

Hew Locke: The Procession

May 23 — Sep 2, 2024 | ICA, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA, US

This summer, the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston (ICA) opens the next season of the Watershed with the U.S. debut of *The Procession* (2022), an ambitious work by sculptor and visual artist Hew Locke OBE RA.

On view May 23—Sept. 2, 2024, *Hew Locke: The Procession* was originally commissioned by Tate Britain, UK, for its 2022 Duveen Commission. The ICA Watershed presentation is organized by Ruth Erickson, Barbara Lee Chief Curator and Director of Curatorial Affairs, and Anni A. Pullagura, Consulting Assistant Curator, in collaboration with Tate.

A procession is part of life; we gather and move together to celebrate, worship, protest, mourn, escape, or call for change.

These expressions are all at the heart of *The Procession*, which features a gathering of over 100 life-size figures of all ages and abilities. Intricately handmade and adorned in printed fabric, patchwork, and appliqué, these spectacular figures embody visual references to colonialism, globalization, conflict, ecology, and cultural exchange.

“They’re moving into another life,” says Hew Locke. “They may be coming from difficult times, they may be heading towards difficult times, but there’s an energy there, which is about hope.”

Staged in the industrial setting of the Watershed at the edge of the Boston Harbor, *The Procession* invites visitors to join this forward-moving mass and encounter the diverse histories and experiences these sculptures embody.

“With its location in East Boston overlooking the Atlantic—a point of entry, and home for generations of newcomers to this country—the ICA Watershed is a uniquely apt location for audiences to engage with *The Procession*,” said Jill Medvedow, the ICA’s Ellen Matilda Poss Director. “Renowned artist Hew Locke has created a procession of figures, drawing on Caribbean and other carnival traditions. We are excited to invite our visitors to walk alongside the procession and experience the collective reasons for gathering in solidarity, migrating towards a hopeful future.”

In *The Procession*, visitors will see carnival characters such as Mother Sally, Pitchy-Patchy, and Midnight Robber, dancers, refugees, horse riders, soldiers, sailors, bearers, pregnant women, drummers, and flag bearers in Locke’s cast of characters. Some carry metaphorical baggage in the form of symbolic objects, banners, or uniforms from the past and present. Others wear dresses printed with reproductions of historical paintings; Chinese, Indian, and African financial documents; and images of Locke’s own past work. Several sculptures reference contemporary concerns, such as evidence of rising sea levels, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the invasion of Ukraine. Bearing the collective weight of such histories in a timeless arrangement, the figures, in the artist’s words, “reflect on the cycles of history, and the ebb and flow of cultures, people, finance, and power.”

“In *The Procession*, Locke gathers and assembles the images, materials, and concerns that have occupied his practice for decades, presenting an engaging and colorful crowd of travelers that carry both historical and cultural baggage on their journey,” said curators Ruth Erickson, Barbara Lee Chief Curator and Director of Curatorial Affairs, and Anni A. Pullagura, Consulting Assistant Curator.

“Using cardboard, jewelry, medals, and repurposed emblems of imperial power, Locke’s work engages with identity, collective histories, and contemporary experiences of the long shadow of colonialism.”

Alex Farquharson, Director of Tate Britain, said, “I am delighted that Hew Locke’s ambitious and powerful installation is being staged at ICA Watershed. When it was unveiled at Tate Britain, it had a transformative impact on the building and on our visitors, bringing complex histories and urgent questions to the fore. It is fitting that *The Procession* has continued its journey to the other side of the Atlantic, where I’m sure it will continue to spark new conversations and responses.”