

Jamaican Spiritual



St Stephen Walbrook
39 Walbrook, London EC4N 8BN
3rd July 2017 - 14th July 2017

Introduction

The show is made up of painting, sculpture and photography highlighting the strong spiritual nature of Jamaica and its people. Whilst predominantly Christian, Jamaica is home to a wide mix of religions which coexist peacefully. The variety of spiritual beliefs held on the island reflect the diverse nature of the people who live there and the motto of the country "Out of many one people."

Whilst spirituality is the overriding theme the exhibition inevitably also offers a compelling insight into the diverse nature and vibrancy of modern Jamaica.

Theresa Roberts

Jamaican Spiritual

A Jamaican Art Exhibition at St Stephen Walbrook, London

Jamaica, an island-paradise known for having more churches per square mile than any other country in the world, has spirituality pulsing through its veins. From the preacher to the congregant to the entrepreneur to the civil servant; from the Rastafarian to the sceptic; from the gifted entertainer to the talented and athletic; from the young to the old; from the affluent to the indigent; from the shy to the bold; from carnival to lent ... spirituality is an integral part of life in Jamaica.

It is no surprise that the expression of spirituality and faith finds its way into virtually every facet and cultural aspect of Jamaican life, and the avenue of art is no exception. Art is imagined, created, gifted, exchanged, bought, sold, admired, critiqued, taught, practised and discussed every day in Jamaica, and many of its themes focus on the settings, rituals and surrounding circumstances of the Jamaican faith experience. The artists in this exhibition were exposed to diverse spiritual sources, which were etched in their memories and hard-wired in their cultural reflexes as they grew up in the respective urban and rural contexts of their shared homeland. This powerful experience ultimately inspired the themes of their amazing artwork.

We are extremely privileged to have these wonderful works of art courtesy of the gifted and talented Jamaican artists and made possible by the generous and astute organisation and presentation by Art Patron and Curator Theresa Roberts. Enjoy the depiction of faith in these wonderful works of art as you discover your own spirituality within.

David Neita

JAMAICAN ART – AND THAT OLD-TIME RELIGION

Jamaican art has never been as experimental as that to be found in – say – Cuba, its neighbouring island in the Greater Antilles. Cuban art reached out to the Modernist Movement almost as soon as it began. And Cuba has always had links to what was going on in the mainland nations of Latin America. Art in Jamaica, linked to the UK, remained consistently more conservative.

Nor is Jamaican art, nowadays, much like the art of Haiti, though resemblances have existed in the past between what were called the Jamaican Intuitives – untaught artist linked to Rastafarianism – and the inward-turned, fiercely indigenous art of Haitian practitioners of Vodou.

The selection of works due to be shown at St Stephen Wallbrook, in an exhibition curated by Theresa Roberts, a passionate advocate of the culture of her native island, in an exhibition opening on July 3rd, shows some of the nuances of Jamaican culture, as this is expressed in art.

What will be on view in the show oscillates between stuff that looks somewhat naïve (though it is soon evident that any naiveté is a mask), in this case for example Carl Abrahams' witty *Schoolgirls With A Prophet*, and quite a high degree of sophistication. An Art Deco sculpture of Orpheus, for example, is the work of Edna Manley, generally considered to be the true founder of a recognisably Jamaican school of artists. She was also an important political figure, married to Norman Manley, one of the chief pioneers of Jamaican independence, leader of the Jamaican People's National Party, Chief Minister from 1955 to 1959, and first Premier of Jamaica from 1959 to 1962.

While Orpheus with his lyre is a classical figure, not a Christian one but one with a relevant message about divine rapture, the show also features, in more obviously specific guises, the spirituality that pervades a great deal of the art produced in Jamaica, as well as its frequent resistance to being categorised as 'ethnic' – i.e. as in some way necessarily Africanising. The images are about seeing Jamaica as it actually is - not as some lost fragment of African culture, transferred intact to a different hemisphere.

Where the idea of Africa is stressed, it is to make a theological statement. Christopher Lawrence's icon-like portrayal of an African Christ declares that Christ exists as a Saviour for all mankind.

Marlon James' *Trio* offers sociological not theological instruction. It shows three Jamaican women, wearing identical pink uniforms that suggest that they may perhaps be nurses, or even actual church emissaries, as they stroll past the gates that enclose a handsome Victorian church, which stands in a garden with clipped hedges, a bougainvillea vine in full bloom and a number of palm trees. If you choose to read it that way, the image suggests both the surviving Anglo-Colonial element in Jamaican society, and also the fact the Christian faith is a non-exotic, everyday presence there. Both images tell one much about Jamaica as it is now, without pushing the point.

