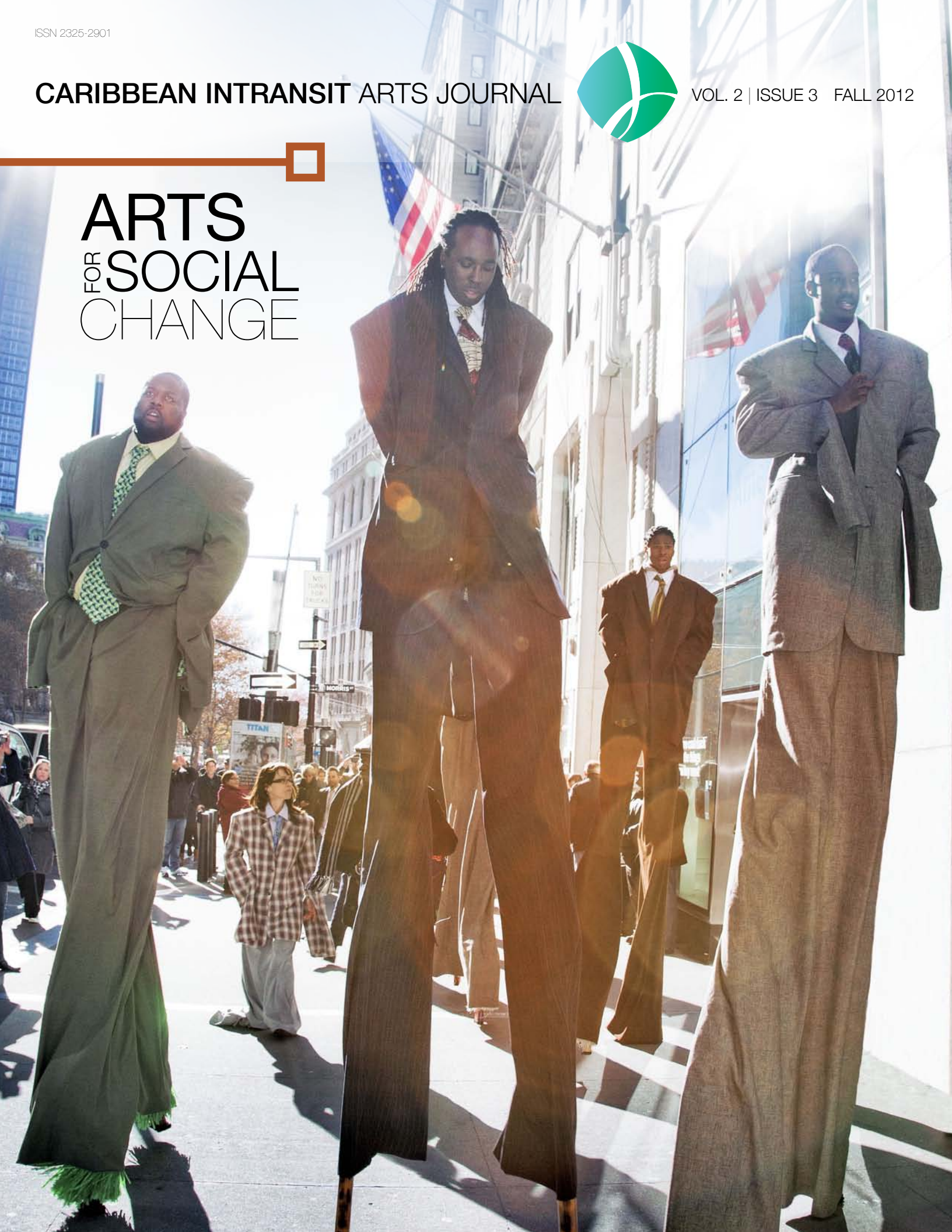




ARTS
FOR
SOCIAL
CHANGE



CARIBBEAN INTRANSIT ARTS JOURNAL

The concept of *CARIBBEAN INTRANSIT* is to provide a creative 'meeting place' for Caribbean artists to share their thought provoking ideas and works within a community of cultural producers, students, scholars, activists and entrepreneurs. The word 'InTransit' signifies the historical and contemporary global movement of Caribbean peoples and the opportunities for becoming that this movement offers. *Caribbean InTransit's* approach to the exploration of Caribbean arts and culture is not insular thus it incorporates artistic practices and beliefs external to the Caribbean. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 license, *Caribbean InTransit* is an open access academic journal with a rigorous blind peer review process. Submissions of essays, artworks, poetry as well as other art forms in English, French and Spanish are welcomed. *Caribbean InTransit* is published by African and African American Studies, George Mason University.

On November 2011 in New York, Barbata collaborated with the Brooklyn Jumbies to present *Intervention: Wall Street* – a performance that took place on Wall Street in New York City's Financial District. *Intervention: Wall Street* was conceived as a response to the dire economic crisis that became most evident in 2008 afflicting Americans and impacted 99% of the global population. Financial speculation and banking abuses by the largest and most powerful institutions on Wall Street have brought misery to individuals, institutions and to entire countries. In this public performance, which took place in November 2011, Laura Anderson Barbata and the Brooklyn Jumbies brought to the Financial District of New York a world-wide practice to remind viewers of the global impact of this crisis and the urgent need to elevate and change the values and practices of the New York Financial Industry. Moko Jumbies- men walking on stilts are a common feature of Trinidad and Tobago's Carnival celebrations.

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CARIBBEAN INTRANSIT
ARTS JOURNAL

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CARIBBEAN
INTRANSIT
was born
out of a
collaborative
conference
project
initiated by
creative writer
Alake Pilgrim.

This year has seen the continued development and morphing of Caribbean InTransit with new team members joining us and several of our members having submitted dissertations and completing PhDs. We would like to congratulate graduates: Dr. Katherine Miranda and Dr. Njelle Hamilton and also Marsha Pearce for her imminent qualification.

Caribbean InTransit is now housed within African and African American Studies at George Mason University. More information on the activities and projects of AAAS can be found here: www.aaas.gmu.com

Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Jack Censer took a keen interest in Caribbean InTransit from its inception. We would like to extend our sincerest gratitude for his continued support. Director and Assistant Director of African and African American Studies at George Mason University, Wendi Manuel Scott and Mika'il Petin also approached the project with enthusiasm agreeing to be affiliated with the journal and contributing to its initial development. Over the Summer of 2012, these affiliations developed further with the result of Caribbean InTransit finding its home within African and African American Studies within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at George Mason University. Thank you Dr. Scott and Mr. Petin for continually and patiently listening to our ideas and working to fine tune our offerings.

Caribbean InTransit would also like to acknowledge the support and partnership of the School of Arts, George Mason University, in particular artists and lecturers Peter Winant, Tom Ashcraft, Edgar Endress and Jorge Porrata in staging and participating in Caribbean InTransit's overseas excursions and events. Thank you, professor Jo-Marie Burt, Director of Latin American Studies and co-Director of Global Affairs for your consideration, encouragement and support of our endeavors. The Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage has also been instrumental in shaping the initiatives and direction of Caribbean InTransit. In particular, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to our advisor Mr. James Early as well as curator Dr. Diana N'Diaye, director, Kim Sojin and Keisha Martin.

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FOREWORD: PRAXIS AND POLITICS

Marielle Barrow, Editor - in - Chief

This third issue addresses a topic that is the functional premise of *Caribbean InTransit*. *Caribbean InTransit* aims to undertake specific projects of arts for social change through its *This is Me* program and other events. Concomitantly *Caribbean InTransit* amalgamates ideas and initiatives through its themed issues that work toward various types of social transformation. Several factors contribute to the thinking behind and construction of the rubric of 'arts of/for social change' or arts as a tool for social development.

Societies have continually compartmentalized knowledge in an effort to maintain hierarchical social orders. From information security regimes with levels of clearance to the Ford assembly line, where specialized knowledge of one aspect of the big picture was developed, to the disciplined knowledge of university students, compartmentalized knowledge acts as a buffer to critical apprehension of a larger reality.

The Arts re- united with the social domain can function as a bridge in re-connecting knowledges and in re-framing knowledge. Often through visual stimuli or via other mechanisms, the arts within society disturb regular sensibility by creating provocative interventions. But the project of bridging knowledges or de-compartmentalizing knowledge is happening on a number of other levels. Interestingly, making connections between disparate ideas has become the domain of new interdisciplinary fields such as Cultural Studies or specific approaches to pedagogy such as community based learning. Community based learning functions similarly to arts for social change projects in terms of praxis: this form of pedagogy allows movement from critical mental processes of consideration and thinking, to effective and ethical action.

Aristotle, the Greek Philosopher used the Greek word praxis to indicate the idea of practical reasoning as juxtaposed to theorizing but this idea of the practical also takes us into the realm of the political. Praxis translated

as "process", "practice or "experience" was expected to enhance a "sense of well-being". Many Arts for social change projects take this mandate seriously whether they hearken the term praxis or not. Contemporary projects and practitioners like the avant-garde movements (during Modernism) that preceded them, attempted to unite art with the social, ensuring that art became recognized as a way of doing and a way of feeling or experiencing. French Philosopher Jacques Ranciere registers this dual dynamic of doing and feeling as the aesthetic regime which regulated between 'aesthesis' - art as a way of experiencing and poesis - art as a way of doing. As a regime of freedom and autonomy in lieu of artistic perfection, the aesthetic regime addressed 'a lost human nature' and was thus aligned to a utopic political ideal of rejuvenating human nature. Ranciere thus advocates the recognition of the inherent politics of the arts in the social arena. The arts for social change are often, on some level, political.

This issue addresses several levels of arts for social change however *Provisions Library*, an Arts for social change library located on the George Mason campus, alerts us to an even broader spectrum of possibilities in this regard. *Provisions* identifies "meridians"— 36 social change research topics that open the gamut of existing and possible domains of social change work. Among these "meridians" are Cultural Diversity, Youth Activism, Mobility and Migration, Public Space and Commons, Cultural Diversity, Conflict Transformation and Critical Media. Within these domains, specific tools of presentation are used. Public Art has historically used specific mechanisms to provoke thought and consideration including comedy, re-focusing of ideas and distortion. A common current tactic is dissonance also referred to as the inversion of signifiers or 'mashup of signifiers' according to *Floating Lab* team member, Peter Lee. *Floating Lab Collective*, an Arts collective housed at GMU, as well as US groups such as the *Yes Men* often use 'purified or distilled signifiers' in de-familiarizing familiar situations and subjects - the same visual space is used to present antithetical content or messages resulting in a complicated process of masking and unmasking of contemporary issues. This de-habituation is aimed at breaking stereotypes and revealing symbolic violence within hegemonic structures.

Below is the call – prepared by Marsha Pearce, the journal's Managing Editor – that was disseminated to invite papers and projects for this issue on Arts for Social Change. We invite you not only to probe the myriad levels and implications of this issues' presentations but to consider the methods and projects that might be suitable endeavors for your own community in addressing local issues and needs. We challenge you to embark on an arts for social change project. You don't have to be an artist to use visuals and you don't have to be a politician to initiate change.

Call for Papers: Issue 3

"The arts is a form of action," wrote Caribbean intellectual and choreographer Rex Nettleford. As action, the arts can be an effort inclined toward a pursuit of social change. The arts can be political acts. The arts can liberate ways of being and refashion ways of thinking in our world. The arts can be used to transform communities and transfigure societies. Michael Manley, who served as Prime Minister of Jamaica for eleven years, understood this as Jamaica turned towards a project of independence and decolonisation. According to Manley, "art, in the widest sense of painting, sculpture, poetry, drama, literature, the theatre, music, dancing and the rest, [is] an indispensable element in the process of transformation...exposure to art must be planned." This idea of art as planned action for change or a strategy for revolution was also grasped by those like Argentine film directors Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino as well as Cuban filmmakers Julio García Espinosa and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea who regarded art – particularly film or cinema – as a mode of subversive action and an instrument of social transformation. Through concepts and movements like "Third Cinema," "Imperfect Cinema" and "Cine Liberación," film was soon seen as a mobilising force and a "guide for action." The work of Trinidadian artist/dancer Beryl McBurnie also transformed the way in which people saw themselves in relation to their African heritage. Her work with the Little Carib Theatre in Trinidad helped move folk traditions from the social margins to a centre stage position in various communities. Art, then, can be a powerful means to take action. Are we taking advantage of art's capacity for social change in the new millennium? How is the transformative potential of art being deployed in our contemporary world?

This issue understands art in its broadest sense. It aims to put a spotlight on the teleology of art – specifically art with a purpose of critiquing assumptions, challenging the status quo, revamping hearts and minds and ameliorating social systems. We invited critical dialogues about the work art accomplishes in the interest of public good; dialogues about art functioning at the intersection of creativity and justice, imagination and metamorphosis. Submissions were welcomed but not limited to the following themes: Art and human rights; Art as activism; Art as liberation; Art and community; Art and resistance; The artist as agent of social change; Art in times of crisis; Art and spiritual transformation; Art and utopian imaginings; Art in education.

– Marielle Barrow, Editor - in - Chief

ABOUT THE EDITOR IN-CHIEF

Marielle Graduated with a Bsc in Hospitality Management from The University of the West Indies, and the University of Technology in Jamaica and earned a Postgraduate Diploma in Arts & Cultural Enterprise Management and an MPhil in Cultural Studies at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad.

As an Arts Consultant Marielle helped create an Action Plan for the music and film industries for the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and presented at the 2009 CARICOM experts meeting in Haiti, on Cultural Industries, Trade and the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) in 2009. She has co-chaired the Allspice Festival of Arts and Humanities in Washington DC and continues to pursue painting as a professional passion. She founded *Caribbean InTransit* in 2010 and continues to develop it as a model for academic interrogation and development of the Caribbean arts and culture industry of the Caribbean. She is a Fulbright scholar at George Mason University.

Cover Image: Laura Anderson Barbata
<http://www.lauraandersonbarbata.com>

Laura Anderson Barbata was born in Mexico City. She lives and works in New York City and Mexico City where she is a professor at the Escuela Nacional de Escultura, Pintura y Grabado La Esmeralda of the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, México. Since 1992 she has worked primarily in the social realm and has initiated projects in the Amazon of Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, Norway, the USA, and Mexico.

Cover Curator: Annalee Davis
www.annaleedavis.com

Annalee Davis is interested in supporting *Caribbean InTransit* by way of curating covers for the Arts Journal, connecting the work of contemporary practitioners with scholars and critical thinkers concerned with the Caribbean. The link between the image and the text may expand the lens through which we view the region and contribute to a richer understanding of the space.

ABOUT THE COVER CURATOR

ntro

Toby S. Jenkins, PhD | Guest Editor, Issue 3

Art, Power & Social Action

Words have power. We speak through words. We sing through words. We write and think through words. Essentially we live our lives through words. Through words we understand the world, make sense of it and articulate that insight. Energy. Effect. Power. This is what makes a publication like the Caribbean InTransit Journal such an important form of literary scholarship. The journal creatively integrates words, thoughts, images, and opinions to inspire, provoke, and bear witness. The articles, essays, poems, and exhibitions found in this issue illustrate how as artists, writers, and thinkers we can reach beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries to converse with distant academic cousins

such as cultural studies, the arts, sociology, ethnic studies, political science, and history. But more importantly, by privileging the academic merit of diverse forms of knowledge and expression (poetry, photo-essays, and songs) this journal breaks the boundaries of academia and passes through the gates of privilege in order to converse with those whose lives are situated on the margins. Through this work we make our contributions to push the lives, experiences, and histories of marginalized communities into the forefront of society.

The "ARTS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE" issue responds to the growing need to develop critical art consumers, performers, and intellectuals in a world that is dominated by popular culture. Many communities are overwhelmed by depictions in popular media, film, magazines, and music that encourage negative global beliefs about what is accepted as authentic culture and cultural representation. Unfortunately, popular does not necessarily equal purpose. According to Mulana Karenga's (2005) theory of artistic responsibility, socially responsible artistic expression must meet three qualifications: (1) It must be functional, possessing the ability to address social issues particularly affecting oppressed and marginalized communities (2) It must be collective, representing the fullness of the cultural experience of a people and (3) It must be committing, offering forth a motivation for the realization of a people's true potential and an active work against social limitations. This theory reminds us that socially responsible art is not only art with an opinion, but it is also art that is approachable, multidimensional, and practical. It is not enough to spark interest – socially responsible art seeks to spark action.

In many ways, art activism is a tactic of recovery. It represents the ways in which creative minds seek to offer relief to communities and societies plagued by racial, socio-economic, gender, and cultural wars and trauma. The topic of war and

recovery is most often discussed in relation to military wars on foreign soil. However, there have been domestic "wars" from which many communities are still struggling to recover. When every day people fight civil wars (or act out against the society and agents that oppress them), the impetus for such action is often not understood by those outside of the community. Just as the daily realities of foreign war often go unknown by many who live thousands of miles away from a war zone, some citizens are often unaware and oblivious to the continued challenges faced by our own nation states and cities as these communities seek to heal themselves physically and spiritually from political rage and oppression. Art has a place in this recovery.

Where is the Love?

In all moments of great drama, intensity, disaster, and importance... we change. We are humbled to the core of what it means to be human. And so we leap head first into acts of love. Examples of major social events such as 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, and the earthquake in Haiti move people to a greater level of consciousness, a greater sense of what it is to be human, and a higher plane of leadership. Even moments of personal tragedy such as a major disease diagnosis or life changing events like a divorce cause us to remember love and care for the spirit. And amazingly so do the moments of struggle in communities. Like survivors of a storm, the oppressed come together and share their storm stories and do the work of loving themselves back to life. As bell hooks points out in her book, *Salvation* (2001),

Since our leaders and scholars agree that one measure of the crisis befalling Black people is lovelessness, it should be evident that we need a body of literature, both sociological and psychological work, addressing the issue of love, its relevance to political struggle, its meaning in our private lives (p.5).

Art has been such a vehicle of expressing political critique and exhibiting authentic love for a society – the type of commitment that causes you to speak out when you see your society going in the wrong direction. We criticize out of love – out of a wish to make things as best as they can be. The art produced by both historic and

contemporary artists represent a love story filled with all of the drama that comes with being crazy in love – intense feelings, differing perspectives, unintended neglect, and inexplicable attraction. Through song, paint, voice, camera, and computer, artists give life to issues that matter. Though stereotypically viewed as angry and radical, protest movements, critical essays, and activist art forms are actually attempts to create a love driven world. This is not simply a question of "Do you love your culture, community, or society?" But more importantly, it is a question of, "How do you display an ethic of love as a form of cultural leadership – as a product of creative citizenship itself?" A loved based leadership proxy gives deeper meaning and purpose to the work that artists create. A quote by William Barclay (2001) sums it up perfectly:

'All human things are trivial if they exist for nothing beyond themselves.' The real value of anything depends on its aim. If we eat simply for the sake of eating, we become gluttons, and it is likely to do us far more harm than good; if we eat to sustain life, to do our work better, to maintain the fitness of our body at its highest peak, food has a real significance. If people spend a great deal of time on sport simply for the sake of sport, they are at least to some extent wasting their time. But if they spend that time in order to keep their bodies fit and thereby to do better work for God and for others, sport ceases to be trivial and becomes important. The things of the flesh gain their value from the spirit in which they are done...the most important thing is the life giving power of the spirit (p. 265).

