

HEW LOCKE

Helen Sumpter, In the Studio, Hew Locke, Time Out, March 2008, p. 61

In the studio *Hew Locke*



Hew Locke in 'Congo Man' disguise from his 'How Do You Want Me?' series (above) and the man without the mask in his studio (left).

You're surrounded by plastic toys and tat – do you buy wholesale?

'Most of it comes from shops in Hackney and Brixton. Shepherd's Bush market is good too and Covent Garden market for plastic flowers. The shop owners know me now so I get to see the new stock when it comes in.'

And the pile of talking books?

'I'm a big fan and listen to them while I work – I like to be transported somewhere else. At the moment it's Alan Bennett, Sherlock Holmes and classic Saki stories.'

You must like digestive biscuits too. I spy several packets of those.

'There is the one box of high-fibre crispbread too, that's my attempt at a healthy option. I do eat a proper lunch and highly recommend the Turkish restaurants on Mare Street.'

Any confessions that might blow your art world cool?

'I have quite a passion for stately homes, I guess that's pretty unfashionable. I just love the fact that they're full of odd weaponry and weird decorative artefacts.'

*Interview: Helen Sumpter
'How Do You Want Me?' is at Hales Gallery from February 29-April 5 (See King's Cross to Shoreditch listings).*

Born in Edinburgh, Hew Locke grew up in Guyana and studied at Falmouth and the Royal College of Art before making his home in London. His chaotic sculptures, actually carefully orchestrated arrangements of cheap plastic toys, jewellery and colourful fabrics, allude to relationships between identity, money, conflict and the state. For his latest exhibition 'How Do You Want Me?' he has taken life-size photographs of himself posing in elaborate costumes that reference archetypal and contemporary images of tyrants, rulers and terrorists. He has a studio in Hackney.

What was it like to dress up in your own sculptures?

'I had to be sewn into the costumes, which are heavy and cover most of my face and body, so it was very uncomfortable. In one way it felt great to become these exotic dictatorial figures, but like the work there's an attraction in the colourful excess but also a darker side that's not so nice.'