



Project Gallery: Hew Locke
December 3, 2013 – May 25, 2014

Hew Locke
b. 1959, Edinburgh; lives in London
For Those in Peril on the Sea, 2011
Model boats and mixed media
79 boats; dimensions variable
Collection Pérez Art Museum Miami, museum purchase
with funds from the Helena Rubinstein Philanthropic Fund
at The Miami Foundation

This project is organized by Pérez Art Museum Miami
Chief Curator Tobias Ostrander.
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Project Gallery

Hew Locke



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English

For Those in Peril on the Sea

For Those in Peril on the Sea (2011) is a large installation by the London-based artist Hew Locke, consisting of over seventy model boats that are suspended from the ceiling. The title of the piece is a line taken from the widely known “The Royal Navy Hymn,” and evokes narratives of the sea as a place of danger. Locke’s installation addresses the sea as a transnational space, constructed from the migrations of people, goods, and cultures. The sea is articulated here as an environment filled with ambitions, potential prosperity and pleasure as well as fear, trauma, and hardship.

The boats are diverse in size and color and create a spectacular parade of nautical ingenuity. They include model boats found on the Internet, in shops, or handmade by the artist using cardboard, papier mâché, and wood. Locke has worked on each boat, repainting one in strong reds, another in greens or yellows, or covering it with additional materials, such as gold chains, medallions, or plastic plants and artificial flowers. These additions and alterations aesthetically unify this motley fleet.

Bright colors, gold, cardboard, and found materials appear in previous works by Locke, such as his famous *House of Windsor* series from the early 2000s, which are portraits of the British royal family made from plastic beads, toys, and silk flowers. These materials, in turn, reference those used in Caribbean carnivals, as well as the cheap plastic objects that are mass-produced in China and distributed globally.

The boats selected for this piece represent designs developed throughout the world and across various historical periods. They include Chinese junks, Norwegian cruise ships, Indonesian fishing boats, British police boats, oil tankers, schooners, clipper ships, cigarette boats and inflatable rafts. For the artist, each is connected to a particular cultural, historical or contemporary context or event. For example, one boat is named *M.V. Sirius Star II* and represents an oil tanker that was seized and its cargo ransomed by a group of pirates in Somalia in 2008. The *Nanashi Maru* (“The Nameless” in Japanese), references the many boats destroyed in the tsunami of 2011. A simple flat-bottom canoe of a pirogue design recalls those used by Senegalese trying to cross illegally to the Canary Islands.

Boats have appeared consistently throughout Locke’s artistic production. An early work from 1994 titled *Ark* is made from papier mâché, which has been modeled and painted in ornate designs that reference the many converging cultures that make up London’s population. These forms include elements taken from Chinese junks and dragon sculptures, to Indian temples and textiles. Boats are also significantly tied to the artist’s own biography. Born in Edinburgh, Locke moved at age five with his family to Guyana, where he lived until he returned to Great Britain at age 21. The family traveled to their native Guyana by boat and the artist remembers this journey as marked by rough seas and the discovery of two stowaways hiding on the



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ship. Guyana is known as the “land of many waters,” and boats have a strong presence within daily life in the country. Locke has additionally spoken of the boats of his youth functioning as aspirational symbols, evoking international travel and the possibilities of a better life elsewhere.

Locke views the boats he has collected and produced as votive offerings, as symbols of gratitude for safe passage on the sea. *For Those in Peril on the Sea* was inspired by small boats he first encountered in a chapel in northern Portugal and later saw in churches in France and Holland. His installation was originally produced in 2011 for the Folkestone Triennial, where it was installed in the nave of an old church of this seaside British town. The artist has explained that, when conceptualizing this piece, however, he was also thinking about other communities whose livelihood and populations are deeply tied to the sea, and that Miami was a significant referent for him in its development. He was thinking not only of the pleasure boats and cruise ships that navigate this South Florida context, but the history of the handmade rafts of the Cuban *balceros* and those of Haitians, which have navigated dangerous currents attempting to reach Miami.

The artist worked carefully on the placement of this piece within the Pérez Art Museum Miami. These numerous boats are densely hung from the low ceiling of the Project Gallery at the entrance of the museum. Their tight formation evokes

a school of agile, colorful fish. Each boat is suspended at a slightly different height, creating a dynamic depth of field, as they appear to move forward, toward the viewer and the horizon. Their specific height, just above our heads, places us in an unusual position. It is as though we have fallen into the sea and are looking up at these beautiful, enigmatic and humble vessels, seeking their precarious shelter, longing for safety and home.

Tobias Ostrander
Chief Curator

Bio

Hew Locke was born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1959. He moved with his family to Guyana when it became independent in 1966. He returned to the UK to receive a BA in Fine Art at Falmouth and an MA in Sculpture at the Royal College of Art in London. He currently lives in London. His work has been exhibited as part of group exhibitions presented at The Power Plant, Toronto; Folkestone Triennial; Gasworks, London; Museum of Art and Design, New York; San Juan Triennial; Guangzhou Triennial; and the Brooklyn Museum of Art, among other venues. Locke’s work is included in the collections of Tate Gallery, London; British Arts Council; the Brooklyn Museum of Art; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; and the British Museum, London, among others. Locke has received the Paul Hamlyn Award and the East International Award, and has been short-listed for the prestigious Fourth Plinth competition for London’s Trafalgar Square.



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(full-bleed image, front side)

1 Hew Locke. *For Those in Peril on the Sea*, 2011. Model boats and mixed media. 79 boats; dimensions variable. Collection Pérez Art Museum Miami, museum purchase with funds from the Helena Rubinstein Philanthropic Fund at The Miami Foundation. Installation view Pérez Art Museum Miami. Reproduced with the permission of the artist. Photo by Daniel Azoulay photography

2 *Ark*, 1994. Papier maché, cardboard, wood, steel, and mixed media. 180 × 72 × 132 inches. Photo by the artist

3 *El Dorado*, 2005. Mixed media. Approx. 114 × 69 × 23 inches. Photo by FXP Photography

4 *For Those in Peril on the Sea*, 2011. Model boats and mixed media. 79 boats; dimensions variable. Commissioned by The Creative Foundation for the 2nd Folkestone Triennial. Collection Pérez Art Museum Miami, museum purchase with funds from the Helena Rubinstein Philanthropic Fund at The Miami Foundation. Installation view: The 2nd Folkestone Triennial, Church of St. Mary and St. Eanswythe, Folkestone, England, 2011. Photo by Indra Khanna