

Up Hill Down Hall: An indoor carnival
As part of BMW Tate Live 2014

Informed by the history of the Notting Hill Carnival as it reaches a milestone half-century of existence, *Up Hill Down Hall: An indoor carnival* offers critical and artistic perspectives on Carnival. Coinciding with the Notting Hill Carnival, *Up Hill Down Hall* showcases performances for hundreds of participants by artists Hew Locke and Marlon Griffith against the backdrop of an architectural design by Gia Wolff and a soundscape by Dubmorphology (Gary Stewart and Trevor Mathison) with a special intervention by Central Saint Martins Fine Arts students and recent graduates.

Up Hill Down Hall engages with Carnival as ritual of resistance, festival of otherness and performance art, and with the Notting Hill Carnival specifically as a contested site from which to reflect on notions of public space, performance and participation. It conceives of Carnival less as a theme than a medium and introduces practitioners across disciplines who draw from Carnival as a medium of artistic production and a form of social and political address.

London-based artist Hew Locke creates his first performance work, *Give and Take*, an exploration of the changing spatial politics of the Notting Hill neighbourhood. *Give and Take* both critiques the gentrification of the area and embraces the Brazilian influence on this historically pan-Caribbean festival. A piece about the tensions between residents and street revelers it asks 'Who owns the streets of Notting Hill?' Locke's first carnival-inspired performance is the outcome of decade-long meditations on Carnival in Guyana and London and continued engagement with carnival aesthetics that have long suffused his work. *Give and Take* is realised in collaboration with the Batala Samba-Reggae band.

Trinidad-born, Japan-based visual artist Marlon Griffith presents *No Black in the Union Jack*, a performance inspired by the 2011 London summer riots. In this piece, Griffith fuses the nationalistic Caribbean motif of the hummingbird with anti-riot police shields in body adornments that blur the boundaries between masquerader and police officer. Also a trained masman—the Trinidadian colloquial for Carnival designer—Marlon Griffith has a longstanding experience in creating carnival performances both for the Trinidad and Notting Hill carnivals. Griffith is collaborating with Elimu Paddington Arts Mas Band for which he designed two carnival bands in the past.

Inspired by extensive student research into the socio-political history of the Notting Hill Carnival and the politics of space and location, *The Sky is Dancing* is a special

intervention that responds to wider critical debates about public art and ceremonial practices that have influenced and been influenced by carnival as a cultural and artistic form. *The Sky is Dancing* project has been produced under the auspices and with the participation of UAL's joint Chairs of Black Art and Design, Sonia Boyce and Paul Goodwin in collaboration with Anne Eggebert and Stephen Carter of the XD Pathway at CSM.

London-based sound artists Dubmorphology remix live and recorded tracks of steel pan and calypso, reggae and punk with texts relating to the Notting Hill Carnival from Linton Kwesi Johnson to Zadie Smith, and elements from Gary Stewart's ongoing oral history archive of the Notting Hill Carnival. The live remix, entitled *Sonar*, is played through a customised sound system on the bridge that crosses the Turbine Hall, alluding to sound system set ups under the Westway Bridge during Notting Hill Carnival.

Using Oscar Niemeyer's carnival stadium in Rio de Janeiro, the world-famous Sambadrome, as reference, New York-based architectural designer Gia Wolff transforms Herzog & DeMeuron's architectural space of the Turbine Hall into a carnival space with *Canopy*. A deconstructed canopy of ropes hung above and under the Turbine Hall bridge, the monumental installation enhances the Turbine Hall's unique street-wide scale and entices processional performance.

While signaling the importance of Carnival as a performance medium with mass appeal in the culminating era of the massification of museum culture, *Up Hill Down Hall* inscribes these works within the politically conscious cultural legacy of the Notting Hill Carnival, born of Caribbean migration and metropolitan accommodation to the aftermath of colonialism, resistance to racism and the mainstreaming of multiculturalism and, ultimately, developed through cultural ingenuity and artistic creativity at the forefront of the formation of postcolonial British culture.

Indeed, the Notting Hill Carnival spurred the creation of iconic works of popular culture from avant-punk rock band The Clash's 1977 *White Riot's* single following their experience of the 1976 Notting Hill Carnival riots to Linton Kwesi Johnson's 1979 *Forces of Victri* dub poem accounting for West Indian resistance to police attacks on the Notting Hill Carnival in 1977. The Notting Hill Carnival also paralleled the emergence of the discourse of Cultural Studies with public intellectuals from Stuart Hall to Paul Gilroy (the title of whose landmark book *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1987) was unwittingly borrowed by Griffith) and Kobena Mercer commenting upon the Notting Hill Carnival as then pioneer documentary filmmaker Isaac Julien provided visual imagery to this nascent black British political aesthetics with *Territories* (1984). It has since continued to spark the creative imagination and was used by Zadie Smith as a plot device in her latest novel *NW* (2012).

Even as the topography around Tate Modern is reminiscent of that of Notting Hill despite gapping scale discrepancies with the Thames River as the Grand Union Canal, and Ladbroke Grove and the Westway Bridge as the slope and bridge inside the Turbine Hall, **Up Hill Down Hall** does not literally bring the Notting Hill Carnival down in the Turbine Hall. Instead, swarming through the gate to the museum as access to the streets continues to be restricted, will **Up Hill Down Hall** open new roads made to walk this Carnival day?

–Claire Tancons
August 2014