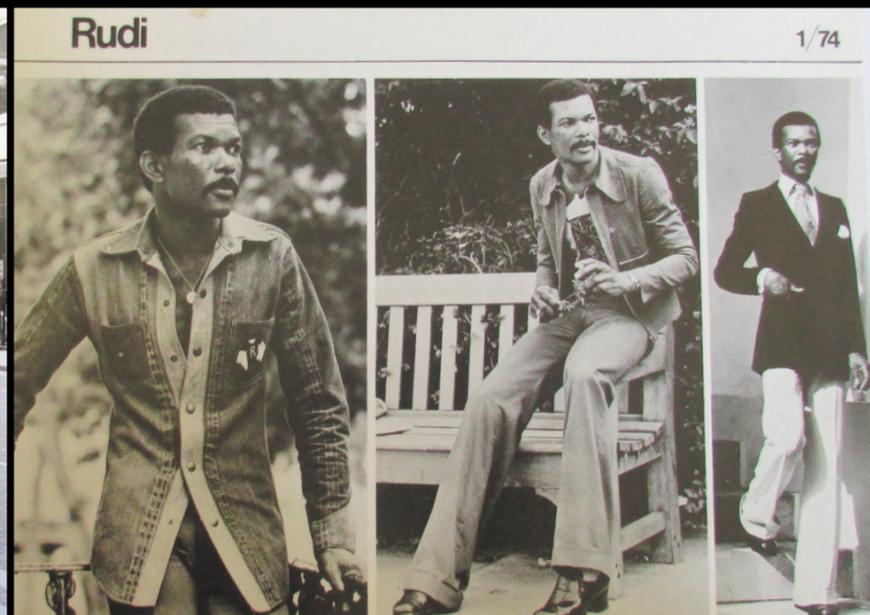
Entirely self-taught, he began to draw and paint in 1969 and incessantly so during months of convalescence after breaking his neck water skiing in 1973. Over four decades he created around 1000 pictures as well as hundreds of ceramic pieces, delicately glazed pots, sculptures and platters. He painted in gouache, watercolour, acrylic and oil. In later years he produced colour-drenched abstracts and still lifes. When wracked by back pain he created vivid linear works. Rudi was involved in some 40 exhibitions including one man shows on four continents encompassing London, Manchester, Jamaica and even Australia.

London allowed his creative juices to flow. He was at home in every milieu the city could offer; aristocratic, thespian, bohemian – a keen gallery goer and cultural activist. He witnessed both London’s decline and ascent, participating in its evolution from imperium to diversity. He loved the Notting Hill of market, Carnival and *Absolute Beginners* and lived through riots, Rachman and metrosexuality as his generation changed post-war Britain.

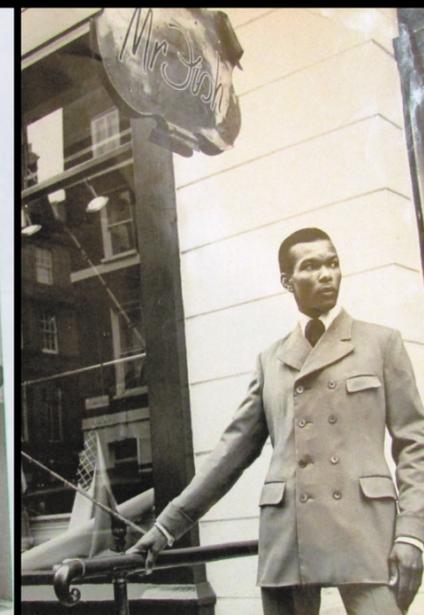
Exhibition texts written by Wesley Kerr and Novelette-Aldoni Stewart, co-curators of the exhibition.



Attracting attention on a London fashion shoot



Rudi’s modelling card



Modelling for Mr Fish