

Artzpub/ DRACONIAN  
HOLIMS issue 16

THE GLOBAL  
LAFRICA P  
PROJECT



Stephen Burks, *Missoni Patchwork Vases*

Artzpubly/ DRACONIAN SWITCH  
**THE GLOBAL AFRICA PROJECT**

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**DRACONIAN SWITCH AT MAD GAP 2010** | RICHARD MARK RAWLINS

The opportunity for Draconian Switch (DS) to show in The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) for the Global Africa Project alongside the likes of the Alice Yard crew of Nicholas Laughlin (Writer), Sean Leonard (Architect), Marlon Darbeau (Design Artist), and Christopher Cozier (Artist) was eye-opening, memorable and created a strange resonance for me.

It was my first experience in an international show and certainly in one that was this big. The MAD Global Africa Project (GAP) showcased the works of over 100 artists. Having the chance to meet and connect with many of them (Loring Cornish, Stephen Burks, Taslim Martin, Satch Hoyt, Bright Eke, Jack Travis, Cheryl Riley, Fred Wilson) at the show's opening was the icing on a cake that had been set in motion months before when it was confirmed that DS was going to be part of the show. No, I didn't get to meet art star, Kehinde Wiley, but just to be considered for an exhibition like this, and to have the work that our team has been doing over the past four years be recognized as significant and important

enough to be included was mind-blowing. Noted in the curatorial statement of the exhibition's catalogue: **'Many of the artists in the exhibition function primarily, even exclusively, in a virtual format – such as the Caribbean e-journals *Small Axe* and *Draconian Switch – Global Africa* seeks to convey this experience to visitors'.**

The Global Africa Project, curated by Lowery Stokes Sims and Leslie King-Hammond, is, in my estimation, more an experience than an exhibition. The incredible juxtaposition of works by artists belonging to the African diaspora – defined not by region but by a presence. A contemporary art presence of being in Africa, being of Africa, a presence of engaging Africa, or the variant nature of being an African descendant.

**"We are asking the question, 'What is Africa?'" says Leslie King-Hammond, who directs MICA's Center for Race and Culture "We aren't looking at traditional associations with black Africa. We're looking at**

***Africa as a psychic space, an intellectual space and creative space that inspires artists."***

It is this connection to a 'psychic' space that resonates with me. A connection based in my DNA perhaps. A type of artistic déjà vu, but projected from some deep down subconscious. My first impression of the show as I stepped out the elevator onto the fourth floor (the show actually utilized three floors of the museum and a piece of the lobby) was...WOW. This is big. Really big; and there's just so much. I stood there soaking in the sensory overload for a bit, caught myself then started making my way through the show piece by piece. (Credit certainly has to go to the show's gallery designer GBOYEGA Designworks.) Then it hit me: the pieces were talking. Not actually speaking out loud, but speaking harmoniously with one another within the space.

It was as though the gathered work just made sense and felt familiar all at the same time. Artist Cozier commented

# GLOBAL AFRICA PROJECT

The Global Africa Project is a multi-year initiative that aims to celebrate and promote the rich cultural heritage and contemporary art of Africa. Through a series of exhibitions, performances, and public programs, the project seeks to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of African art and culture on a global scale.

The project is supported by a consortium of organizations, including the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Endowment for Democracy. It is also supported by the following organizations:

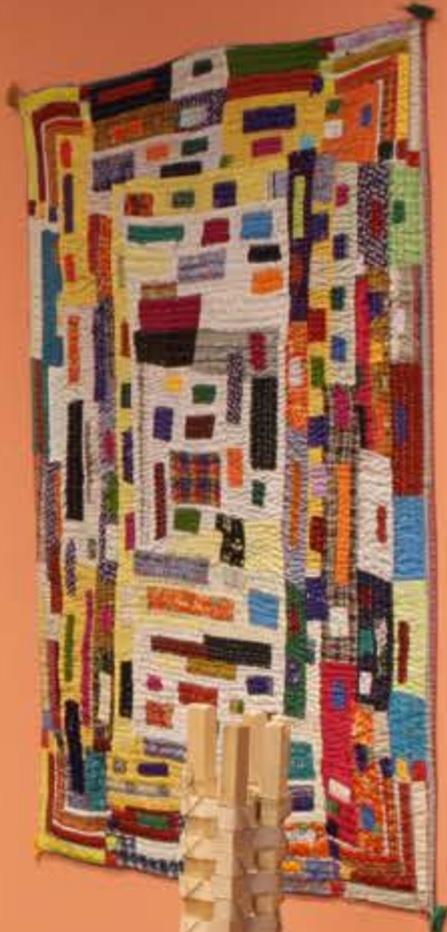


Supporting organizations include:

- THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
- THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES
- THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY
- CASTLELLA FUNDATION
- BOONBERG
- AFRICANA

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- BOONBERG
- AFRICANA



once, at one of our coffee mornings, that when he first saw Basquiat's work in France, he stood there in front of the work with its little add-ons and stick-ons (I believe he referred to them as) and he felt as though he was standing in front of a downtown Port of Spain parlour with its little advertisements for Bermudez biscuits and Du Maurier cigarettes etc. At GAP, I understood what he meant. I stood within the show and felt transported to the works of a lot of other Caribbean artists who were not in the exhibition.

