



Sokari Douglas Camp CBE, *Sugar Cane John Canoe*, 2021,
Mild steel acrylic paint, 155 x 33 x 26 cm. Courtesy the Artist and October Gallery, London.

Sokari Douglas Camp CBE

Jonkonnu Masquerade

16th June – 23rd July, 2022

October Gallery is pleased to announce a solo exhibition of new works by Sokari Douglas Camp CBE that explore the masquerade of 'Jonkonnu' both within its Caribbean context and that of the broader African diaspora. This exhibition will coincide with her large-scale steel sculpture *Europe Supported by Africa and America* being displayed at the V&A to complement the *Africa Fashion* exhibition, which opens on 2nd July, 2022. Two more of her larger than life-sized steel sculptures, again relating to Jonkonnu, will also form part of the Kensington and Chelsea Art Week, from 23rd June - 3rd July, 2022.

While researching the origins of the Notting Hill Carnival during the pandemic 'lockdown,' Douglas Camp became fascinated by a set of coloured lithographs by Isaac Mendes Belisario, depicting Jonkonnu revellers in Jamaica in the late 1830s. The Jonkonnu festival developed during the period of slavery, when plantation workers celebrated the few days holiday allowed each year with exuberant musical masquerades that recalled their African heritage. During these revels, the slaves would disguise themselves in costumes that borrowed from and parodied western archetypes: admirals, sailors, queens, plantation-owners, actors, etc., each with a dramatic headdress, while mingling with these figures were wild men, nature-spirits, demons etc., whose roots lay deeper in ancestral African traditions.

The striking headgear of the masked revellers reminded the artist of the thrilling Kalabari masquerades of the Nigerian coastal region where she was raised, figures she had previously explored in her work. The outpouring of sculptures that resulted is a heady mix of outlandish characters who trace the overlapping links between still-surviving African masquerades, Caribbean carnival traditions and their most recent incarnation on the streets of London, during the colourfully costumed parades of the Notting Hill Carnival. With these exhilarating new works, Sokari Douglas Camp pays homage to the indomitable 'carnival spirit' still surviving despite all adversity. These steel sculptures playfully combine different elements from the interrelated worlds of imaginative masquerades, festival processions and carnival parades. In so doing, they affirm the powerful contribution of African and Caribbean cultures to the multicultural city of London today. While the Notting Hill Carnival has been cancelled for the past two years because of the pandemic, the vital energy of these dancing figures looks forward to a time - soon to come - when the joyful revels return and the entire community unites in celebrating together again our collective powers of resilience.

Notes to Editors

Sokari Douglas Camp was born in Buguma, Nigeria, in 1958, and lives and works in London, UK. She first exhibited at October Gallery in 1985. She has had more than forty solo shows worldwide and in 2005, was awarded a CBE in recognition of her services to art. Her work is in the permanent collections of the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., USA; Setagaya Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan; and the British Museum, London, UK.

In 2012, her large sculpture, *All the World is Now Richer*, a memorial to commemorate the abolition of slavery, was exhibited in The House of Commons and then, in 2014, at St Paul's Cathedral, London. In 2016, her successful solo show, *Primavera*, at October Gallery, brought together major new sculptures which focussed on the reinterpretation of familiar figures from the European classical tradition as depicted by Botticelli and William Blake. Douglas Camp was selected for Ichihara Art X Mix 2020, Japan and created the largescale sculpture *Manmade* for the festival, on a moving tram carriage at Goi Station. She was also one of the international artists selected to create a column for STOA169 in Polling, Germany, a globally unique artist-columned permanent hall that unites contemporary artistic ideas and different cultural concepts in one place.

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Exhibition:	Sokari Douglas Camp: <i>Jonkonnu Masquerade</i>
Dates:	16 th June – 23 rd July, 2022
Private View:	15 th June 2022. 6pm-8.30pm
Venue:	October Gallery 24 Old Gloucester Street London WC1N 3AL
Telephone:	020 7242 7367
Fax:	020 7405 1851
Opening hours:	Tuesday – Saturday 12.30 – 5.30pm
Admission:	Free
Website:	www.octobergallery.co.uk
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Nearest tubes:	Holborn/Russell Square
Buses:	19, 25, 38, 55, 168 and 188
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