



mas

Tradition, Memory & the Critical Contemporary



This exhibition juxtaposes works from the Central Bank's art collection with the work of six mas designers/practitioners in order to open a dialogue on the past, present and future of masquerade and carnival culture. The works featured highlight the concerns of artists over the past seven decades as they confront the idea of nationhood, identity, memory and tradition through their practice, while also tackling contemporary global concerns.

February 13 – March 27, 2026
Central Bank Museum

Sádé Budhlall



Sádé Budhlall
Photograph by Robert Taylor

sádéASKS

- ❓ How do I remain accountable to the spiritual and cultural meanings of the Soumayree while allowing the character to respond to urgent global injustices?
- ❓ What responsibilities do I take on when I carry religious, cultural, national, and political symbols in the Soumayree? What are the stakes?
- ❓ Is the Soumayree inviting people to feel emotionally moved, or asking them to recognize their responsibility in fighting injustice and oppression?
- ❓ What does it mean for me to stage cross-religious solidarity in Carnival performance when politics have taught communities to see each other as enemies? Can the Soumayree be used to build solidarity across religious conflict, rather than deepen division?
- ❓ When embodying the Soumayree who holds power, how do I stand beside a community in struggle, rather than over them? What aesthetic or choreographic decisions can I make?

Sádé Budhlall is a Trinbagonian anti-disciplinary Odissi artist who moves between diasporic embodiment, embodied resistance and decolonial practice.

Working across practice-based research, performance, film, and facilitation, she examines how reconstructed Indian classical dance disciplines bodies within nationalist, neo-colonial, and patriarchal structures, intervening through choreopolitical practice and Caribbean embodiment to open new political possibilities.

Her current research project, *Disobedient Bodies*, is a practice-based inquiry into how diasporic and Caribbean bodies inhabit Indian classical dance technique. Through studio research, performance, and facilitation, the project examines how Odissi shifts when practiced through multiple ancestral lineages, foregrounding embodied negotiation, contradiction, and contingency as integral conditions of the form rather than deviations from it.

Sádé is a Global South Scholar in the MA Dance: Participation, Communities, and Activism program at the London Contemporary Dance School.

Links to articles on Sádés work:

<https://newsday.co.tt/2024/08/18/indian-dance-researcher-wins-global-south-scholarship/>

<https://theplace.org.uk/blogs-stories/meet-our-global-south-scholars-on-the-ma-dance-participation-communities-activism/>

Sádé's website - write up on her work in Carnival:

<https://sadebudhlall.com/carnival/>

Kamille Andrews



Kamille Andrews

Kamille Andrews' Iron Woman

Soumayree, performed at the 2025 National Traditional Mas Competition, reimagines the Soumayree as a feminine embodiment of Ogun using the dhantal as a conduit of ancestral power, while her installation positions the steelpan at the throat of a sculptural form layered with X rays. The Soumayree's history, linked to Indo-Trinidadian performance traditions, reflects aesthetic and symbolic ties to leela, to representations of Durga—specifically Kateri Amman—and to the recurring cross-cultural significance of the horse as vessel of strength and freedom. The installation integrates Guna molas as cosmological textiles and centers metal as material of extraction, resistance, and sonic invention, drawing on histories of Black metallurgists and on instruments such as the steelpan and dhantal, both created by transforming industrial remnants into tools of rhythm, memory, and cultural resilience.

Excerpt from **The Trinidad Carnival – Mandate for a National Theatre** by Errol Hill (1972):

“The horse’s head is attached to a light bamboo framework. The masker entered through a hole at the back of the animal’s neck and carried the reins in his hands so that he appeared to be its rider. It rested on pads strapped on the masker’s waist, the feet hidden from view below a long skirt of rich material. The king as a leading dancer carried a wooden sword. He and his four or five princes wore metallic paper crowns and satin costumes decorated with swansdown and rhinestones, and their faces were whitened with powder. Another man dressed as the queen in a sari collected money on a brass plate. The band would progress in this manner through the streets on Carnival day, dancing to a drum, sometimes cymbals, and singing traditional Hindi songs... In the delicate and stately dance of the Indian Burokit, however, obvious sexual connotation is absent.”

<https://www.kazillioncollectiv.com/kamille-andrews>

Amanda T McIntyre



Amanda T. McIntyre
Photograph by Marlon James

Amanda T. McIntyre is a Trinidadian writer, artist, and scholar whose design practice centers on contemporary revisions of the Caribbean Baby Doll, harmonizing the parallel histories of Caribbean architecture and masquerade. Her ensemble references 19th century vernacular gingerbread architecture, which emerged alongside the Baby Doll and remains visible across Trinidad and Tobago in houses shaped by diverse influences including French, Iberian, English, Moroccan, Ghanaian, Caribbean Indigenous, Chinese, and Indian traditions. In her Baby Doll work, McIntyre uses Caribbean architectural aesthetics to propose responses to the climate emergency, drawing on vernacular gingerbread architecture's adaptation to cultural and environmental conditions, particularly its functional, ventilating lattice work, which she reimagines through textile choices. Her practice also incorporates variations of the chattel house, tapia house, and ajoupa.