There was a sense of different but familiar associations with the work of the fashion artist Duro Olowu, and photographer Nonsikelelo "Lolo" Veleko and Trinidad's own Robert Young. A familiar that was reflected in the Caribbean/African mixing and matching of multiple patterns, noted in Maude Southwell Wahlman, *Signs and Symbols: African images in African American Quilts* as an 'improvisation'. Maren Hassinger's video, Daily Masks, made me think of the work of Trinidadian performance artists Akuzuru and Dave Williams.

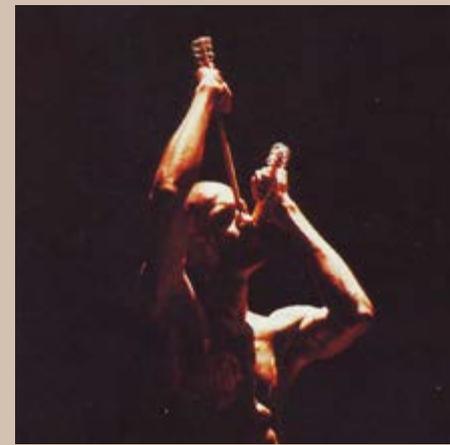
Nick Cave's *Soundsuit* took me back to Suriname and my first experience with Dhiradj Ramsamoedj and his *Flexible Man* (a new version, Caribbean Woman was on show at the recently concluded Museum of The America's *Wrestling with the Image* exhibition). The performative aspect of Cave's suit meant for public displays conjured up memories of Trinidadian artist Marlon Griffith's own carnivalesque explorations. Serge Mouangue's exquisite kimonos evoked images of Surinamese artist Marcel Pinas's record of his maroon heritage in Fragment *Kibii Wi Koni*. But strangely enough, though the work of the jewellers within the show sparked the most of this familiar/unfamiliar recall (I am by no means a jewellery aficionado) the works of the Shompole Collection Makers, Giovanna Ménard, and Beverly Price whispered to me the names of Jamaican, Jasmine Thomas-Girvan and Trinidadians, Rachel Ross and Janice Derrick (who has sold work in the MAD shop).

Somewhere between my initial concept of what the show was going to be like and the experience of actually being present for the show in this place The Museum of Arts and Design with its enchanting views of Columbus Circle and Central Park, I got it and it made absolute sense.

As one native New Yorker, Milton Glaser interpreted it in his 2005 poster designed for all those wishing to help improve conditions in Africa and fight world poverty... **WE ARE ALL AFRICAN.**



Robert Young



Dave Williams



Marlon Griffith



Jasmine Thomas Girvan



Akuzuru



Dhiradj Ramsamoelj



Janice Derrick



Marcel Pinas



Rachel Ross

# THE GLOBAL AFRICA PROJECT

The Global Africa Project surveys the work of designers, craftsmen and artists who create within the psychic and physical space that is known as Africa in our contemporary world. The challenge presented by an exhibition such as The Global Africa Project is indicated in its title. Given the transnational, non-migratory nature of artistic careers today, where is Africa? The individuals in this exhibition live and work in Europe, Africa, the Americas and Asia. They defy any definition of what we may think of as "African," and therefore this exhibition does not attempt to define or unearth African aesthetic, although shared sensibilities might well be seen in the work. Global Africa focuses on stories of individuals whose artistic vocations—expressed in design, craft, and art—are often both innovative and unorthodox.

Global Africa encompasses a wide range of disciplines, including ceramics, textiles, jewelry, furniture, architecture and fashion. Photography, painting, and sculpture clarify and complement the objects on view. Global Africa also reflects the widely accepted view that the familiar boundaries among genres in contemporary art are permeable. The exhibition not only corrects the current curatorial perspective of the Museum of Arts and Design, but also represents the same of interrelationships among artistic genres that mark more traditional African objects use, function, and presentation. To demonstrate the varied aspects of the global African world, the exhibition is organized around several themes that reflect the strategies of production in the contemporary diaspora: African art world, standing careers, intersecting cultures, competing globally, sourcing locally, redefining traditions, and building communities.

The Global Africa Project is made possible by:



with additional support from:

Kelly Martell Foundation for the Visual Arts

the spirit of our mission is to support the work of artists and designers who are pushing the boundaries of their craft and art.