We can extend this to include the life giving power of art – when art is used as a tool of social activism it ceases to be mere entertainment it becomes an important piece of knowledge production. This issue of Caribbean InTransit Journal will explore art from this context. The essays in this issue all wrestle with the ways in which art and literature can push the boundaries of social thought. The journal begins with James Darbouze's interrogation of the relations of art, philosophy and social transformation. Laura Barrio-Villar's critical piece focuses on African Diasporic tourism, neocolonialism, and intra-racial dislocations within romance novels and films. Two pieces that focus on art as a venue for social action include Marsha Pearce's essay, "Art is a Doing Word: Jamoo Music as World Changer" and Marcela Guerrero's critical

assessment of Glexis Novoa's "Invitado de honor."

We also share the thoughts and perspectives of those doing the important work of creating community and activist art. Laura Maier's interview with Rozi Chung allows space for the practical experiences, motivations, and challenges of artists themselves to be heard. Of course given the interdisciplinary nature of this journal, art is also displayed and analyzed through visual essays and poems. "Pathetic Fallacy" by Heather Pinnock gives voice to the experience of living on the margins of society and the constant quest for home, belonging, and inclusion felt by so many throughout the world. Ronnie McGrath's "Diasfrican" offers an important statement on the hard-headed determination that is required in order to take the risk of being an art activist. Keisha-Gaye Anderson's "Stones" uncovers the ways that our efforts to stand and fight are rooted in love – that many of us have learned to be hard rocks so that a foundation of love and equality can be built from that. The visual essays include a compilation by Annalee Davis and excerpts from the portfolios of Andrea Chung and Charles Campbell. Finally, we share several book reviews. Also of note is Safi

Harriot's dance review, "Fearless Softness: A Possibility for Dancing, Witnessing, and Being with Others," which explores the connection between body, mind, and social existence. The works mentioned are just touchstones of the larger body of scholarship that is offered in this issue. Through the words written on the pages to follow and the words imagined through the visual displays shared, we seek to create a source of power and a social energy of innovation that sparks minds and motivates action.

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ABOUT THE GUEST EDITOR

TOBY S. JENKINS, PhD

Dr. Toby Jenkins is an Assistant Professor of Integrative Studies and Higher Education at George Mason University. Her work focuses on the utility of culture (contemporary culture, folk culture, and pop culture) as a politic of social survival, a tool of social change, and a transformative space of non-traditional knowledge production. She is also interested in the ways in which culture influences one's leadership proxy and sense of citizenship/social commitment. Jenkins earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Public Relations from the Honors College at the University of South Carolina. She received her Masters in College Student Personnel Services from the University of Maryland, College Park and completed her doctoral studies in Educational Theory & Policy/Social Foundations of Education at Penn State University. Dr. Jenkins has spent the last 10 years working as an administrator and diversity practitioner in higher education. In 2004, Dr. Jenkins came to Penn State University to direct the Paul Robeson Cultural Center.

At Penn State she spent five years implementing a bold strategic vision for the cultural center which included (1) the creation of a new programming framework to guide the creation and delivery of cultural programs, (2) significant fund-raising efforts resulting in \$50,000 of raised funds each year, (3) the creation of new staff positions, (4) intentional student outreach efforts, (5) facility enhancements, and (6) critical administrative policy changes. Jenkins expanded the cultural center's reach beyond campus and into local, regional, and global communities. She brought a long list of new creative and educationally critical initiatives and programs to Penn State.

Previously, Jenkins worked at the University of Maryland within Academic Affairs as Assistant Director of the Nyumburu Cultural Center. While at UMCP, Jenkins planned university events bringing to campus artists and intellectuals such as Outkast, Maya Angelou, Elie Wiesel, Doug E. Fresh, Mos Def, Talib Kweli, Johnnie Cochran, Nikki Giovanni, Dick Gregory, Molefi Asante, and Bill Maher. She also served as a Program Manager within the College of Education conducting research assessment and creating mentoring outreach programs to local K-12 schools in the Institute for Urban and Minority Education. In 2000, Jenkins created the Joint Service Project, bringing together college students, faculty, and staff in service efforts within the local community

and in 2001 she created the Vision Cultural Mentoring Initiative providing college mentors and interactive cultural experiences for local high school students at low performing schools in Prince Georges County. Both programs received honors from the President of the United States and the Governor of Maryland.

Dr. Jenkins past professional experience as a student affairs staff member with Semester at Sea as well as her individual research projects and studies have taken her to over 20 countries including Greece, Spain, Norway, Italy, Morocco, Egypt, Russia, Belgium, Turkey, South Africa, Senegal, England, France, Costa Rica, Jamaica, and Trinidad. Additionally, she worked with students from over 40 countries as the resident life director for the Johns Hopkins University Office of Summer Programs. Within student affairs, she has also worked in student activities as a Program Board Advisor and in Fraternity and Sorority Life as a House Director. Prior to her work in higher education, Jenkins worked for Momentum, IMC as an event marketing account executive and Oscar Mayer foods as a media spokesperson. Dr. Jenkins' professional memberships include the American College Personnel Association, The National Women's Studies Association, The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, and the International Cultural Studies Association.



ESSAYS



JAMES DARBOUZE

Art et catharsis sociale.

Variations autour du thème de l'artiste paramètre du changement social.

Keywords: Art, philosophy, social transformation.

Abstract:

The role of art in society is a recurring topic. Since Platonic statements on the role of art in society in general, the relationship of philosophy to art has not ceased to be a problem. Art was struck by anathemas, on account of its excessive rapprochement with reality. What should the exact relationship of art to reality be? Opinions are divergent concerning these issues. Globally, there are two major conceptions in conflict. Proponents of 'l'art pour l'art', for whom art is the domain of the 'beautiful' and should not have much to do with reality – a means of escape - and on the other, those for whom the role of art is to transform reality. This article focuses on the second point of view according to which the role of art is to facilitate the emergence of 'figures' capable of transforming the social reality. It analyzes three cases of artistic productions and proposes a theorization of what the role of the artist could be in dynamic social transformation.

“Les plus beaux chants sont des chants de revendication.

Le vers doit faire l'amour dans la tête des populations.

À l'école de la poésie, on n'apprend pas.

On se bat !!! ”

Léo Ferré, Préface, 1971.

Depuis les énoncés platoniciens sur le rôle de l'art en général dans la société, de la poésie et du théâtre en particulier¹, le rapport de la philosophie à l'art n'a pas cessé de faire problème. L'art a été frappé d'anathèmes et cela, pour cause de son trop grand rapprochement avec le réel (l'art imite la nature) et son incapacité à livrer la vérité (l'idée immuable par delà la chose). De façon générale, on peut dire que les philosophies, jusqu'à l'époque contemporaine, n'ont pas tenu les arts en grande estime. Non pas qu'elles ne se

soient pas occupées de l'art, loin de là, car il y a toujours eu une certaine réflexion philosophique sur l'art, mais c'est toujours du haut de son piédestal (de la pensée) qu'elle a toujours daigné jeter un regard – le plus souvent dédaigneux – en direction de l'art. Quel doit être le rapport de l'art à la réalité ? Par suite, comment l'artiste doit-il se positionner au réel, par rapport au social? Quelle est la meilleure posture ? Serait-elle de contemplation, d'imitation, de description et/ou de transformation?

Autour de ces différentes questions, il y a tout lieu d'affirmer que les avis sont multiples et divergent. Mais de façon rapide et schématique, on peut dire qu'il

¹ Platon, République, Livre III. Il chasse les poètes de la cité idéale et condamne dans le comédien “un être multiple, flottant, dont l'aptitude à l'imitation témoigne de la légèreté et la superficialité.”

y a deux grandes conceptions en conflit et en débat. Les partisans de l'art pour l'art, ceux pour qui l'art est du domaine du beau et ne devrait pas avoir grand-chose à voir avec le réel et ceux-là se répartissent en une pluralité de déclinaisons et de l'autre, il y a ceux pour qui le rôle de l'art est soit “d'obnubiler la raison, de rendre aimable la prison du réel ” soit de transformer le réel.

Pour ceux-là, le rôle de l'artiste peut consister à faciliter l'émergence de figures intempestives du réel en donnant à voir ou à entendre, à imaginer ou à fantasmer des subjectivités qui se positionnent dans la rupture avec un certain partage du sensible² actuel et ponctuel.

De ce point de vue, l'artiste se voit investir d'un certain rôle social, celui de ré-formateur. Il peut, par sa production, libérer des manières nouvelles d'être dans le monde et, par suite, remodeler les façons de penser le monde. En ce sens, dans son œuvre à égale distance entre la fiction et la réalité, il prend la mesure du réel, il le décrit mais également, en bon ouvrier de l'imaginaire, il en excède les limites et transfigure l'avenir.

Dans le cadre de cet article, nous nous intéressons principalement à ce second point de vue et à ces différents échos notamment dans le domaine de la production littéraire (poésie, roman) et la production cinématographique. L'article est divisé en deux parties. La première traite d'un film où justement cette question du rôle social de l'artiste semble mise en exergue (Chansons du deuxième étage de Roy Anderson) et la seconde, à partir de la mise en perspective de deux œuvres littéraires contemporaines (Gouverneurs de la Rosée de Jacques Roumain, L'ignorance de Milan Kundera), propose une théorisation de ce que pourrait être le rôle de l'artiste dans une dynamique de transformation sociale.

I. De l'art comme propédeutique à la folie et au dépaysement du réel.

«Est-il vrai qu'on peut devenir dingue à force d'écrire de la poésie?». Autrement dit, cette expression particulière de l'art est-elle à ce point éloignée du réel qu'à force de s'en occuper on peut finir par perdre le sens du réel ? Telle est la question qui me travaille depuis

² Pour cette notion de partage du sensible cf. l'œuvre de Jacques Rancière

un certain temps et notamment depuis que j'ai vu le film Chansons du deuxième étage³ qui se fait partiellement l'écho de cette rumeur persistante⁴. Je ne voudrais pas essayer de répondre à cette question sensible s'il en est dans le cadre de ce petit texte. Il n'empêche qu'elle saura au cœur de toute notre réflexion.

Reprenons le synopsis du film:

«Kalle a volontairement enflammé sa boutique pour toucher une prime d'assurance. Démasqué, il devra se recycler dans le commerce stérile de crucifix, lui qui trouvait le destin déjà bien cruel de l'avoir affublé d'un fils névrosé. Tout aussi peu enviable, un autre se cramponne aux pieds de son patron à l'allure de porcelet, se prêtant ainsi à une scène d'humiliation qui fera de lui la serpillière du couloir. Jamais bien loin, des “revenants” harcèlent les consciences alors que des décideurs scrutent l'avenir dans une boule de cristal et qu'un général sénile et incontinent attire l'état-major pour son centième anniversaire.»

³ Chansons du deuxième étage, réalisé par Roy Anderson d'après un poème du poète Péruvien César Vallejo, Octobre 2000. Dans ce film, les symboles jouent un rôle de tout premier ordre. Et le premier symbole est, en effet, le fait que le film ait été dédié et placé sur l'influence de César Vallejo qui représente, de l'avis de beaucoup de critiques, une véritable révolution dans la poésie de langue espagnole. Mais à côté de ce premier symbole, il y a un autre encore plus fondamental et qui consiste à mon avis en cela que Vallejo participe, aux côtés de Pablo Neruda et José Martí, de ces grandes figures intellectuelles et militantes latino-américaines pour qui le rôle de la poésie en particulier et de l'art en général ne peut se concevoir en dehors d'une véritable critique sociale. En effet Vallejo n'écrit-il pas dans ces “poemas humanos” : “Un homme passe, un pain sur l'épaule // Vais-je écrire ensuite sur mon double (...) Un boiteux passe, donnant le bras à un enfant // Vais-je après lire André Breton? Un autre tremble de froid, tousse, crache le sang // Convendra-t-il jamais de faire allusion au Moi profond? Un autre cherche des os dans la boue, des épilures // Comment écrire à présent sur l'infini? Un maçon tombe d'un toit, meurt et ne déjeune plus // Invoquer désormais le trope et la métaphore? ” cf. César Vallejo, Poemas Humanas, Choix des Textes par Georgette Vallejo, Éditions Pierre Seghers, 1967

⁴ La rumeur persiste en effet depuis longtemps. Si dans le film le lien est spécifiquement à la poésie, on connaît toutefois la chanson Chatterton de Serge Gainsbourg qui fait une espèce d'inventaire de tous les grands personnages historiques qui ont perdu le sens de la réalité (suicidés ou fous à lier). Les trois quarts sont des créateurs dans les divers domaines de l'art. Serge Gainsbourg, Chatterton, 1967.

Le fils névrosé dont il est question ici c'est Tomas. Ancien chauffeur de taxi et père de famille, il est interné dans un asile d'aliéné où il côtoie un mystique (qui n'arrête pas de parler de Jésus) et d'un "aspirant" médecin. Kalle, le père de Tomas, est convaincu que c'est à cause de la poésie que son fils est interné. Aussi, n'arrête-t-il pas de scander à qui veut l'entendre : « Il en a écrit tellement de poèmes qu'il en est devenu dingue! » De l'avis de Kalle, la source du mal semble bien être là.

En fait, le problème de Tomas c'est qu'il n'a pas d'idée de business. Tandis que l'an 2000 approche et que les gens n'ont qu'une idée en tête : faire un peu d'argent, se battre pour gagner sa croûte et avoir quelques bons moments, y compris, bien entendu, l'investissement dans la fabrication de crucifix, le produit devrait marcher... Tomas lui fait de la poésie. Il n'a pas d'idée de business.

Et plutôt qu'à s'occuper à trouver des produits à vendre, afin de faire quelques bénéfices et agrandir le patrimoine avec quelques zéros, il fait de la poésie genre :

« Aimé soit celui qui dort sur son dos

Aimé soit celui qui s'assoit

Aimé soit celui qui paie avec ce qu'il n'a pas⁵

Et Kalle de s'étonner, en posant des questions en apparence simple mais qui cache toute la profondeur du mal-être qui l'anime par rapport à l'essence de la poésie et sur lequel nous sommes appelés à mener une réflexion: Celui qui s'assoit pourquoi devrait-on l'aimer? se demande-t-il. En effet, qu'est-ce qu'il a de si particulier, celui qui s'assoit, qui mériterait qu'il soit digne d'amour? Et voilà l'art rattrapé par la réalité, le poète par son double.

Il me semble avoir lu quelque part que Kalle symbolisait le désespoir et la petitesse de l'homme moderne. On voit bien que l'on est en plein dans le vif du sujet. Essayons un approfondissement.

⁵ Ce poème de Tomas n'est en fait qu'une réplique du "Trébuchement entre deux étoiles" de César Vallejo qui commence ainsi : "Il y a des gens si malheureux qu'ils n'ont pas de corps"

II. Art, phénoménologie de la réalité et processus du changement social.

Dans son très classique ouvrage *La dimension cachée*, Hall⁶ nous explique comment l'art peut servir à éclairer notre perception des choses et des êtres et par suite les transformer. L'art représente une certaine histoire de la perception, les œuvres d'art peuvent rendre un compte certain du monde sensoriel dans lequel leurs auteurs ont évolué mais par ailleurs nous explique-t-il une des fonctions majeures de l'artiste est d'aider le profane à structurer son univers culturel. Ainsi, il serait possible à travers l'art de suivre « le développement de la conscience progressive que l'homme a prise de lui-même d'abord, puis de son environnement, de lui-même par rapport à ce dernier, et enfin de la relation dialectique qui le lie à cet environnement ⁷ ». L'art, en ce sens, constituerait toujours selon Hall l'une des sources de renseignements les plus abondantes sur la perception humaine. Brecht ne disait-il pas déjà, tout aussi élégamment, que « le sujet de l'art est le désordre du monde⁸ ». Soit ! Aussi, quand il y a désordre dans le monde, on devrait pouvoir trouver des traces de ce désordre dans l'art. Et vice-versa, le désordre dans l'art devrait tout aussi trouver une certaine correspondance dans le monde.

Autant dire que la production artistique loin d'être anodine et sans intérêt a une portée hautement significative. En effet, pour citer le poète Joël Desrosiers, qui mieux que les artistes savent « murmurer sur fond d'insurrection contre l'Un et les figures du même, le chant hybride...⁹ ». Ici, bien entendu, on est bien loin du paradigme aristotélicien dans lequel : « Les poètes sont de grands constructeurs de mensonges¹⁰ ».

⁶ Edward T. Hall, *La perception éclairée par l'art*, in *La dimension cachée*, Éditions du Seuil, 1966.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Berthold Bercht, *Écrits sur le théâtre*, Gallimard,

⁹ Joël Desrosiers, *Théories Caraïbes, Poétiques du déracinement*, Éditions Triptyque, Montréal, 1996.

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Métaphysique*, cité par M. Heidegger, in *Les concepts fondamentaux de la métaphysique : monde-solitude-finitude*, Gallimard, 1992. Et Heidegger de nous rappeler que : « L'art – dont fait partie la poésie – est la sœur de la philosophie et que toute science, par rapport à la philosophie n'est peut être que l'intendante. » p. 21.

Au moment où Hall écrit ces propos, le thème de l'intérêt de l'art pour la pensée est connu. Et déjà, l'art est considéré comme une procédure de vérité parmi les autres (la philosophie, la science et la religion). Ce qui, par contre, fait l'originalité des propos de Hall, c'est cet air qu'il a de soutenir que, par delà tous les arts, cet art spécifique qu'est la littérature peut être un informateur privilégié – pour qui veut s'enquérir de l'évolution des choses humaines – dans la mesure où elle utilise l'élément culturel humain le plus fondamental qu'est le langage¹¹. Voilà pourquoi, il propose d'étudier « les œuvres littéraires, non pas en vue de la simple délectation (...) mais avec pour objectif précis la détermination des composantes fondamentales du message que l'auteur fournit ». Ibid

Joël Desrosiers, le poète qui, selon ses dires, n'a de compte à rendre qu'aux fleurs, ne soutient pas vraiment le contraire quand il écrit dans ses *Théories Caraïbes* : « Alors que les crispations identitaires s'amplifient dans le monde, la question n'est pas vaine de savoir comment poser et construire la présence de l'autre dans l'œuvre ; comment affronter avec beaucoup de compréhension la différence des autres : sexualité, races, marginalités... » (Joël Desrosiers, op. cit.) La question se pose d'autant plus dans son acuité que, comme il le dit si bien lui-même, "Je n'est pas un autre". Tout est là y compris dans les points de suspension...

La pensée de l'artiste en général et du poète en particulier est une mine toujours ouverte sur le monde et sur ses problèmes. René Char ne proclamait-il pas qu'à chaque effondrement des preuves le poète répond par une salve d'avenir. Il ne saurait donc y avoir échec du point de vue de cette procédure spécifique de vérité qu'est l'art. La salve d'avenir est là pour nous rappeler que l'histoire a plus d'imagination et que l'effondrement des preuves n'est aucunement l'effondrement du monde. Le réel est tellement plus riche que le rationnel qu'il y a des moments – plus souvent qu'on ne le pense – où, par un mécanisme de saturation phénoménale, on ne trouve pas de mots pour le dire. Il convient dès lors d'être à l'écoute de la rumeur du monde et de s'y référer plutôt que de s'enfermer dans la répétition du connu.

¹¹ Edward T. Hall, *Le langage de l'espace*, in *La dimension cachée*, Éditions du Seuil, 1966.

Ainsi, l'art peut-il nous livrer une trame d'interprétation plus variée, plus diversifiée pour appréhender l'autodéfinition des individus et assurer, pour l'être humain, par delà bien et mal, une meilleure sculpture de soi, hors des cadres fixés de la normalité statistique et productiviste.

