

FEAR

4 PACKS

10 OZS. EACH

NET WT. 40 OZS

(1.13KGS)

MADE IN THE USA

PACKAGED AND DISTRIBUTED IN THIRUOD AND TOROAO
CHRISTOPHER CORDER

FEAR

1PACK
NET WT. 30 OZS
(850-5 G)

MADE IN THE USA
PACKAGED AND DISTRIBUTED IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
©CHRISTOPHER COZIER

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1PACK
NET WT. 30 OZS
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MADE IN THE USA
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©CHRISTOPHER COZIER



Rumination on Fear

By **ANDREA FATONA**

Three years ago, I stumbled upon Christopher Cozier's graphic work *Available At All Leading Stores* on his blog, while putting together the group exhibition *Reading the Image: Poetics of the Black Diaspora*. I was elated, as it seemed as if the work talked back and forth in interesting ways with the text-based installation *Room of Fears* by Michael Fernandes, one of the other artists in the show.

I immediately rang Cozier to negotiate the inclusion of his work into the exhibition. To my surprise, he said that the work only existed in graphic form, and would have to be produced in three dimensions for the exhibition. Our telephone conversation gave birth to the collaborative production of a rubber stamp and 3x3x3-inch cardboard boxes that gallery viewers could stamp and take away with them from the exhibition.

The addition of this participatory element to the exhibition was exciting. Furthermore, producing the elements comprising *Available At All Leading Stores* resulted in a fascinating reversal of the production-consumption chain that generally defines North-South relationships. Here I was in Canada, producing a work of art for consumption here in the North that was conceived and designed in Trinidad. The irony of the process rang loudly for me. It seemed that the age-old system of capitalist development that favoured the North had been turned onto its head, as I was now adding value to an idea, turned into commodity, conceived in the South, yet produced and distributed in the North.

The artwork took on new meaning outside of its production in the context of the gallery exhibition (i.e. its internationalisation). Gallery-goers took up the work in a very subjective manner. The act of creating the boxes was a performative one, in which individuals attempted to create the perfect object. If the stamp/text was not properly centred, the maker proceeded to create a new box. It seemed as if it was a form of spontaneous personal quality control, similar to what one might expect on an assembly line. I observed this fashioning and refashioning of the fear boxes over and over again.

For the most part, the boxes became receptacles in which gallery visitors stored their innermost fears until they were able to deal with them in more productive ways. The storage of fears served as a counterpoint to Fernandes's *Room of Fears*, in which individuals were asked to voice their fears, and then have them publicly displayed as text on a wall in the gallery.





Notes on “FEAR”

By CHRISTOPHER COZIER

18 April, 2006

New on the Market: I was thinking about “FEAR”. Has it now replaced ethnic identity as a new political (even national) commodity? In its current 10-oz. packets, it can easily be distributed for consumption.

28 June, 2006

“Available at all leading stores!”

Curator Andrea Fatona calls from Toronto . . . she has seen another of my graphic works on my blog. In this work, I am speculating about “fear” as a new political commodity. People in Trinidad are supposed to be living in fear, so we need a new government or new security measures to save us. They also say we need a renewal of moral and religious values! I keep asking myself who is selling this and why?