Adejoke "Wahala Temi" Tugbiyele Sediata, **AFRIKEA**



Duro Oluwu, *Urban Patchwork*



Xenobia Bailey, *Zulu Queen Harvest Fire Coat*



12

Alex Locadia, *The Batman Chair*



13

Willie Birch,  
*In Search of  
Warriors*

# AFRICA AS

# A PSYCHIC

# SPACE

# A CHAT WITH CURATORS LOWERY SIMS & LESLIE KING HAMMOND

**DS:** THE GLOBAL AFRICA PROJECT IS AN AMBITIOUS UNDERTAKING, WHICH HAD THE POTENTIAL TO BE A VAST AND UNWIELDY SUBJECT FOR AN EXHIBITION. WHY MAKE IT A “GLOBAL” AFRICA PROJECT? AND, HOW DID THE IDEA FIRST COME ABOUT?

**LS & LKH:** The first question is answered by engaging the second. The idea for the exhibition was posed to me when I first started at the Museum of Arts and Design in the fall of 2007. In thinking about shows organized around a single entity that engaged race or gender, I was initially cautious. As I thought about the idea of the exhibition two things occurred to me: 1. the nomadic nature



Ousmane M'baye, *Meuble de cuisine (Kitchen Furniture)*



Nick Cave, *Sound Suit*

of identity in the contemporary world and 2. the dispersal of Africa throughout the world. So I knew we ought not to think about the exhibition as just involving Africa. Creators I knew were born in Europe of African parentage, educated in the US and took up residence in the Caribbean. How did that make them African? So provisionally I came up with the title The Global Africa Project to indicate that this exhibition would extend out into the world and the title stuck.

**DS:** The exhibition includes fashion, architecture, sculpture, web based material, furniture design, jewellery, painting, basketry, ceramics, working collectives and even conceptual spaces. Why include such a varied selection of visual enterprise and what were the challenges of bringing them together under one roof?

**LS & LKH:** MAD is dedicated to looking at the "blur zone" between art and craft, craft and art, art and design, craft and design. So we knew we would concentrate on furniture, ceramics, textiles, basketry, fashion, architecture, etc. It soon became clear that certain painting, sculpture and photographs would have to be included to complement that work in those genres. After we assembled an initial selection of works and artists/



craftsmen/ designers, we looked for a way to organize this chaotic mess. One of the designer/makers we'd contacted, Ousmane M'baye, sent me an article in which various people involved in design in Africa were interviewed. In that article the various challenges and goals of the designers were outlined and we decided again to follow the artists and organize the exhibition according to their ideas: intersecting cultures, competing globally, sourcing locally, transforming traditions, building communities and we added a sixth: branding content.

**DS:** What are you hoping to achieve with the GAP?

**LS & LKH:** To demonstrate the rich and varied population of creators out there who are related to Africa and demonstrate their viability on the global scene. Also to demonstrate how in economically challenged regions that art, craft and design and their accompanying modes of entrepreneurship provide a "third way" (as per Hernando Soto) alternative to aid and investment for economic sustainability in Africa and other regions of the world.

**DS:** What are you hoping audiences will go away from the museum with?



Sonya Clark, *Hook head from the Crossroads Series*



**LS & LKH:** A pervasive sense of creativity, invention and excitement that come from the Global Africa World.

**DS:** Lowery, you signed my catalogue with the words: "Thanks for showing us the future". How do you see web-based visual arts representation impacting on the present and future of contemporary art?

**LS & LKH:** They are crucial vehicles for disseminating information. Many of the creators whom we included in this exhibition exist archive-ly only on the web, either through websites or blogs. This is the communication mode especially for this generation of creators and their audiences.

**DS:** Draconian Switch is a Caribbean-based magazine that focuses primarily on contemporary art and design in the Caribbean and its practitioners globally. The Caribbean was represented at GAP by Mervyn Awon (Barbados), Giovanna Menard and Georges Valris (Haiti) and Alice Yard (Trinidad). So we have to ask the question: Why not more Caribbean artists in the show?

**LS & LKH:** We were looking for truly innovative and exciting and original work. This is a first pass at this and we expect to uncover more but we did look extensively. Since we knew we had limited space we had to choose individuals and collaboratives who embodied a specific element of the situation we wanted to show the public.

**MAD is dedicated to looking at the “blur zone” between art and craft, craft and art, art and design, craft and design. So we knew we would concentrate on furniture, ceramics, textiles, basketry, fashion, architecture, etc. It soon became clear that certain painting, sculpture and photographs would have to be included to complement that work in those genres.**



Daniele Tamagani, *Playboys of the Bacongo, Brazzaville*



# THE GLOBAL AFRICA PROJECT

The Global Africa Project is a multi-media project that explores the global impact of African art and culture. The project is a collaboration between the African continent and the rest of the world, and is a testament to the power of art to connect people across cultures and continents. The project is a multi-media project that explores the global impact of African art and culture. The project is a collaboration between the African continent and the rest of the world, and is a testament to the power of art to connect people across cultures and continents.