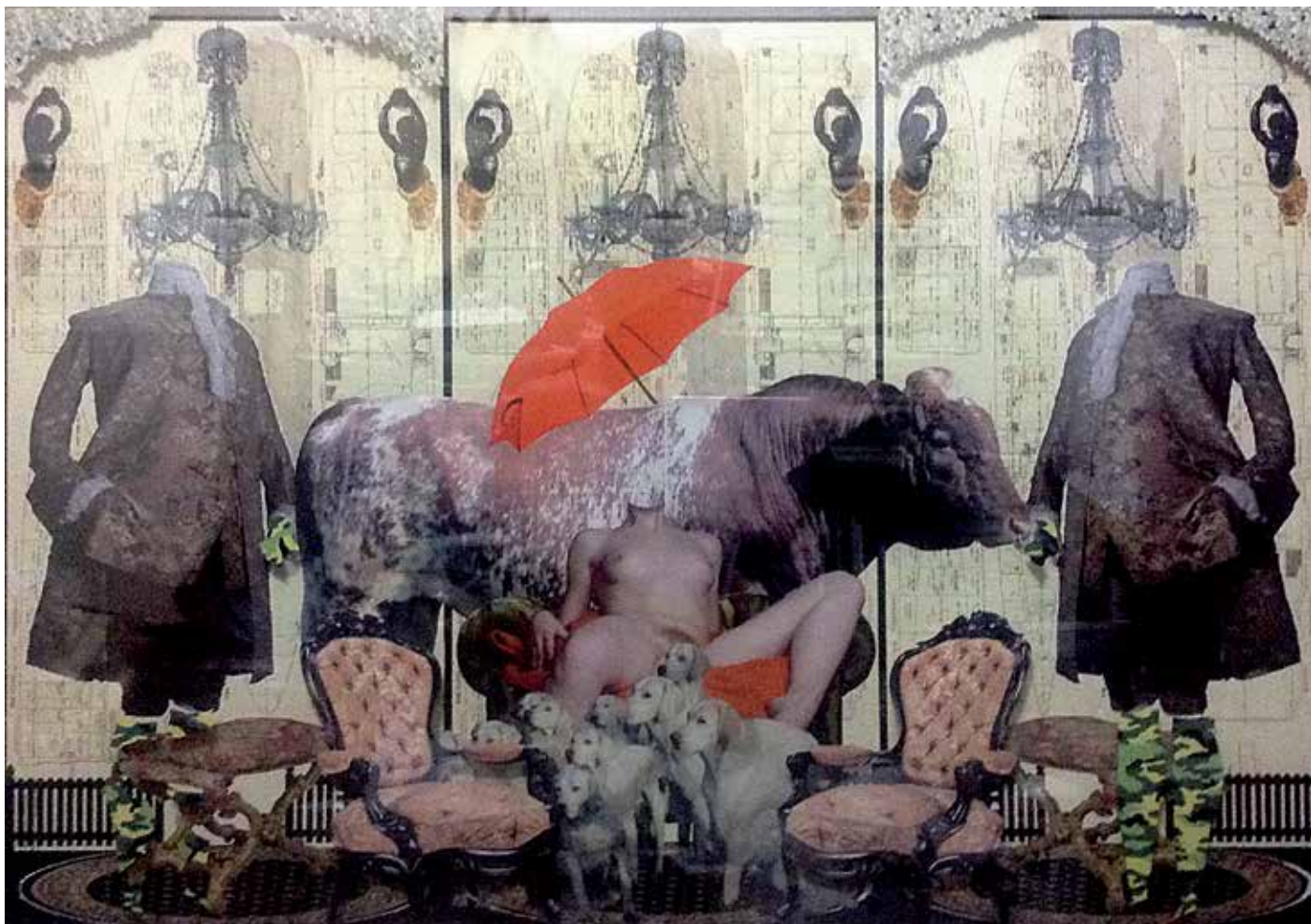
Edward Lucie-Smith



Mabusha Dennis
"Sunday is coming #1"
Acrylic on Canvas
2017
46" x 40"



Mabusha Dennis
"Sunday is coming #2"
Acrylic on Canvas
2017
36" x 48"



Phillip Thomas

"Exodus: the golden calf has matured..."

Mixed Media

2017



Greg Bailey
"The Sacrifice of Isaac"
Oil on Canvas
2017
90" x 57"



Edna Manely
"Orpheus"
Bronze
1983



Marlon James
"Trio" (Lonely Wanderer Series)
Digital Print on Paper
2017



Marlon James
"Request" (Lonely Wanderer Series)
Digital Print on Paper
2017



Lesli-Ann Belnavis
"Peaceful Resolve"
Digital Print on Paper
2014



Lesli-Ann Belnavis
"Eyes Wide Shut"
Digital Print on Paper
2014



Laura Facey Cooper
"Prayer"
Bronze
1995



Laura Facey Cooper
"Prince of Peace"
Silk Installation
2017



Alicia Lisa Brown

"Priest 1"

Oil on canvas

2017

16" x 12"



Alicia Lisa Brown

"Priest 2"

Oil on canvas

2017

16" x 12"



Sireita Mullings

"Sister beloved. In my Temple"

Digital Print on Paper

2017



Sireita Mullings

“Heaven’s Chant”

Digital Print on Paper

2017

The work “Selassie Was Ere” is part of a photo documentary that marks the remapping of Haile Selassie’s life in Bath UK where he spent five years in exile. Members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church come together and join hands to create the symbol of the triangle, in acknowledgement of the significance of the Holy Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Ghost.



