

**Paint Like the Swallow Sings
Calypso: Impressions of Carnival
by Paul Dash, Errol Lloyd & John
Lyons in dialogue with works
from The Fitzwilliam Museum &
Kettle's Yard**

**12 November 2022 -
19 February 2023**

**Press View: 11 November 2022,
10.45am - 1pm**

Kettle's Yard is delighted to announce 'Paint Like the Swallow Sings Calypso', a major new exhibition curated in dialogue with artists Paul Dash (b. 1946, Barbados), Errol Lloyd (b. 1943, Jamaica) and John Lyons (b. 1933, Trinidad). Alongside a selection of their own works, the artists will bring together the collections of Kettle's Yard and The Fitzwilliam Museum for the first time, assembling paintings and works on paper that reflect the rich history and themes of Carnival, from street parades and dance, to folklore, flora and fauna. The work of more than 35 artists spanning five centuries will reflect elements from Carnival's rituals and celebrations, including Gustave Moreau, Albrecht Dürer, Helen Frankenthaler, Avinash Chandra, David Bomberg, Graham Sutherland and Barbara Hepworth.

The exhibition's title references The Mighty Swallow, the performance name of Antigua and Barbuda calypso musician Sir Rupert Philo (1942-2020), whose lyrics protest the inequalities inflicted upon enslaved Africans and Indigenous populations under colonial rule. Today's Carnival celebrations retain influences from these cultures, with open-air processions holding ever more significance as symbols of freedom and belonging. The history of enslavement is significant to the study of Carnival, particularly after emancipation in the late 1800s when newly freed slaves started to participate in the lavish masquerade parties from which they were



Paul Dash, *Masked Stick-lick Fighters Parade*, 2019, etching.

previously excluded. Throughout the exhibition, visitors will be guided by quotations from Guyanese author Wilson Harris' *The Carnival Trilogy* (1985), whose abstract and allegorical style of writing embodies the festival's imaginative spirit and syncretic blend of mythologies, religions and schools of thought.

Structured around three interwoven chapters, 'Paint Like the Swallow Sings Calypso' will begin by exploring Western European traditions associated with Carnival. Although originating in Ancient Egypt as a pagan ritual, the festival's genealogy weaves through European Catholic customs such as Bacchanalia, the Feast of Fools and French masquerade balls, which were imposed upon Caribbean populations by Western colonisers. In this section, elaborate costuming and masked parades will be seen in 16th and 17th-century works from Joos de Momper the Younger and Jean Michel Moreau, and in Pieter Brueghel's 1632 *Village Festival*, an example of the theatricality of medieval religious procession. Paintings and etchings from Paul Dash bring these celebrations into the present day, as seen in *Carnival Dancers Mingle* (2019-20), and *Masked Stick-lick Fighters Parade* (2019), where costumed figures perform with sticks used in traditional Bajan martial arts. Despite the convivial atmosphere and Baroque attire, the pointed hats worn by Dash's characters suggest a more sinister reference to the Ku Klux Klan.

**For further information
and images**

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John Lyons, *Eloi! Eloi! (Lama Sabachtini)*, 1979, oil on canvas.

The exhibition's second chapter will provide insight into the spiritual nature of Carnival through modes of abstraction and surrealism. Here Lyons' vibrant canvas *Mama Look A Mas Passin* (1990) will show the French-Trinidadian jabmolassie devil character parading with friends in court jester hats, juxtaposed with David Bomberg's more subdued procession down the avenues of Spain during holy week in 1935. The straining crucifixion scene in Lyons' *Eloi! Eloi! (Lama Sabachtini)* (1979) will then be mirrored in *The Deposition* (1946) by Graham Sutherland, who portrays his biblical characters as weak, malnourished figures after obtaining a photobook picturing victims of the Holocaust.

This second section will further focus on the symbolism of plants and animals associated with African, Indigenous and European Carnival traditions. The luminous swaths of blue and yellow in Helen Frankenthaler's abstract work is derived from nature and landscape, whereas *Study for lyre birds* (1943) by Ceri Richards plays on themes of dance and mimicry. Stylistic parallels will also be drawn between the linocuts *Monstrous head breathing fire* (n.d.) by Fritz Möser, and Lyons' *Soucouyant and the Jumbie Bird* (2006), a portrait of the Caribbean shapeshifting figure and rare pygmy owl who is believed by many to be a harbinger of death.



Errol Lloyd, *Notting Hill Carnival - IIC*, 1988, oil on canvas.

As London became a centre for Caribbean émigrés and migrants between the 1950s-70s, a new intellectual and artistic energy framed the development of the Caribbean Artist Movement in the UK. The final chapter of the exhibition will present works by Errol Lloyd which illustrate contemporary festivities adopted from former slaves, such as the burning and harvesting of sugarcane (known as *cannes bruleés* and angelcised as Canboulay), bamboula dancing and drumming. Lloyd's series *Notting Hill Carnival* (1988-2001) shows bands of masqueraders dancing through the streets in traditional Aztec and Olmec fashions, and young festivalgoers donning horned jabmolassie masks. The exhibition will then close with Lloyd's *Notting Hill Carnival - IIC* (1988), a patchwork canvas celebrating Carnival's melting pot of cultures, customs and histories.

