

Press Release: For immediate release

Exhibition runs 22 October – 18 November 2010



Introducing the unique vibrancy and flavour of Jamaica's modern and contemporary art scene through the work of her women artists.

This autumn, the New Hall Art Collection at Murray Edwards College, Cambridge, will be hosting an exhibition of modern and contemporary works by **Jamaican women artists**. *Art Jamaica* presents both established and emerging Jamaican artists, embodying notions of what it is to be Jamaican. The works exhibited draw on a wide variety of influence from Jamaican culture and heritage to contemporary ideals of womanhood and exploration of the female body.

This will be the first exhibition presenting Jamaican women artists in the UK and includes work by 13 Jamaican artists: Edna Manley, Judy Ann Macmillan, Laura Facey, Laura Hamilton, Keisha Castello, Khepera, Margaret Chen, Ebony G. Patterson, Monique Lofters, Kristina Rowe, Helen Elliot, Anna Ruth Henriques and Trudy Ann Barrett.

“The works presented here call into question the simplified history of Jamaican contemporary art. Edna Manley, Laura Facey and Judy Ann Macmillan show where women’s art is rooted in contemporary Jamaican culture. They are not apparently interested in the clash of cultures that has too often preoccupied those who write about Jamaican art. The contrast between them is not one between Europe and (a largely imaginary) Africa but between the public and the private, Macmillan offers an intense concentration on Jamaican nature; Manley and Facey are not afraid to make broad statements about the human condition, which puts them in direct relationship to the Latin American tradition of Diego Rivera in Mexico and Antonio Berni in Argentina.

These preoccupations continue, but in a different guise, in the work of younger Jamaican women artists. They have obviously been affected by the worldwide feminist movement, with a particular, often very specific, interest in women’s bodies. They are as comfortable with the mythology of the Greco-Roman tradition – the goddess Ceres, for example – as they are with the idea of an ancestral Africa. They sometimes seem to see the production of art as a juncture of opposites – on the one hand as an exploration of the self, often influenced by the doctrines of Jung, and on the other hand as the expression of a collective consciousness where African elements still have a fundamental role to play. They explore a very wide range of materials and techniques.”
Catalogue extract from Edward Lucie-Smith

Pat Ramsay, an advocate of Jamaican art explains, "Contemporary Jamaican art is bold and eclectic. It uses a variety of media and assumes many and varied roles, from mirroring society to critiquing the dynamics of its makeup. Jamaican Art is organic, constantly evolving, and with each evolution it seeks to challenge conventional understandings of the art form and format.

The inspiration behind this exhibition has come from a private collection owned by Theresa Roberts, who was born in St. Elizabeth, Jamaica and lived there for the first 8 years of her life before following the rest of her family to live in London. Theresa is tremendously proud of her cultural heritage and is a keen advocate of Jamaican art. She has been collecting since the late 1990s and now has a substantial collection of incredibly diverse works. Theresa says, "the quality and diversity of the art scene in Jamaica demands that it be exposed to an international audience. I am incredibly grateful to the New Hall Art Collection for staging this exhibition which is an important step towards helping gain that exposure"

A full colour catalogue will accompany this exhibition with an introduction by noted art historian and critic, Edward Lucie-Smith.

Art Jamaica, forms part of Cambridge **Festival of Ideas**, a programme of talks, events, performances and activities exploring the arts, humanities and social sciences. For more information please see the Festival of Ideas website:

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/whatson/ideasfestival/about.html>. The exhibition runs between **22 October and 18 November** at the New Hall Art Collection, Murray Edwards College, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, CB3 0DF and is **open every day 10am – 6pm. Admission is free.**

-ENDS-

For more information, please contact:

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Images for the exhibition, *Art Jamaica*, are available upon request.

Interviews with the organisers and artists can be arranged.

Notes for editors

1. Founded in 1954, New Hall was renamed Murray Edwards College in 2008. The college is one of three women's colleges at Cambridge.
2. **The New Hall Art Collection** is a permanent collection of contemporary art by women artists. Paintings, prints, and sculpture are displayed throughout the Murray Edwards College. With close to 400 contemporary artworks by women artists including Paula Rego, Mary Kelly and Nicola Hicks, the New Hall Art Collection has become the most significant of its kind in Europe. www.art.newhall.cam.ac.uk. For more information contact curator Amanda Rigler, art@newhall.cam.ac.uk.

3. **Theresa Roberts** was born in St. Elizabeth, Jamaica and lived there for the first 8 years of her life, following which, she moved to London with family. From 1999 she started returning to Jamaica regularly and now has a home on the island. During her time in London, Theresa became heavily involved in the art world, initially collecting European art. On her return to Jamaica, Theresa was tremendously impressed and proud to discover the quality and sophistication of the Jamaican visual arts scene. This led to her starting an important collection of Jamaican art. From this beginning, she became convinced that she wanted to promote Jamaican artists internationally.

Support for Jamaican artists has now become her main passion but she continues to be involved in various UK arts projects including DRIFT (which involves the installation of visual arts in the River Thames), the New Hall Cambridge art collection (which is the largest collection of women's art in Europe) and the establishment of the International Slavery Museum, which forms part of National Museums, Liverpool.