Un tel processus nous semble à l'œuvre dans certains romans contemporains haïtiens et étrangers. Nous voudrions considérer principalement deux de ces romans : *Gouverneurs de la rosée* (Romain 150) de Jacques Roumain, un roman haïtien, au renom international, paru en 1944 et *L'ignorance* de Milan Kundera. Il s'agit pour nous de voir, par delà la différence de leurs âges, qu'est-ce que ces deux pièces à conviction littéraires ont à nous dire au sujet de l'artiste comme agent de changement du poème du social. Si comme le soutient Alain Badiou « tout vrai poème est une considération intempestive ». Le poème du social tel que nous l'entendons ici se doit d'être une considération sur des figures intempestives du social.

Et alors, vient toujours à point nommer la question fatidique à savoir : qu'est-ce qu'une figure intempestive du social ? Précisons cette notion de figure intempestive du social. La figure est l'opposé du concept ; tandis que le concept se situe au niveau de l'entendement, la figure, elle, renvoie aux sens. L'intérêt de la figure est dans sa matérialité illustrative, en tant qu'elle est du concret, elle permet de voir, permet de témoigner et d'appréhender dans la chair de la chose alors que le concept, en tant qu'abstrait et instrument de la raison ne permet qu'une saisie virtuelle. La figure, c'est une matérialité dont la présence est beaucoup plus parlante et plus convaincante que tous les discours conceptuels. Appeler à parler, son témoignage est dans une large mesure, beaucoup plus convaincant.

a. Ce qu'est une figure intempestive du réel.

Les figures intempestives du social sont des matérialités, disons des êtres humains, qui tentent de se défaire de la lourdeur des convenances consensuelles ou dissensuelles du social. Des subjectivités qui tentent de se faire entendre, de s'affirmer dans leurs projets propres par delà les normativités du pratico-inerte du social. Et qui, par suite, se trouvent en proie à un combat pour leur

affirmation face aux résistances multiples de l'ordre. Des phases de ce combat peuvent se dépister partout. Combat contre l'État en tant que celui-ci représente le nouveau garant de la rationalité sociale. Combat également contre un dispositif social qui vise à les désespérer et à les astreindre à la mort. Dans cette indécidabilité entre la vie et la mort... ce refus du désespoir... naît le tracé de leur poème propre.

Les figures intempêtes du social refusent de croiser les bras en l'attitude stérile du spectateur parce qu'elles savent que la vie n'est pas un spectacle. Véritable passant qui s'applique à passer¹², elles refusent de se laisser broyer dans le nouveau concept de la vie entendue comme univers concentrationnaire.

b. *Les figures intempêtes du réel, illustration en deux tableaux.*

I. GOUVERNEURS DE LA ROSEE.

Gouverneurs de la Rosée est comme l'autre œuvre qui nous intéresse ici un roman de la nostalgie. Écrit à Mexico en 1944, ce livre, classique de la littérature haïtienne contemporaine, raconte l'histoire de Manuel. Un revenant. Manuel Jean-Joseph qui revient d'un long séjour de quinze années en terre étrangère, plus précisément de Cuba où il était parti pour travailler dans les champs de canne. Autant que son départ, son retour est un choc. « Ce qu'il voyait c'était une étendue torréfiée, d'une sale couleur rouillée, nulle part la fraîcheur verte qu'il espérait, et ça et là, la moisissure éparses des cases » (Roumain 24-25). Une misère qui ne s'est jamais vue. Alors qu'il croyait revenir chez lui, il est frappé, étonné de voir comment son lieu d'ancrage, son lieu natal sur lequel il fantasmatiquement depuis Cuba est devenu un désert. Mais plus frappante est pour lui la haine, l'inimitié profonde et diabolique, qui divise le bourg et trace la ligne entre deux groupes de paysans – pourtant issus d'une même lignée – suite à une affaire de partage de terre, une question d'héritage ayant tourné en bataille. Et les gens, des paysans, sont en train de dépérir à

¹² Pour reprendre une formule de René Char repris par Émile Ollivier dans son roman *Passages*. Cf. René Char, *Rougeur des matinaux*, Editions Gallimard, « Nous sommes des passants appliqués à passer, donc à jeter le trouble, à infliger notre chaleur, à dire notre exubérance. Voilà pourquoi nous intervenons ! Voilà pourquoi nous sommes intempêtes et insolites. »

feu nourri. Ce topos, c'est Fonds rouge. Et puis il y a pour couronner le tout « la malfeasance des autorités, le juge de paix, la police rurale, les arpenteurs, les spéculateurs en denrées » contre laquelle les paysans sont sans droit. (Ibid 56)

Pour des paysans pauvres qui, pour toute activité, n'ont que le dur labeur de la terre, on comprend que la sécheresse sur un long temps et la désertification ne peut signifier que l'anéantissement à plus ou moins long terme. La seule issue face à cette chronique d'une mort annoncée, ce destin tragique, reste l'exode, la fuite ou l'exil, dans tous les cas le déplacement vers d'autres lieux de l'intérieur mais également vers les champs de canne des républiques voisines. Mais est-ce vraiment là une issue? Manuel qui revient de Cuba sait que ce n'en est pas une. D'ailleurs si tel était le cas, il ne serait pas revenu. Aussi, il est celui qui va essayer de redonner vie à Fonds rouge. Nouveau berger de l'enracinement, émissaire de l'attachement à la terre natale, c'est lui qui va essayer de se fixer à nouveau à la terre¹³, en laquelle plus personne ne semble ne plus avoir le moindre espoir, les habitants de Fonds rouge. Pour commencer, il doit substituer à la haine qui divise et sape tout, l'amour qui réconcilie et reconstruit. C'est vers ce projet que tend l'essentiel autant que le superflu de son activité. Pour cela, il lui faut trouver l'eau, l'ἀρκη (l'arkhè, le fondement), à partir de quoi la vie pourra renaître de la nuit. Cette mission semble se fixer pour lui dès son arrivée : « Il descendit le sentier, écarta quelques galets, gratta le sable brûlant. Des racines mortes s'effritèrent entre ses doigts lorsque, sur les bords du ravin, il consulta la terre grenue, sans consistance et qui coulait comme de la poudre » (Roumain 24).

Une question que l'on pourrait se poser : Manuel est-il vraiment revenu ? Revient-on jamais ? Mais revient-on jamais quand on a laissé son pays ? Le rituel du retour au pays natal peut-il en réalité être correctement consigné dans un cahier ? Le même pays qu'on a laissé est-ce dans le même que l'on revient ? Dans le cas de Manuel, il est évident que non. Et puis, il y a aussi le problème du temps,

¹³ Ainsi à Annaïse qui lui dit : « Pour nous autres malheureux la vie est un passage sans miséricorde dans la misère. (...) il n'y a pas de consolation. » Il réplique sur le ton sentencieux du prophète : « En vérité, il y a une consolation, je vais te dire : c'est la terre, ton morceau de terre fait pour le courage de tes bras... » pp. 26-27.

celui de la temporalité, du temps de la mémoire et du temps réel, celui qui s'écoule entre-temps. Entre le temps dans lequel l'on s'en va et celui dans lequel, en principe, dans la forme, l'on revient. Celui du temps réel, le temps historique, et du temps vécu... comme quand l'on revient d'un long voyage comme Ulysse ou d'un long coma... La sensation forte que le temps s'était un moment arrêté. Que les choses se sont figées, cristallisées, kitschées dans un temps « T ». Dans une mémoire défaillante et désincarnée qui n'arrive pas à faire la synthèse de la pensée du divers. Mais revient-on jamais quand on a laissé son pays ?

Jacques Roumain lui a une réponse toute lyrique à cette question : « Si l'on y est d'un pays, si l'on y est né, comme qui dirait : natif-natal, eh bien, on l'a dans les yeux, la peau, les mains, avec la chevelure de ses arbres, la chair de sa terre, les os de ses pierres, le sang de ses rivières, son ciel, sa saveur, ses hommes et ses femmes : c'est une présence dans le cœur, ineffaçable, comme une fille qu'on aime (...) » (Ibid) Mais c'est une réponse lyrique qui, par delà sa beauté, ne manque de laisser perplexe. Une chose est d'avoir en soi un lieu que de l'avoir devant soi. Or dans cette image lyrique de Jacques Roumain, les deux images sont identifiées voire confondues.

Comment faire à rebours le chemin du dépaysement quand on a été mis en dérouté par la misère? D'ailleurs le pays dans lequel on revient n'est plus le même. La seule chose qui est restée fidèle à la mémoire de Manuel est la case¹⁴. L'espace physique n'est plus le même. Les gens physiquement et mentalement ne sont plus les mêmes. Et le « on », le « on » qui revient n'est plus le même. Comment, c'est-à-dire depuis quel lieu unitaire, synchroniser ces décalages à temps multiple ? Le Déprestre de Maurice Sixto est une histoire de ce genre. Le retour a failli tourner au drame. L'incompréhension est partout! Comme nous le verrons à la lumière du roman suivant (*L'ignorance* de Milan Kundera) ce retour est impossible.

¹⁴ cf. p. 30 « Manuel retrouva la case fidèle à sa mémoire : l'étroite galerie à balustrades, le sol battu, pavé de galets, les murs vétustes où transparait le clissage. »

2. L'IGNORANCE.

Le roman *L'ignorance* de Milan Kundera paru en 2003 est également un livre où l'étrangeté, la nostalgie¹⁵, la difficulté et l'horreur du retour tiennent une place structurante. L'histoire, c'est celle de Irena, ou plutôt celle du déchirement de Irena à la sortie du stalinisme d'16ans les anciens pays du bloc de l'Est. Emigrée en France en 1969, elle y séjourne depuis vingt ans en 1989 quand le bloc s'effondre. Et elle a complètement déjà refait sa vie là où elle est. Elle a son travail, son appartement, ses enfants. Elle est donc déchirée entre l'obligation de retour au pays natal – qui est le théâtre d'événements historiques (la révolution) qu'elle n'avait jamais imaginés – que lui impose ses amis [notamment son amie française Sylvie qui, dès l'ouverture du roman, lui demande : « Qu'est-ce que tu fais encore ici ! » et son ancienne condisciple au lycée qui lui a écrit une lettre dans laquelle elle lui dit : « « Il est grand temps que tu reviennes »] et son désir profond de continuer à vivre là où elle se sent bien, là où elle a tout naturellement refait sa vie. La question du retour prend la forme d'un dilemme, d'autant qu'il y a longtemps qu'elle a acquis la conviction que « son émigration, bien qu'imposée de l'extérieur, contre sa volonté, était peut être, à son insu, la meilleure issue à sa vie »⁹ (Ibid 30). D'autant qu'également, elle a toujours eu à vivre le retour au pays natal, comme tout émigré politique, fantasmatiquement (Gallimard 21) sous le mode de l'horreur. Pourtant dans le pays où elle vit, on avait pris l'habitude par anticipation de la considérer comme une émigrée en souffrance. Donc le moment était « maintenant venu pour elle de confirmer

¹⁵ A propos de la nostalgie, M. Kundera nous rappelle dans son éclairage sémantique autour de la nostalgie que selon la langue utilisée, elle peut se dire de multiples manières du passé ou de l'avenir. Ainsi nous apprend-t-il que, « Les Allemands utilisent rarement le mot nostalgie dans sa forme grecque et préfèrent dire Sehnsucht : désir de ce qui est absent ; mais la Sehnsucht peut viser aussi bien ce qui a été que ce qui n'a jamais été (une nouvelle aventure) et elle n'implique pas nécessairement l'idée d'un nostos (retour) ... » p. 11.

¹⁶ Dans le roman, l'auteur parle de sortie du communisme, il ne fait aucune différence entre le projet d'émancipation universelle contenu dans cet idéal et les régimes d'inspiration soviétique (à l'instigation du Kominintern sous obédience stalinienne) qui se sont installés dans les anciens pays du bloc de l'Est. « Dans un monde qui s'est complètement évaporé de sa tête. » p. 192

cette souffrance par la joie de son retour» (30).

«Dès les premières semaines de l'émigration, Irena faisait des rêves étranges : elle est dans un avion qui change de direction et atterrit sur un aéroport inconnu ; des hommes en uniforme, armés, l'attendent au pied de la passerelle, une sueur froide sur le front, elle reconnaît la police tchèque. Une autre fois, elle se balade dans une petite ville française quand elle voit un curieux groupe de femmes qui, chacune une chope de bière à la main, courent vers elle, l'apostrophent en tchèque, rient avec une cordialité perfide, et épouvantée, Irena se rend à compte qu'elle est à Prague, elle crie, elle se réveille» (ibid 31).

Donc même en émigration, elle est hantée mais négativement par Prague sa ville qu'elle n'aime plus – si elle l'a jamais aimée. Dans cet extrait du texte, on peut voir les deux principales obsessions qui reviennent la persécuter jusqu'en son lieu de retraite et de recueillement, la police tchèque et la condition des femmes tchèques, peut être celle d'institutrice de campagne, dont elle refuse le destin. Son déplacement est topographique mais elle est également identitaire. Elle lui permet de se poser dans un refus. Mais cela, c'est le soir, car le jour les choses se passent autrement. Le jour, elle recevait de son subconscient des "morceaux du pays natal telles des images de bonheur". Et une tension s'installe¹⁷ entre ses sentiments de jour et de nuit. Cette ambivalence sera-t-elle maintenue jusqu'à la fin ? Est-ce cette ambivalence primitive chez elle qui conditionne l'ambivalence des attitudes à son égard essentiellement caractérisées par le mépris ? Tout en elle la dépeint comme une étrangère. Son rapport avec sa mère, son rapport avec son pays etc...

Au moment où ses événements se produisent dans son pays¹⁸, qui d'ailleurs n'est même plus son

¹⁷ Milan Kundera, *L'ignorance*, Gallimard, 2003, p. 23. cf. "Le même cinéaste du subconscient qui, le jour, lui envoyait des morceaux du pays natal telles des images de bonheur, organisait, la nuit, des retours effrayants dans ce même pays". Cette traduction en double clichés du cinéaste du subconscient, qui n'est autre qu'elle-même, témoigne de la tension dans laquelle elle vit par rapport à la chose

¹⁸ Comme elle le dit elle-même lors d'une discussion avec son ami Gustaf, le suédois, qui conseille à sa firme d'envisager l'ouverture d'une agence à Prague et qui lui dit : - « Je suis ravi d'entrer en contact avec ta ville », - « Prague n'est plus ma ville. » p. 31. Mais cela

pays, se déclenche également en elle un processus de questionnement profond sur elle-même et sur son histoire personnelle. Sur sa manière d'appréhender sa vie, son histoire, sur son grille d'appréciation d'elle-même. C'est à la faveur de ce déchirement qu'elle va entreprendre un véritable retour sur elle-même, une véritable remise en question. Irena c'est quelqu'un de simple qui ne demande pas plus que l'on s'intéresse à elle, que l'on s'intéresse à ce qu'elle a à donner en propre, à ce qu'elle a à dire. Et c'est justement là le but de sa recherche. Elle veut être reconnue pour ce qu'elle est : quelqu'un qui vit et qui, à ce titre, a quelque chose de propre à raconter. Tout ce qu'elle veut, c'est sortir de cette image kitschée de l'émigrée comme « la jeune femme qui souffre, bannie de son pays.»

Et dans sa volonté, Irena est désespérément seule. Désespérément incomprise dans cette quête d'affirmation d'elle-même. Et c'est sa solitude essentielle qui donne la tonalité définitive du roman. Comme quand elle rencontre Josef dans l'Aéroport de Paris, et qu'elle souhaite qu'il se souvienne de lui... la joie du destin partagé... son unique hantise étant de ne pas traverser la vie sans intéresser personne... c'est le début d'un nouveau malentendu. Car Josef, lui, est bloqué dans les convenances. Il suivra sa trajectoire jusqu'au bout.

Et même si, comme le fait remarquer François Ricard, « tous les personnages du roman sont des émigrés», par delà quelques similitudes de surface, le drame d'Irena n'est pas le drame habituel des émigrés. Son histoire est singulière et sa situation irrégulière. Elle ne rejoint même pas celle de Milada, la scientifique à l'oreille mutilée, qui voudrait justement pouvoir exister sans avoir besoin d'un corps.

En guise de conclusion.

De ce qui précède, il nous semble découler certes des interrogations diverses et extrêmement nombreuses. Nous en privilégierons une : celle sur le rôle que peut jouer l'art dans la transformation sociale. Les auteurs choisis nous apprennent justement que l'art peut jouer un rôle déterminant en illustrant cette idée selon laquelle dans le domaine de la transformation sociale, il ne

on se refuse de l'entendre car comme elle le dit c'est selon la fidélité à l'étiquette qu'on lui a mis qu'elle sera jugée.

saurait y avoir échec.

A ce propos, il nous semble que leur concept d'art, en assurant une prise en charge utopique de la réalité sociale, a le potentiel de permettre au réel de se renouveler, de se ré-inventer et de sortir du cadre pré-établi. Cette prise en charge passe par une interrogation, une remise en question du social tel qu'il est. Et c'est ce que nous avons essayé de montrer par l'analyse des ouvrages qui précèdent.

L'intérêt de ces ouvrages (*Chansons du deuxième étage*, *GR*, *L'ignorance*) est qu'ils mettent en scène de subjectivités errantes, que nous avons précédemment appelées figures intempestives du social. Le cadre des histoires, les auteurs et les personnages varient mais qu'ils soient à Fonds Rouge, en France ou dans un lieu quelconque, dans tous les cas, c'est de mobilité et d'errance qu'il s'agit.

Le film et les deux romans choisis sont des ouvrages militants et c'est d'ailleurs ce qui explique leur similitude de tonalité. Il s'agit ici et là d'histoire d'étranger, de figures intempestives du réel. De gens qui viennent ou reviennent de loin et ce faisant, ils questionnent ce qui, pour tout le monde, semble aller de soi. Cette idée, Manuel l'exprime clairement car, comme il le dit lui-même, il a appris de son expérience cubaine que « ce qui compte, c'est la rébellion, et la connaissance que l'homme est le boulanger de la vie

Qu'il s'agisse de Thomas, Manuel ou Irena, les personnages sont animés d'un égal désir d'affirmation de soi, de prise en charge de leur destinée hors des cadres fixés et dans lesquels on voudrait les retenir. C'est en cela qu'ils peuvent constituer des paramètres du changement. Il y a dans la vie de chacun de ces personnages deux coordonnées géographiques : un local et un extra-territorial... initialement imaginé, fantasmé, un espace archétypal dans lequel la figure du désir se construit fictivement à partir de bribes furtivement chopées ça et là – et l'essentiel de leurs vies s'articulent, s'ordonnent autour de ces deux lieux. Thomas, Manuel ainsi que Milada sont avant tout une géographie – qu'ils refusent ou qu'ils assument – et c'est à partir de ce lieu qu'ils

tendent d'inventer, de déconstruire les lignes déjà fixées. A partir de ces lieux, qu'ils tentent de fuir les réservoirs de stéréotypes ; il y a fondamentalement, une tension à sens multiple à laquelle donne naissance leur mouvement de déplacement. Chez eux, comme le dit le poète Joël Desrosiers, la nostalgie du pays perdu ne s'accompagne pas de l'acquisition d'un autre. Ce qui installe les personnages dans une certaine ambivalence fonctionnelle à laquelle certains périront.