An accompanying programme of talks and events is planned to take place at Kettle's Yard and across Cambridge in collaboration with the Cambridge University Library.

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About Paul Dash

Paul Dash (b. 1946, Barbados) lives and works in London. He emigrated to Oxford in 1957 with his family at the age of eleven. After a foundation course at Oxford Polytechnic, now Oxford Brookes University, he completed a BA at Chelsea School of Art in 1968 and an MA at the Institute of Education, University of London, where he received a distinction in 1990. In 2009 Dash was awarded a PhD from Goldsmiths University of London, writing a dissertation on African Caribbean pupils in Art Education. Dash was an active member of the Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM) from 1969-1972 and exhibited with the group at various venues in London and Kent. He participated in the 'Whitechapel Open' in 1985 and 'Caribbean Connection 2: Island Pulse', at Islington Arts Factory in 1996. Other exhibitions include the 'Summer Exhibition' at The Royal Academy (1998 and 2020), 'No Colour Bar' at Guildhall Art Gallery, London (2015-16), the *Arrivants* exhibition at Barbados Museum in honour of Kamau Brathwaite (2018), his first major solo show at 198 Gallery Brixton (2019) and *Threadneedle Street Prize* at Mall Galleries (2020). Dash was also a participating artist in 'Life Between Islands: Caribbean-British Art 1950s-Now' at Tate Britain (2019-2022).

About Errol Lloyd

Errol Lloyd (b. 1943, Jamaica) is an artist, writer, art critic, editor and arts administrator. Since the 1960s he has been based in London, to which he originally travelled to study law. Now well known as a book illustrator, he was runner-up for the Kate Greenaway Medal in 1973 for his work on *My Brother Sean* by Petronella Breinburg. A central figure in the Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM) in 1966, he went on to produce book jackets, greetings cards and other material for London's Black-owned publishing companies including New Beacon Books, Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications and Allison & Busby. He also served as an editor of the Minorities' Arts Advisory Service (MAAS) magazine, *Artrage*, and his young adult novel *Many Rivers* (1995) was nominated for the Carnegie Medal.

About John Lyons

A painter and prize-winning poet, John Lyons (b.1933,Trinidad) moved to London to study at Goldsmiths' College School of Art and Design (1959-64) and at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne (1964-65). Trinidadian myths, folklore and Carnival are recurring themes in Lyons' work as seen in 'Caribbean Connections' at Islington Arts Factory (1995), his major touring solo exhibition, 'Behind the Carnival' at Huddersfield Art Gallery (1992-94) and Edison Galerie, The Hague (1982); and 'Mythopoeia', a touring solo exhibition at Wrexham Art Centre Gallery (1997). From 1979 to 2019 Lyons exhibited in numerous group exhibitions. From 1998-2004 he was co-founder and Director of the Hourglass Studio Gallery, which included an arts education charity-funded branch in West Yorkshire. He has also been active in many art organisations, including as a selector for the exhibitions, 'Double Vision' at Cartwright Hall, Bradford (1987) and most notably, Denzil Forrester's 'Dub Transition' at the Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston (1991). As a poet he has published seven collections and has contributed to numerous anthologies. In 2016 his collection for children, *Dancing in The Rain*, was shortlisted for the CLIPPA award given by Clpe (Centre for Literacy in Primary Education). In 2022, he served as a judge for that same award. Lyons has also written published critical texts on the work of other artists. For his contributions to the arts, he was awarded The WindRush Arts Achievement Award in 2003, sponsored by the Arts Council.



A Village Festival, With a Theatrical Performance and a Procession in Honour of St Hubert and St Anthony. Bruegel, Pieter, the younger (Flemish, c.1564-1637/8). Oil on panel, height 118.1 cm, width 158.4 cm, 1632. Museum accession Number 1192. Image credit: © The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

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About Kettle's Yard

Kettle's Yard is one of Britain's best galleries - a beautiful and unique house with a distinctive modern art collection, and a gallery exhibiting modern and contemporary art. Supporting this is an established learning and community engagement programme, archive, and programme of chamber concerts. In February 2018, Kettle's Yard reopened after a two-year development by architect Jamie Fobert. The new Kettle's Yard includes state of the art new exhibition galleries, generous education spaces, a café and new welcome areas. Kettle's Yard's mission is to contribute to society by inspiring and engaging audiences through art, learning and research of the highest quality. We believe that great art should not be the privilege of the few, but for everyone. Our values reflect Kettle's Yard's creator Jim Ede's support for artists and belief in art's power to make us look again and change how we act in the world. www.kettlesyard.co.uk

About the Fitzwilliam Museum

Founded in 1816, the Fitzwilliam Museum is the principal museum of the University of Cambridge and lead partner for the University of Cambridge Museums (UCM) Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation funded programme. It houses over half a million objects from ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman artefacts, to medieval illuminated manuscripts, paintings from the Renaissance to the 21st century, world class prints and drawings, and outstanding collections of coins, Asian arts, ceramics, and other applied arts. The Fitzwilliam is an internationally recognised institute of learning, research, and conservation. www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk



Avinash Chandra, *Black Feast*, 1962, pen and ink and watercolour on paper.

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