

Julien Creuzet
Too blue, too deep,
too dark we sank,
meandering every moving
limb. In the den, in the
womb. Too bèlè, too
gwo-ka, too biguine, too
compas, too kadans, too
calypso, too mazurka,
too makossa, in my joyful
sadness (...)

14 January/13 March 2022

Julien Creuzet, *Allied Chemicals & Dye*, 2019, High Art, Paris, installation view. Courtesy of the artist and High Art, Paris / Arle



As the second recipient of Camden Art Centre's Emerging Artist Prize at Frieze, French-Caribbean artist Julien Creuzet (b. 1986 France) will present a new installation commissioned especially for Gallery 3. This will be his first UK institutional exhibition in the UK.

Born in a Parisian banlieue, Creuzet grew up in Martinique and now lives and works in Paris. He places his own lived experience at the heart of his practice whilst allowing the work to shine a light on collective social realities of the Caribbean diaspora, focusing on the troubled intersection between Caribbean histories and the events of European modernity. Creuzet describes his ancestral home, Martinique, as "the heart of my imagination" and the visual and aural languages that collide in his installations migrate and transform through a process of creolisation, entering into a dialogue with the question of emancipation, a spirit of black affirmation and the feeling of the Caribbean diaspora as it exists now.

Creuzet's multi-disciplinary practice interweaves poetic, sensory, political and social forms and his new commission at Camden will fill the Centre's Gallery 3 with a dense installation incorporating music, video, poetry and sculpture. His distinctive sculptural language often repurposes found materials - cords, nets, wires, ropes, bags - relics or detritus washed ashore by oceans or the unrelenting progress of history, as well as fragments, materials and objects given to him by other artists that he reincorporates in his assemblages. This installation will involve a series of new suspended and floor-based sculptures which are informed by the insignia on the flags of those Caribbean countries which gained independence after centuries of colonial rule - representations of animals and vegetal forms that composed their motifs. He invites visitors to navigate an environment filled with words and symbols, colours and textures, drawn from the heritage of different cultures - allowing relationships between disparate elements to be drawn out through the imagination.

A new film presented as part of the exhibition is a self-portrait rendered as a digital composite of smartphones, cigarettes and other elements - alluding to the ways the African diaspora is connected and networked digitally as well as through literature, music and art. The character begins to dance in a traditional style that has evolved in Martinique through periods of colonisation, resistance and emancipation. Bèlè combines distinct rhythmic music and movement as a form of emotional expression, tracing its West African heritage to fertility rites that were adapted in the Caribbean context to rituals of labour and mourning associated with slavery.

The work exists in deliberate dialogue with the space of the gallery as well as the social and political context of London, in particular the cultural heritage of the Caribbean diaspora and its continuing influence on British culture, which generates some of its most powerful art and music: from Calypso, Ska and Reggae to Drill and contemporary urban music. Bringing his work into a specific relationship with the contemporary music scene, Creuzet is collaborating with London-based singer-songwriter anaiis to compose and record a new soundscape that will play with and through Creuzet's sculptures in the gallery. Drawing from her French-Senegalese heritage and experiences living in the USA and Ireland, anaiis' work is shaped by ideas of liberation, empowerment and the reclamation of freedom.

The collaborative commission with anaiis takes as its starting point a bibliography selected by Creuzet - drawing inspiration from the work of Saint Lucian poet and playwright Derek Walcott, French-Martinique musician and Caribbean literary theorist Jacques Coursil, Martinique-born poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant's writings on migration and creolisation, and other figures associated with the 1930s literary movement - Négritude - co-founded by Martinican poet Aimé Césaire.

Often performing his poetry live to audiences, the artist gives voice to the question of how Caribbean culture can and does exist now, speaking affirmatively of Black experience in the European context, attempting to describe a feeling in relation to the world from his position, here and now, combining fiction, storytelling, myths and histories with the compelling, visceral experience of exile, isolation and racism. For Creuzet, art is an opportunity to create, or creolise, a new language, allowing the space of his exhibitions to exist as fictions where visitors can enter into a landscape of forms that signify freely through the imagination, with an aesthetic sensibility that connects intimately to the source of their cultural histories.

Notes to editors

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Biography

Julien Creuzet (b. 1986, Le Blanc Mesnil, France) lives and works in Montreuil, France. The artist graduated from the School of Fine Arts in Caen, the Post-Diploma in Fine Arts at the Lyon Academy and the Fresnoy-Studio national des arts contemporains. Recent solo exhibitions include: Document, Chicago, USA, CAN Centre d'art Neuchâtel, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France, Fondation Ricard, Paris, France, Bétonsalon, Paris, France. Group exhibitions include: Manifesta 13, Marseilles, France, Wiels Contemporary Art Center, Brussels, Belgium, Museum für Modern Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany, Musée d'Art moderne de Paris, France, Rennes Biennale, France, Gwangju Biennale, Korea, Lafayette Anticipations, Paris, France, Biennale de Lyon, France, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France, Biennale des Rencontres de Bamako, Bamako, Mali, Contemporary African Art Biennale of Dakar, Dakar, Senegal. Creuzet is currently nominated for the Prix Marcel Duchamp 2021. He is represented by High Art, Paris.

Camden Art Centre

Camden Art Centre has a reputation for platforming artists at critical moments in their careers, when the exposure to London and international audiences has the most impact on the trajectory of their practices. Creuzet is the second recipient of Camden Art Centre's Emerging Artist Prize, awarded to an artist selected from the galleries in Frieze Art Fair's Focus section – the area of the fair dedicated to supporting younger galleries and artists in earlier stages of their careers. The prizewinner is offered their first show at a London institution in Camden Art Centre's galleries - providing invaluable critical exposure at a pivotal stage in their career. Since awarding Creuzet the prize in 2018 his work has received international recognition including the prestigious BMW Art Journey award and a nomination for the Prix Marcel Duchamp.

Camden Art Centre is a place for world-class contemporary art exhibitions and education. Situated in Hampstead, North London (charity number 1065829) Camden Art Centre is a place for art and artists; a place for the curious, the novice and the expert alike. It's a place to see, to make, to learn and to talk about contemporary art, whether in our building, attending off-site projects or via our digital forums. Founded by artists in 1965, the Centre continues to be a space for the most vital and diverse mix of practices and ideas and is dedicated to supporting artists at every stage of their careers.