En clair, ce sont des passants qui s'appliquent à passer et qui vont très certainement périr pendant la traversée. Rien de mal à cela puisqu'on finit tous par périr durant les traversées. On ne voit jamais le bout de la traversée, le bout du passage. Que le navire fasse ou ne fasse pas naufrage, le passage restera donc inachevé. La situation est sans issue et grande est la responsabilité de l'assumer. Ce qui s'assure, par delà l'expérience spécifique des passagers, c'est la pertinence du message transmis à savoir la nécessité et la continuité du passage.

Dans les méditations qui ouvrent la dernière partie de son roman *Passages*, Émile Ollivier écrit ceci : « Dans leur soif de départ, les voyageurs ignorent souvent qu'ils ne feront qu'emprunter de vieilles traces. Mus par une pulsion, quand ils ont mal ici, ils veulent aller ailleurs. Ils oublient que le mieux-être est inaccessible puisqu'ils portent en eux leur étrangeté. (...) Ils erreront sans fin, animés du même désir fou que celui qui hante le destin implacable des saumons : ils tâtent des fleuves, des océans, pour retrouver à la fin l'eau, même impure, où ils sont nés et y pondre en une seule et brusque poussée, une réplique d'eux-mêmes et mourir.» Diagnostic décapant et sans concession. Est-ce à déclarer la vanité de toute chose et à proclamer la futilité et l'absurdité des rêves et des étrangetés ? Faut-il déclarer que les passages n'auront plus lieu ?

Et le dernier mot c'est un personnage du film, Stefan le frère cadet de Tomas, qui nous l'apporte. "Ce n'est pas vrai que les gens sont insensibles aux poèmes. Ils font semblant. Du moins pour l'instant, car il y a un temps pour tout. Et le temps de Tomas viendra!!!"

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Biographie.

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LAURA BARRIO-VILAR

Romancing the Caribbean: Tourism, Neocolonialism, and Intra-Racial Dislocations in the African Diaspora

Keywords: Tourism, Black bodies, neocolonialism, intra-racial relations, African American women writers

Abstract:

In order to study the impact of tourism on intra-racial relations among Blacks, I examine Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*, Terry McMillan's *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, and fifteen other romance novels. The Black body appears as the running metaphor through which the authors explore class divisions in the neocolonial system that defines today's African diaspora. In contrast with the empowering stories of upper-middle-class Black American women, we have the bodies of Afro-Caribbean islanders, who either disappear as mere servants in the background, or are brought to the forefront of the story as sexualized bodies at the protagonists' service. I contend that, while this paradoxical use of the Black body allows us to trace the cultural and economic evolution of U.S.-Caribbean relations from the colonial through the neocolonial era, it also reflects a problematic tendency toward rhetorical neocolonialism in African American women's writing.

"The sun never sets on the tourist empire" – Deborah McLaren (1998)

People all over the world have been crossing borders and exploring new frontiers for ages and for various reasons, from economic and political expansion to cultural curiosity. Today, we talk about these transnational encounters as globalization, whether we refer to the fast flow of capital and information across borders, international travel and migrations, or the increasing awareness of cultures around the world. One of the phenomena that benefits from globalization, and more specifically from post-World War II advancements in international air travel and the rise of Western consumerism, is tourism. What once was considered a luxury that only a few could enjoy, is now more accessible to masses of economically privileged (Western) peoples. One of the main destinations that many tourists choose for vacationing is the Caribbean, which has become an emblematic point of reference for those who seek an

escape from the mundane and stress of modern life to an exotic and relaxing "paradise on earth." As the former Caribbean colonies entered the postcolonial era and gained more control over their economies, Caribbean governments began to exploit the islands as a tourist destination. Encouraged by Western governments and other world organizations, such as the World Bank, United Nations, and World Tourism Organization, they hoped this approach would bring in money to the region and help improve its infrastructures.

Most studies on the tourism industry focus on its economic, political, and social effects on the regions where people tend to vacation. Whereas those will inform my analysis, I would like to focus on tourism as a form of voluntary and temporary migration in which African Americans increasingly participate. The decreasing costs of airline and cruise travel to the Caribbean have

attracted the attention of the rising African American upper-middle class. As a result, we can no longer talk about white Americans being the only U.S. presence in the Caribbean tourist resorts. An increasing number of African American women writers have made the transnational encounters between U.S. Blacks and Caribbean Blacks through tourism the framework of their novels. In order to study the implications of these interactions, I will examine Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby* (1981), Terry McMillan's *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* (1996), and fifteen other contemporary romance novels that follow McMillan's literary tradition. My take on these texts is informed by postcolonial, feminist, and cultural studies approaches, through which I will explore the dangers of engaging in neocolonialist practices, whether consciously or unconsciously, as writers and/or readers.

All selected texts feature Black women that move from the U.S. to a Caribbean island in order to escape their stressful upper-middle-class lives and to enjoy the pleasures of the region, whether it is natural resources, recreational opportunities, cultural heritage, or titillating sexual encounters with the natives and/or other tourists. The Black body appears as the running metaphor through which the authors explore class divisions in the neocolonial system that defines today's African diaspora. The interesting thing here is that we have, on the one hand, the empowering stories of upper-middle-class Black American women come to terms with their socially and sexually repressed bodies, blossoming into a new sexual self while on a Caribbean island. On the other hand, we have the bodies of Afro-Caribbean islanders, who either disappear as mere servants in the background, or are brought to the forefront of the story as sexualized bodies at the protagonists' service. I contend that, while this paradoxical use of the Black body allows us to trace the cultural and economic evolution of U.S.-Caribbean relations from the colonial through the neocolonial era, it also reflects a problematic tendency toward rhetorical neocolonialism in African American women's writing.

2. THE BLACK BODY IN TONI MORRISON'S TAR BABY:

Tar Baby is probably the least studied work by Toni Morrison. Most critics have analyzed her fourth novel

by either focusing on the cultural and political implications of its protagonists' racial and cultural assimilation into white Western capitalist values, or deconstructing the religious underpinnings of the story. Scholars such as Ann Rayson, Sandra Pouchet Paquet, and Evelyn Hawthorne highlight the opposition between the protagonist, Jadine Childs (who represents upward mobility, Western civilization, and a detachment from Black heritage), and Son Green, her lover (who embodies Black folklore and Black nationalist values). Meanwhile, authors like Lauren Lepow underscore Morrison's critique of dualistic thinking through biblical discourse and echoes of Milton's version of paradise. Although some critical readings of *Tar Baby* deal with the notion of the African diaspora and its values, I am interested in the novel as it deals with the intricate experiences of those who choose to live in voluntary exile and migration, as well as the story's colonialist undertones.

The novel focuses on Jadine, a successful African American model who runs back to her white patrons and her family in the Caribbean looking for answers to the uncertainties in her life. Although her college education and her job as a model have helped her gain an upper-middle-class status, Jadine lacks guidance and self-confidence. At the beginning of the novel, we find Jadine at the peak of her professional and academic career. She has landed a cover in *Elle* magazine and passed her oral exams in art history from the Sorbonne. Furthermore, her white European boyfriend, Ryk, has asked her to marry him, and everybody seems interested in befriending and supporting her. However, while Jadine is shopping for a party to celebrate her achievements, "knowing she was intelligent and lucky," she runs into a Black woman, with "skin like tar against the canary yellow dress" she wears (Morrison 45). The vision of this woman attracts the attention of everybody in the store, including Jadine, who seems to be mesmerized by the woman's "confidence of transcendent beauty" (Morrison 46). But it is her encounter with this Black woman that shatters Jadine's confidence and makes her question herself: "that woman's woman—that mother/sister/she; that unphotographable beauty took it all away" (Morrison 46).

Jadine's personal crisis unravels the main events in the rest of the novel. Her value as a woman is based mostly on her value as a model. In other words, it is

her body, her beauty as a Black woman that helps her succeed in life. But meeting the woman in yellow, who seems to be the essence of pure Black female beauty, reminds Jadine that her title as "the copper Venus" means nothing (Morrison 115), since it is based on an artificial version of beauty and a false sense of security. Jadine realizes, "The woman had made her feel lonely in a way. Lonely and inauthentic" (Morrison 48). Compared to the woman in yellow, Jadine's beauty is based on a stereotypical representation of Blackness. In fact, she does not even want to define herself as a Black woman, and feels uncomfortable when others see her as such: "I wonder if the person he [Ryk] wants to marry is me or a black girl? ... what will happen when he finds out that I hate ear hoops, that I don't have to straighten my hair, that Mingus puts me to sleep, that sometimes I want to get out of my skin and be only the person inside—not American—not black—just me?" (Morrison 48). Jadine's definition of Blackness is based on reductive mainstream notions that tie African Americans to a specific set of physical characteristics, dress and music styles. Ironically, her attempt to escape from Blackness will lead her closer to it, as I will later show.

No matter where her career takes her (Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Paris), Jadine feels at odds with those around her due to society's racial and gender expectations: "she always thought she had three choices: marry a dope king or a doctor, model, or teach art at Jackson High. In Europe she thought there might be a fourth choice" (Morrison 225). In the U.S. she is expected to abide by the racial codes that define American society, and whatever sense of security she finds, even in the multicultural and urban New York City (which she considers "a black woman's town" (Morrison 222)), it is only temporary: "New York was not her home after all. The dogs were leashed in the city but the reins were not always secure" (Morrison 288). On the other hand, in Paris she is perceived and admired as an exotic primitive, much like Josephine Baker in the early twentieth century. Conflicted about her role in society and Ryk's marriage proposal, she flies to the Caribbean in search of answers and guidance from her aunt, Ondine, and uncle, Sydney. It is precisely the social hierarchy and dynamics among white Americans, African Americans, and Afro-Caribbeans on

the francophone island of *Isle des Chevaliers* that I find most fascinating and I would like to focus on.

Morrison's narrative sheds light on the continuities between American slavery, colonialism, and the new postcolonial era in which the story is set. Far from the idyllic, peaceful, and comforting paradise that the Caribbean has always been thought to be, the island and its inhabitants prove to be caught in a vicious cycle, where racial hierarchies, social inequalities, and the exploitation of the land have barely changed. If anything, they have become more obscured and complicated. My argument about *Tar Baby*, then, contains three major points: First, I briefly illustrate how the interracial relationships between the American characters mirror the master/servant dynamics found in the plantocracy of the antebellum U.S. and the colonial Caribbean. Second, I focus on the intraracial relations between the African American and the Afro-Caribbean characters, which are complicated by class and cultural differences. I examine how the supracitizen status of U.S. Blacks in the diaspora renders the Afro-Caribbean bodies and experiences invisible. Finally, I offer a critique of Morrison's use of paradise discourse. In sum, I argue that Morrison's initial attempt to expose the cultural and material implications of the postcolonial/neocolonial era is undermined by her problematic use of paradise discourse (as defined by Gregory Ian Strachan) and her complicity in the development of neocolonial stereotypes about the Caribbean and its peoples. In fact, I contend that Jadine's pseudo-tourist status in the Caribbean contributes to the perpetuation of the Caribbean peoples as exotic and primitive, at the same time it leads her to participate in their economic exploitation.

2.1 MORRISON'S CRITIQUE OF NEOCOLONIALISM:

Incorporating the story of Valerian and Margaret Street, the white American couple who paid for Jadine's education in the best schools, not only allows Morrison to explore interracial relations, but also sets the political and economic framework of the story. Valerian's entrepreneurial experiences as the owner of a candy factory and a real estate developer mirror the evolution of the United States as a neocolonial power. Valerian's family fortune is the result of their candy's popular success—candy made from Caribbean products and sold

to “jigs” (poor Southern Blacks). Valerian might benefit economically from the labor of Caribbean hands and the plantation economy of the region; nevertheless, he does not feel indebted to the area or its inhabitants in any way. In fact, after he discovers Gideon and Thérèse, his two Afro-Caribbean servants, stealing apples from him, “he had been able to dismiss with a flutter of the fingers the people whose sugar and cocoa that had allowed him to grow old in regal comfort” (Morrison 202-03). Valerian’s attitude toward and interactions with his Black servants are informed by his privileged position in the upper echelons of economic and social hierarchies. The master/servant dynamics reflected in the novel resemble those under slavery and colonialism. Unlike European colonizers and plantation owners in many parts of the Caribbean and the United States, Valerian does not impose his belief system and worldview on his servants, nor does he resort to violence when conducting business and living in the Caribbean. Nevertheless, he does follow a similar approach to his predecessors by ignoring the needs and culture of the island’s natives and building his empire over their shoulders. Despite the changes in the sociopolitical climate of the island, these similarities underscore some of the continuities between the plantation system and the neocolonial enterprise.

As in most situations in which employers and servants live under the same roof, Valerian considers his African American servants (Sydney and Ondine), as well as their niece (Jadine) like members of the family. But working for and in the family does not necessarily mean being part of it. In fact, as Margaret reminds Valerian, “they are [his] for life. ... They’re loyal people and they should be” (Morrison 31). The white couple’s attitude toward their Black servants is paternalistic and possessive. Not only do they refuse to recognize how much they depend on their employees, who go beyond the call of duty to satisfy the Streets’ needs. Later on we also discover that, because the Black couple depends on their job for economic survival (to the point of moving with them all the way from the United States to the Caribbean), Ondine decided not to manipulate Margaret’s most important secret: Margaret used to torture her son physically, cutting him up, burning him with cigarettes, or sticking pins in his behind (Morrison 208). Had Ondine and Sydney

been part of the family and seen their employers’ family as theirs, Ondine would have probably tried to protect the child against his mother’s abuse. The inequality in their relationship might not be clear to the white couple, but their Black servants know better than to offer their unconditional loyalty and commitment to them, so they never forget the professional basis of their employment and living arrangements.

Valerian exercises his power as the owner of the house and the emperor of his micro universe. As a result, he does not hesitate to welcome Son to their dinner table and use him as a source of entertainment after Margaret discovers the intruder hidden in her closet. Sydney, Ondine, and Jadine feel outraged and offended by Valerian’s lack of distinction between hard-working Blacks like them, and “uncivilized” Blacks like Son and the natives of the island: “The man upstairs wasn’t a Negro—meaning one of them. He was a stranger. ... And even if he didn’t steal, he was nasty and ignorant and they would have to serve him anyway” (Morrison 102). Similarly, when Valerian decides to fire Gideon and Thérèse without consulting with Sydney and Ondine, both servants complain about the lack of consideration he shows towards them and their work. Valerian’s despotism is criticized by all the characters in the novel, and as a matter of poetic justice, he eventually becomes a hopeless and helpless zombie, paying for his past dues. Morrison thus underscores the negative ramifications of the old and new plantation system for both masters and servants.

The tar-baby story also helps frame Morrison’s critique of the ill effects of colonialism. Whereas most scholars see Jadine as the tar baby that seduces and traps Son in the story, I propose to look at the fictional Caribbean island of Isle de Chevaliers as the literal and metaphorical tar baby that gives title to the novel. As Lauren Lepow reminds us in “Paradise Lost and Found,” the tropical paradise of the island contains a swamp, Sein de Vieilles: “And a witch’s tit it was: a shriveled fogbound oval seeping with a thick black substance that even mosquitoes could not live near” (Morrison 10). The swamp is the product of real estate developers’ diverting the course of a river in order to make room for luxury buildings like Valerian’s house, where wealthy (white) Americans could vacation or retire (Lepow 366). According to the island’s legend,

Sein de Vieilles is also the home of the swamp women, who have sex with the men that ride horses over the hills. These horsemen are presumably the descendants of “some slaves who went blind the minute they saw Dominique [the island],” and managed to escape slavery by hiding on the island (Morrison 152). For those unfamiliar with the nature of the swamp or careless about the legend behind it, the tar-like substance of which is full can prove dangerous.

Jadine, who dismisses the island’s folklore as ignorant Black people’s superstitions, accidentally sinks in the swamp while wandering its surroundings. As she struggles to get out of the slime, the old women “were delighted when they first saw her, thinking a runaway child had been restored to them. This girl was fighting to get away from them. The women hanging from the trees were quiet now, but arrogant—mindful as they were of their value, their exceptional femaleness” (Morrison 183). Jadine is not only trapped by the tar-like swamp, which encapsulates the essence of the island’s past (slavery) and present (tourism), but she refuses to sink in it, literally and metaphorically. But most significantly, she rejects the model of Black femininity that Sein de Vieilles (“the old women’s breast/bosom”) represents.

Like in the archetypal tar-baby story, we have a “farmer” (the white American entrepreneurs of the tourism industry) that creates a “fake” tar baby (i.e., the island’s luxurious buildings and tourist resorts, including the swamp) in order to attract and seduce, and even manipulate and punish those who threaten the farmer’s interests and/or property. Jadine poses a threat to the neocolonizers’ interests by destabilizing social and economic hierarchies, given her ambiguous cultural upbringing and her ties to both the working and the upper-middle class. After all, she is a light-skinned Black woman who rejects her racial background; she has been educated to uphold white Western values as the most relevant; her career as a model grants her the luxuries of the upper-middle class; and the only family she knows are working-class Blacks. Thus, the tar-baby story, interwoven with the Black female body as a metaphor, helps Morrison’s critique of the exploitation of the Caribbean island first under the plantation economy (Valerian’s use of Caribbean sugar and cocoa for his candy), and later under the tourism

economy (Valerian’s house on the island).

2.2 BLACK SERVANTS AND INTRARACIAL HIERARCHIES:

Valerian and his white American counterparts are not the only contributors to the perpetuation of colonial values in the Caribbean region. The dynamics between Sydney, Ondine, and Jadine, on the one hand, and Gideon, Thérèse, and Alma Estée, on the other, also mirror those of the master/servant relationship. The African American characters of the story see themselves as more civilized, refined, cultured, and complex than Afro-Caribbeans. The Afro-Caribbean characters, in turn, resent their Black American counterparts, but “wear the mask” and a fake smile in front of them: “Thérèse whose hatreds were more complex and passionate as exemplified by her refusal to speak to the American Negroes, and never even to acknowledge the presence of the white Americans in her world. To effect this she believed all she had to do was not look at them.... What they took for inattentiveness was a miracle of concentration” (Morrison 111). Far from romanticizing racial connections, Morrison’s narrative reveals no sense of unity among Blacks from different countries in the diaspora. Although both couples are servants, economic and cultural differences create a rift in their relationship.

Morrison emphasizes the disconnection between U.S. and Caribbean Blacks especially through their naming practices. Like the Streets, neither Sydney, nor Ondine or Jadine know (or bother to know) the real names of their Afro-Caribbean counterparts. They refer to Gideon as Yardman, and to Thérèse and Alma Estée as Marys. Sydney, Ondine, and Jadine think all the women on the island are called Mary something (Morrison 40), so they do not make any distinctions between them. To them, they are all named the same, they all look the same, they all have the same primitive values and background, and they all perform services for them. Readers might find Sydney, Ondine, and Jadine’s treatment of the island Blacks more problematic than the Streets’. After all, Valerian and Margaret barely see or interact with these servants. However, Sydney and Ondine have to talk to them and work with them every day. Needless to say, Gideon, Thérèse, and Alma Estée resent not only the

white Americans for whom they work and who have taken over the island, but also their African American servants, whom they also consider outsiders. Gideon even takes pride in the fact that Thérèse has been fired several times, but keeps being rehired because they do not notice he brings her back each time (Morrison 153).

