ARTIST’S VOICE

A Dress to the Nation: here is not a happy place

RICHARD MARK RAWLINS

VERSION ONE OF THIS WORK WAS A PHYSICAL DRESS made in the “Orphan Annie” iconographic style out of two national flags of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Installed at Alice Yard art space in Trinidad for five days prior to Inter-national Women’s Day 2017, the dress was presented as a way of symbolising my feelings toward trust, hope, security and prayer – ideas encapsulated in our national anthem – that in my opinion have been expected of each of our citizens over the course of my lifetime, but without any real sense of reciprocity. The piece takes its name from our highest office’s desire to communicate with our island populace by stopping everything to give an “address to the nation”. In this work, the dress takes the form of a disembodied wraith with anthropomorphic proportions, wandering around seeking answers while attempting to live, work, and play safely despite the fragility of the moment. I write this shortly after our nation’s 55th Independence. Thirty-seven women have been killed for the year 2017, others have gone missing. We recently raised the age on the child marriage act. Our politicians are singing Orphan Annie’s song – The sun’ll come out tomorrow. “Well yeah, you could wait for that,” is my response. CQ

RICHARD MARK RAWLINS is a mixed media artist and graphic designer living and working in Trinidad and Tobago. His work examines poetics, politrix and notions of deceptive topicalities. It underscores deceptive tropicalities in a Caribbean postcolonial society. Follow his work at richardmarkrawlins.com