

Jamaican Connections

6th July 2015 - 3rd August 2015

FALMOUTH

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Introduction

Jamaican Connections is a show designed to celebrate the many links that exist between Falmouth, Cornwall, England and the Caribbean island of Jamaica. The most obvious connection between the two places, which are separated by nearly 5000 miles, is the existence of Falmouth, Jamaica which is situated in Cornwall (one of Jamaica's 3 parishes).

Less well documented, however, is the painting trip to Jamaica embarked upon in 1923 by Falmouth's popular artist, Henry Scott Tuke. Tuke spent many months in Jamaica producing a number of fine watercolours in his characteristic impressionist style. These paintings were mainly of familiar Tuke subjects, boats and boys, but he also painted some landscapes of Black River in Jamaica, where he was based. The show opens with 4 such landscapes painted on that very trip and also features a Kingston scene which was the port of entry for Tuke when arriving in Jamaica.

The Black River connection is important as this was my birthplace and, as one of the leading collectors of Jamaican art in Europe, all the Jamaican art for the show is from www.art-jamaica.org, my private collection. I am linked to Falmouth, England by marriage, being the daughter-in-law of John and Rosemary Roberts, both of whom are well known local ex-teachers. I was inspired to create this show following my discovery that Tuke had painted scenes of places familiar to me from my childhood.

The most obvious artistic links between Tuke and Jamaican painters exist in the works on display by Albert Huie (often referred to as the grandfather of Jamaican painting) and Barrington Watson, who is Jamaica's most celebrated living artist. The impressionist style and artistic themes common to all three painters can be clearly seen and are fine examples of that "generation's" work. The exhibition features the work of the three generations of the Jamaican artists, Barrington Watson, Raymond Watson and Kai Watson.

A further Cornish link is provided by the impressive bronze sculpture entitled "Orpheus" by Edna Manley (wife of a Jamaican Premier Norman Manley and mother of a Jamaican Prime Minister, Michael Manley). Like Tuke, Manley was born in Yorkshire but was influenced by her contemporary Barbara Hepworth (also Yorkshire born), best known for the work produced in St Ives.

Albert Huie and Edna Manley were two inspirational figures in the Jamaican art world showing aspiring Jamaican artists what they could achieve. The rest of the show aims to bring to Falmouth a flavour of the wide range of Jamaican art produced from the time of Tuke's visit right through to the modern day. Each piece has been carefully selected to illustrate a different element of Jamaica's highly developed and eclectic art scene.

Theresa Roberts

JAMAICA – A PLACE FOR ART

Like my friend Theresa Roberts, who is the organizer of this show, I am a proud Jamaican – "Born'ya!", as Jamaicans say. In fact my father's family have lived in the Caribbean, though not for all of that time in Jamaica, since 1635. As a child, growing up in Jamaica, I became very much aware to the special qualities of Jamaican nature. Those qualities are fully apparent in this exhibition. In this tropical island, one experiences nature and natural things with unique intensity. A number of the paintings shown here make this apparent.

What the paintings and sculptures do not fully explain when shown in a British context, is the complexity of the Jamaican artistic tradition. Jamaica is part of an island group known as the Greater Antilles. Its close neighbors, geographically, are Cuba and Haiti. These have strongly contrasted artistic personalities. Cuban artists were early recruits to European Modernism – one only has to think of Wifredo Lam, a close friend of Picasso and a recruit to the International Surrealist Movement. Latterly, Cuba has been part of a wider Latin American consensus. Haiti, on the other hand, has become known for its self-taught artists, with strong inherited African influence, and links to the local Vodou cult.

Jamaica has had a number of artists of this Haitian type, generally referred to as Jamaican Intuitives and often linked to Rastafarianism, the Jamaican religion that believes in the coming of a black Messiah, identified with Haile Selassie, the one-time Emperor of Ethiopia. These artists are gradually dying out and are not represented here. What one sees reflected is a proudly self-sufficient art world, resistant to the more extravagant manifestations of Modernism and Postmodernism, but by no means unaware of what is happening in a wider context. A good example of this is the exuberant Bullfighter by Philip Thomas, a younger Jamaican artist who has made a successful career in the United States. One notes the connection with Art Deco, a luxurious style that has always attracted leading Jamaican artists. One sees the same influence in the bronze Orpheus by Edna Manley, generally regarded as the mother of Jamaican sculpture.

The great strengths of Jamaican art are first, that it is self-sufficient without being too enclosed; and second that it has a very solid tradition of local patronage. If one visits the island, one finds that people's homes – for example those of the business community in the suburbs of the island's capital, Kingston – are filled with paintings by local artists. This makes a striking contrast with the situation in nearby Haiti, where, as a search on the Internet will soon reveal, there is a large production of art works meant almost solely for export. Cuba, too, has problems – in this case because artists can find themselves on a collision course with the state authorities, as was demonstrated this year by the arrest of artist Tania Bruguera and the confiscation of her passport. Her offence was attempting to stage a performance about free speech after being refused official permission to do so.

