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South-South: Interruptions and Encounters

JUSTINA M BARNICKE GALLERY, TORONTO APR 2 TO MAY 19 2009



Apache Indian *Arranged Marriage* 1992 Video still Courtesy Island Records
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With artists like [Mark Dion](#) collaborating with an ornithological society for the recent [Folkestone Triennial](#) and [David Rokeby](#)'s ongoing series of works based on computer and neurological sciences, it's difficult to deny that contemporary art projects are becoming increasingly interdisciplinary in their approach. University art galleries are uniquely situated to encourage these kinds of cross-disciplinary experiments in art production and the [Justina M. Barnicke Gallery](#)'s current exhibition, "South-South: Interruptions and Encounters," is a perfect example of how fruitful some of these partnerships can be.

Organized with Toronto's [South Asian Visual Arts Centre](#), and co-curated by Barnicke artist-curator Tejpal S. Aji and University of Toronto doctoral candidate in history Jon Soske, the exhibition brings together eight artists whose work examines the intersections of African and South Asian history, politics and culture. But unlike the polemical, performance-based projects that characterized identity politics in the 1980s, the works in "South-South" offer subtler interventions into their cultural milieu, challenging viewers to rethink geographical boundaries and colonial histories in inventive ways.



Hew Locke *Edward VII (Restoration series)* 2006 Commissioned by Spike Island Bristol
Courtesy of the artist & Hales Gallery London

In London-based artist [Hew Locke](#)'s photo collages, for instance, public monuments to statesmen, kings and slave merchants have been adorned with intricate layers of faux-gold jewelry, cowrie shells and beading inspired by the indigenous cultures by which these historical figures profited. Locke's work represents a complicated layering of local and world histories where human figures are appropriated and re-appropriated, but thoroughly intertwined. Similarly, Trinidad-born Marlon Griffith's *Runaway Reaction* series of carnival-inspired catwalk outfits, constructed from delicate sheets of washi paper, transform their models into beast-like hybrid creatures that are both beautiful and vaguely threatening.

Personal genealogical histories are also unpacked through projects like [Brendan Fernandes](#)' video *Foe*. Born in Kenya and now based in Toronto and New York, Fernandes (with the help of a voice coach) attempts to mimic three dialects of English that supposedly correspond to his biographical trajectory: Indian, Kenyan and Canadian. The artist's inability to convincingly imitate the accents raises questions about the fixity and flexibility of identity, while, in an adjoining room, Omar Badsha's haunting photographs of apartheid-era South Africa pay testament to the life-and-death consequences of enforcing rigid racial identification and segregation policies.

With works by Allan deSouza, [Jamelie Hassan](#), Louise Liliefeldt and British DJ Apache Indian rounding out the exhibition, "South-South" is guaranteed to offer thoughtful new directions for cross-cultural collaborations. (7 Hart House Circ, Toronto ON)

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Marlon Griffith *Hukaro* 2005–9 Installation view

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