

ARTFORUM



Carmel Buckley and Mark Harris, *Sparrow Come Back Home* (detail), 2014, 270 ceramic tiles with digital ceramic decals, 5' 5" x 58' 5".

WILMINGTON, DE

Carmel Buckley and Mark Harris

THE DELAWARE CONTEMPORARY
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In their installation *Sparrow Come Back Home*, 2014, Carmel Buckley and Mark Harris investigate processes of recollection. The British duo accomplishes this through

translations of Trinidadian calypso singer-songwriter Mighty Sparrow's album covers into digital ceramic decals fired onto 270 twelve-by-twelve-inch tiles. At a time when artists are showing a renewed interest in performing as archivists, Buckley and Harris distinguish themselves not only by presenting evidence of their research but also through their craft of ceramic simulations. *Sparrow* is not solely a send up to one of calypso's suave and earnest agitators; it also considers the means by which cultural materials become historicized.

Lined up along shelves that wrap around the gallery space, these memorabilia-like objects are grouped into an impressive monument. Scanning from cover to cover, one notices shifts in designs when independently released records have been reissued by globally reaching labels like RCA. Working with scales both intimately personal and enormously institutional, the installation takes a form that recalls Mighty Sparrow's lyrical blends of personal experiences with frank accounts of larger issues of political injustice expressed through the adopted tongue of Trinidad's English colonizers.

The effects of colonialism and diaspora in the West Indies have been traced in the circulation of calypso to audiences beyond their local communities. The music itself, while lively and danceable, has served as a platform to voice complaints about local government, the particulars of which are perhaps opaque and hermetic when heard outside Trinidad. This tension is well served in the silence of the *Sparrow* installation, where the sounds of the music under consideration are displaced, putting the onus on the viewers to seek out Mighty Sparrow's music for themselves.

— Matt Morris