The dynamics between Sydney and Ondine (on the one hand) and Gideon and Thérèse (on the other) may remind us of those between the big house and the field slaves, which takes us back to my original claim about the continuities between American slavery, colonialism, and the new postcolonial era that Morrison highlights. However, Jadine's role in these relations complicates and takes Morrison's critique of colonialism a step further. Because Jadine as an African American is a contributing member to the U.S. economy and culture, I contend Morrison develops a critique of Jadine's (and by extension of upper-middle-class African Americans') complicity with the economic and political exploitation of Afro-Caribbean individuals in general. Morrison thus characterizes the relationship between Afro-Caribbeans and African Americans in the novel as tense and conflictive, leading readers to question the potential implications of real life relationships. I also argue that the healing experience that Jadine undergoes in the Caribbean ultimately contributes to the cultural exploitation of Afro-Caribbeans. Thanks to her material affluence and the privileges granted by her nationality, Jadine chooses temporary exile in the Caribbean as a means to escape the oppressive circumstances by which she lives surrounded in the U.S. and even in Europe. However, her participation in the emerging tourism industry further complicates her relationship with her Caribbean counterparts, by exoticizing them and perpetuating the paradise discourse that constrains Afro-Caribbean peoples.

2.3. MORRISON'S PROBLEMATIC USE OF PARADISE DISCOURSE:

Although Morrison sets out to undermine the dualistic thinking that permeates Western culture, particularly primitivism discourse, her decision to make Jadine one of the main focalizers of the story may contribute to reinforcing the idea of whiteness as symbolic of culture and civilization, as opposed to blackness as the

embodiment of wild, primitive, and sexual tendencies. Morrison engages in neocolonialist discourse in order to highlight the degree to which Jadine has internalized racism and white Western values. The most revealing cases of this type of rhetoric and epistemology are Jadine's reaction to the black sealskin coat that her European boyfriend gives her, and Son's characterization as wild, primitive, and dangerous. When Jadine is left alone with her coat, she "closed her eyes and imagined the blackness she was sinking into. She lay spread-eagled on the fur, nestling herself into it. It made her tremble. She opened her lips and licked the fur. It made her tremble more. Ondine was right; there was something a little fearful about the coat. No, not fearful, seductive" (Morrison 113). Jadine's sexual desire is awakened by the blackness of the coat, which is paradoxically fearful and seductive. The fur's color and texture provoke in Jadine a sexual drive she has suppressed and denied in order to adopt upper-middle-class sexual mores and to avoid being stereotyped as a hypersexual Black jezebel. Discovering this underdeveloped, yet powerful aspect of her identity initially scares Jadine. But the very thing from which she has run away throughout her life eventually becomes appealing.

Likewise, when Jadine first sees Son, everything about him is black, fearful, and seductive, to the point that "[a]s [Son] stood looking at the coat she could not tell whether he or it was the blacker or the shinier" (Morrison 114). Son smells like an animal. In fact, his smile reminds Jadine of "small dark dogs galloping on silver feet" (Morrison 113). She also notices other physical characteristics in Son that she has learned to consider primitive, uncivilized, dangerous, and undesirable: "his skin [is] as dark as a riverbed, his eyes as steady and clear as a thief's" (Morrison 113). And the most disturbing feature: "his hair looked overpowering—physically overpowering, like bundles of long whips or lashes that could grab her and beat her to jelly. And would. Wild, aggressive, vicious hair that needed to be put in jail. Uncivilized, reform-school hair. Mau, Attica, chain-gang hair" (Morrison 113). Interestingly, despite Jadine's initial aversion toward Son's criminal and animal-like qualities, she ends up having an intense sexual relationship with him. Thus, Jadine, the orphaned light-skinned Black woman who has assimilated

into Western capitalist values and has internalized the idea of Blackness as primitive, regains access to her racial and sexual self through Blackness. It is not until she has immersed herself into the "Black experience" through her affair with Son that Jadine finds some inner peace and achieves a certain degree of self-fulfillment.

As empowering as Jadine's self-discovery might seem, I find the evolution of the process problematic not only because her self-fulfillment is predicated on Son, therefore leaving the power of validation for this woman at the hands of a man. Her transformation is also predicated on what I consider colonialist undertones. On the one hand, we can argue that Morrison is criticizing the primitivist discourse characteristic of racist attitudes, by exaggerating its consequences when unchallenged. In this sense, Jadine's perspective functions as a rhetorical device through which Morrison illustrates the ludicrousness of this approach to race. On the other hand, the lack of a clear distinction between the narrator's voice and the character's views can lead the reader to believe that Jadine's thought process is shared and encouraged by both the narrator and the author (at trap into which I kept falling after several readings until I was presented with an alternative interpretation).

Relying on a similarly ambivalent take as with the use of primitivist discourse, the novel reveals the consequences of viewing the Caribbean as a cultural paradise of sun, sand, sex, and servility, and implying that Caribbean cultures and civilizations have not changed and assimilated into European standards as much as African American culture has. After Jadine achieves a new understanding of her racial and sexual self, she flies to Paris, taking her sealskin coat with her, and retaining only a romanticized memory of the Caribbean. Presumably planning to marry Ryk, Jadine is on her way to a life of riches and (white) cultural sophistication, and seems to ignore the oppressive material conditions in which the Afro-Caribbeans characters in the novel and even her own African American family are left. Consequently, I contend, class and national differences undermine the apparent universal brotherhood and sisterhood that Morrison might have envisioned for African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans through their reclamation of a common African heritage.

Through the myth of the blind slaves that gives name to the island, Morrison emphasizes the important role that slave resistance plays in the identity of the island and its inhabitants. The Blacks that became blind upon arrival to this new land have presumably maintained most of the cultural values they brought from their place of origin. Despite (or perhaps because of) their physical blindness, though, the myth portrays them as visionaries untouched by white western civilization and its capitalist values. Morrison relies on the experience of slavery, as well as the resistance and resilience that Blacks had to develop in order to cope with it, as the common past that bonds Blacks in the diaspora, even when her characters seem to forget this connection and focus on class and cultural differences. Ultimately, *Tar Baby* idealizes and romanticizes the island natives in the process.

3. THE BLACK BODY AND AFRICAN AMERICAN ROMANCE NOVELS:

Whereas the purpose of Toni Morrison's use of neocolonialist literary discourse in *Tar Baby* is debatable, there is no question about the problematic use of this ideology in what is now one of the most popular literary genres among middle-class African American women: the romance novel. *Tar Baby* is one of, if not the first text written by an African American woman that explores the impact that U.S. businesses and the tourism industry in the Caribbean has on intraracial relations. Interestingly, the topic has now become popular among African American authors of romance novels. Probably as a result of the increasing number of African Americans that travel to the Caribbean on vacation in the last two decades of the twentieth century, numerous African American romance novels are set in the Caribbean region. The islands provide an ideal background for the recreation of fantasy and escapism characteristic of the romance genre. Although a departure from Morrison's complex and sophisticated writing, the formulaic style and storylines of these romance novels should not be underestimated, especially considering their large readership and popularity. When examining the impact of tourism on relationships among U.S. and Caribbean Blacks, these novels become crucial to our understanding of today's representations of the Caribbean in the American popular imagination. Having the stories set in the Caribbean allows both authors and

readers a chance to explore other areas of the diaspora, satisfy their curiosity about the paradisiacal islands, and feel empowered by a seemingly liberal and generous outreach to the area.

Terry McMillan's 1996 *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* is arguably the first of many romance novels that tackle many of the topics introduced by *Tar Baby*. In essence, McMillan narrates the story of Stella, a 42-year-old, upper-middle-class, divorced Black woman, who travels to Jamaica and finds the love of her life: a twenty-year-old Jamaican college student. Although they only spend a few hours together, the couple hit it off from the moment they meet and, despite the age, economic, and cultural differences, in the end they decide to get married. Like Morrison, McMillan selects the Caribbean as the exotic location where her protagonist will discover her essence as a Black woman, and how far her body, career skills, and cultural values can take her. As a result of McMillan's success, many African American women authors of romance novels have begun to write migration narratives featuring African American women who travel to the Caribbean. For the purposes of my project, I have identified fifteen of these contemporary narratives of tourism, which have been mostly published by the Dafina Series of Kensington Books, and specifically target an African American female audience.

Through a general overview of these texts, I will expose the dangers of engaging in neocolonialist practices, whether consciously or unconsciously, as writers and/or readers of this type of narratives. I will analyze the problematic cultural implications that African American women's narratives of tourism have on U.S.-Caribbean relations, revealing a paradoxical new trend of neocolonialism. On the one hand, the authors explore the potential of the Black female body as both a subject and an object of sensual and sexual desire, which has long been a taboo subject in many cultural venues due to the genteel ideology that permeates the African American middle class. But along with the empowering stories of successful African American career women, whose spiritual and sexual needs are finally discussed and taken care of, comes the exploitation of Afro-Caribbean individuals. While African American women's experiences remain the center of attention in these

tourism narratives, their Afro-Caribbean counterparts are relegated to the background of the story as mere props, usually wandering around as servants on constant call but barely noticed. Afro-Caribbean men, on the other hand, serve a much more crucial purpose. Their attractive bodies are paraded in front of the female protagonists for their own gratification. In fact, it is thanks to the initial sexual connection that African American women establish with them that the female protagonists reach their sexual, emotional, and spiritual maturity. With only a couple of exceptions, the romantic and sexual fantasies these writers create do not consider the reality on which these relationships are based: the emergence of the Caribbean beach boy as a result of the economic needs brought by the tourism industry.

But before I develop my argument, let me first clarify why I choose to focus on romance novels. After all, these cheap paperbacks are considered low-brow popular literature, developed through formulaic (and even simplistic) patterns and style for the mere purpose of entertaining (instead of challenging) their intended audience. Romance novels have been also accused of perpetuating patriarchal values and women's discrimination through love stories of female subservience and dependency on male authority and power. Nevertheless, since the 1980s, several critics have pointed out the empowering effect that these novels can have on their readers, who are more actively engaged in the production and interpretation of the texts than it was originally assumed. As the authors in Susan Strehle and Mary Panizza Carden's edited volume, *Doubled Plots: Romance and History*, demonstrate, "on the one hand, the narrative ventriloquizes cultural values, perpetuating and naturalizing patriarchal models of gender that project women's destined and desirable end in the family; on the other hand, the narrative talks back, revealing women's frustration, dissent, and potentially subversive responses to those patriarchal constructions" (xii). In fact, romance novels have changed since the 1950s and 60s, and the genre has become a billion-dollar-a-year industry with close to 65 million readers (*Romance Writers of America*). Today, readers get to enjoy the adventures of heroines who look more like them, who are economically independent, professionally capable, strong and assertive;

women who are aware of their sexuality and pursue a committed and balanced relationship in which love, respect, values, intimacy, and family responsibilities are mutually shared (Thurston 96).

Since 1980, African American women writers have developed their own series of romance novels, featuring Black women of all shapes, sizes, and skin tones, and including all sorts of Afrocentric elements. These stories have become very popular among African American readers, who "contribute 10 to 30 percent of the more than \$1 billion spent each year on romance novels" (Osborne 61). As Gwendolyn E. Osborne illustrates, "African American romance readers enjoy stories about women who look like them—not just physically, but politically, socially, economically, and emotionally as well" (67). Among the myriad settings, storylines, and historical frames that African American romances can have, one of the most popular stories is that of the African American woman who goes to the Caribbean on vacation and finds love on one of the islands. Terry McMillan's *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* was the first romance novel to start this new trend.

As a result of the success of McMillan's novel and its subsequent film version, many African American women authors of romance novels began to write tourism narratives featuring middle- or upper-middle-class African American women who, like Stella, travel to the "exotic" Caribbean islands in search of an escape from the mundane and the stress of modern life. In fact, many of them allude to McMillan's title, thus paying homage to her success and positioning themselves in her tradition. By referring to the new reality of Black tourism in the Caribbean, an experience that previously could only be enjoyed by a privileged (white) few, these authors counteract the current negative images that often pervade mainstream American media and popular imagination, which tend to represent Blacks as inner-city thugs, welfare recipients, or uneducated and unemployed individuals, for example. The protagonists not only enjoy the opportunity to travel to foreign lands, but they do so in first-class airplane seats and luxurious cruise ships, which they can either afford or have won through a contest. In the case of Marissa Monteilh's *The Chocolate Ship*, for instance, upon entering the first Black-owned cruise

ship on which the characters will experience many of their romantic and sexual fantasies, the heroine proudly declares: "I can't help but think how amazing it is to see all these Black people... cruising. Taking time out to do something once thought of as an adventure only explored by the White world. Putting our money together to get our butts onboard a Black-owned cruise ship with Black employees, black carpeting, black leather furniture, Black art, Black soul food and Black drinks" (Monteilh 48). Monteilh's fictional cruise ship embodies the best of Black culture, achievement, and consumerism, as it recreates a diasporic fantasy for her readers.

Black tourism romances also show successful African American women fulfilling both their romance and sexual fantasies, and finding a committed relationship between two equals. Romance writers thus give life to strong characters that Black female readers can identify with and fulfill their own fantasies through. Although in some cases the protagonists interact only with other African Americans, many of the novels show an attempt to reach out and connect with the "brothers and sisters" of the diaspora, to the point that some of the female characters end up having affairs and even marry Caribbean men. The anonymity and escape opportunities granted by the Caribbean islands are the perfect scenario for these African American women to forget their inhibitions and try new experiences. Angie Daniels' *In the Company of My Sistahs* even goes a step further by featuring an African American lesbian, who has been in the closet her entire life and, after having a fling with another woman in Jamaica, finally comes to terms with her sexuality. Upon returning to the U.S., she makes her long-term "relationship" with her girlfriend official. The romance industry thus opens a door to African American women writers and readers that had previously been excluded from the adventures of romance.

3.1 TOURISM, BLACK ROMANCE, AND NEOCOLONIALISM:

Despite the empowering elements that Black tourism romances might have, their stories normalize the concept of tourism as a positive choice for Caribbean economic advancement and as a productive form of cultural connection between the U.S. and the Caribbean.

And what I find more problematic, the authors (consciously or unconsciously) rely on a discourse very similar to that of colonial texts, which many postcolonial writers and intellectuals of Caribbean descent oppose and try to dismantle. At the same time that these romance writers attempt to counteract the ramifications of stereotypes about African Americans as uneducated, hypersexual, lazy individuals, they also reinforce other misinterpretations of the Afro-Caribbean experience. In fact, I argue that their perspective and treatment of Caribbean Blacks often mirror the old master-servant and colonizer-colonized relationships from the slavery and colonial eras.

First of all, the socioeconomic situation of the Caribbean nation states in these romance novels, as well as the interactions that the American protagonists maintain with the Caribbean characters, remind us of slavery and colonial times, much like the real life situation. Although most of the former Caribbean colonies have achieved their political independence from their colonizing nations, they have been caught up in a new situation of economic and political dependency on European and North American powers, which continue to control the area. Whereas under colonialism European nations controlled Caribbean economies through the plantation system, today foreign-owned airlines, tour operators, and hotel chains mostly from North America and Europe control the Caribbean economy through the tourism industry, as Ian Gregory Strachan and Polly Patullo demonstrate. The tourism industry has therefore replaced the old colonial system. As a result, far from strengthening the cultural “brotherhood” of the diaspora, U.S. Blacks do not join their Caribbean brothers and sisters in their struggle towards economic and social autonomy, but benefit from their labor, much like white Europeans and Americans. Afro-Caribbean bodies and sex become the new “raw products” exchanged for the benefit of outsiders.

As Strachan points out in *Paradise and Plantation*, “Although many African American tourists are today deliberate about spending their money in an independent black nation with whom they share cultural and historical ties, many others travel to the Caribbean in search of the same leisure, sun, gambling, and duty-free liquor that numerous white tourists enjoy” (13). Likewise, the African American protagonists of romance novels rejoice

in the various options for leisure and consumerism that Caribbean cruises and touristic resorts offer. They parasail, snorkel, water ski, shop, gamble, drink, eat, dance, and sunbathe, expecting all their needs to be met with a happy smile and barely ever giving a second thought to those who serve them. As the Afro-Caribbean entrepreneur in Michelle Monkou’s *Island Rendezvous* points out, “People expected all the natives to be smiling and happy for their business. There was no day off in the tourism industry” (30). Even when Stella overtips Black taxi drivers, tour operators, etc. because, as she puts it, taking care of each other is “a Black thing,” McMillan’s character is oblivious to the perspective of those who serve her and who might find her behavior patronizing. For that matter, Stella never considers the possibility that the island natives might dislike being reminded of her privileged economic and citizen status.

It is mostly when the islanders’ perspective is considered that we are exposed to the negative consequences that colonialism and tourism can have. In some instances, romance writers depict the poor conditions in which some Caribbean natives are forced to live. As their female protagonists explore the wonders of the region, often accompanied by one of the natives, they sometimes run into poor, marginal areas where many islanders live, but the tourists are rarely exposed to. The women, on their part, think that the small glimpses they get of the “real side” of the islands are enough for them to understand the complex realities in which Afro-Caribbeans live. This is, for example, the case in Leslie Esdaile’s *Take Me There*, where a reggae-rap artist hires a young accountant to balance his books in St. Lucia, his home country. The protagonist gradually falls in love with the charismatic singer, who has become rich thanks to his music, but always tries to invest his money back into his poverty-stricken community. Interestingly, although he makes an effort to show her the areas he is trying to help, readers only get a few paragraphs of those. The rest of the story unfolds inside the artist’s luxurious mansion and on his catamaran. Skerret’s *Letting Loose*, Monique’s *This Time*, King-Gamble’s *Then Came You*, Monkou’s *Island Rendezvous*, and McCarthy Louard’s *Smooth Operator* also follow this pattern. Although the African American protagonists fall in love with Afro-Caribbean natives who

try to show them the part of the islands that tourist barely ever access, it is these men’s connections to a luxurious lifestyle that marks the relationship. The experiences of the average Afro-Caribbean remain invisible.

In order to get a glimpse at the complex Caribbean reality in the neocolonial era from the Afro-Caribbean people’s perspective, which Toni Morrison briefly introduces in *Tar Baby* through Gideon and Thérèse, we have to resort to works such as Jamaica Kincaid’s *A Small Place*. In contrast with the conformist (yet trickster-like) attitude of Morrison’s fictional characters, Kincaid offers a real-life angry response to the devastating cultural, economic, and political effects of colonialism and tourism in the Caribbean, using Antigua (her homeland) as an example. She criticizes the tourist’s blindness, since he/she is not only ignorant of the culture and history of the island, but also oblivious of the poor material and health conditions of the islanders, the lack of cultural and economic resources, and the political corruption that controls the economy. In fact, Kincaid introduces us to an Antigua in which only outsiders and the former elites seem to prosper economically on the island. She addresses the reader/tourist/colonizer directly:

you make a leap from being that nice blob just sitting like a boob in your amniotic sac of the modern experience to being a person visiting heaps of death and ruin and feeling alive and inspired at the sight of it; to being a person lying on some faraway beach...; to being a person marveling at the harmony (ordinarily, what you would say is the backwardness) and the union these other people (and they are other people) have with nature.” (16)

For Kincaid, there is no real connection between the tourist and the islander. Theirs are two separate, unrelated experiences. Kincaid’s resentment towards tourists goes further, when she states, “An ugly thing, that is what you are when you become a tourist, an ugly, empty thing, a stupid thing, a piece of rubbish pausing here and there to gaze at this and taste that, and it will never occur to you that the people who inhabit the place in which you have just paused cannot stand you, that behind their closed doors they laugh at your strangeness.... They do not like you” (17). Although Kincaid’s opinion on the tourist experience in the Caribbean is not necessarily

shared by all islanders, she does give voice to a perspective that is often ignored or minimized. Even in the case of African American tourists, we should not assume (like MacMillan’s *Stella*) that the gap between the visitor and the guest is automatically bridged because of the common racial heritage. Cultural and class differences play a major role in the exchanges between the two groups, regardless of their good intentions.

