

2021 6th Rex Nettleford Arts Conference

Call for Proposals



THE ARTS: Decolonising the SPIRIT!

The Arts: Decolonising the Spirit! is the guiding theme for the 6th Rex Nettleford Arts Conference being hosted online by the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts, October 6-8, 2021. Signalling the role and place of the arts in current dialogue on social, cultural, and political discourse, this theme underscores a journey of decolonisation that is pivotal to and through the arts, especially in the 21st century.

As the world becomes more interconnected, our individual experiences expand into the collective, shared milieu. Global declarations, a pandemic, and a fight for race and identity representation have marked diverse journeys and learnings that must be explored together to present renewed understandings, perspectives, and directions for continuity.

Throughout 2020 and into 2021, global citizens, regardless of difference, took to the streets in thousands to protest racism and persecution amid a pandemic that mandates physical distancing – communicated as ‘social distancing’ – for survival. What is the shape of the hurt that would cause such a world-wide eruption in which masses would transgress public health and safety protocols? The

associated fervour to which it is attended suggests that whatever is being challenged is more precious than life itself and something must be dismantled urgently, for our continuance as a civilisation. This must give us pause. Breathe.

2021 was declared as the International Year of the Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, while discourse in some spheres have shifted to “creative ecology”. In the face of artistic expression and development, social, cultural, health, and political accord, discord, and dissonance, what does sustainable development look like? In many ways the life-altering impacts of the Coronavirus lay bare key challenges and opportunities of our age, not the least of which is the enterprise of decolonising. Beyond ‘pivot’, ‘Zoom’ (as metaphor and mode), and ‘new normal’, decolonising has resurrected as a most pressing mandate and popular mantra of our time.

In “Decolonizing the Spirit” (2009), Rex Nettleford reminds us that this ongoing project “finds answers in the exercise of the creative imagination.” The arts and culture are thus central to the effort. But, like every other ecology, it too is disrupted. Its work/ers are at once distanced from equitable access to the tools and technologies of the current industrial revolution while at the same time catapulted towards its use - learning and persisting, in spite of. Nettleford further posits, “... ‘learning to what end?’ The uncertainty of where we are heading and how to make the journey continues to haunt us”.

This virtual conference, therefore, is a call to workers

engaged in critical arts and culture practice to offer presentations, papers, roundtables, workshops, and performances addressing the sub-themes listed below. The aim, as we give ourselves pause, is to strategise for our renewal and continuity, even as we confront ongoing shifts to our lives and landscapes.

ABSTRACTS

Abstracts should not exceed 300 words and should include a title along with a brief outline of the presentation. Abstracts must also be accompanied by a brief biography of 150 words. This should be emailed to artsconference@emc.edu.jm with CALL FOR PROPOSALS as the subject.

SUB-THEMES

Caribbean Voices of Renewal and Continuity
Psychic Disarray and Reparation
Lessons from CARIFESTA
The Creative Ecology For Sustainable Development
Decolonising Education
Dismantling Inequalities: Gender and Race in Focus
Unmasking COVID
Creative Technology in the Arts
Access, Inclusion and Equity in the Arts
The Stories We Tell: Narratives of Self in the Digital Age

DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF ABSTRACTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR PANELS IS July 30, 2021.