With support from:

- Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts
- DEKLEITER FOUNDATION
- Bloomberg
- HSBC

Support for the exhibition is provided by the African Union and the African Development Bank.



**EBONY LIFE**

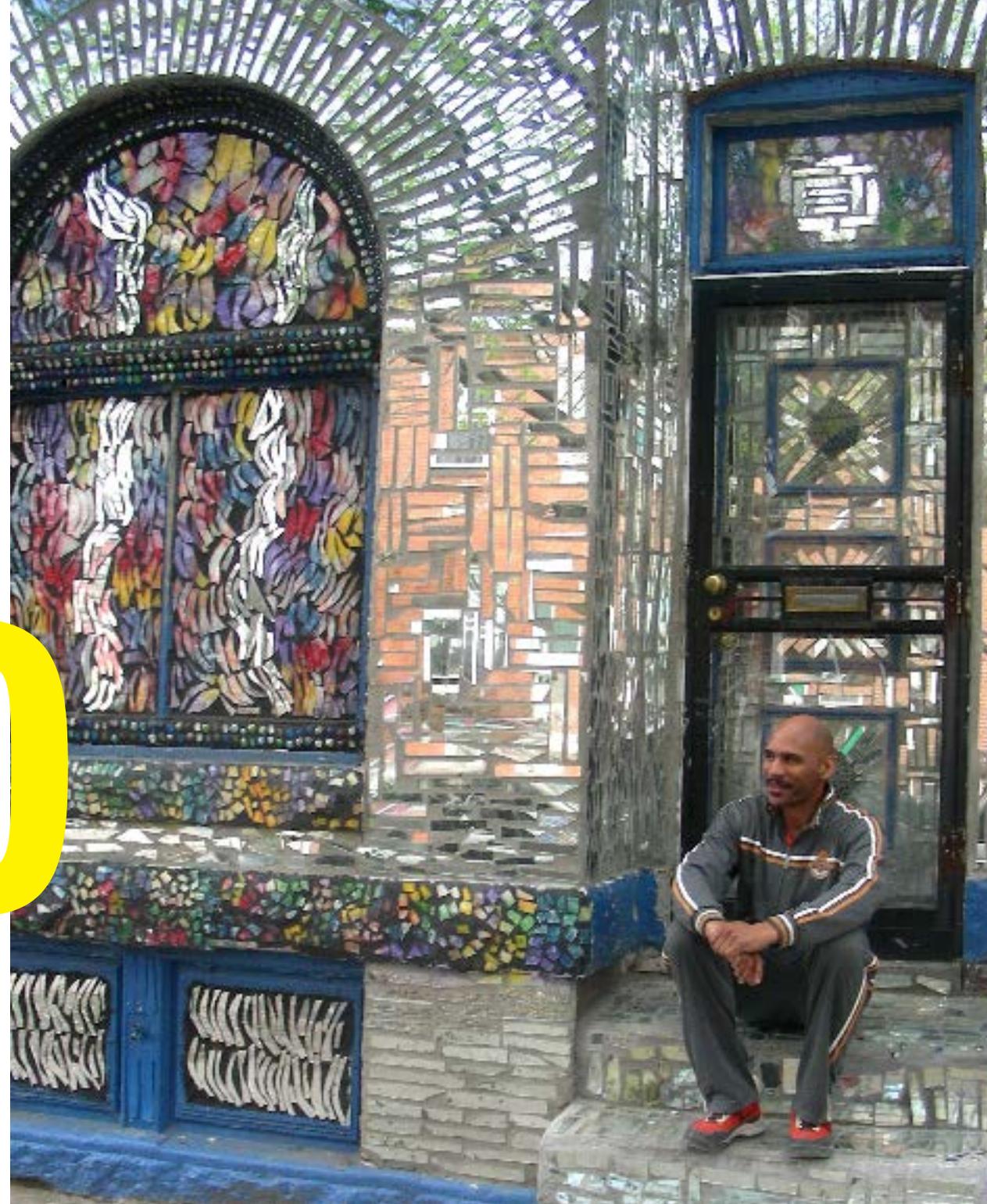


# LORING CORNISH

From the city of Baltimore in the U.S., Loring Cornish is making his house a living, ongoing work of art. He's described as an "outsider artist" and Draconian Switch had the opportunity to learn more about him and his monumental work.