In other words, when one looks at the works presented here, one is to some extent complicit in a kind of visual eavesdropping. These are the images and themes that interest Jamaicans themselves. The thing that comes through very strongly is the artists' love of the place they live in. Yet one also notes the unselfconscious references to age-old classical civilization. Jamaican artists still cling to the idea of a Golden Age – if not brought to them by Haile Selassie, then by their own efforts in seeking it out.

Edward Lucie-Smith

Henry Scott Tuke in Jamaica

Henry Scott Tuke (1858-1929) was an exponent of 'plein air' painting and an early member of the Newlyn School, painting there in 1883-4 before moving to Falmouth where he established his reputation for maritime subjects and in particular studies of young male models usually posed with rigging, rocks, the sea and sky for backdrop.

He first came to Falmouth as a boy and fell in love with the great sweep of water that is Falmouth Bay and the ships of all shapes and sizes that arrived from all quarters of the world. Tuke spent his summers in a modest cottage at nearby Pennance Point where he had a perfect vantage of this bustling trade and would put to sea in his floating studio The Julie of Nantes to make watercolour sketches of these great vessels.

In November 1923, at the age of 66, he set off for the West Indies in the sailing and steam vessel the SS Coronado. His travelling companions were his friends Frederick Albert Mitchell-Hedges (1882-1959), an explorer he had met in Falmouth, Lady Richmond Brown, who had funded the expedition for Mitchell-Hedges, and Miss MacBeth.

Their first stop was Jamaica where Tuke and Mitchell-Hedges would rise early to go fishing with the help of local lads Ralph, Robbie and Samwel who all became models for Tuke's paintings. The paintings of the Black River that Theresa has chosen to include in this exhibition all date from this time and are amongst 18 watercolours that are held in the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society (RCPS) Tuke Collection here at Falmouth Art Gallery.

We are fortunate to have Tuke's diary for this period and so we know that on the 13th December 1923 Tuke arrived 'at the famous Black River where received by Mrs. Levy at Waterloo House'. They spent about six weeks there and made several excursions 'up the river'. On one such expedition on the 6th January he mistakenly left his bag on the quay and when he retrieved it he found that his watercolour box was missing. Tuke writes 'sent for the local tin-smith and gave him instructions with rough cardboard model, how to make a watercolour box. This he completed with no little skill and delivered in the afternoon.' Thereafter Tuke had to compromise and it is certainly true that the work done after this date uses a different range of colours from his usual palette.

The expedition continued on to Belize in the British Honduras where Tuke was badly bitten by mosquitoes and ticks. He developed malaria and according to Mitchell-Hedges 'his heart is badly affected'. In fact he never really recovered from this illness and died five years later in his cottage at Pennance Point and was buried in Falmouth cemetery.

Henrietta Boex - Director



Title - Three sloops at Black River, 22 January 1924

Medium - Watercolour,

Size - 10" x 14 1/2"

Initialed bottom right H.S.T.

RCPS Tuke Collection A150



Title - Black River, Jamaica, 1924

Medium - Watercolour,

Size - 10" x 14 1/2"

Inscribed, signed and dated bottom left: Black River, Jamaica, H. S Tuke, 1924

RCPS Tuke Collection A138, R1068



Title - Group of Trees, Black River, 1924

Medium - Watercolour,

Size - 7" x 10 1/2"

Initialed bottom right H.S.T.

RCPS Tuke Collection A137



Title - Kingston Harbour, 11 December, 1923

Medium - Watercolour,

Size - 7 1/2" x 10 1/2"

Date, inscribed and initialled bottom left: Dec 11 1923, Kingston Harbour HST

RCPS Tuke Collection A211



Title - Black River from West Beach, 9 February 1924

Medium - Watercolour,

Size - 6" x 8 1/2"

RCPS Tuke Collection A167



Albert Huie
Title - Roselle water falls , St Thomas
Medium - Oil On Canvas
Size - 26" x 22"



Albert Huie
Title - Land and sea Scape , Port Henderson
Medium - Oil On Board
Size - 16" x 13"



Alex Cooper
Title - The Saw Pit
Medium - Oil On Canvas
Size - 19" x 23"



Alex Cooper
Title - Banana Trees
Medium - Oil On Canvas
Size - 37" x 28"



Edna Manely
Title - Orpheus
Year - 1983
Medium - Bronze
Size - 2' x 1' x 3' high



Barrington Watson
Title - After The Storm, Hector River, Portland
Medium - Oil On Canvas
Size - 40" x 20"