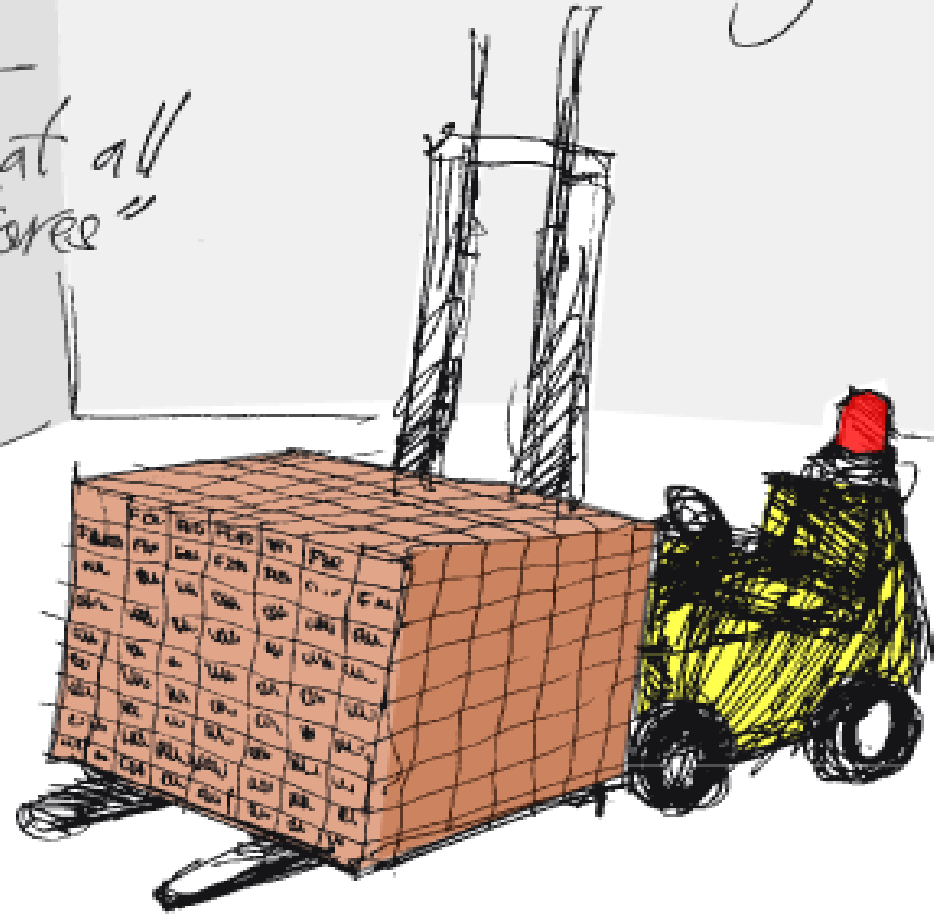
As usual, someone told me that the work looked foreign and that that there was nothing distinctively Trinidadian about it . . . they said it looked generic.

The way I see it, these local concerns place me in a larger, less anxious and competitive domain, in which a kind of empathy can take shape between myself and others in other countries and cultures who are facing similar challenges and manipulations in the fast-expanding global economy and social order. Maybe on islands people look inward and outward simultaneously.

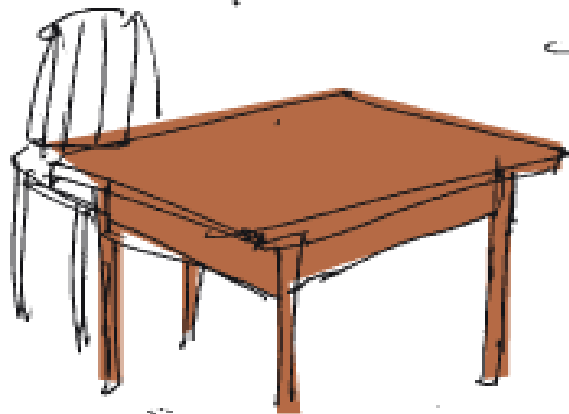
So the curator and I begin to collaborate. We are imagining how this work will fit in to or shape her idea, and if she can take the responsibility to make aesthetic choices in the implementation and placement of the work in the space and context. I decided that a simple rubber stamp made at an office store would do. This means that people entering the exhibition could make the stamp themselves on the little cardboard boxes.

To me this is exciting. It occurred to me that this is a collaboration not just between myself and the person that enters the show and gets to stamp the “fear” label on a box and take it home, but also with Andrea. She gets to actually choose the boxes and order the stamp and have a say in how it will work. The work enables a number of participants, and I am more of an instigator than a sole maker “artist-man” in the old-fashioned sense.

Kevin this could be a way to do this work
 "Available at all leading stores"



the idea would be for the boxes to be stacked as if just off the production line. on a fork lift, then a take and a chew to sit and also stamp one's own box. The box would be then flat and not assembled.



In the early 90s the term "marketable historical injury" kept coming up in my speculations about the use of identity. It was my final departure (hopefully/optimistically) from the territorial prospects (but designations) of multicultural politics, and particularly the reductivist political commodification of self and sensibility within local electoral politics, and the lucrative postures of newspaper columnists. The seed of further distrust and by extension the marketability of fear and insecurity were coming on stream.

Early 2009, responding to a question from Julieta González

I am still imagining other commodities like this one, even though the thoughts came up about four years ago.... Initially it came to me while I was watching regional media coverage and election campaigns that were brokering fear rather than offering the kind of leadership or vision that would allow us to confront it. As I thought about it more, it could also have implications about the post-9/11 world and broader global realities, and about the way we watch CNN and BBC etc living in places like Trinidad ... the way a confusion sets in about who these broadcasts are aimed at, about who is actually living within a certain political expectation, economy and access and who is not....