**DS:** LORING YOU'VE BEEN DESCRIBED AS A VISIONARY OUTSIDER ARTIST. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

**LORING CORNISH :** It's an artist who has no formal training. Usually types such as us have a passion that takes over until the passion becomes the person's life, as such in my case. I left the television, movie and radio industry to worship God all day and night in the comfort of my home.



Loring Cornish,  
*Mosaic House,*  
*Baltimore*



*Regal Rising* (chair) and *Ancestral Futures* (mirror)

I'm a loud worshipper, so I certainly couldn't praise God with loud shouts of "hallelujah" on the sets of Hollywood California, so I distinctly remember making a decision not to return to the movie I was working on, "Time Machine". I went to my bungalow in Silver Lake California and began making art as I was now a full time worshipper (smile). While I had given in to my passion, my passion hadn't caught up with the fact that I needed to eat and pay bills. I endured a lot of difficulties starting out. Visionaries spend hours and hours and hours working on projects that fulfill the need inside of them. I can't describe the energy or the power of the will behind the outpour of the amazing creations that are developed. Innate only touches the tip of the iceberg behind this passion of wanting to create.

Food becomes unimportant, television doesn't exist. Friends and relatives get in the way. Please don't ask me out to dinner. Time spent with my creations is the most important thing that I need. Everything else gets in the way. Everything. A visionary has a passion that cannot be contained. The term "outsider" almost has a negative connotation. Many museums tend to shun works of this fashion, in that there are specific MUSEUMS

that cater to artists such as myself. Here in Baltimore we have one called The American Visionary Art Museum. Thanks to Rebecca Hoffberger, my career as a visionary has gotten off to an incredible start. Several works of mine have been displayed. Thanks to Rebecca and others who see the deep beauty of visionary artists we're able to continue our passion and eat as well.

**DS: YOU ARE IN SOME GREAT COMPANY AT MAD GAP, TELL US ABOUT THAT EXPERIENCE.**

**LC:** An opening at the Museum of Arts and Design in Manhattan, New York right across the street from one of the most talked about parks in America where every great singing star in the world has probably performed. An opening in the greatest city in this country. An opening where \$750,000 for a two room condo with no parking is a steal. Gosh, I don't think I can begin to describe how incredible this experience has been. My work was on the fifth floor in the Museum of Arts and Design. I've been doing art for about tens years and I was asked by Dr. Leslie King-Hammond to specifically create a mirror and a chair for the show. I was given free reign. I knew the pieces had to be spectacular so I went all out. When Dr. Leslie King-Hammond saw the pieces for the

first time she was amazed. I was overwhelmed with her reaction. It was exactly the reaction I was aiming for. Opening night surpassed all my expectations. As I stood by my work listening to the hundreds of positive comments I became extremely grateful that Dr. King-Hammond had asked me to be a part of this incredible show. The show in itself is something to experience. Lowery Stokes-Sims and Dr. Leslie King-Hammond are to be commended for spearheading such an amazing collection of work. I also applaud the two for the incredible team they brought on board to put together this history making event. For an outsider artist from a little old town called Baltimore Maryland, this has been an experience of a lifetime.

**DS: YOU LIVE AND WORK IN BALTIMORE. TELL US ABOUT YOUR BALTIMORE AND HOW IT AFFECTS YOUR WORK.**

**LC:** Because I don't pay too much attention to the surroundings of my environment I don't know if the city does have a tangible affect on my work. However, I do know this much; after visiting New York for a week with MAD GAP, I'm so grateful to have two houses that I use as studios and gallery spaces. I have free parking.

I have two fronts that I can use as work spaces and two back yards that I can use as work spaces. The houses are only a few feet apart. Each house has three levels. The houses are typical Baltimore row homes. I live less than a minute from Druid Hill Park, an incredible open space that I used as my back yard while growing up. Traffic is fine for me because I'm hardly ever in it. I live less than five minutes from downtown. I can catch the late movie downtown by getting on the freeway when there's usually only a few travelers. I can always find unique materials to work with. I have peace here. My expenses are affordable. I can do what I want to do by living here in this city. I wouldn't have this if I were living in New York. However, on the flip side, finding others who pursue their passions by believing in their dreams while living their dreams is extremely hard to come by. I do a lot of self-encouragement. I do have a few close friends who believe in me whole heartedly.

**DS: OKAY, YOU'VE GOT TO TELL US ABOUT THE "HOUSE", LORING. PEOPLE TALK ABOUT THAT HOUSE IN BALTIMORE WHERE LORING CORNISH LIVES AS A MUST-SEE. TELL US ABOUT THE HOUSE AND THE PROCESS OF MAKING IT. HOW DID THE**

**NEIGHBORHOOD TAKE TO THE CONVERSION?**

**LC:** It's your typical basic artist pad with the exception that the front of the house is covered in glass forty feet high and sixteen feet wide. I also covered all the floors in glass and some of the walls. The house is fun. It has a great feel to it. I knocked all the plaster off the walls for the most part. Upstairs I knocked out all the walls including the ones surrounding the bathroom. It's just one huge space. When I bathe I see all the art. There's art every where. Because I've covered the windows in colored glass, beautiful colored light shines through. The inside of the house is always changing.