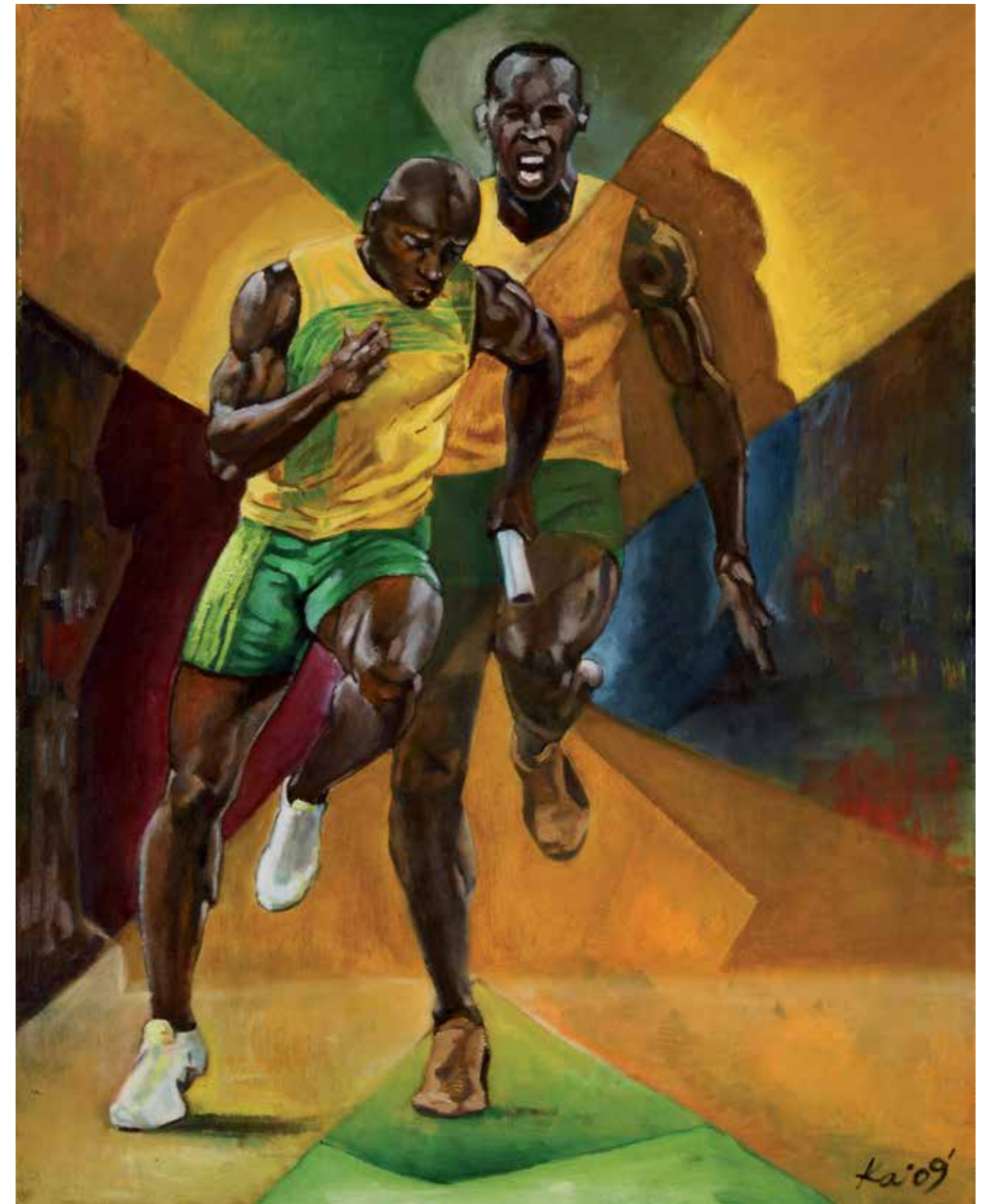
Judy-Ann Macmillian
Title - Ackee and Breadfruit
Year - 2006
Medium - Oil On Canvas
Size - 30" x 20"



Judy-Ann Macmillian
Title - Edward Lucie-Smith
Year - 2008
Medium - Oil On Board
Size - 23" x 24"