I started as a designer, and I always associate design work with a more direct communication with a possible public. Some of my earlier design work was placed anonymously in public places. I still appreciate the dissemination, accessibility, and the direct communication. I live in a location in which there is no critical or financial embrace for what I do, so I cannot depend on magazines and institutional structures to position or convey my ideas. So the Internet and design strategies have become even more important. There is also an economy thing, in that the objects themselves are not precious. I can plan and imagine them, they can be made industrially or by others, and one rarely has to ship and insure anything. Their value is in their conceptual intent, and in the moment that a viewer encounters the work and enters the head-space it initiates. I work for that moment.

Some of these notes were previously published in Small Axe 23, June 2007





Home-brewed FEAR

By RICHARD RAWLINS

In June 2007, my work entitled *Speak Up! Or Forever ...* was included in *Small Axe 23*, along with Christopher Cozier's *Available At All Leading Stores*. This simple visual communication fraught with all its humour/picong appealed to the ad man in me. “What a hell of a great idea!!!” — packaged Fear.

Made in the USA. The work reflects all of these things that continually haunt us today within our relatable-global-village proximity. It embodies energy, food, and financial crisis concerns, 9/11 self-imposed mental adjustments, war justifications, and rainbow-coloured terror alerts.

Packaged and Distributed in Trinidad and Tobago. This place Trinidad and Tobago that I call home, this pre-packaged box hits you more like a ton of bricks rather than its Net 40 ozs. It embodies just about every single security and insecurity issue that we have. This simple little box is the mirror-like reflection of our wrought iron housing chambers, our late-night drive-by stolen B13/B15 White Sentra stalkings, tribal electoral “poli-tricks”, Carnavalesque VIP aspirations of ironic commonality, and more personal home-brewed fears than this space permits. This seminal work, much like a strong bag of tea, is meant to be brewed over and over again.



I sketched the adjacent image and emailed it to Chris shortly after my first encounter with Available At All Leading Stores. This piece, produced after my Speak Up series, inspired the photograph on the preceding page of this visual dialogue.



Now in personal ^{attacks} packs and with AOX
(Apprehension Ostracism Xtremism)

Paradise™

By NICHOLAS LAUGHLIN

Some say that we lost Paradise
Some say that we living Paradise
Some say well if this is Paradise
Good God where the hell is Paradise?

Oh-oh, oh-oh, leh we go, oh-oh, to Paradise....

— 3Canal, “Paradise?”

It is the drizzly Friday morning before Carnival, and I am slumped in my chair, staring at the chaos of my desk, trying to invent a costume for J’Ouvert. This year I am playing with 3Canal. The theme of the band is *Paradise?*, complete with sardonic question mark, after one of the songs on their new album. Nowadays, most people don’t bother with costumes for J’Ouvert, beyond the obligatory layer of paint or mud. But I like the challenge, in all senses, of a costume. Last year it was devil wings, a bow tie, and a placard. This year, I’m stumped.

I stare at the chaos of my desk. Piles of paper, an empty teacup, my dusty laptop screen. A bowl of paperclips. A small brown cardboard box, not much bigger than a stack of Post-It notes, with plain black text on one side:

FEAR
1 PACK
NET WT. 30 OZS
MADE IN THE USA

It is one of the original hand-stamped boxes from Christopher Cozier’s installation *Available At All Leading Stores*, shipped down from the gallery in Canada. It has sat on my desk for months, a mordant reminder of my time and place. I summon up iTunes and listen to the 3Canal song.

Buildings filling the skies
And people dying for another to rise
Black gold and crimson tides
Is this Paradise?

I pick up the phone and dial a number. “Chris? It’s Nicholas. What you think of this....”

I find a plain cardboard box lying around the house, 16 x 12 x 10 inches—not a cube, but close enough. I spend a couple of days figuring out how I’ll carry it through the streets. Should I strap it to my back? Attach it to a stick so I can hoist it into the air? I don’t want it to get crushed in the intoxicated J’Ouvert throng, and I want to carry it high enough that people can read the words from a distance.

“Put your head inside it and wear it like a mask,” one friend suggests. No, I won’t be able to see where I’m going, and I’ll stifle. Instead I imagine an old-time Fancy Sailor with some papier-mâché extravaganza perched on his head, and two cords dangling in front to help balance the weight.

