

The West Hollywood Plummer Park Community Center Hosted Event To Revive Jamaican Jonkonnu Artistic Tradition



Jeffrey Anderson Gunter and Marie Kellier

The City of West Hollywood Community Center in Plummer Park came alive with history, culture and heritage on Saturday, August 10th, when International Eye LA presented 'Two Faces of Jonkonnu: Resistance and Joy.' The event was part of an ongoing project by Jamaican artist Marie Kellier to support revival of Jamaica's Jonkonnu tradition. It was funded by a grant to International Eye LA from the City of West Hollywood Arts Division.

International Eye LA empowers individuals and communities by activating safe spaces with creative, multicultural and

healing activities in arts, culture, business, education and humanities.

The almost capacity audience for 'Two Faces of Jonkonnu: Resistance and Joy' was enraptured as artist Marie Kellier presented an evening devoted to the history, heritage and socio-cultural context of Jamaica's Jonkonnu tradition, which she presented through a contemporary and creative lens. The room was beautifully framed with several 8-foot banners reproduced from a series of lithographs by Jamaican artist Isaac Mendes Belisario, who captured and presented first person accounts of Jonkonnu performances, accompanied by paintings of the elaborate costumes they wore in the 1700's. The lithographs, which Kellier said initiated her investigation into the status of the tradition, were first published in Jamaica between 1837 and 1838 and more recently by the Jamaica Gleaner to shed light on the almost total disappearance of the tradition. Additional paintings of Jonkonnu images by Jamaican artist Bernard Stanley Hoyes rounded out the display and helped to represent a modern interpretation of the practice.



Jankano Supporting Belly Woman

Master of Ceremonies Jeffrey Anderson Gunter officiated the evening's activities and helped to welcome Jonkonnu characters Queen, Belly Woman, Pitchy Patchy, Actor Boy, Jack in the Green and Devil to the red carpet. Original music composed by Ricardo Wilson, M.D. provided the rhythm to which each character walked the red carpet, wearing beautiful Jonkonnu costumes designed and fabricated by Kellier. Each character was highlighted and their history and purpose shared with the intrigued audience.

In presenting excerpts from her ongoing research, Kellier described Jonkonnu as a performance masquerade that was developed and used as a tool for resistance, survival and celebration among enslaved Africans in Jamaica in the 1700's. For those unfamiliar with the tradition, she went on to comment that "Amidst the toil, confinement and rigors of enslavement, artists, musicians, dancers and other creatives from diverse African communities gathered the materials and supplies they needed, found ways to communicate with each

other, carved out time to develop characters, fabricate costumes and present this unique and iconic art form with dance, pantomime and music. Research into Jonkonnu practice she shared, indicated that Jonkonnu performers were feared by plantation owners both because they did not understand it and because Jonkonnu were always suspected of being involved in 'subversive behavior' while 'jonkoonooing.'

A dramatic interpretation of the the Belly Woman character in relation to slave owners during 'Two Faces of Jonkonnu: Resistance and Joy' explored origins of the 'Belly Woman' character in the context of cultural retention, creative resistance, freedom and the human ability to survive and thrive in the face of unspeakable acts of oppression.

Upcoming development of her work on the Jonkonnu tradition, Kellier revealed, included fabricating additional original costumes for the characters King, Horse Head, Cow Head, and House Jonkonnu. She is currently seeking more funding sources while preparing a manuscript, a website, and a feature length film.

The evening concluded with acknowledgement of some of the organizations and individuals who have been instrumental in supporting the work and a photo op session with the Jonkonnu characters. International Eye Los Angeles is additionally supported by grants from the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, Alliance for California Traditional Arts (ACTA) and Office of Supervisor Holly Mitchell, with organizational support from LA County Department of Arts and Culture and California Arts Council.

The event was produced by MARIKEL.