Carl Abrahams

"Schoolgirls with Prophet"

Oil on Canvas

1982

14.5" x 10"



Christopher Lawrence

"The Redeemer"

Oil on Canvas

2013

30" x 24"



Shaun Reid

"The nature of Christ's Lessons"

Acrylic on Canvas

2017

36" x 48"



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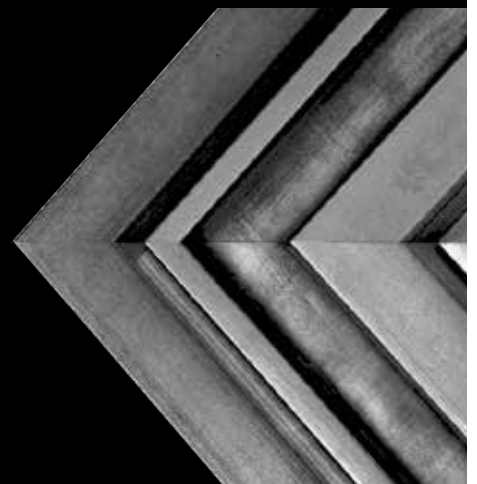
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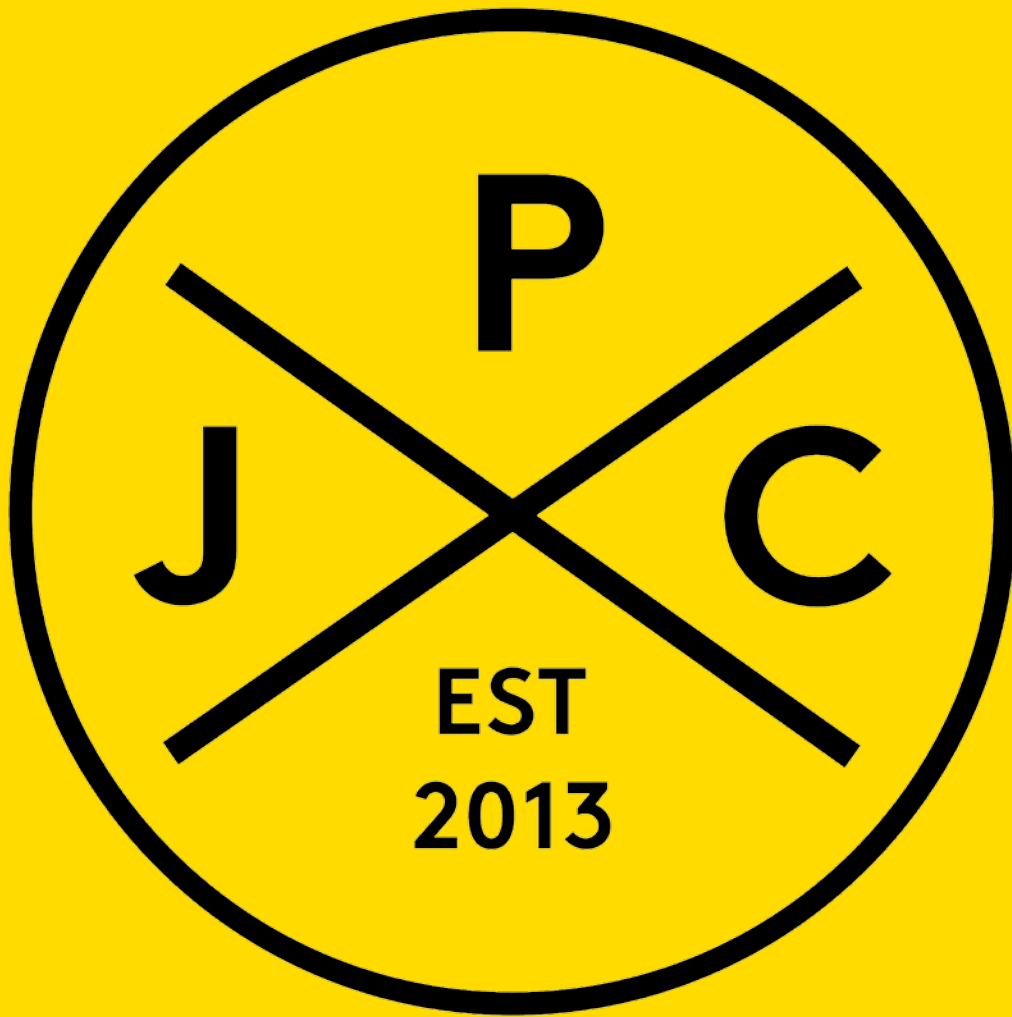
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