

Spirit Possession

Celebration of Ghanaian Faces, African Culture & Heritage

Juneteenth

June 2024

Orange County Center for Contemporary Arts

Santa Ana, California

June 1 to 29, 2024

Opening Reception: Santa Ana First Saturday Art Walk,

June 1, 6:00 to 10:00pm

About the Exhibition

Exhibiting Artists

Allyson Allen

Artist, Author, Instructor, Culture Bearer

Thomas Fynn

Ghanaian

Photographer

Tom Lamb

Photographer

SPIRIT POSSESSION is a Celebration of Ghanaian Faces, African Culture and Heritage. A collaboration with two documentary imagemakers, Thomas Fynn and Tom Lamb; joined by African American quiltmaker, Allyson Allen, with her unique hand quilted textiles. Lamb returned to Ghana in 2023 after almost 25-years and with Fynn transverse the country creating this synergistic documentary portfolio.

The photographic portfolios contain images at OCCCA are seen contemporarily from five regions of Ghana highlighting the rich culture, history and natural areas. The exhibition also highlights and contrasts traditional Ghanaian fabrics with Allen's contemporary hand created textiles.

Allyson Allen says, "I intentionally strive to create an unexpected juxtaposition between harsh images or text and soft quilted textiles. Ultimately, I want each piece to be a teaching moment. My work is my way of addressing intolerance, hate, and abuse of animals, our planet, and each other."

Almost 30-years ago, Tom Lamb was a part of the international charette team to design the visitors center for Kakum Park Forest Park in the Central Region of Ghana. One of the elements presented was the first canopy walkway system in Africa which has survived and become one of the most see

locations in Ghana. Over the following five years he returned to document Ghana for the Smithsonian , Conservation International and for Ghana Tourism of the Central Region. During this time, he was introduced to Thomas Fynn and has been in contact ever since. They had often discussed Fynn's efforts in Ghana and the potential of an exhibition here in the United States.

The OCCCA exhibit is the second in a series of photographic exhibitions curated as a vibrant celebration of Ghana's cultural and natural splendor. Through the art of photography, the exhibition aims to showcase Ghana's unique identity, cultural wealth, and natural splendor to a global audience. By promoting dialogue, exchange, and collaboration, events like this exhibition play a crucial role in fostering cultural appreciation and economic growth, ensuring Ghana remains a beacon of heritage and hospitality for generations to come.

"The Spirit Possession" first exhibited in April 2024, Accra, Ghana, was a 5-day photographic exhibition, as a photographic collaboration between Tom Lamb and Thomas Fynn, executive director of FYNNexthibits.

The Ghanaian event, organized under the "Experience Ghana, Share Ghana" campaign by the Ghana Tourism Authority, promises to showcase the rich heritage and beauty of the nation through the lens of photography. Addressing the esteemed gathering, Judith Kelly, Senior Corporate Affairs Officer of the Ghana Tourism Authority, conveyed a message on behalf of the CEO, Akwasi Agyeman.

Kelly emphasized the exhibition's theme, "Celebration of Ghanaian faces, African culture, and heritage," as a reflection of Ghana's diverse cultures and inviting landscapes. "Photography provides the platform to tell our story that transcends language barriers and captivates the imagination of viewers."

Fynn expressed joy in showcasing the beauty and creativity of photography, emphasizing the unique stories captured in each image on display. He asked the Ghanaian Government, Ministries, Departments, Agencies, organizations and individuals to invest in photography to boost Ghana's tourism industry.

"You can't market your country without photography," Mr. Fynn said, adding that, " Photography speaks louder than a thousand words, let's invest in photography to promote tourism".

His Royal Majesty, Gbese Mantse-Dr Nii Ayi Bonte II, conveyed gratitude for the exhibition's alignment with the Ministry of Tourism Arts and Culture Campaign. He emphasized the significance of the exhibition in projecting Ghana as a top tourism attraction through pictorials and photographic displays. The exhibition, themed "Spirit Possession," reflects cultural festivals like the Ga Mashi and Homowo, showcasing Ghana's rich cultural heritage to the international community.