Jankano Enactment

Candice Hoyes Releases In The Upper Room (For Mary Winnifred) As Part Of Sadah Espii Proctor's Lincoln Center Bayou Project



Singer and composer Candice Hoyes unveils “The Upper Room (For Mary Winnifred)” for Sadaii Espii Proctor’s *adrift: the bayou project*, an exhibit running until May 8th at Lincoln Center in New York City. Proctor’s commissioned presentation is part of Lincoln Center’s Social Sculpture Project. The Brooklyn sound designer and new media artist used inspiration from a visit to Ion Swamp in Charleston, South Carolina which is the site of a former rice plantation to pay homage to African Americans separated from their families as a result of North American chattel slavery. Many placed ads and letters in Black publications like Freedom’s Journal and The North Star in search of their loved ones. Attendees of the exhibit can interact with three blue haint-proof doors with their phones to access the past and a digital collage of those letters.

Espii discovered that no less than 50 Maroon communities were founded in forests, mountains, and swampy regions of the south including Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana,

Virginia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. Espii captured sound recordings from the Ion Swamp and they are used to tell the area's story. She configures the bayou as a place of familiar reclamation, ancestral stories, and Black psychic healing. Hoyes penned "In The Upper Room" for her ancestor grandmother Mary Winnifred and she sings it with prayerful intent. The song marks Hoyes' debut as a Lincoln Center composer. The use of chamber music, heritage, spiritual wisdom, and lyrical voice is an intertwined approach she plans to produce with over the next few years. Hoyes' is also one-third of the avant-garde jazz trio [Nite Bjuti](#). Espii's [*adrift: the bayou project*](#) is showing in Hearst Plaza at Lincoln Center until May 8th. It is free to the public.



The Bayou Project



The Bayou Project

**Grandmaster Flash & Tierra
Whack To Co-Headline Hip Hop
50 Concert In Conjunction
With Keith Haring Exhibit +
J. Dilla Tribute**



Grandmaster Flash by Grandmaster Flash

Grandmaster Flash and Tierra Whack will co-headline a Hip Hop 50 concert presented by The Broad this Saturday (Aug.26th). The concert is happening in conjunction with the exhibition *Keith Haring: Art Is for Everybody* and a tribute to J.Dilla by DJs Monalisa and Wyldeflower with an appearance by IIIa J. The concert is the last event of the summer celebrating hip-hop at The Broad that featured monthly screenings of the PBS

series “Fight The Power: How Hip hop Changed the World” and a conversation between Chuck D of Public Enemy, Lisane Basquiat, sister of Jean-Michel Basquiat, Gil Vazquez, Director of The Haring Foundation, and Lorrie Boule, writer and producer of *Fight The Power: How Hip-Hop Changed the World* about Hip-Hop and visual art.

The Keith Haring exhibit shows how hip-hop influenced the late artist with visuals of boomboxes, DJs and breakdancing figures. Grandmaster Flash’s foundational contribution to hip-hop on classics like “The Message” and “White Lines” changed the course of hip-hop. Tierra Whack, who can be currently seen in Netflix’s *Ladies First*, is a Grammy-nominated rapper known for her slick wordplay. She will perform music from her critically acclaimed *Whack World*, Whack History Month series and her *Rap?* EP as well as new material.

DJs Monalisa and Wyldeflower will play a set dedicated to late hip-hop production genius J.Dilla with an appearance from his brother IIIa J.

More Information about the event can be found at www.thebroad.org.



Tierra Whack by Flo Ngala

Chuck D’s Book Of Fine Art Coming Out In The Fall

Chuck D will see the publication of his first art book this coming fall. *Livin Loud* is a body of work influenced by his

politics and musical influences. The pieces will be accompanied by Chuck D's commentary informed by his time growing up in the '60s during the Civil Rights movement. Rage Against The Machine's Tom Morello wrote the foreword for the book that has over 250 works. The book brings Chuck D's career full circle as he was a graphic artist before he co-founded the rap group Public Enemy. He explained this move in a press statement:

"I was already expressing my political viewpoint through my art and graphics, so the bridge into music was a natural next step. First, I expressed myself with my head and my hands, and then later with my voice."

Genesis Publications will release *Livin Loud* on November 29th as a hardcover and there will be 1,200 signed copies bound in cloth with gold foil in a clamshell box. A second volume is included and has a reproduction of Chuck's sketchbook. The deluxe edition has numbered prints of Public Enemy, the Beastie Boys and Run DMC. The Collector's edition has the same features except for a numbered print of Public Enemy. To order the book check out ChuckDbook.com.