Indeed, according to Strachan, “The African American ... may subject Caribbeans to the same systematic nativization, objectification, romantization, and exploitation in which the white tourist participates, wholeheartedly or unconsciously” (16). Consequently, the interactions that the protagonists of romance novels have with the Caribbean natives are complicated mostly by class differences and their reliance on stereotypes about the islands and their inhabitants. I argue that the tourist status of these characters contributes to the perpetuation of Caribbean peoples as exotic and primitive Others. Furthermore, through the tourism industry African Americans participate in the economic and political exploitation of Caribbean people in general, thus engaging in neocolonialist practices. More importantly, as romance writers unravel their stories, they engage in a neocolonialist discourse. They may have originally intended to reach out to and develop connections with other members of the African diaspora. But in actuality their novels disguise the material conditions, as well as the political and cultural realities of the Caribbean region, advancing the economic and political interests of North American and European imperialism.

The Caribbean region is presented in romance novels as a carefree paradise, where everything is perfect and beautiful, and no troubles exist. The “sun, sand, and sea... and sex” formula often found in touristic brochures is indeed suitable frame for romance novels, which deal with fantasies about foreign lands and exotic others. The protagonist of *Then Came You*, for example, finds comfort in the natural landscape and small villas of the Grenadines, which represents a sharp contrast not only with the urban setting where she works, but also her childhood neighborhood: “It was paradise for her, too, certainly a far cry from the slums where she’d grown up. For the remainder of the short ride, Raven gazed out

of the vehicle, admiring the pastel villas and lush natural vegetation" (King-Gamble 146). Furthermore, the stories often imply that Caribbean cultures have not changed and assimilated into European standards as much as African American culture has, which theoretically allows the characters to find inner harmony and get in touch with their African roots. In *The Chocolate Ship*, for example, the narrator describes the island of Nassau as

so beautiful, with its fine, pristine, pearly white sand beaches, picturesque tropical splendor, tall leaning coconut trees, and turquoise blue waters. Just in from the shore a little way Mia and Miles could see the special Old World charm and ambience captured by the colonial buildings, wooden chalets, and straw markets as well as the New World luxury hotels. ... Just beyond the front line of hotels was a city with gigantic casinos, sidewalk cafes, open-air markets, an eighteen-hole golf course and world-class entertainment, all just a bus ride away. (Monteilh 278)

The Caribbean landscape frames the story, with Afro-Caribbean servants in the background, ready to make the tourists' experience an unforgettable one. Although the islanders' Black bodies seem to blend into the landscape and are rendered almost invisible, there is a certain type of body that is highly visible, desirable, and pursued: the beach boy's body

3.2. BLACK ROMANCE & CARIBBEAN BEACH BOYS:

The success and empowerment of both authors and readers of tourism romances becomes problematic because they are predicated upon the deployment of the Afro-Caribbeans as a cultural Other and, more importantly, a sexual fantasy. The stories normalize the image of Caribbean Blacks as cultural and sexual servants, much like colonial writing used to do. In addition to exposing the female protagonists (and readers) of romance novels to the "authentic" Caribbean, the Afro-Caribbean male characters fulfill the heroines' sexual fantasies. African American romance readers are perfectly familiar with the stereotype of the hypersexual Black man. Some authors, such as Terry McMillan, go as far as to make the myth part of the characters' conversations. As Stella is reminded by both of her sisters, she needs to "[t]ake plenty of condoms with [her] and get some from all those young Jamaican

boys with big flapping dicks" (McMillan 46). Nevertheless, the romantic relationship that always develops between the female and male protagonists of these novels is superimposed to the image of the Afro-Caribbean male body as sexually and emotionally available to the female tourist. As much as the writers attempt to minimize the idea of the Black male and female bodies as sexual object and subject, respectively, I contend that the sexual and emotional dynamics in these relationships are based on neocolonialist practices.

If we look, for instance, at the relationship that Stella establishes with Winston in McMillan's romance, and consider Winston's potential perspective, the possibility of the young Jamaican being a so-called beach boy emerges. Because Stella is the novel's first-person narrator, readers are made to believe that Winston is genuinely in love with Stella. However, all we truly know is that he is an attractive, young man, taking a break from college, and trying to make a living as an apprentice cook during the high tourist season. He meets Stella by chance and insists on pursuing her, despite her initial reluctance to engage in any sort of relationship with someone who could be her own son. Winston's charm, sex-appeal, and persistence eventually captivate Stella, who develops a sexual relationship with him. Stella pays for their cocktails, meals, Winston's hotel pass, much like many female tourists do with their beach boys in real life. Even later, she mails him clothes and other expensive presents from the U.S. In the meantime, Winston maintains the illusion of romance and makes Stella believe he is in love with her. Stella becomes emotionally vulnerable to him. She visits him in Jamaica one more time, and then pays for him to visit her in the U.S. They eventually decide to get married, although readers are left to wonder if Winston is doing it out of love, or because marrying Stella is his passport to a luxurious lifestyle and career opportunities he does not have in Jamaica.

The dynamics between Stella and Winston resemble those between wealthy female tourists and beach boys. As George Gmelch explains in *Behind the Smile: The Working Lives of Caribbean Tourism*, relationships between beach boys and female tourists usually involve a discourse of romance and the possibility of a long-term relationship. The beach boy has some leverage in the

relationship. He is on familiar ground, while the tourist is in a foreign land. He is knowledgeable about such relationships, while she may be unfamiliar with them. But ultimately it is the female tourist who has control, since she pays the bills, can break it off, and will leave the island to return home. She may be emotionally vulnerable, but it is the beach boy who is financially dependent and who must show deference and appreciation in order to maintain the relationship. (32)

The interesting thing here is that the emphasis on romance usually overshadows the economic transaction behind the relationship. If the roles were to be reversed and we were talking about an American male tourist and a Caribbean woman, many would associate the case with the sex industry that exists in the Caribbean region. Furthermore, because Stella and Winston happen to be members of the same race, the relationship is considered one between equals. We should not forget, though, the economic differences that exist between these characters, which give the African American woman the upper hand in the relationship. Finally, we need to consider the motivations behind the so-called beach boy. Many young Afro-Caribbean men exploit the stereotypical sexual image that foreigners have of them and use it to their advantage in order to make money fast and maintain a reputation as independent, sexually-prowessed men. As Gmelch points out, "For beach boys, relationships with tourists provide money, sex, intimacy with a foreigner, short-term comforts (e.g., dinner, drinks, a nice room), and enhanced status among their peers" (32). Becoming a beach boy might be an enticing prospect for young Afro-Caribbean men, desperate for money and lacking opportunities for career advancement, even within the tourist industry, which is often presented as their only option.

African American romance novels overlook the economic and social effects of colonialism and tourism on the Caribbean islanders. In most novels, after the African American female protagonist achieves a new understanding of her racial and sexual self, she goes back to the United States and only retains a romanticized memory of the Caribbean. In the end, readers are left to imagine how happy the protagonists will be together after their wedding. The African American female protagonist

finally has it all: a college education, a successful career, a secure financial status, and a Black man who can satisfy her sexually, emotionally, and spiritually (even if it is only during her temporary stay in the Caribbean). There is no recollection of the oppressive material conditions in which many Afro-Caribbeans are left. Class and national differences undermine the apparent universal sisterhood that African American romance writers might have envisioned for African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans through their reclamation of a common African heritage. Furthermore, because these novels are marketed as empowering tales for (middle-class) Black women, who reclaim their sexuality and agency by crossing geographical and cultural boundaries, and exploring "new" territories and experiences, their cultural impact on African American women's view of globalization and diasporic relations becomes more problematic. Far from being the empowering texts they are meant to be, they distract the audience's attention away from the civic responsibilities they have as members of a globalized world in which material and social inequalities are increasingly growing.

In *Tar Baby* Toni Morrison criticizes neocolonialism as a continuation of the plantocracy system of the slavery and colonial periods, with the Black female body as a central point of contention that could potentially offer a solution to oppression in the African diaspora. The novel's protagonist might feel constrained by the value placed on her body, but it is only when she comes to terms with it and with the racial heritage represented by *Sein de Vieilles* (another reference to the Black female body) that she can envision a future of possibilities. Likewise, African American tourism romances present the Black female body as a source of pleasure and empowerment. By developing relationships between African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans, these romance novels offer a chance for their readers to connect with a diasporic community. Nevertheless, the empowering message for African Americans in all these texts is ultimately advanced at the expense of their Caribbean counterparts, which transforms African Americans into "cultural colonizers." The lack of balance in the diasporic connections proposed by these writers is what I find problematic.

African American writers need a different approach to the new cultural and economic conflicts

that emerge in tourist areas of the African diaspora. The most inclusive text I have found, written by an African American, addressing this issue is June Jordan's essay "Report from the Bahamas." As a result of her experience at the Sheraton British Colonial hotel in the Bahamas, Jordan worries about establishing connections and building bridges between individuals who might be, at first sight, separated by race, class, or gender. She realizes that Afro-Caribbeans are not necessarily passive victims of exploitation and that they participate voluntarily in the tourism industry: "I know [the waiter's] no fool; he's a middle-aged Black man who needs a job and this is his job—pretending himself a servile ancillary to the pleasures of the rich" (40). As hard as she attempts to connect with her Afro-Caribbean counterparts on the basis of race, class, and gender, she realizes that those aspects of identity "may serve well as indicators of commonly felt conflict, but as elements of connection they seem about as reliable as the precipitation probability for the day after the night before the day" (46). Jordan concludes, "The ultimate connection must be the need that we find between us. It is not only who you are, in other words, but what we can do for each other that will determine the connection" (47).

I am not suggesting that all African American authors or, for that matter, African American romance writers, should take the responsibility of engaging in deep economic, political, or cultural analysis when it comes to U.S.-Caribbean relations. However, I do want to emphasize the dangers of this new colonialist discourse, which disguises and often silences the voices and experiences of Blacks in the Caribbean. In order to avoid becoming economic and cultural colonizers of the Caribbean region again, we need to pay more attention to the silences and invisible bodies in these narratives.

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MARSHA PEARCE

Art is a Doing Word: Jamoo Music as World Changer

Keywords: Jamoo, Art for Social Change, Caribbean Music, Isaac Blackman

Abstract:

This paper draws on an interview with Caribbean singer, songwriter and producer Isaac Blackman, with specific reference to his latest album entitled *World Changers* and the genre of music known as Jamoo or Jehovah's music. Using the conceptual framework of art as a doing word or verb, the paper argues that Blackman's Jamoo music does a certain kind of work: It functions as a trigger that establishes a particular mood which opens up the world as a place of positive possibility and establishes us in that world as courageous beings who have the capacity to effect change. The notion of mood is key to the discussion and insights are drawn from the work of Heidegger. The paper insists that Blackman proposes a world changer identity.

A person once asked me
How can I change humanity?
How can I transform a reality,
Into something beautiful?
But I said it's simple
Trust in God
He's more than able
To make you a living example
That will blow their minds
You can change the world
With your smile
So please don't hesitate
Change the world
Make it great
You can change the world
With your thoughts
So think positively
Every day when you walk
So watch what you're thinking
'Cause what you're thinking you'll be doing
And what you're doing you'll be sowing.

From the song "World Changers" by Isaac Blackman

The late Caribbean scholar Rex Nettleford has left for us a useful framework within which to think about art. According to Nettleford, art is "a form of action" (170). I interpret his words to mean that art is a verb rather than a noun – art is a doing word. If art is a verb, then what does art do? What must art do? Ernst Fischer offers an answer. In his book *The Necessity of Art*, Fischer says of art: "...unless it wants to break faith with its social function, art must show the world as changeable. And help to change it." I propose that Isaac Blackman's art attempts to do such work. Blackman, a singer, songwriter and producer from the twin-island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has been involved in the music industry for over two decades. In 2006, he solidified his status as an influential creative force with his hit song "To the Ceiling" from the album of the same name. "To the Ceiling" – a song which expresses an elation that comes from an awareness of a god who cares for and protects us – is considered a crossover single as the track has and

continues to draw appeal and sales from music enthusiasts outside of the gospel music market. The song's popularity has spread throughout the Caribbean region and it has taken root in the international music arena. Blackman's reach and impact have earned him a number of accolades. He was selected as the Best Recording Overseas Artiste at the Barbados Flame Awards. In 2007, he won five titles at the Trinidad and Tobago Gospel Awards including Album of the Year and Overall Male Artist of the Year. In that same year, he also received the Gospel of the Year title from the Copyright Organization of Trinidad and Tobago's ninth annual music awards. Blackman is a much sought after recording artist who has toured places like Kenya, Uganda, Sweden, the U.S. and Canada where he has shared his inspirational messages in song with large concert audiences. When Blackman is not singing, he is busy producing music and writing songs for other artists like the North American and Reggae Gospel music group called Christafari.

At the base of Isaac Blackman's music practice is a principle of affecting change. In August 2011, he launched his third music album entitled "World Changers." The work is a presentation of fourteen tracks in a musical style known as Jamoo – a portmanteau of the words "Jehovah" and "music." The Jamoo genre does a certain kind of work. Blackman's music is an appeal to the spiritual dimension. It is a rhythmic call for a transformation of our spirits, an inner revolution, which in turn can be translated outwardly in a form such as a smile. Blackman therefore sings: "You can change the world with your smile, so please don't hesitate change the world, make it great." For Blackman, change starts from inside, with for example, our thoughts: by "think[ing] positively every day when we walk." Music, as art – indeed as a doing word – has that capacity to reach our interior, to get to the recesses of mind and soul.

I met with Isaac Blackman in November 2011 to talk about his music as verb, to discuss his art in relation to social change. His responses from that interview form the ground upon which this article is built. It is Blackman's insistence upon music as that which can set the mood of a people and a society, which serves as a pivoting point for my argument. I draw on the etymology of the word "mood." Mood can be traced to the German word "mut" meaning "courage." And the word "courage"

is derived from the Latin "cor" meaning "heart." The idea of "mood" is connected to the innermost part of ourselves: our heart, our spirit. When we are told not to "lose heart" we are being urged not to lose courage; we are being "en-couraged." What is being addressed is our mood. It is this understanding of mood as inner courage that I make use of here. I also deploy Martin Heidegger's notion of mood as a mode or way of being in the world, in other words, mood as a kind of "in-ness" (Wheeler 2011). A mood opens up the world to us in a particular way. If we are courageous, the world opens up as a brave place of powerful possibility in which we become situated. Together, this etymological route and Heidegger's insight underpin a thinking through of how Blackman's art operates. I contend that Isaac Blackman's Jamoo functions as a trigger that can create mood as courage, in other words, a fearlessness or audacity in the face of the seemingly insurmountable or intractable. His Jamoo stirs an ontological shift toward a bold way of being in the world that can cause positive change.

Jamoo Origins

Isaac Blackman is the youngest son of the late Garfield Blackman (also known as Ras Shorty I or Lord Shorty), who remains one of Trinidad and Tobago's noted performing artists. It is Garfield Blackman who pioneered Jamoo, a musical form, which grew out of soca music – a genre also created by him. Garfield Blackman used music as a path to attempt to articulate what it meant to be Trinbagonian in the 1960s (the islands of Trinidad and Tobago obtained independence from the British empire in 1962), that is, within the context of an early, post-independent, Caribbean nation. According to his son Isaac, Garfield Blackman attempted to give expression to what he saw as a variegated society of people of largely African and East Indian heritage, who now found themselves existing together and trying to define themselves in the New World, in the wake of enforced slavery and indentureship. His efforts manifested themselves in a new rhythmic rendering called soca music: a fusion of Afro-Caribbean calypso music and Indo-Caribbean cadences. Isaac Blackman shares his father's aim:

My father wanted to create a music that really reflects us as a nation – being a mixed society – so the creation of soca came about from the soul of an African man and the

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ISAAC BLACKMAN

element of East Indian music. He called it soca. The “-ca” comes from “ka” which is the first letter in the Indian alphabet. I

Garfield Blackman continued to develop soca as a creative crystallisation of human existence in the Caribbean region. In his grappling with a Trinbagonian ontology, in his efforts to nurture and assert an autonomous identity through music, Garfield Blackman would eventually take up the point of view that what it means “to be” also includes a recognition of a spiritual connection with god. For him, being and becoming were intertwined with Jehovah. Soca music had been created from the soul of one man but he sought to fashion a musical form that could move and shape the spirits of all peoples in the society in which he lived. As such, he incorporated the gospel or a revelation of Christ into soca music and Jamoo (Jehovah’s music) was born.

The personality of Jamoo throbs with African and East Indian rhythms but it does not pulsate with the forces of African and East Indian gods and goddesses like Ogun, Ymoja, Shiva and Lakshmi. Instead, Jamoo is infused with the messianic energy of Christianity in a musical form that resonates with a New World trope of hybridity. Jamoo is a Caribbean creole form, where “creole,” as Bolland describes it, “refers to a local product which is the result of a mixture or blending of various ingredients that originated in the Old World” (50). The indigenous form known as Jamoo was conceptualised and enacted by Garfield Blackman with his understanding of its potentiality as a shaper of a way of being that is at once personal and collective. It is this musical legacy that Isaac Blackman takes up from his father. Isaac comments on the work Jamoo, as a musical art form, is meant to do: “Jamoo is music to develop the spiritual aspect of Caribbean people... Jamoo is built on transformation, change, development, any way that you can...influence and build the fabric of any

1 “Ka” is the first (consonant) letter of the Nagari or Devanagari alphabet used to write Sanskrit, Hindi, Bhojpuri and other Asian languages.

society – it applies to any part of the world.” Jamoo has a social responsibility; a transformative power and this capacity, according to Isaac Blackman, is tied to mood.

Jamoo and Mood

“Music sets the mood,” states Isaac Blackman. In setting mood, music can create a way of being in the world. Blackman observes:

If you are watching a movie, whether it is a scary part, an exciting part, a happy part, music actually puts human beings in a particular atmosphere. The music that shapes your society or culture or environment is very important. Using art to transform the view of society and the view of yourself is very important. A lot of people are not aware of this so they use any chord, they don’t understand the power... it actually affects people’s behavior.