Applying glass to all the floors and the front of the house proved a bit challenging. It wasn't a job for the average artist. Going up and down on a single forty foot ladder applying glass one piece at a time was no easy feat. Can you imagine all the questions from the neighborhood folk...what are you doing, why are you doing that, do you have permission to do that, how is that going to stay, aren't you afraid of being on that ladder. It was an ordeal answering all those questions. Some people don't adapt well to change especially when they've been seeing the same

**MANY BLACK PEOPLE  
IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD  
DO NOT UNDERSTAND  
OR GET WHAT I DO.  
MANY OF US HAVE TO  
SPEND OUR EXTRA  
TIME TRYING TO GET  
AN EXTRA DOLLAR  
INSTEAD OF GOING TO  
AN ART SHOW.**

building for years being transformed by a young black visionary artist. On my block people have regular jobs. I don't see a lot of people living their dream or pursuing their passion. It was a hard adjustment moving back to Baltimore and establishing myself as an artist. It was like pulling teeth to give you a better description of what I've endured. Many black people are not into art or the cultivation of it. Many of us weren't taken to museums while growing up. Many black people in my neighborhood do not understand or get what I do. Many of us have to spend our extra time trying to get an extra dollar instead of going to an art show so I completely understand the lack of appreciation from the surrounding neighborhood. However, I'm respected highly by my neighborhood. They don't understand me but they've grown to respect me. I can't ask for more. If I'm not home many of my neighbors will talk to visiting guests about the house(s) and me as an artist. Sometimes they even take them inside my house because I never lock the door. The neighborhood has become a part of my art project (in a sense) .

**DS: EXPLAIN THE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IN YOUR WORK. WHAT IS IT ABOUT YOUR FAITH OR THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE THAT DRIVES YOUR WORK.**

Out of my worship comes my art. I believe I'm inspired through my praise. I think the best thing that I can do here on earth is worship God. I feel his presence when I'm creating the art. To me staying in my environment and worshipping God is a much better choice than any thing else I can think of. I get energy when I'm listening to the music and singing my heart out. I get energy when I can't stop saying Thank you Jesus as I'm creating the art. There's a flow that's super natural that can't be explained but only experienced. I want to trust God for more than just a paycheck. I quit the industry to trust God in his fullness. When I get to heaven I want to say to God, "I trusted you for more than just a paycheck and you came through with flying colors." That is going to be a great day for me. I hope that God is well pleased with my decision.

In closing, in February I had my own museum show. Only my work featured. God has honored my decision to trust Him. You have no idea how his honoring me makes me feel.

photograph courtesy: Bonnie Schupp



# COZIER ON

# MAD, ALICE YARD, JOHN & GAP

Draconian Switch caught up with Artist/Writer/Thinker Christopher Cozier on the eve of his leaving for a showing in New York at the Museum of Arts and Design. We asked him about the show, the Alice Yard art space and his body of work...

**DS: IT'S BEEN A BIG YEAR FOR ALICE YARD: PARAMARIBO SPAN A STRING OF SUCCESSFUL ENGAGEMENTS IN ALICE YARD AND NOW THE GLOBAL AFRICA PROJECT AT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN (MAD), NYC. TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT HOW YOU VIEW THE YEAR AND HOW ALICE YARD BECAME INCLUDED IN THE SHOW AT MAD.**

**Christopher Cozier:** Yes – it's good that our ideas are being noticed and that they can be applied and tested beyond the physical Yard. Fingers crossed.

Lowery Sims first asked me to recommend some design-based work from Trinidad. I sent her links to various things and she was really taken by Marlon Darbeau's work from the New Orleans show and to things like Draconian Switch. She was initially looking at steel pan and also at architects, so obviously Sean's investigations came up. Our

conversation shifted from Trinidad to the region and to one or two artists from Africa that I had met - people like Ugochukwu Bright Eke, who did a residency at Alice Yard, and Kossi Assou who was in Haiti on my last visit there. I was never thinking of my own work but then she began to research my stuff and realised that there was a design element that has kept coming up in my practice over the years – the various rubber stamps, the mass-produced objects such as the Box of Fear, the various cards, and objects like the benches or peeras, for example. She was curious about our use of the internet and the dialogues and communities we have been constructing – the ongoing conversation with Sean Leonard and Nicholas Laughlin around Alice Yard and its networks. It all expanded from there and especially after we did the "Critical Space" clip on VIMEO for the conference at MICA.