Allyson Allen
Artist * Author * Instructor * Culture Bearer

Exhibiting and teaching for over thirty years, Allyson uses traditional and unconventional materials to create unique dimensional textile art. Her work, in the genre of information art, often produces pieces specifically for storytelling, folklore and cultural preservation. Practicing learned and self-taught techniques of craft, research, original design, history and culture, in traditional and contemporary pieces, exemplifying a cross-disciplinary approach to quilting, doll making, and book art.

Allyson's handmade quilts and quilted journals usually incorporate recycled materials, fabric, found objects, and stitched paper elements. Her work is issue focused and thought provoking.

"I intentionally strive to create an unexpected juxtaposition between harsh images or text and soft quilted textiles. Ultimately, I want each piece to be a teaching moment. My work is my way of addressing intolerance, hate, and abuse of animals, our planet, and each other."

In three decades, Allyson has received over forty visual arts grants to create and exhibit her work. She is a Special Exhibitor, lecturer, and instructor for Mancuso National Quilt Shows, and is recognized by the state of California as an award-winning Master African American textile artist and Culture Bearer. Twice nominated for NEA National Heritage Fellowship consideration, Allyson is a 2024 National Craft Industries Golden Scissors Awardee. Allyson's work has been exhibited in galleries, museums, and embassies around the world.



Thomas Fynn
Ghanaian
Photographer

Thomas Fynn based in Moree, Ghana, is a documentary photographer. His photographs preserve and promote the cultural heritage of Ghana and programs in the Central Region. Since 1976, his photography has had an emphasis in cultural heritage, high-profile personalities, Ghanaian national events, eco-tourism and culture. He established FYNNexhibits as a multimedia consulting firm with the vision of preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of Ghana and especially the Central Region. He is recognized for his commitment, dedication and passion for photography which earned him the Ghana Ace Photographer's award and the World Master Award in Arts and Culture at the Jeollanamdo Festival. He has contributed immensely towards the promotion of tourism in Ghana through the coverage and production of photographs of socio-cultural events, activities and programs. Finn uses his photographs to preserve and promote "Our Cultural Ghana Heritage". Fynn reflects through his photography the body language, culture, productivity, alliances, nature, and hard work in people.



Tom Lamb
Photographer

Tom Lamb based in Southern California is a landscape and ethnographic photographer. He uses photography as his primary tool, along with pioneering trends in new media. Through the art of storytelling Tom has dedicated his life to creating memorable photographs and championing environmental awareness. His images, both from the air and the ground, are often of in transition or abandoned landscapes. He uses images to examine how we interact with the planet's most valuable and increasingly threatened resources. Tom is interested in the balance between the natural world and man's mark on the land. Lamb Studio has collaborated worldwide with nonprofits aiding in cultural, historic, conservation and philanthropic efforts. He is an artist member of OCCCA, philanthropist and board member of various organizations including the Festival of the Arts of Laguna Beach, Laguna Plein Air Painters Association, Laguna Wilderness Press, Phen-dey Tibetan Foundation, and Summervail Art Workshop Legacy Project.



ORANGE COUNTY CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART



Spirit Possession



Tom Lamb



Allyson Allen



Thomas Fynn

Celebration of Ghanaian Faces, African Culture, and Heritage

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Join us for special Juneteenth programs



Orange County Center for Contemporary Arts

117 N. Sycamore Street, Santa Ana, CA 92701 | info.occca@gmail.com | www.occca.org

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OCCCA has a proud history of providing artists a forum free from censorship to explore and experiment in all forms of media, to inspire and further one's creative vision. Orange County Center for Contemporary Art is a non-profit California 501(c)(3) corporation operating as an artist-run, uncensored, community gallery since its inception in 1980.

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