



February 2016: Fish and Dragon

Thanks to Carnival I was only able to take in the final day of our Fish and Dragon Festival, but what an enjoyable afternoon it was. I watched the varieties of martial art, including my favourite (for watching, clearly) which is the Brazilian capoeira; there was skateboarding, two Chinese dragons made an appearance, one manned by Chinese, the other by Barbadians, and our athletic green monkeys were in attendance. A lively crowd milled about on the Church Village Green, many watching the shows, but others marvelling at displays of Chinese calligraphy, or having a drink or bite to eat. It was a truly joyous atmosphere, and more than one person mentioned that the Green was made for this kind of activity.

But for me the biggest thrill was the special art exhibition, mounted on the ground floor of our soon-to-be-officially-opened Exchange Museum. The artists specially invited to contribute to the exhibition were Joshua Lue Chee Kong, Leandro Soto and Versia Harris, all of them names you should get to know. Joshua is Trinidadian, and he exhibited futuristic little sculptures which he photographed in street scapes in China during a two month residency he recently spent there. The photographs are cleverly composed so as to make the sculptures larger than life, seemingly permanent features of the city.

Leandro Soto you may remember for his wonderfully different design for our Xmas Party a few years back. He imagines the cultural journey of a Chinese immigrant to the Caribbean, and how his creativity interprets the New World, with a Chinese sensibility.

And then we had our own Versia Harris, whose talent is taking the local and international artworld by storm. She has exhibited in the US, Curacao, Trinidad and Brazil, as well as her prize-winning work shown here in Barbados. She has three dramatic interpretations of the monkey, our monkey, in his element in a forest landscape that is massive and shrouded in mystery. The monkey dominates this landscape as Emperor, Warrior and Performer, in the three pieces on show.

The evening continued with cultural performances under the lights on the Green, a mixture of Chinese and local artistes, exploring the shared possibilities of the Fish and the Dragon.

The internet and the globalisation of commerce has brought us closer to China than many realise, and our festival has heightened the consciousness of many to that reality. Hopefully it will have inspired others to join those who have chosen to be our pioneers in this festival, which was at once visionary and exciting. Our heartfelt thanks to Ambassador Wang Ke and the Embassy, and to our friends and colleagues who made it possible and put it all together. Special thanks also to the Chinese TV Network (CCTV), who captured it all to beam internationally.