**DS: YOUR OLD ALMA MATER, MICA (MARYLAND INSTITUTE COLLEGE OF ART) IS "CO-ORGANISING AN UNPRECEDENTED EXHIBITION OF AFRICAN ART, DESIGN, AND CRAFT WORLDWIDE". THE SHOW, CO-CURATED BY MICA'S OWN LESLIE KING HAMMOND AND LOWERY SIMS, FEATURES A**



*"MADE IN CHINA" stamps have been so much a part of our lives growing up in Caribbean. In the past it was pencils and plastic pencil-sharpener, yellow twelve-inch-rulers etc. Modest items with all the associations of developing countries and low level consumption. Today, in the same locations, for people with bigger budgets, it is now monolithic structures and narratives of progress. - Cozier (from the bogpost "development box" and other moments <http://christophercozier.blogspot.com/2010/11/development-box.html>)*

**SHOWS OF THE FALL BY NEW YORK MAGAZINE. WHAT, IF ANY, IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS FOR YOU?**

**CC:** OK. I didn't know that. Well, Leslie was one of my undergraduate lecturers and subsequently advised me in making my choices while applying to graduate school in the 80s. Lowery did studio visits while I was a graduate student at Rutgers but she may not recall. Thanks for bringing that to my attention. For some reason I was thinking more about our little John D, the one that was, back home. In my days it was just a few little wobbly brown stools and tables in a hot dusty room in a large, typical early 60s tropical institutional space. I can still smell the fermenting grain from the flour mills or hear the hiss of steam from T&TEC.

**DS: SPEAKING OF ALMA MATERS, JOHN D. (JOHN DONALDSON TECHNICAL INSTITUTE) HAS QUITE A NUMBER OF GRADUATES SHOWING AROUND THE GLOBE AT THIS TIME: THE MARLONS (GRIFFITH AND DARBEAU), WENDELL MCSHINE AND OF COURSE, YOURSELF. HELLUVA COINCIDENCE.**

**CC:** Not really when you think about it carefully. For example, John D gave me my start as a professional artist – a competitive and solid enough portfolio to get into university abroad. I did not do well in secondary school here so I couldn't get into UWI. I was a reject from the conventional system even though I passed 11+ for my first choice school. I made doodles and paper planes with my O-level answer sheets. I was extremely alienated. I still have them in a zip-lock bag at home after smuggling them out of the exam room! Maybe they will become part of a future artwork in some way. John D. was my first real lifeline in a society with extremely limited educational and life choices and I gave it my all with that in mind. So, when I first returned to Trinidad after studying abroad, I wanted to be part of that and to follow on with that tradition (not the wobbly desks and the dusty space but the critical dialogues) to do the same for others in whom I saw the same struggle.

I remain astonished and elated at what was accomplished there for and by myself and others, for Wendell, Marlon D and G, Nikolai Noel and so many more. The things we take for granted here in Trinidad confuse me often.

**I bought this little stamp in a mall in Port of Spain.** *I began to see these little stamps more and more over the years. Apparently they are quite commonly used for labeling, on arrival, in small shops? Why are they being labeled here in Trinidad? What would the value of labeling my work this way in narratives of development and progress? So far I have begun to label drawings of pedestals for politicians to stand upon. Within the narrative of "Development" this object can allow them to feel taller and more important or they could use it to hang themselves. A friend, Cecile, offered the following comment on my blog: "I've heard of "suitcase traders" using these stamps when importing goods that aren't labelled with a country of manufacture. Such a label is necessary to bring these goods here "legally". So, traders take these stamps with them to wherever they go to get their goods and if there happen to be any items which are untagged, they place a little "Made in China" stamp on to avoid any trouble with Customs." Cozier (from the bogpost "development box" and other moments- <http://christophercozier.blogspot.com/2010/11/development-box.html>)*



**DS: YOU WERE CHOSEN TO CREATE "NOW SHOWING", THE OFFICIAL IMAGE FOR THE 2010 TRINIDAD & TOBAGO FILM FESTIVAL. AS A RESULT, YOU 'RETURNED' HOME THIS YEAR, THIS BEING YOUR FIRST SHOWING IN TRINIDAD IN A DECADE. 'RETURNED' IS REALLY IS A FUNNY TERM WHEN YOU LOOK AT IT BECAUSE YOU LIVE AND CREATE IN TRINIDAD, THOUGH YOUR WORKS HAVE BEEN ON TOUR IN COLLECTIONS ABROAD. WHAT WORK DO YOU CURRENTLY HAVE ON TOUR AND NOW THAT YOU ARE 'HOME' SO TO SPEAK, WHEN CAN WE EXPECT TO SEE THE WORKS HERE IN TRINIDAD?**

**CC:** Yes, I was quite surprised to be asked. An interesting question resides in this idea of "here" – my work resides where there is a context or space for it. We are talking about critical engagement and financial investment – about a responsive professional space for real growth. I would like Trinidad to be one of those kinds of locations as well. I remain optimistic. But then – look at where most Caribbean literature is written and also published. At the end of the day, "home" is wherever one can find some level of equality, dignity and way in the world.

