

FELIX & SPEAR

Telephone 020 8566 1574
Email press@felixandspear.com
Website www.felixandspear.com

Press Release
May 27, 2022

JOHN LYONS: *Unmasking the Psyche*

Paintings inspired by carnival and folklore of Trinidad & Tobago

10 June – 17 July 2022

London W5, May 27, 2022 – Felix & Spear Gallery is delighted to present the exhibition *Unmasking the Psyche* by the Trinidad born painter and poet, John Lyons (b. 1933).

...

The creative energy which inhabits the canvases of painter and poet John Lyons is inspirationally generated by the vibrancy of the folklore and phantasmagorical pageantry of carnival. It is eminently reasonable to assume that the interaction of the multi-cultural homogeneity of African, Spanish, French, Indian and Chinese in the colonial days of Trinidad & Tobago predisposed over a period of time the conditions for the proliferation of such a rich folklore and a flamboyant, inventive carnival.

I remember John Lyons in Zamana Studio, which we shared many years ago, when with loaded paint brush and gestures of intuitive spontaneity he produced his magical canvases. As John himself said in one of his press releases: “Although my paintings appear as figurative they eschew illustration”; and he continued, “...discovered colour-forms in my intuitive response to the drama of gestural brush strokes on the canvas is for me a creative adventure”.

Adrian Henry (1932 -2000), himself a celebrated painter and poet, had this to say about John’s paintings: “Despite the dark ambiguities of the imagery, in which Carnival also seems to be a Dance of Death, it is like Lyons’ best work, joyful and celebratory.”(*Catalogue – Behind The Carnival 1992*) Henry here paints a perfect picture that unfolds the complexity of Lyons’ inner space. He presents a narrative that captures the inner sacrament of the artist and his vision. In my view, Lyons’ work with its movements, distortions and vibrant, non-naturalistic colour brings to mind a legacy of Expressionism and Surrealism, albeit through the creative sensibilities and authenticity of an artist who lived through, from his early years to adulthood, the folklore and carnival of Trinidad & Tobago. This is that element of his creative, artistic practice which imbues his paintings, and I dare say, his poetry, with a strong aspect of originality; it comes from the soul of his motherland. The overall impression of his canvases is a uniquely seductive evocation of colourful dreamlike imagery which has resonances in the archetypal and universal. John Lyons is the only Caribbean British painter addressing this artistic paradigm at this present time.

Alnoor Mitha FRSA

Senior Research Fellow/curator/artist, Manchester School of Art

About John Lyons

b.1933 Port-of-Spain, Trinidad,

Lives and works in Cambridgeshire, England.

Trinidad-born painter and poet, John Lyons arrived from Trinidad to England in 1959 to study at Goldsmiths College School of Art and Design. He graduated as a painter in 1964 and in 1965 he went on to the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne to study for an Art Teachers' Diploma. During a 27-year teaching career he continued his painting and writing with dedicated enthusiasm.

John Lyons retired as a college lecturer in art and design and was then able to devote himself not only to his writing and painting, but also to be involved with a number of art organisations for the promotion of visual arts in the UK: He was a member of the purchasing panel for the Arts Council Collection, an adjudicator for a number of art awards, among them the Whitechapel Young Artist Award; he was also an exhibition selector for Cartwright Hall, Bradford; Nottingham Castle Museum and Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston. In 1998 Lyons was co-founder and Director with Jean Rees, playwright, poet and arts activist, of the Hourglass Studio Gallery and its charity funded-arm, HEADS (Hourglass Educational Arts Development Services) for the promotion of the arts in the community in Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire.

John Lyons has taken part in numerous group exhibitions. The most notable being Life Between Islands, British-Caribbean Art The 50's -Now, Tate Britain Dec 2021 – 2022, Super Black, Firstsite Art Gallery, Colchester 2019, No Colour Bar, Black British Art in Action, Guildhall Gallery, London 2016, The Hayward Annual 1982 British Drawing South Bank Centre London. There have been fourteen solo exhibitions of Lyons' work nationally, two of which were, Mythopoeia a touring exhibition from Wrexham Arts Centre 1997, and Behind The Carnival, from Huddersfield Art Gallery 1992-94.

As a prize-winning poet, John Lyons' poems are numerous anthologised; and he has seven full published collections of poetry. In 2016 his collection for children, Dancing in The Rain was shortlisted for the CLIPPA Award; and he was on the judging panel for the 2022 of the CLIPPA Award. His contribution to Arts in the UK was acknowledged with the Arts Council sponsored Windrush Arts Achievement Award in 2003

NOTES TO EDITORS

Gallery address: **Felix & Spear, 71 St. Mary's Road, London W5 5RG**

Exhibition Opening Hours: Wed – Fri 11.00 – 18.00, Sat - Sun 12.00 – 15.00

If you would like more information about this topic, please contact 020 8566 1574 / press@felixandspear.com

© 2022 Felix & Spear. All rights reserved.