



Launch of 'Minshall by Norton'
Remarks by Mark Loquan | NGC President
December 6th, 2019 | Castle Killarney

Good evening to all.

In the cultural meccas of Europe, art is one of the biggest tourist attractions. Entire histories can be traced through the works of painters and sculptors and architects. Studying this art gives unparalleled insight not only into the artists and their subjects, but the culture, beliefs and attitudes of eras past.

As a people, we in Trinidad and Tobago are sadly not as appreciative of the historical and academic value of our art. Consider, in particular, how relatively little attention is given to preserving our most impressive and distinctively Trinbagonian artworks - the masquerades of our Carnival.

The challenge with celebrating and studying mas as an artform is that it is short-lived. It parades on stage for a brief time before being retired to a corner or dismantled and discarded. However, through a photograph, the art of a mas-man can live beyond one Carnival season.

That is why this publication that marries mas-maker and picture taker is such an important one, and why we at NGC are so happy to see it finally launched.

Peter Minshall is a legend of Trinidad Carnival. His work has consistently interrogated, introspected and challenged. He has pushed limits, creating mas that defied people's expectations of mas. His body of work constitutes a running commentary on the evolution of our country and humanity on the whole. In many ways, Minshall is more than an artist – he is a poet, a thought leader, a revolutionary.

To capture the story of Minshall mas from inception through more than thirty years of innovation is no small task. A lesser storyteller than Noel Norton might have faltered, but Norton had the talent and passion to keep pace. Like Peter Minshall, Noel Norton was a master of his craft. He was a premier Carnival photographer, a stage side fixture with his camera, documenting a history we are now able to engage.

Ladies and gentlemen, when NGC was approached to support this publication, we immediately saw its value. It not only chronicles three decades of Carnival art for future generations to study - it honours the work of a man whose name is less known, but whose lens has made it possible for future generations to see into the past. It celebrates art through art.

We at NGC are heavily invested in the preservation of our arts and culture. As a state company and corporate citizen, we have an interest in ensuring that our people never lose sight of what it means to be Trinbagonian. This is why, over the years, we have sponsored such initiatives as NGC Sanfest, NGC Bocas Lit Fest, steel

and tassa bands, scoring of Panorama compositions, theatrical productions of local literature, among others. Two years ago, we launched a special National Heroes Project to commemorate the achievements of eminent sons and daughters of our soil. In 2018, our honouree was the great Pat Bishop, who was an extraordinary artist, among other things. In keeping with the above themes, this publication allows us to continue our celebration of national art into 2019 and beyond.

Ladies and gentlemen, our traditional art and culture are part and parcel of our identity, but young people are now engaging far less with tradition. Carnival today is more associated with revelry and wearing the minimum. The party outjumps the spectacle. If we are not careful, this festival, symbolic of resistance and freedom, can lose its deep historical significance. We need more publications such as these to remind us of the Carnivals of our past, their unique facets, and the space they created for intelligent and artistic expression.

On that note, I wish to congratulate and thank the Norton family for their vision and hard work in piecing this publication together. It cannot have been easy to sift through thousands of photographs, each with a story to tell, to select a handful for this book, but the finished product is as triumphant and captivating as the mas it portrays.

Noel Norton has gifted our country with memories in hard copy that we can treasure and honour with due reverence. The Norton family should take great pride in the knowledge that this book and Norton's work will soon have a place in homes and libraries across Trinidad and Tobago.

Finally, let me express gratitude to the great Peter Minshall, still with plenty more to say through his art. It is a privilege to see your artistry in the flesh, but it is just as impressive in print. We wish you the best of health and vigour to continue making mas and history.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for being here to launch this publication with us. Please be sure to get a copy for your own collections. Do enjoy the rest of the evening.