One of my projects is now in Martinique after being in England and Spain, another is still in Canada, a collection of my prints were just on show in the US and Alice Yard is in two shows, the current one at MAD which opens this week and the other which opened in Miami/Basel and was in France over the last few months. The film festival image simply created a reason for me to do something in Trinidad. However on-line my work and ideas are always "here," "there" or "everywhere" according to how you interpret "location".



**THIS WAS MY FIRST DRAWING OF THE BENCH (PEERA ) WHICH I CALLED "LITTLE GESTURES" IN 2006.** Through the dialogues instigated by architect Sean Leonard at Alice Yard, this simple everyday object, enlisted into my symbolic vocabulary, became an object for design investigation by designer Marlon Darbeau.- Cozier ("Little Gestures" from the "Tropical Night" series.)



**ALICE YARD AT MAD GAP** a view of the Alice Yard Space , Marlon Darbeau's Peeras, Christopher Cozier's Development Boxes and Draconian Switch's covers in the background against the big green wall.



*Designer/ Artist Marlon Darbeau - whose work was featured in the MAD Global Africa Project - shares with us a bit of the experience of exhibiting in this ground-breaking show.*

**DS:** It says in your release pre the GAP show that you come from a family tradition of making things in a workshop that was at home or very close to home. Expand on this for us. Tell us of this family tradition and how this has come to inform your design process?

**MD:** As a kid I spent every afternoon until I wrote common entrance waiting at my uncle's metal



# PEERA



workshop - which was within walking distance from my primary school - for my dad to pick me up, although my uncle didn't allow me to really hang around the shop because of all the welding and raw materials around. I was instead placed in the stores to assist or truthfully watch while tools or materials were given out. Then I would spend the evening until 8pm seeing my dad make mailboxes at home. Also very early on, I remember going to my grandfather's woodwork "Arima Door Center" shop, which he owned up until his death.

So, my dad having a small sheet metal workshop making mailboxes, his father having a woodwork shop and his uncle having a steel workshop seems to have embedded itself in my mind. These influences only surfaced many years later. All through secondary school, I did pretty well in my industrial subjects, but never did anything in all the workshops I had access to. Maybe they did not want me to follow in their footsteps. What's

at a local sign factory, which I think allowed me to begin to see the relation between design and manufacturing. The study of graphic design was so rooted in the printed matter that only then was I exposed to thinking in actual 3 dimensions vs simulated. So here I am, many years after, a trained graphic designer, very interested in not just the printed page, but also how design can add value to an object...and I'm not only talking about monetarily,

way change lives.

**DS: Have you ever made anything with your father? Any plans to do so in the future?**

**MD:** Unfortunately, my father and I haven't made anything together as yet. The closest thing to making together thus far was him helping me bend the seat for the love peera. It was really hard for one person to bend



# BY DARBEAU

interesting is that it was only about ten years ago that I began to play with object-making, choosing a chair as my first made object. Now all of this was being done with no intentions of becoming a tradesman; I seemed to be more interested in form and colour, function wasn't even on my agenda. Funny, I still have that first chair and it is a pain to sit on for long. Some years before making the chair, when I was 20, I got job as a graphic designer

but culturally as well; how it can change the way people feel and see themselves. It's very simple: the things we use can have significant impacts on the way we live and behave and that is important to me. Design applied to making can dramatically change making. So what I have set out to do is to use every means of making I was exposed to in every workshop I experienced to help translate ideas into tangible objects that will in some

on the bender so he gave a hand. I have been working on a new version of his mailboxes which I have not shown him yet. I also ordered seven newspaper barrels i.e. the newspaper holders on his box design. I am gonna do something with them - he will be so surprised. One of the things I have been thinking about lately is at some point I might have the chance to develop products using his way of making.

DS: Writer Andre Bagoo once described you as a design artist?  
Many people call you a designer? Which is it? Do you straddle both?  
Is there a distinction for you?

MD: I am a designer. The thing is, design has been the common activity applied to all the forms of visual expression or communication I have worked in. From the signage, advertising, fashion, packaging, TV and books. When I had my first solo show En Route... of bridges and barriers, I intentionally and clearly designed art objects that were functional. For me there is no distinction, because I always wanted to be an artist, but somewhere along the way I began to see that my medium was design, which meant I had access to almost any way of making my ideas. At a point I straddled, but what I've learnt is design's ability to give access in ways that sometimes art does not.





Bright Ugochukwa Eke, *Engaging Ripples (ii)*