Link to more on Amanda's work:

<https://www.q-zine.org/non-fiction/dolly-ma-brigitta-queer-babydoll-mythography-in-trinidad-and-tobago-carnival/>

Amanda Asks

- ? In what ways are the memories of masquerade cultures carried through time and space?
- ? Discuss the impact of migration patterns in the continued development of Caribbean carnivals?
- ? Can carnival design practices be considered fine art and high fashion?

Bruce Cayonne



Bruce Cayonne

Bruce Cayonne is an artist and sign painter based in Arima, Trinidad. He has been painting fete signs for the past thirty years. His iconic work has come to define the visual landscape and history of Trinidad and Tobago with his signature fete style — bold, precise lettering against colourful and vibrant gradient backgrounds, each sign hand-painted on hardboard and hammered onto lightposts.

Over the past three decades, Cayonne has produced thousands of signs and has collaborated with numerous artists and musicians, such as DJs like Kabuki, Dr Hyde, Howie T, Foreigner, and Nyahbinghi, and visual artists like Christopher Cozier (T&T), Blue Curry (UK/Bahamas) and ds4si/Intelligent Mischief (USA). Bruce had his first solo exhibition *Once Upon a Fete*, featuring fete signs from the early 1990s to the late 2000s at Alice Yard in 2001. For the past 3 years he has worked with Robert Young to produce design for the bank The Vulgar Fraction.

(Information courtesy Alice Yard)

Bruce Online

<https://www.abigboxofcrayons.com/blog/bruce-cayonne>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tZyae64jGQ>

Robert Young



Robert Young
Photography by Alatashe Girvan

Robert Young, a Trinidadian artist and designer, founded The Cloth in 1986 and uses clothing to express the social landscapes, emotions, and working-class Afro-Caribbean memory that shape his practice, extending these principles into his role as designer and bandleader of the Carnival band A Vulgar Fraction, where he encourages performers to engage pedagogically with ideas through hands-on mas making. His work is informed by a family legacy of labour activism—his grandfather Thomas Young's union organizing in New York, his father Joe Young's leadership in Trinidad's 1961 bus strikes and 1970 Revolution, and his mother Grace's founding of a credit union—and he persistently examines how slavery, indentureship, and colonisation continue to impact contemporary life while seeking creative strategies for healing and community restoration. The Cloth is a major force in Caribbean fashion, its bold garments worn by cultural leaders and featured at events including Paris Fashion Week, Portugal Fashion, the Intra African Trade Fair, and Tranoï Tokyo, with Robert also speaking at the 2024 AfriCaribbean Trade and Investment Forum. Since his first showing at the 1992 Biennial of the Caribbean, his art has influenced design across the African diaspora, with collaborations and exhibitions at institutions such as the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Savvy Contemporary, FIT's Africa's Fashion Diaspora, and in books including Africa's Fashion Diaspora and Crafted Kinship.

Vulgar Fraction is an independent mas band that challenges conventional Carnival approaches. The band is known for encouraging masqueraders to create their own costumes, using traditional mas elements combined with contemporary techniques. Kongo Dey, the 2025 portrayal, used 700 banana trees as a main design component. The trees have been processed using a machine loaned to Vulgar Fraction by the UWI University Field Station at Mount Hope and the UWI Engineering Department. The stripped, dried banana plant fibers, tied into long tufts, adorn the costumes as a statement about extraction. Vulgar Fraction operates without corporate sponsorship.

<https://vibes.trinidadexpress.com/buzz/kongo-dey-comingvu-gar-fraction-2025-mas-to-celebrate-the-kongo-presence-in-the-caribbean/>

Amy Li Baksh



Amy Li Baksh
Photograph by Lesley Farai Granderson

I have been interested in cow mas since 2021 and first played in 2023, drawn to a form long considered “extinct” yet still quietly surviving; its silent, genderless, eco conscious nature and singular performance captured me, and seeing how little information existed pushed me to begin documenting the practice before remaining knowledge is lost. After speaking with a young performer in 2025 whose entire costume he rebuilt based on what I shared, I realized how urgently our emerging artists need guidance to connect with their cultural roots.

That same year I applied to UWI for an MPhil in Cultural Studies, intending to continue to a PhD, with research tracing cow mas and its regional and ancestral counterparts to propose a framework for a decolonial, ecologically responsible Carnival, culminating in a practice based thesis that combines archival work, creative production, and a vision for how this artform can shape our understanding of Carnival, culture, and the Caribbean.

Articles written about Amy’s cow mas:

<https://www.autostraddle.com/queer-trinbagonian-carnival/>

<https://www.caribbean-beat.com/is-sue-187/mas-of-a-memory-memory-of-a-mas-backstory>

Amy Asks

- ? How can we envision traditional mas not as static but as an evolving artform?
- ? What is the responsibility of a traditional masmaker to honour the legacy of those that came before?
- ? What is the story that we tell about the world around us by what we choose to portray?