Blackman expresses an irresponsibility or lack of awareness on the part of the musician who uses “any chord.” The musician as artist must be conscious of a strong connection between music and mood or music and a way of being: excited, happy, scared and other ways of being in the world. His album therefore opens with the song “So Good” which establishes a joyful way of being in the world. He sings:

Since I was small
God bless me with a voice to sing
And I thank him for the melodies that I bring
So this song is to bless up your life
This song here is to make you feel all right
To strengthen you on your journey
When you’re feeling down and you’re weary
So don’t worry
Listen to this song
And feel happy

Yet, Blackman understands that mood can lead to action. Mood can “affect people’s behavior.” Blackman is therefore careful with Jamoo, to go beyond stimulating happiness to stir another way of being, that is, to kindle mood as courage. He is careful to use music to en-courage. And that encouragement is for each of us to serve as a world changer. The tracks from his “World Changers” album are a catalyst for making a positive difference in our societies. For example, the song entitled

World Changers Album Cover. Cover Design by Design by Spirit. Photograph by Sancho Francisco

Stumbling is directed at men and gives encouragement to start over in the face of missteps and mistakes. Blackman challenges a dominant pattern of masculinity by attempting to legitimise an alternative way of being a man. According to Crichlow et al, hegemonic norms require men to be stoic, strong and invulnerable. Blackman seeks to unseat these norms. Through his lyrics he aims to redefine what a “real man” is. Blackman sings:

So if you feel like you're stumbling
And you feel like you're fumbling
Start all over
Start all over
Because you're a real man
When you say that you're sorry
You're a real man
When you say God forgive me
It takes a real man to recognize you're wrong...
'Cause you're a real man
When you could control your temper
You're a real man when you don't act like a monster...
Ain't nothing wrong with trial and error brother

Blackman attempts to show a hegemonic masculinity as changeable. He insists that a shift toward a normative construction of men as individuals capable of making mistakes, individuals capable of introspection and correcting their wrongs – individuals who understand their being in relation to god – is possible. Blackman recognizes that masculinity is not a static category. “Masculinities are configurations of practice that are constructed, unfold and change through time” (852), write Connell and Messerschmidt. Through his musical art, Blackman therefore creates a mood, specifically mood as courage, to reconfigure and transform masculine practice in our contemporary age.

For Blackman this mood, this en-couragement, can start with one person. He observes:

[The song] Stumbling comes from personal growth and development: to be honest with yourself, to recognize that you should always learn from your mistakes and not because you make some kind of blunder you are doomed. It is not too late to start over. It's not too late to say that this is not working for me and be brave enough to say let me try another method – there must be another way – and make that move. Stumbling is me looking at myself and dealing with me. I don't want to tell people something I am not doing. This is what can encourage people. I am taking the initiative. I am an artist, I am a musician. I am a world changer. I am going to change the world as a

musician, as an artist and show people that they can too.

His words reflect what Nettleford sees as an artist's viewpoint for, as Nettleford writes, “the Caribbean creative artist, like his counterpart anywhere, deeply understands the dictum that universal paths are made by specific journeys” (170). Blackman insists that the path of the world changer can start at the individual level and move to that of the collective. As such, he deploys the first person plural “we” in the optimistic song entitled “All is not Lost”:

All is not broken
All is not stolen
All is not taken
We still have love
All is not lonely
All is not weary
All is not thirsty
You set us free
So we still have joy
We still have peace
We still have hope
We still have love

This track offers en-couragement to see the world through a lens of promise and hope – a perspective that “we” are all invited to share. The song calls for an ocular shift so that we see the world with spiritual eyes, through god, that is, through the “you” who is able to set us free from the blinders of seeming loss and hopelessness. Blackman en-courages us, with his music, to see the world in a positive light.

How we see is indeed a key part of Isaac Blackman's efforts to alter a way of being in the world. His song “Me Boot” is also suffused with mood understood as courage. He en-courages us to see beyond the physical realm in order to confront and change the world. Instead of taking up arms against each other, the song asks that we put on an armor of knowledge against ignorance and engage in metaphysical battle. For Blackman, changing the world demands that we dare to become conscious of and active in a spiritual realm. In “Me Boot” he shares:

We don't wrestle against no flesh, no blood
But spiritual wickedness in high and low places...
We suffer every day cause of ignorance
The youths, they're dying every day cause of ignorance
Open your eyes and see
Who is the real enemy

Strap up knowledge as your boot
Ready for them
Strap up wisdom in your suit
Ready for them
'Cause this is a war
We gotta fight

Blackman's Jamoo therefore, is art for revolution where change is understood as that which must occur first at the level of the spirit for transformation at the physical dimension to be made manifest. His Jamoo is art for a radical shift toward a bold ontology that acknowledges an inextricable connection with a transcendental way of being. His music triggers our spirit. His music engages that metaphysical part of us: our mood, specifically mood interpreted as courage.

A World Changer Identity

If Isaac Blackman's music functions in a way that pivots on transforming how we see, that is, in a way that en-courages us to see beyond the physical in order to change the world, then his offering of “world changer” as an identity is one that insists that we see beyond such hierarchical social categories as race, gender, class, ethnicity, religion, sexuality and nationality. His Jamoo therefore also plays a role in changing how we see one another and ourselves. “How you see yourself determines how you see life and how you see others,” says Blackman. He adds:

When you push others down you push yourself down. We all need each other to survive. We need to respect, care, love and honor each other. No one is insignificant. Everybody has the power to change, to do something to change to make things better. What I am trying to accomplish with my music is to open people's eyes to that understanding.

Blackman's Jamoo does a certain kind of work. What his music attempts to accomplish is the demonstration of the possibility of a differently configured world. As such, his musical art is a verb. It serves to show the world as changeable and sets about establishing a mood, stirring the courage for us to confront and subvert exclusionary social identities, to transfigure a world structured by hierarchies, to see each other as equals – boldly being in the world as world changers.

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MARCELA GUERRERO

Killing Time with the Honorary Guest: A Generational Assessment of Glexis Novoa's Invitado de honor

Keywords: Primitivism, Haiti, Graffiti art, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Hector Hyppolite

Abstract:

This paper draws on an interview with Caribbean singer, songwriter and producer Isaac Blackman, with specific reference to his latest album entitled *World Changers* and the genre of music known as Jamoo or Jehovah's music. Using the conceptual framework of art as a doing word or verb, the paper argues that Blackman's Jamoo music does a certain kind of work: It functions as a trigger that establishes a particular mood which opens up the world as a place of positive possibility and establishes us in that world as courageous beings who have the capacity to effect change. The notion of mood is key to the discussion and insights are drawn from the work of Heidegger. The paper insists that Blackman proposes a world changer identity.

*"Aparecía en la historia de la revolución cubana,
ahora con caracteres nítidos, un personaje que se
repetirá sistemáticamente: la masa."*

Ernesto "Che" Guevara

"El reto es hacer reír con la verdad."

Glexis Novoa

From the onset of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Cuban art has had, by virtue of the government's control and regulation of art produced on the island, a political veneer. Nieve Guerra, the principal character in Wendy Guerra's diary/novel *Todos se van* from 2006, refused to believe this truism. "In Cuba," Nieve's mother explained to her, "politics can be found in what you eat, what you wear, where you live, what you possess and even

¹ "It appeared in the history of the Cuban Revolution, now with sharp attributes, a character that will repeat itself systematically: the masses" (translation mine) (Guevara).

"The challenge is to make people laugh with the truth" (translation mine) (Ichikawa, sec. 16).

in what you don't possess. If you want to escape politics you have to escape from Cuba" (188). Rationalizing her mother's words as the result of an inevitable generation gap, Nieve expressed, "She thinks that what a person paints and what a person writes contains politics" (emphasis mine) (188-189). Further on in the same diary entry, Nieve wonders what to do with her mother who now behaves like a daughter². In this example from Cuban

² The diary entry to which I am making reference is particularly helpful for this article because it throws light on the marked ways two generations respond to the practice of making art in Cuba. Nieve's mother vehemently believes that art in Cuba is mediated by politics; to escape this sentence would require a physical distancing from the island. However, after noticing the fragility and unreliability of the straight-laced category of generations, Nieve challenges her mother's perspective.

literature, the generational reversal to which Nieve alludes raises a series of questions applicable to Cuban visual art from the twenty-first century: Can the traditional category of "generation"—used by both literary and art critics—explain the artist's own individual response to the project of the Revolution? What type of responsibility would Cuban artists carry if their art production were no longer hinged on a collectivity? What new critical readings can we give to twenty-first century Cuban art if we disengage it from the Revolution's rhetoric? These are some of the inquiries that will help me consider Glexis Novoa's 2007 performance/video work *Invitado de honor* (Honorary Guest) from 2007 (see figure 1).³

Similar to Nieve—who confesses in her diary to feeling and knowing herself to be different from the rest of her peers—Novoa's unwillingness to comply with any given sets of boundaries (e.g., boundaries set by the state, the medium, the gallery, etc.) places him outside a specific collectivity or generation. In *Invitado de honor* his evasiveness towards the categorical allows him to take stock of the history of performance art in Cuba from a symbolic and physical distance while mordantly commenting against Fidel Castro's attitude towards the arts. I want to argue in this paper that Novoa's *Invitado* establishes a distance between this particular work and previous generations of artists in order to create a vantage point from where he can analyze not only performance art but also the Revolution itself as the ultimate performance piece.

Invitado was presented in the exhibition "Killing Time" held from May 12 through July 28, 2007 at Exit Art gallery in New York City (Matalon). Novoa's performance followed the main tenets of the show—exhibiting works of contemporary Cuban artists who approach the subject of time, process, and transition in Cuba. According to the press release, the more than 60 artists who participated in the show are considered contributors to the "Cuban art renaissance" that began in the 1980s and included "artists from the Island and abroad" (Matalon). Even though it is not clear from the press release whether the artists "from the Island" still live there, what is clear, however, is that

³ Youtube video of *Invitado de honor* (Guest of Honor): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCMj4HowUss>.

these were artists who lived at some point the experience of the Revolution. Explicit in the press release too is the desire of the curators—Elvis Fuentes, Yuneikis Villalonga, and Glexis Novoa—of clearly establishing a connection between the Revolution and the concept of time: "The Revolution has been a symbolic intervention on Cuban time. In return, time has shaped discourses of and on the Cuban Revolution" (Matalon). If one stops for a second and considers the category of "generation"—a concept whose logic is intrinsically dependent on time—into which literary and art critics have classified Cuban artists for the last twenty years,⁴ it would be conceivable to think of Cuba's "generations" as a discourse also shaped by the Revolution and, more specifically, by the rhetoric of the revolution. I wish to contend that Novoa, who has certainly belonged to art collectivities in the past, stands, this time at least, alone. By doing so, it is his own individual voice (no longer part of "the Cuban people" or any other sort of collective entity) that can critically assess the role of Castro and his government on the last almost thirty years of Cuban art. Novoa's anti-generational stance, at least in this work, can be seen as a strategy to disassociate his work from the perennial tendency of searching for the "new generation;" a concept whose messianic tone evokes Che Guevara's call for the "new man." His personal stance on the ways to re-think Cuban contemporary art (especially performance) becomes apparent in the dialogue that transpires between curator and guest of honor in *Invitado de honor*.

In the performance piece—which was recorded on June 11th and now exists in video, photograph (see figure 2 and 3), and transcript formats—we see artist Glexis Novoa (b. 1964) giving a guided tour of a section of "Killing Time" to a very believable stand-in of Fidel Castro⁵. Novoa, presumably acting as curator of the show, attempts to explain to a meager-looking Castro the existing documents that attest to the survival of

⁴ Consider too the expression mentioned before, "Cuban art renaissance," coined by Luis Camnitzer in his influential book *New Art of Cuba* (21). As the French etymology of the word tells us, *renaître* means to be born again. Camnitzer's and other art critics' fixation with describing art as a rebirth of sorts will be analyzed in more detail later in the text.

⁵ Asahel Rosales, a Cuban ballet dancer living and working in Miami plays Fidel Castro in *Invitado de honor*.



Fig. 1. Left: Youtube, Glexis Novoa, *Invitado de Honor (Honorary Guest)*, 2007. Performance at Exit Art, New York.



Fig. 2. Left: Rosales getting ready to perform as Fidel Castro in *Invitado de honor*, 2007. Courtesy of Exit Art, New York

Fig. 3. Below: Rosales as Fidel Castro discusses with Glexis Novoa as they film the performance *Invitado de honor*. Courtesy of Exit Art, New York



Fig. 4. Left: Untitled Glexis Novoa, *Untitled 'Practical Period,'* 1989. Oil on paper, wood & canvas, wooden structure, 16 x 49'. Photograph from the III Havana Biennale, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana. DACRA-Craig Robins Collection, Miami Beach.

performances carried out from 1979-1990. One of the constant tugs-of-war between Novoa and Castro has to do with the insistence on the curator's part of asking the honorary guest if he remembers the events. Castro, on the other hand, insists on responding by interrupting and passing judgment based on whether he considers that the performances were working for or against the revolutionary project. The interaction between both curator and guest of honor makes one wonder: what is the power relation that Novoa seeks to expose? What role do politicians play in Novoa's work? What good does memory serve to art if the recollection Castro has of Cuba's most brilliant generation of performance art is not accurately remembered?

It would be impossible to understand Novoa's recent work without considering his trajectory as an artist who has consistently mocked official state apparatuses (Ichikawa, sec. 3). The difficulty of pigeonholing his works into a single medium or category makes it hard to label; anytime it seems one has understood the work of Novoa he surprises viewers by doing something atypical or unprecedented. Trained in graphic design in the early 1980s, Novoa quickly gained notoriety when he joined the experimental workshop of Aldo Menéndez. Working individually, however, Novoa created in 1988 a series of paintings whose background resembles the happenstance style of American Abstract Expressionism of the 1950s while superimposing political messages on the foreground. The obvious split between background and foreground, between abstraction and literality, suggests cultural

differences between Abstract Expressionism's country of origin, the United States, and the nation to which the messages make reference, Cuba. In *Esta obra fue hecha en Cuba por un pintor joven, nacido y que vive en la Revolución* (This work was made in Cuba by a young painter born and living in the Revolution) (see figure 5), Novoa used the canonized frenzied quality of Abstract Expressionism as the backdrop on top of which he scribbled the graffiti-like messages. According to Luis Camnitzer, the drips and splashes are "reduced to existence as a functional symbol, which in Novoa's repertoire only signifies 'the foreign' and the 'the imported'" (232). I concur with Camnitzer but would follow his insightful remark by saying that the messages act as an assault on various levels.

First, there is an assault on the canonic idea of "good taste." Novoa has mentioned in the past that he wants to become the "worst painter in history" (232). Thus, by textually battering the Abstract Expressionist signature style, Novoa is dismissing this avant-garde movement as an imperialistic imposition and the base or foundation for all contemporary art to come. Second, his messages, although some are less ambiguous than others, often call attention to the necessary conditions Cuban artworks need in order to be sold in international art markets. In *Esta obra fue hecha en Cuba* this is particularly perceptible since the two basic provisos for works to sell well—the work was made in Cuba and by a young Cuban painter born and living under the Revolution—are immediately established. Although these are just two possible readings one can make of this series

of Novoa's paintings, what remains from this work is the inability to pin down an absolute interpretation. On the other hand, his oeuvre does transmit a tongue-in-cheek frankness, often aggressive and iconoclastic, that reveals the precarious nature that accompanies collective groups and movements that seek to transmit an antagonistic discourse or intention.

Recognizing the emotional honesty and idealism of these paintings led Novoa to self-title this phase as his "romantic period."⁶ However, tight controls, the increasing menaces of censorship, and the need to achieve recognition in the artistic field, forced Novoa to create a body of work that would allow him to triumph, sell, and be invited to exhibit internationally (Birbragher 82-82). Still poking fun at the international art market's simple-mindedness, especially in regard to Cuban art, he decided to call this new body of work his "practical period." A work from 1989 titled *Etapa práctica* (Practical Stage) (see figure 4) consist of a large panel installation depicting unintelligible inscriptions à la Soviet social-realism. Written in a Cyrillic-looking alphabet, these large-scale installations poked fun at what Camnitzer has described as a "perestroika-contaminated international art market while making a devastating criticism of it" (235). If the cynicism of the previous year had proven to be too literal, the year of 1989 represents Novoa's total manipulation of his circumstances. *Etapa práctica* became the star of the Third Havana Biennial and with it he traveled to Pori (Finland), Düsseldorf, and Boston (235).

Francine Birbragher has described in more detail other characteristics of these Soviet-inspired paintings. For instance, he employed portraits of Castro, Guevara, and national hero executed for corruption and trafficking drugs, Arnaldo Ochoa (all images whose use had been banned by Castro's regime) but disguised them in such a way that would elude the censors (83). The use of political figures, even if these were camouflaged, along with the transgression implicit in this act, constitutes one of the first times Novoa would incorporate politicians into his work, the most current example being *Invitado de honor*.

Performance art in the late 1980s was another

⁶ For more information about Novoa's "romantic" and "practical" periods, see Camnitzer 235.

one of Novoa's artistic endeavors. Along with Carlos Cárdenas, Novoa formed part of a two-man collective called *Grupo Provisional* (Provisional Group). The "provisional" in the title responded to the group's anxiety of becoming institutionalized (Camnitzer 178-180). They were also flexible when it came to other artists collaborating with them. Their main concern was the routine into which the Revolution had fallen, to which they reacted with a sardonic tone that became the signature style of their performances. In 1987, when the *Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas Cubanos* (Union of Cuban Writers and Artists or UNEAC) organized a conference around the concept of art, *Grupo Provisional* took control of the floor and decided to turn the conference into an award-giving ceremony. The awardees—Flavio Garciandía, Gerardo Mosquera, among others—were given silkscreened skeleton figures that celebrated their contribution to the visual arts of Cuba.

Their anti-institutional mockery was always accompanied by humor. When *Arte Calle* (Street Art), another performance troupe, decided to stage a fake gallery opening where no objects would be exhibited (the artwork was the opening itself), Novoa and Cárdenas came in with a video which they showed to the audience. By shifting the original intention of *Arte Calle*, *Grupo Provisional* curtailed the conceptual goal of the former group. In the UNEAC and *Arte Calle* examples, the success of *Grupo Provisional*'s performances depended on not allowing the other groups' goals of coming to fruition. Novoa's anti-institutional drive seen in his performances, coupled with his subtle scorn of Cuban political figures, reaches a special point in 2007 with *Invitado de honor*.