In the end, the design is simple. I cut an oval into the underside of the box, just slightly smaller than the circumference of my head, and line it with strips of plastic foam. I try it on: the box sits firmly just above my brow, even if I jump around. Next I punch two holes in the underside. I thread in lengths of strong yarn and knot them on the inside. I can grab onto the dangling cords to shift the weight of the box as I move. Now the text: Chris suggests I blow up a version of his original design, make a colour print, and paste it to the box. I decide on a more low-tech method, hand-lettering the box with a black permanent marker. I haven’t told Chris yet, but I’ve taken liberties with his text. The box now reads:

PARADISE
100 PACKS 10 OZ. EACH
MADE IN CHINA
DISTRIBUTED IN T+T

And in smaller letters:

(APOLOGIES TO CHRISTOPHER COZIER)



The history of the Caribbean is a catalogue of trade wars, pillagings, predatory exchanges, bank heists on the scale of whole countries, and bills of sale enforced at gunpoint. Glass beads for gold, blood for sugar, self-respect for tourist dollars, oil for salvation. It sometimes seems there's nothing we can't or won't offer for sale. In what Derek Walcott called "this chain store of islands," independence only changed the faces of the salesmen, not their tactics.

Cozier conceived *Available At All Leading Stores* at a particularly anxious moment in recent history. As the wider world worried over the Bush doctrine, Iraq, Guantanamo, and the Axis of Evil, Trinidadians grew obsessed with a spiraling murder rate, garbage-can bombs deposited in downtown Port of Spain, and the latest popular business scheme: kidnappings for ransom. Fear was the hot global commodity, often packaged together with Security in buy-one-get-one-free deals; manufactured in Washington, DC, advertised on CNN and Fox News, traded in capital cities around the world, with special discounts available at the nearest airport metal scanner. Trinidad, always ready to adopt and adapt trendy imports, didn't lag behind.

Three years later, the market has shifted. Global capitalism as we knew it took a tumble in 2008. American voters replaced Bush 2.0 with a brighter, shinier, and better-designed model. Now the world wants to buy an Obama t-shirt, the one with the new brand name: Hope.

Meanwhile, here in Trinidad, the populace has finally got the invoice for the PNM government's Potemkin nation project, better known as Vision 2020. The costs are stated in trillions, the fine print seems to be in Cantonese, and the product was broken before it came out of the package. Port of Spain floods and traffic gridlocks in the shadow of half-finished skyscrapers built by imported Chinese labour with imported Chinese materials. They said we were buying Paradise. Well, if this is Paradise, where the hell is Paradise?

For three or so hours on J'Ouvert morning, Paradise is an empty space, an absence, in a cardboard box I balance on my head. Watch me, turning into a metaphor for a nation bearing the burden of false advertising and false hopes. If anything and everything is for sale, if art is just another product with varying profit margins, if Cozier can taunt us with the joke of commodified Fear, then I can re-commodify, re-sell, re-brand.