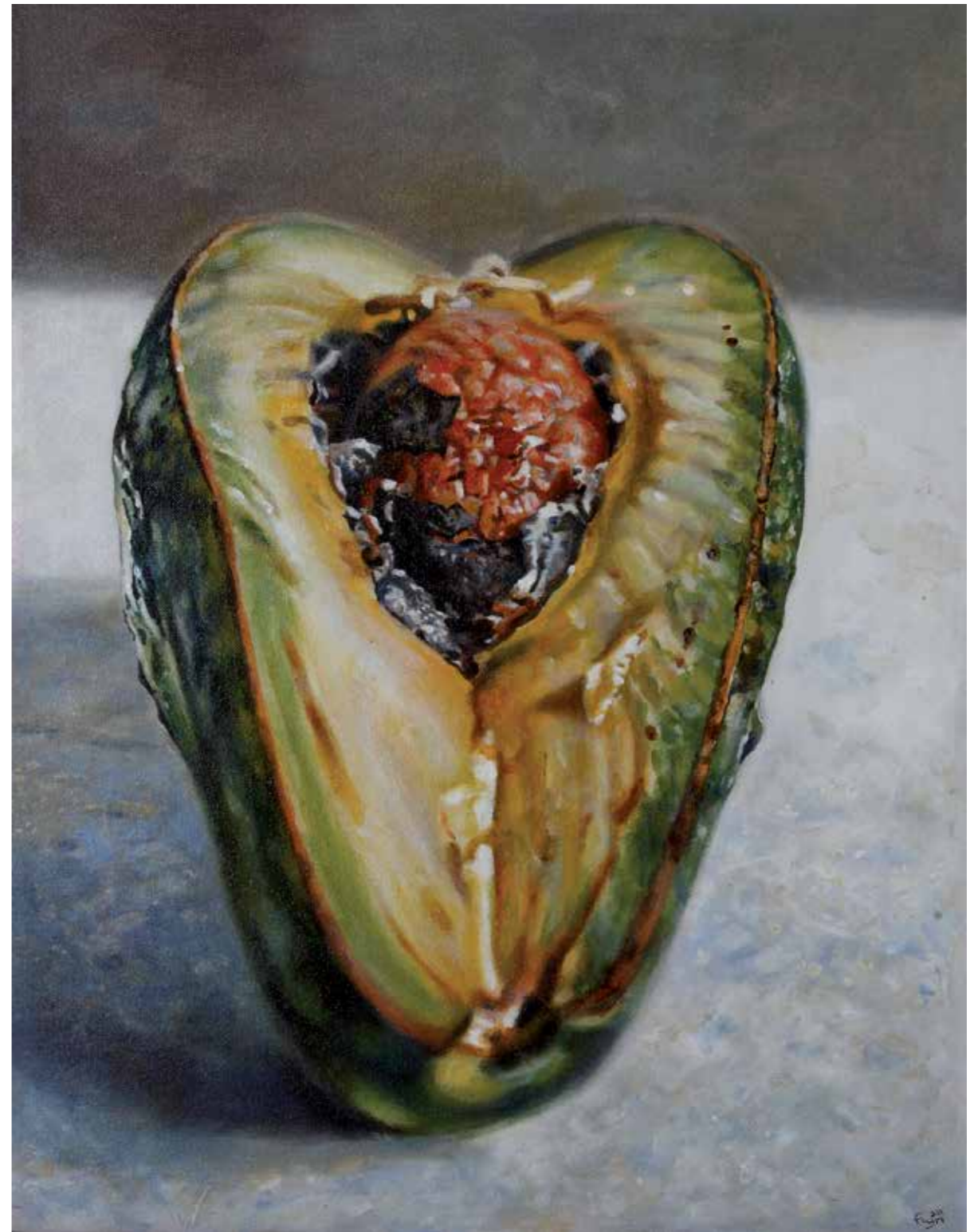
Phillip Thomas
Title - The Bull fighter, diptych
Year - 2012
Medium - Oil on canvas
Size - 2 of 2' x 3'



Kai Watson
Title - Vibrations
Year - 2009
Medium - Oil On Canvas
Size - 2' x 2' 6"



Ebony Patterson
Title - Hybrids
Medium - Mixed media
Size - 60" x 63"



Michael Flynn Elliott
Title - The Core
Year - 2011
Medium - Acrylic On Canvas
Size - 2' x 2' 6"



Raymond Watson
Title - First Child
Year - 1998
Medium - Bronze, Maquette
Size - 2' x 1' x 1'



Laura Facey Cooper
Title - COMB
Year - 2011
Medium - Lignum Vitae Wood
Size - 8" x 2'



Khary Darby
Title - Study #3 from The Furies Series
Year - 2010
Medium - Oil On Canvas,
Size - 36" x 36 "



Monique Lofters
Title - Untitled
Year - 2011
Medium - Acrylics On Canvas
Size - 36" x 30"



Christopher Lawrence

Title - 'Vintage Marley',

Year - 2015

Medium: - Oil on Hardboard

Size - 16" x 12"

Richard Young image.



Christopher Lawrence

Title - Ethan the Faun

Year - 2014

Medium - Acrylic and Oil on Hardboard

Size - 16 1/16" x 16 1/16"



Paul Stoppi
Title - Natural Beauty
Year - 2013
Medium - Photograph
Size - 23" x 16"



Laura Hamilton
Title - Pink over Red
Year - 1998
Medium - Oil on Paper.
Size - 3' x 2'6"

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