

THE GREATEST FREE SHOW ON EARTH: CARNIVAL FROM TRINIDAD TO BRAZIL, CAPE TOWN TO NEW ORLEANS

CLAIRE TANCONS

→ Fig. 7 Superior Concept Monsters
(Alex Kahn and Sophia Michahelles)
*Rights of Passage (A Contemporary
Dragon Mas')* / 2006 Trinidad Carnival
Processional art performance / Photo:
Stefan Falke, © Stefan Falke / Courtesy of
Stefan Falke, New York



“Having made a name for themselves as the official puppeteers of New York’s Village Halloween Parade, Alex Kahn and Sophia Michahelles of Processional Arts Workshop (formerly Superior Concept Monsters) in Brooklyn, New York, applied their expertise to mas’ making for the 2005 Trinidad Carnival, creating *Rights of Passage*, a contemporary Dragon mas’ (fig. 7). Taking their inspiration from the narrative structure of a traditional Dragon band—complete with the ubiquitous Dragon, the devil’s incarnation as Bookman, and Imps—Kahn and Michahelles updated and recontextualized its formal vocabulary and meaning. They made a Bookman, which traditionally records the names of the living destined for hell, using pages from the Trinidad and Tobago phone book to construct an Arcimboldo-like portrait. The artists not only blended signified and signifier but also made a sharp commentary on contemporary Trinidadian society by suggesting that the names recorded in the phone book might belong to sinners. ”