



All the fun of the carnival –

London's great street festival is coming to Tate Modern. **Tshepo Mokoena** meets the artists who

Earlier this week, the police made a series of dawn raids on west London ahead of the Notting Hill carnival. Two machine guns and a handgun, crack cocaine and about £70,000 in cash were seized, and 88 people were arrested. Across town at Tate Modern, preparations of a different sort were being made, as the gallery gets ready to bring Europe's biggest street festival into its Turbine Hall.

One of the artists taking part in performance art installation Up Hill Down Hall is Trinidadian Marlon Griffith, who worked and trained as a "mas man" in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago's capital city. To mas men – the designers who create the elaborate masks and costumes worn at carnival – the street festival is more than a party. It's a year-long project, and one that requires meticulous planning.

For Griffith, carnival is less jerk chicken and women in beaded bikinis, more vocational art school. Now he's bringing the street fair aesthetic he learned in the Caribbean to London. "I always wanted to be an artist, and never knew what direction that would take. Carnival became the medium for me to move into making work in other areas," he says, in his temporary studio at Paddington Arts Centre.

We are speaking a week and a half before the first carnival whistles start sounding. Around us, art students from Central St Martins are helping him prepare for the show, skirting around stacks of glossy cardboard and pairing up to slice jutting geometric shapes into the thick paper. It's quiet

and diligent work, mostly punctuated by the sound of paper sliding over wooden tables as they readjust the cut-outs, and Griffith watches over it all.

"I started experimenting outside the context of that carnival space. The season's very short, so I asked myself 'What happens after that?'" In this case, what happens is an ambitious one-day live installation set to take over the gallery's cavernous Turbine Hall on Saturday, just as Pineapple Tribe, Saxon Sound, Rampage, Rapattack and the rest of the sound systems begin their battle of distorted reggae, drum'n'bass, rave, hip-hop and garage.

Griffith's contribution to the show will be a performance piece about the tensions over who gets to claim authority over carnival: police, spectators or the masquerade performers. "It became almost a ritual that every year there'd be a clash, and that has always stuck in my mind," he says. He has named his piece No Black in the Union Jack, and draws from his experience marching in the carnival from 2006 to 2008.

"The first year I did it, I was kind of terrified," he says. "Most of the route is very organised, very managed and then it's just total mayhem when you get to Ladbroke Grove. It's where all the chaos happens. I always got the impression that carnival is something the city understands. They understand what it does socially and economically, but at the same time it feels like the city doesn't necessarily want it to happen."

Griffith also gleans inspiration from London's 2011 riots, sparked by the shooting by police of Mark Duggan in

Left to right, curator Claire Tancons in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, Trinidadian artist Marlon Griffith, and British sculptor Hew Locke. Below, a carnival dancer

Tottenham. He aims to include audio clips of "Hackney heroine" Pauline Pearce's voice: she gained fame from a cameraphone video showing her berating looters when the riots spread from Tottenham to Hackney. Though reluctant to give away too much, Griffith says his work will look at carnival with a slightly withering glance, investigating what he perceives as the street festival's inability to evolve and react to social change in London.

What look like piles of zigzagging cartoon lightning bolts made of black and silver cardboard will double as hummingbird costumes and police riot shields. Sixty performers will each hold one in Griffith's part of the show, launching into a routine portraying aggressors, peacocking and showing off for an audience, as well as vulnerable figures sheltering behind wings.

Curator and academic Claire Tancons is behind the show. She was born in Guadeloupe, and in her 20s found herself intrigued by carnival's potential as art, rather than spectacle. In her view, it feels natural to include artists such as Griffith and Hew Locke in the one-day exhibition. "I've called it a 'mass public processional performance'," she says. That's a mouthful, she admits, but it gives a sense of how much it differs from what you'd expect to find at the Tate.

Over in Stockwell, Locke battles pre-show nerves. Give and Take, his contribution to Up Hill Down Hall, will be his first-ever performance art piece. To date, Locke has spent decades making a name for himself as that artist mildly obsessed with the Queen,





with added turbine power

want to bring more to the weekend than loud music, jerk chicken and stunning costumes

heraldry, and the lasting stain left on Commonwealth Caribbean countries by British colonialism. In this show, he will swap painting and sculpture for a troupe of Brazilian-style Samba-reggae drummers - a "bateria".

"Though the piece may look as if it's a very overt political statement, it is actually quite personal and autobiographical," he says, sitting in his studio surrounded by miniature boat sculptures from his past work. Locke lived in Notting Hill in the 1980s, and used the metallic beading and embellished detailing of carnival costume as inspiration. After Tancons approached him towards the end of last year, Locke toyed with the idea of presenting a slide-projection or film of his personal sketches and photographs, before embracing a more high-octane performance instead. He is frustratingly coy about the piece, stopping himself more than once before describing it in detail.

"I wanted to do something which was - I wouldn't say anti-carnival, but was not, 'Yeah, jump up, bikini masks.'

I didn't want to do the huge, highly elaborate costumes that people might expect from me." As its name suggests, Locke is going to make interactions between the samba band, performers and Turbine Hall visitors central to the piece instead. Without an audience, he says, Give and Take won't succeed.

A million and a half visitors are expected to enjoy London's Notting Hill carnival this year, drawn by 7,500 performers, 40 bands and more than 50 sound systems, and fed by 300 food stalls selling tons of chicken curry and Jamaican patties. But it didn't start as an outdoor event. It began at St Pancras town hall in 1959, as a response to a spate of race attacks in Notting Hill, and only hit the streets in 1965 when activist and social worker Rhaune Laslett put together a street party for deprived children. Though Locke insists his piece isn't overly concerned with racial tension, both he and Griffith acknowledge that Notting Hill carnival can hardly be investigated without remembering its roots as a way for dis-

'The first time that I marched, I was terrified. Most of the carnival route's very organised - then it turns to mayhem

enfranchised Caribbean immigrants in London to express their nostalgia for the customs they left behind.

Like Locke, Griffith will be using the Turbine Hall as a street, bringing carnival-like sights and sounds back indoors. Working with sound artists Dubmorphology, he plans to score No Black in the Union Jack with layered soundscapes made up of past carnival sounds - from noisemakers to sirens.

An architectural design by Gia Wolff, named Canopy, will tie sound and visuals for Up Hill Down Hall together.

At Tate Modern, as children race across the floor, Tancons sweeps a hand up towards the ceiling far overhead: "I knew that with all the papier-mâché and fibreglass in the world, we could not create structures high enough to fill up the space," she says. "The show is an experiment, and the only way to know how it may turn out is to experience it."

i Up Hill Down Hall: an indoor carnival is at Tate Modern this Saturday, from 3-6pm

PHOTOGRAPHS GRAHAM TURNER FOR THE GUARDIAN, OLIVER COWLING/TATE



Find Europe's best-kept secret Plus win a trip to West Sweden

From tranquil isles and quaint fishing villages to lively harbours and active adventures, find out why West Sweden is the place to be this summer. Plus: win a five-night holiday to Gothenburg and the enchanting Koster Islands. In association with the West Sweden Tourist Board.

theguardian.com/visit-west-sweden

Visit
Sweden
www.visitwestsweden.com