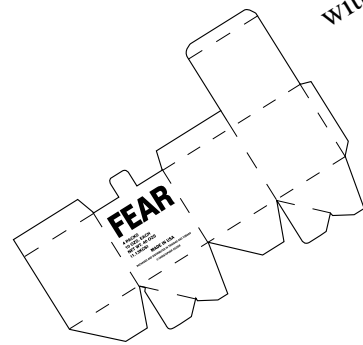
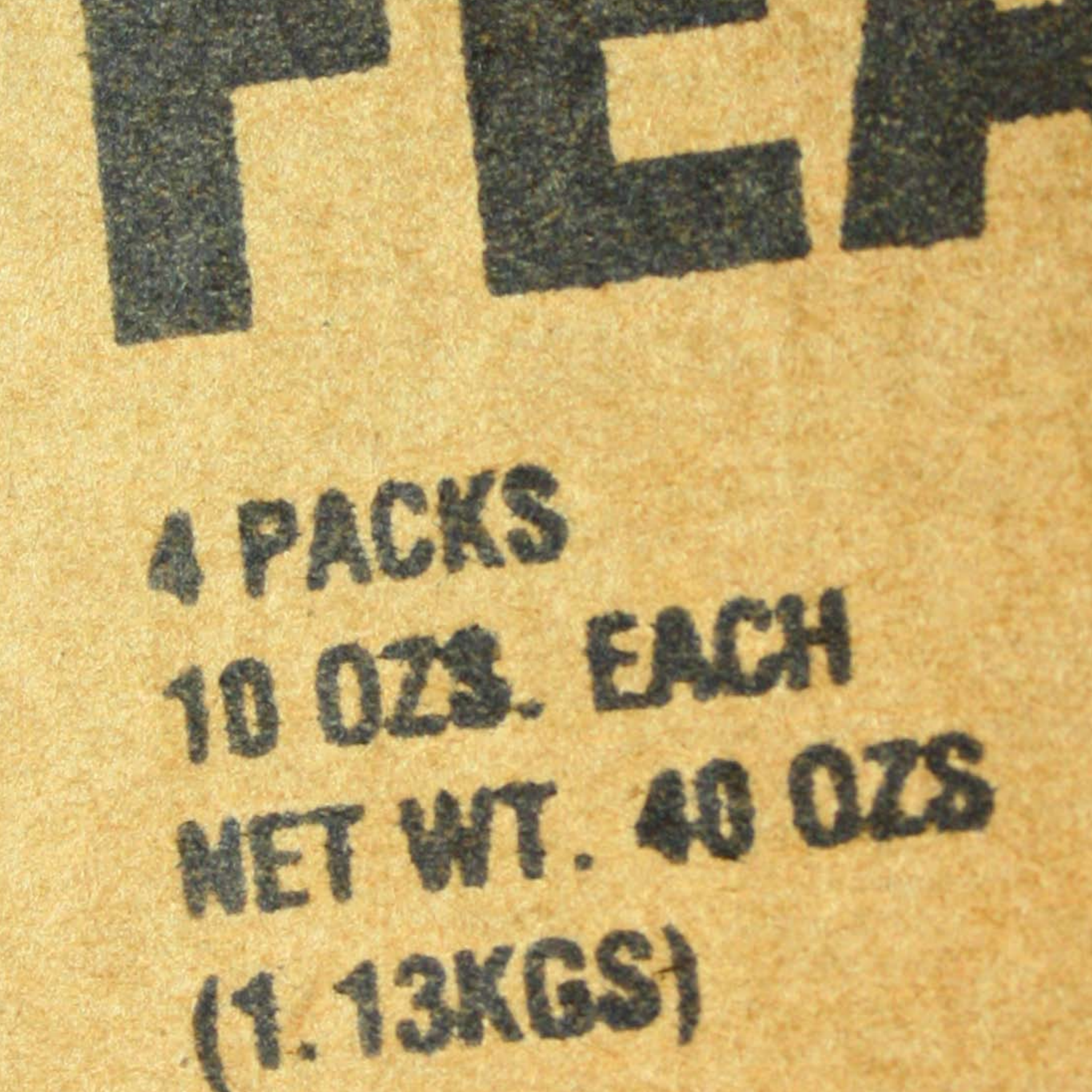
Down Ariapita Avenue and up Carlos Street. *Oh-oh, oh-oh, leh we go, oh-oh.* Hundreds writhing and rubbing up and gyrating, bareback and torn t-shirts and busted-up sneakers, rum and paint and around our necks the little plastic tags that prove we paid our \$200 to play with 3Canal. *Oh-oh.* Down Tragarete as the sun rises, up Edward and across Gordon, and eventually we reach the Savannah. *Oh-oh, oh-oh, leh we go, oh-oh, to Paradise....*

But Paradise is heavier than I expected. At half past eight, by Memorial Park, I slip out of the band and stride off with my cardboard box, now spattered with pretty pink and purple paint. It's early, but the sun is already too hot.



CREATE your own FEAR





Available At All Leading Stores has been exhibited in collaboration
with the following curators:

Andrea Fatona: *Reading the Image, Poetics of the Black Diaspora*, Canada
Marianne de Tolentino, 1st ACP Group Cultural Festival in the Dominican Republic
Raul Moarquech Ferrera-Balanquet: Arte Nuevo Interactiva '07, Mexico
Julieta González: 2nd Trienal Poli/Gráfica de San Juan: América Latina y el Caribe, Puerto Rico

FEAR by Christopher Cozier
Inside Cover & p1 **FEAR BOX and STAMP**
Christopher Cozier

p4 **FEAR on folding**
Photography
Richard Rawlins and Rodell Warner

p8 **Notes on FEAR**
Sketchbook Notes
Christopher Cozier

p10 &11 **Home Brewed Fear**
Photography & Sketch
Richard Rawlins (after Cozier)

p14 &16 **Paradise™**
Photography
Brian Kinzie

Design & Layout
Richard Rawlins

Back Cover Photo
Jeffrey Chock

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Christopher Cozier is an artist and writer living and working in Trinidad.

He has participated in a number of exhibitions focused upon contemporary art in the Caribbean and internationally. Since 1989 he has published a range of essays on related issues in a number of catalogues and journals. He is on the editorial collective of *Small Axe*, A Caribbean Journal of Criticism, published and distributed by the Indiana University Press. The artist has been an editorial adviser to *BOMB* magazine for their Americas issues (Winter, 2003, 2004 & 2005). A documentary produced by Canadian video artist and writer, Richard Fung entitled “Uncomfortable: the Art of Christopher Cozier.” was launched in Toronto in January 2006. The artist is a Senior Research Fellow at the Academy of The University of Trinidad & Tobago (UTT) and was Artist-in-Residence at Dartmouth College during the Fall of 2007 .

For more of Christopher Cozier’s work visit

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/56271618@N00/>