

# NICOLA GREEN

## THE DANCE OF COLOUR

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25 May - 18 June, 2016

**Private View Tuesday 24 May, 6-8pm**

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*"The Dance of Colour has at its centre a shifting narrative that defies to be fixed - with one foot firmly planted in the portrait tradition and the other always thrust forward, testing, questioning, experimenting. Green's work cannot be confined by a category or as a cliché but lived as a working philosophy."*<sup>1</sup> - David A. Bailey MBE

Flowers Gallery is pleased to present a new body of work by British artist Nicola Green. Following on from her well-known series *In Seven Days*, which went behind the scenes of President Obama's presidential campaign trail in 2008, the present exhibition of mixed media portraits focuses on participants of the Rio Carnival in Brazil, expanding Green's ongoing exploration of identity and race within contemporary culture.

A series of silhouetted figures entitled *Carnival Beat* draws together various materials and processes of production, combining hand-painting onto photographic prints with backdrops formed from commonplace domestic textiles, such as richly patterned wax cloth, tablecloths and vinyl, alongside high-end decorative fabrics and wallpapers.

David A. Bailey has described the works in this series as *"highly constructed fragmented artworks"*, referring to the measured collision of diverse imagery from which new narrative threads can be seen to emerge. Drawing together motifs from across geographical and historical boundaries, they reflect the complex and densely interwoven nature of cultural heritage.



*Bate Bola I*, 2016, Hand painting with silkscreen print using water-based & pearlescent inks with diamond dust on perspex, 49 x 39cm

The features of Green's subjects are concealed by layers of flat painted colour, accentuating their choice of costumes and subtleties of gesture, such as the arching of a back, or hands nervously clasping accessories and cigarettes. By masking the figures, Green mirrors a sense of freedom witnessed during the carnival, where everyday identities are subverted by imaginative temporary personas, and the lines between masculine, feminine, racial, social and sexual identity can become blurred.

The title of the second series of works, *Bate Bola* (which derives from the term 'hit the ball' in Portuguese) refers to the traditional custom of gangs or groups of carnival pranksters, who mark the celebrations dressed as clownish characters ranging from harlequins and court jesters to contemporary cartoon or manga figures. During the carnival of 2015, Green photographed members of many different Bate Bola gangs, each signalling their association with vibrant feather boas, pompoms, masks and children's dummies. The images, which are further unified by vividly coloured backgrounds, also represent a temporary individual experimentation with otherness, reversing conventional roles of power, criminality, wealth and social standing.

The works in the exhibition unite Green's interest in the portrayal of status within the cultural diversity of Brazil with her own family's mixed race identity. Green says: *"Like the cultural roots of Carnival, my children have European, South American and African heritage. The experience of Rio Carnival is an extraordinarily joyful, deep and complex symbol of hope where normal power structures, race and inequality are temporarily suspended and reimagined."*



*Carnival, Habanera*, 2016, Photographic print & hand painted acrylic with Matthew Williamson 'Habanera' wallpaper  
42cm x 29.7



*Carnival, Lace Party*, 2016, Photographic print & hand painted florescent acrylic with 'Golden Lace' vinyl & florescent card  
42cm x 29.7

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in 1972, Green graduated from Edinburgh College of Art, Scotland. Her work is in public and private collections around the world, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Courtauld Institute, London; and the Library of Congress, Washington. She has exhibited widely in the UK including the National Portrait Gallery, London; the Dulwich Picture Gallery, London; and the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. She was a trustee of the charity Paintings in Hospitals 2006-2014; a patron of the Prince's Drawing School Drawing Clubs; and is on the board of the Edinburgh College of Art's alumni council. She lives and works in London.

1. David A. Bailey, *Uniting the Colours of Carnival in Rio*, 2016. Essay for the Online Catalogue *The Dance of Colour*.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

Exhibition Opening Hours: Monday - Saturday 10am - 6pm

For further information and images please contact Hannah Hughes - [Hannah@flowersgallery.com](mailto:Hannah@flowersgallery.com) / 0207 920 7777

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