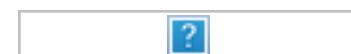


# Harold Offeh: Interview

*Harold Offeh is an artist whose work explores issues of desire, communication and identity. His project 'The Mothership Collective' is taking place at the South London Gallery*

Interview: Helen Sumpter

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## What is 'The Mothership Collective'?

The project developed from a one-day workshop I ran last year at the South London Gallery that drew on the ideas of Afro-futurist mythology from the music and performances of musicians Sun Ra and George Clinton. They both expressed black identity in terms of aliens from outer space and black civilisations such as Egypt. The stage shows for Clinton's album 'The Mothership Collective' were more like raves or parties than concerts and involved Clinton emerging from a mothership spacecraft that descended on to a stage surrounded by dry ice. I had also made a video piece called 'Alien Communication' where I distorted my face by putting different magnifying lenses in front of it. I used the soundtrack to the 1951 sci-fi film 'The Day the Earth Stood Still' which highlights the immediate assumption that aliens are an invading force rather than a peaceful or beneficial one. For this project there are almost three weeks of daily workshops run by artists, musicians and dancers plus an exhibition.

## Can you describe the workshops?

Some are for children, some for adults and some both, but they'll all be fun and will all relate in different ways to ideas connected to the mothership. Olivia Plender and Paul Richards are creating posters and pamphlets that refer to the utopian visions of nineteenth-century, non-conformist religious societies. Barby Asante and Andrea Encinas are inviting participants to become part of an a capella funk choir and Ming Wong will be organising intergalactic speed dating. People who come to that can dress up and create an alien identity for themselves, learn how to interact with other species and then engage in a round of speed dating.

## Are you running any workshops?

I've organised an offsite project to set up an Alien Broadcasting Company where participants create plays and speeches to be broadcast to extra-terrestrials. I'll be wearing a large afro, '70s flares and some form of spacesuit.

## Will you be building an actual mothership?


There's no budget for that, but during the project the South London Gallery itself will become the mothership.

## What will be in the exhibition?

It will be a progressive build-up of objects, artworks and documentation from the workshops. There will be a launch party on August 19 with music, live dancing and hopefully lots of dry ice.

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