



Tropenmuseum

PRESS RELEASE

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The influence of the Caribbean slave revolt on self-confidence today

The legacy of the slave revolt portrayed by photographer Nicola Lo Calzo

Insurgents of the Caribbean exhibition from 23 May to 20 July 2014 in the Tropenmuseum



How does an historical event influence self-confidence today? Are feelings of empowerment originating from that event passed on from generation to generation? The Tropenmuseum will exhibit photographs by Nicola Lo Calzo about memories of slave revolt in Haiti and Guadeloupe and how these memories have been handed down. By re-enacting historical events, and reincarnation and rituals, solidarity with the ancestors continues to this day. The sixteen photographs, recently purchased by the Tropenmuseum, are not about the painful aspects of the history of slavery but show the strength originating from it.

The *Insurgents of the Caribbean* exhibition is from 23 May to 20 July 2014 in the Gallery of the Tropenmuseum.

By buying contemporary photography the Tropenmuseum continues to address themes from its photo collection that are still relevant today. With these photos of Haiti and Guadeloupe Nicola Lo Calzo makes a connection between the colonial past and the present. They are not really about giving an accurate picture of the past, but about why and how people appropriate that history in the present.

Heroes of Haiti

Inspired by the French Revolution, in 1791 the slaves in Haiti revolted against their French oppressors. This important occurrence is scarcely mentioned in European history books. But in Haiti the memories of the resistance, the revolution and independence form a reference point linking the different layers of the population. Nicola Lo Calzo has portrayed the diverse ways in which these memories live on. There are photos of a hugely popular youth movement which reintroduces heroes from the revolution to ordinary people by re-enacting historical events. This inspires underprivileged youngsters to believe that they too can make history. Other photos are of vodou rituals. For the former farming population solidarity with their ancestors from the revolutionary period lives on in this religion.

Rebels of Guadeloupe

On Guadeloupe Nicola Lo Calzo photographed the so-called Mas groups - masked groups that since the 1970s have brought symbols of the resistance to slavery to life, as part of carnival celebrations. The Mas figures are modelled on the maroons - Africans who managed to escape from slavery and build their own life and culture outside colonial society. In their costumes they often deliberately play with the colonial cliché of the rebel

and the 'wild, non-conformist woodman'. The white slave driver is only indirectly present, for example in symbolic attributes such as the whip. This is now claimed by the Mas figures and used to trigger memories.

Nicola Lo Calzo researches the legacy of the history of slavery

Nicola Lo Calzo (born in Turin, Italy, in 1979) lives and works in Paris. The works purchased by the Tropenmuseum belong to the *Ayiti* and *Mas* series and are part of a long-term research project by Lo Calzo on the legacy of slave history, called *CHAM*. Since 2010 Lo Calzo has already travelled to Africa, the Caribbean, America and Europe for this project. The complete CHAM series will be shown in 2015 in the framework of an international exhibition tour, which will be accompanied by a dedicated publication. His photographs have been published in *Liberation*, *Le Monde*, *The Independent* and elsewhere (www.nicolalocalzo.com). The Tropenmuseum is the first museum to buy works from this project. The BankGiro Lottery made the purchase possible.

Tropenmuseum and documentary photography

At the same time as the *Insurgents of the Caribbean*, a *Dutch Doc Photo Award* exhibition can be seen in the Tropenmuseum's Park Hall. Every year this prize is awarded to the best Dutch documentary photography project from the previous year. The exhibition gives an overview of the projects, with special attention to those chosen by an expert jury and thus with a chance of winning the *Dutch Doc Photo Award 2014*. Earlier, from 18 April, the Tropenmuseum will exhibit *Picture This!* This is a small exhibition of photos by pupils in the upper years of secondary school. The pupils took the photos in answer to the question: What can you find about slave history in your surroundings?

Note for the editorial board

Image material can be downloaded via <http://www.tropenmuseum.nl/pers>.

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