In an effort to continue his unwillingness to settle, in both a physical and artistic sense, Novoa moved in 1992 to Mexico where he adopted a new iconography (Birbragher 84). One can always speculate what motivated artists who had enjoyed a productive artistic career in the 1980s to leave the island; but in the early 1990s there was only one reason that drove so many people into exile. When the economic hardships of the "Período especial en tiempos de paz" (Special Period in Times of Peace) started to be felt on the island, the intellectual class, despite all predictions, began to explore new means of creating art. In her essay "Embargoes Masculinities," Guillermina De

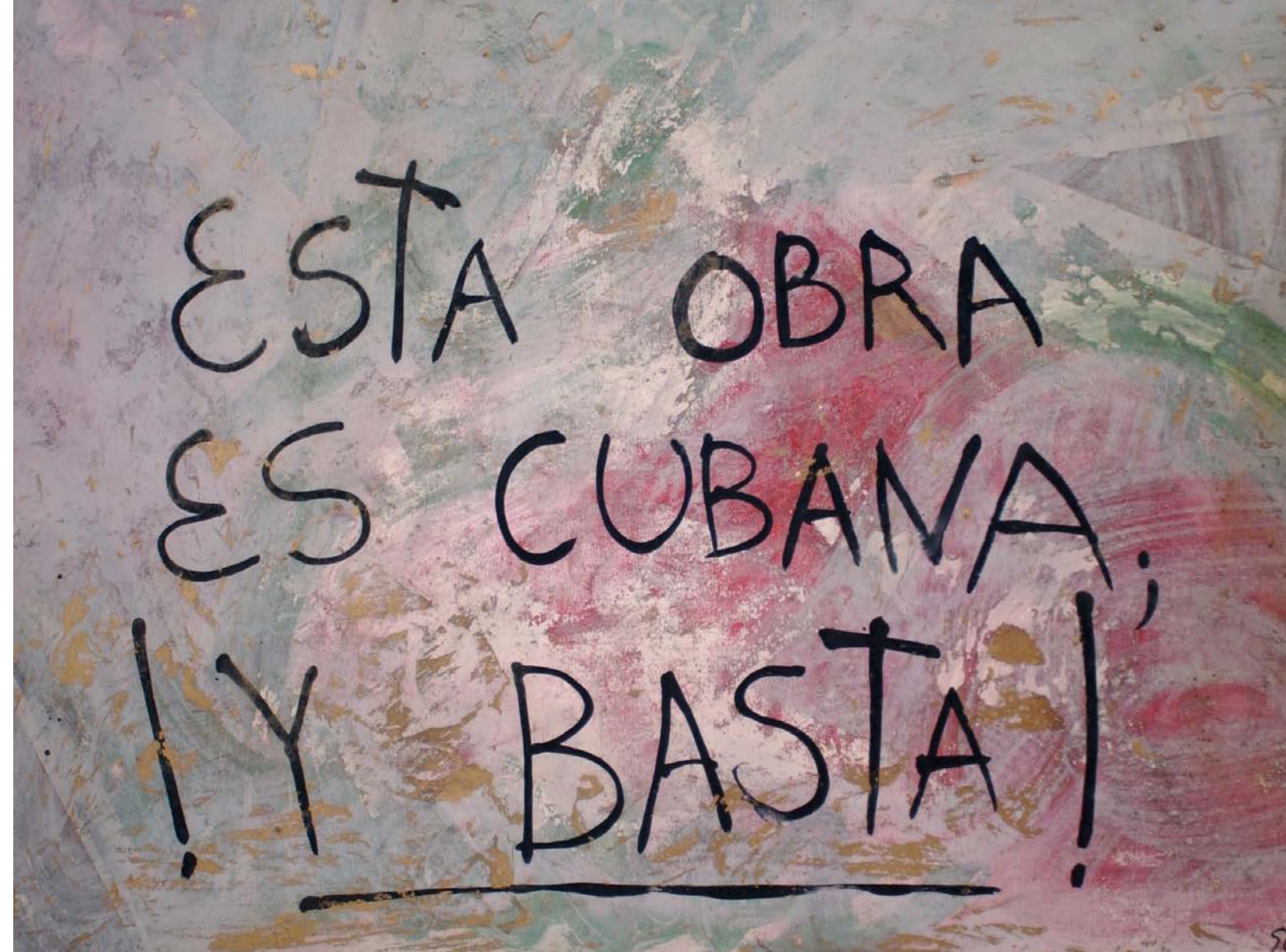


Fig. 5. Above: TGLexis Novoa, *To be or not to be 'Romantic Period,'* 1988. Acrylic on paper, 19 x 27". Selected piece from the original exhibition at Galería Habana, Havana, Cuba. The Farber Collection, New York.

Ferrari mentions that artists who were part of the boom of the 1990s were "animated perhaps by the sense of living a unique and intense historical experience, combined with an increased freedom of expression in relation to that available in previous decades..." (83). In the arena of the visual arts this liberty of expression was consistently lessened by the pressure put out by the censors. Evidence of this is Tania Bruguera's self-produce journal *Memoria de la postguerra* (Postwar Memory), which after two issues was banned in 1994 by the National Council of Plastic Art (Fernández 140). When the Council summoned her, the leadership began citing all the purported violations: invalid use of state resources and illegal distribution of subversive propaganda. The leadership was also bothered by what they deemed as an incongruous gathering of artists that

included some residing outside of Cuba who had not had any contact with the country until that moment (140-141). A year after Bruguera's journal was cancelled and when censorship proved to be too intrusive, Novoa moved to Miami.

In Miami, Novoa has continued to investigate different media such as paper, graphite, marble, and performance.⁷ His work from the current years has explored in more daring ways the aesthetics of power and the symbols that institutionalize it. In his most recent work, *Invitado de honor*, the power relation between Novoa and the stand-in of Fidel Castro does more than

⁷ In 2006 the University of Miami's Lowe Museum of Art organized a retrospective based of Novoa's works from 1994. For more information, see Leyva 148.

just present a confrontation between artist and head of state. Negotiated between the two are the roles of curator, censor, and bureaucrat.

Novoa presents us a very pale and emaciated Castro garbed in what has become his signature warm-up Adidas's jacket. Even though it is not the traditional red, white and blue jacket, it still shows Castro the way the world has seen him after his surgery for intestinal bleeding in 2006 (see figure 6) (Cohan, par. 2). In yet another iconoclastic move seeking to undermine the ultimate symbol of the Revolution, Novoa chose to present a Castro dressed not in military regalia but in the sporty uniform that for some years now has signaled the beginning of his last days. Despite the many occurrences when Castro rests his hand on Novoa's shoulders—an additional sign of the head of state's ailing condition—the former shows an unfaltering attitude when it comes to his position regarding the arts. As curator of the exhibition, however, Novoa attempts to give an insightful explanation of the exhibition despite Castro's many interjections. In recent work, De Ferrari reminds us of the role of the curator as "the person in charge of selecting the works that will be included in an exhibition of one or more artists, and of articulating the discourse that will lend identity to the exhibit" ("Cuba" 230). Even though one can understand the logic of the exhibition, the constant interruptions make Novoa's articulation of ideas particularly difficult. Castro's interruptions curtail Novoa's layout of the exhibition's identity and any effort to exercise self-expression.

De Ferrari also reminds us of the different terms in Spanish used to translate the concept of "curator." If one considers the term used in Spain, *comisario* (sheriff), one would instantly think of a high police figure, one who surveils and has a final say on whether something has infringed the law or not. As mentioned before, many of Castro's interruptions are always sidetracked to comment on whether the artwork served the Revolution or if it was an irreverent act against the socialist project. These different degrees of judgment passing to which Cuban artist have been subjected since the declaration of the socialist character of the Revolution in 1961, has by now very little rhetorical novelty. Thus, if we put the concept of curator as understood in English, and as practiced by Novoa's role as organizer of "Killing Time," against the

term used in Spain, *comisario*, then the tug-of-war between curator and *comisario* becomes all the more evident. In the larger scope of things, Novoa's commentary on the attitude of the *comandante* (commander) towards the exhibition is to show how restrictive the government can be—restrictive to the point of confining and repressing innovative artistic discourses.

Vying for the authority and control over the exhibition's discursive message, Novoa and Castro negotiate the roles of curator, censor, and bureaucrat. Rigid controls over monetary compensation and tight censorship contributed to the emigration in the early 1990s of many internationally known artists working in the 1980s in Cuba. The pressure put on many of these artists came from a particular group in charge of monitoring the literal, symbolic, and iconic messages of Cuban art. Mediating between the artist and the state is the bureaucrat whose work in the cultural sector is to censor fellow artists' works—"fellow artists" because bureaucrats are themselves artists (De Ferrari, "Cuba" 232). Linda Howe has explained how the attitude of bureaucrats is not always fixed but changes according to the period: "Cultural bureaucrats who might have been liberal and 'tolerant' of rebel artists during one phase of the institutionalization of culture became intransigent during periods of political pressure to the point where they restricted production by imposing censorship and repression" (5-6). Based on this quote, I want to argue that this bureaucrat/censor category—just like the curator/*comisario* label—is also a contested one between Novoa and Castro. Nevertheless, in order to understand this point fully we need to consider the last part of the performance.

At the end of the guided tour of the exhibit and after providing documented evidence of the most groundbreaking performances ever carried in Cuba under the revolutionary project, Castro accuses Novoa of forgetting to include an important artist. To this accusation Novoa naively replies: "but you did read the list, right commander?" After confirming that the list has been meticulously examined, Castro insists that Novoa has forgotten someone, and immediately thereafter adds: "I've made many performances in my life!" Even though the remark is brushed off as a casual joke, it does propose

that Castro's political career has been a big performance, a performance that borders on spectacle. The disclosure of his contributions to the cultural scene of Cuba combined with his commissary-like attitude towards the exhibition makes Castro a contender for the position of ultimate bureaucrat of the arts. The fine literal line between cultural policy and policing is sustained in the figure of Castro whose often times nonsensical interjections send an ambiguous message—highly reminiscent of his notorious 1961 proclamation "Within the Revolution everything; outside the Revolution, nothing." The presence of ellipses in the transcript of the performance piece and his remarks after Novoa attempts to explain the works, underscore Castro's wishes to make it clear that there is a policy to respect. In the following passage, Castro not only interrupts the visit but also sidetracks Novoa's idea in order to insert a political message⁸:

NOVOA: And here we have the work of Angelito Delgado, he defecated on top of the newspaper, Granma, in a visual arts exhibition...

CASTRO: The world...is facing up in this historical moment very complicated problems...missing are those principles that will be present so as to defend ourselves and thus avoid a catastrophe...Global!...We don't have that much longer...

As the ultimate bureaucrat and also self-proclaimed artist of the state, Novoa presents us a Castro that is literally and symbolically curtailing needed discussions between the artistic class and the government; discussions that are needed to assure that the arts will keep on going on an ever-evolving, ever-innovative path.

If the politician can be artist, then, the artist can also be politician. The overall performance can be understood as a political move that asks us to reconsider the effects the Revolution has had in the arts of Cuba over the years. By redefining the labels (i.e., artist, politician, curator, *comisario*, performance, Revolution, and others to be discussed), Novoa is acting as a sort of censor that filters out any unnecessary nuances that will deter us from his purpose of critically assessing these concepts in a fresh new way. De Ferrari's words seem suitable in this discussion: "The artist-bureaucrat, then, is censor and

⁸ This fragment corresponds to minute 3:27 of the performance's youtube video.

curator at the same time, juggling labels and redefining aesthetics on the basis of its ambiguities" ("Cuba" 233). It is only fair, however, to say that De Ferrari is making reference to the modes of cultural production on the island, which are determined by the bureaucrats in charge of censoring. I consider, however, that these categories and labels are questioned and negotiated in the tug-of-war between Novoa and Castro precisely to demonstrate that the role of artist-bureaucrat does not need to be subordinated any longer to a good relationship with the state. Not having the pressure of being in the government's good graces, Novoa takes advantage of his physical distance in order to imbue his work with a radical effect: he appropriates the symbol of Fidel Castro to an unprecedented level of mockery never before seen so explicit in his oeuvre; he suggests the Revolution has been a performance piece more aligned with the theatrical and spectacle-like definition of the term than with the art historical concept; and, he challenges the roles of curator, artist, and bureaucrat in order to explore the conceptual possibilities in Cuban art from outside.

At this moment it is worth pondering: what is the connection behind the gathered documented performances exhibited in *Invitado* and the guided tour? What is the purpose of having the specters of some of the most famous performances under the same roof? What is behind Novoa's intention of presenting Castro with this summary of the history of performance art in Cuba? The youtube video shows the second half of the guided tour when the tension starts to build up as the result of Novoa's explanation of the works and the comments Castro fires back. The first work presented to the head of state is a book by José Luis Alonso. The book was part of an exhibit carried out in the late 1980s that dealt with subject matter related to how information enters Cuba and how artists process it (Camnitzer 221). Alonso's book was a mock-up of Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* except that instead of writing the correct author's name, Alonso changed it to "The Echo of Umberto." Inside the book, the pages are completely blank. Upon opening the book in the exhibition, Castro remarked that he likes clear ideas and that this work is a bit too ambiguous. Castro's disgruntled response to the ironic tone of the work (what can be more clear than blank pages) exposes his backing

down from his 1961 position: "Freedom of form has been spoken of here. Everybody agrees that freedom of form has to be respected. I believe there's no doubt in regard to this point" (7). By putting Castro face to face with artistic works that can be seen as having an ambiguous relationship to the political agenda of the Revolution, Novoa is disclosing the government's real feelings towards works such as this one.

In another instance, Novoa shows Castro a picture of the neo-dada artist Robert Rauschenberg and instead of linking him to the performance he was involved with in Havana in 1988, Castro goes on to mention how he knows him well and has even stayed until 3 am chatting with him. His casual remark undermines the seriousness of the encounter between Rauschenberg and the Cuban artistic community. When Rauschenberg went to Havana to offer a series of lectures, Aldito Menéndez, one of the members of Arte Calle, appeared clad in loincloth, feathers on his head, bow and arrow and sat right in front of the speaker. Grupo Provisional also made its appearance while bearing a banner with the profile of an Indian uttering the words "Very good, Rauschenberg." Both gestures wanted to stress the colonizing undertone of the situation. Artists interpreted having Rauschenberg standing and lecturing in front of a crowd of Cubans as a colonizing encounter between the visitor and the public (Menéndez 280). Whether or not Castro purposefully ignored the link between Rauschenberg and the performance piece, what is clear, however, is the lack of importance he gives to the artistic implications of this event. Even when the groups' performances were a clear criticism of imperialistic impositions, actions aligned with the Socialist agenda, these are ignored and sidetracked to talk about more trivial things.

In yet another instance, Novoa shows Castro evidence of the famed baseball game that took place in 1989. After Marcia Leiseca was demoted from her position as vice-minister of culture for allowing to display a portrait of Castro in drag with large breasts and leading a political rally, artists and critics organized an impromptu baseball game at the Marcelo Salado Sports

Center in Havana⁹. Calling attention to actions and the innocuousness perceived in some acts as opposed to others, artists and critics took over the stadium where permission is not needed if the intention is to play a ball game. If, on the other hand, the space is used as a place to hold a gathering, then permits are required. According to Eugenio Valdés Figueroa, the stadium was cleared after the group Paideia read to the crowd a manifesto denouncing the "subordination of the intellectual to hegemonic structure" (qtd. in Fernández 139). What motivated artists and critics to play baseball instead of doing art was to prove the government that if they were not allowed to practice their art (to continue with the rhetoric of sports) then they were going to devote their time to playing baseball. In a society and economy where every citizen is meant to be productive, this is a blow to the stomach. The performance also spoke of the lack of backing they received as a community of artists, as opposed to athletes whose moral and monetary support is evident just by looking at Castro's Adidas uniform.

Following Novoa's mentioning of the baseball game, Castro retorts by saying "our athletes have held the name of Cuba high, but this idea of artists horse playing with baseball! It's a bit too confusing, it seems to me...?" Once again, Castro disregards the purpose of the performance and the meaning it had to the arts of Cuba. Instead of facing up and acknowledging that performance's aim, which was to criticize the institutionalized structures of power, Castro gives a literal meaning to the work and ends up establishing an indirect comparison between Cuban athletes' achievements and the state of opacity in the arts from Cuba. It is not surprising that after el juego de pelota, Novoa and Tania Bruguera have expressed that "the cynicism began"¹⁰ (Ichikawa, sec. 2).

⁹ The exhibition where Castro's portrait was going to appear was closed immediately after finding out about this work. After this controversy, Leiseca, who had been responsible for the implementation of the culturally enlightened policies during the 1980s decade, was moved to the vice-presidency of Casa de las Américas. However, Camnitzer warns his readers that the "details of the affair vary according to the teller" (133 and 258). For more information, see Fernández 139.

¹⁰ In fact, Bruguera's performance at the X Havana Biennial took a page from Novoa's book when, in *El susurro de Tatlin VI* (Tatlin's Whisper VI, 2009), the artist set up a podium in which people could come up for one minute and speak their

The last performance discussed between Novoa and Castro, and perhaps the one that better expresses the build up tension between them, is the presentation of Angel Delgado's work (see figure 7). In an exhibition in 1990, Delgado defecated on top of the Cuban Communist Party's daily newspaper, *Granma*. The vulgar expression "me cago en eso" (I shit on that) was literally carried out as a way of reacting to the supposed morality upheld by the Revolution. For his scatological response in *El objeto esculpado* (The Sculpted Object), Delgado was arrested for six months. Interestingly, his feces were left in the gallery until the day of his arrest so it could serve as proof of the "crime" (Delgado 281). There is an implicit act of courage in calling a bodily process a performance, an act of aesthetic expression that ought to be seen and analyzed. The fact that his excrement was left behind for a couple of days implies that the feces were not the objects of disaffection—the action that was carried out was. By shifting the emphasis from the object to the action, performance art also makes the artist more responsible for his/her actions since depending on them is the success and fruition of the piece. This is also why Novoa's "guided tour" to Castro is so important. As a mediator or better yet translator, Novoa's role is to explain the layers of symbolism and metaphors to Castro. However, Castro's inability or unwillingness to listen to these critical opinions only underscores the frustration of the artistic community of wanting to establish a dialogue with the highest levels of power.

The guided tour ends with the review of Angel Delgado's performance piece, which is not only one of the most controversial ephemeral works ever presented in Cuba but it also marks a chronological period: the beginning of the 90s. As mentioned before, Novoa asserts that after this performance and the baseball game, cynicism was the order of the day. And what

10 mind—provided they would let a dove perch on their shoulders for the duration of their speech. The dove was a sardonic reference to the speech given by Castro in 1959, a sanctimonious event where a dove landed on Castro's shoulder while he was announcing to the masses the triumph of the Revolution.

could be more cynical than finishing the exposition of performances in Cuba from 1979-1990 with the self-proclamation of Fidel Castro as the ultimate performance artist. As such, the honorary guest is also scrutinized in this exhibition perhaps with more attentiveness than the one given by him to the performance artists presented in this work. It is in the interest of Novoa and the other organizers of "Killing Time" to explore the idea of time, especially in connection with the Revolution. In *Invitado de honor*—a performance about performances under the Revolution—the issue of time becomes evident in the fact that these works do not exist any more, only their documentation. Thus, it was their ephemerality what enabled them to be so radical in the first place. Novoa is trying to make a similar comment by suggesting that the revolutionary project, as the works just analyzed, will one day exist only as evidence and documentation.

Another possible interpretation to Novoa's act of taking stock of the history of performance and his last gesture of including Castro and the Revolution as the ultimate ephemeral project can be read as an attempt to put an end to the tradition of seeing art in regenerative terms. Ever since the *Volumen I* (Volume I) exhibition in 1981, art critics and scholars have tended to categorize all subsequent artists under "generations." For example, Luis Camnitzer, the influential art historian whose book *New Art of Cuba* is a prime reference for art of the 1980s, divides the decade into three generations, and each generation into several groups. Even though categories such as these ones are proof of the tremendous feat of summarizing a rich and plural Cuban art production, I wonder to what extent is this tendency a symptom of the Revolution's insistence on creating Guevara's ideal "new man." Holly Block, Sujatha Fernández, Juan A. Molina, Gerardo Mosquera, Eugenio Valdés Figueroa and Tim Wride, among others, have used the qualifier "new" or the label of "generation" to describe art produced since the 1980s in Cuba. Etymologically speaking, "generation" is the consequence of the action of producing offspring. The verb form of the word, "to generate," suggests producing something, like a generator, a machine that generates power. The optimistic tone of the word evokes an engine that will keep producing results: "a generator of revolutionary consciences and combative

spirits" (Guevara 4). Novoa's pessimistic tone, which he has openly admitted informs much of his work, is anti-generational not because he wants to disassociate from artists who in the 80s were his collaborators, but because he acknowledges that whereas the golden age of performances is over, there is still an ongoing performance in Cuba. If the history of performance art in Cuba will inevitably lead to the realization that the Revolution itself has been yet another ephemeral spectacle, then it is necessary to, at least discursively, stop thinking of avant-garde art in regenerative terms.

I am not saying that by choosing to use the term "generation," art critics consciously want to promote and proclaim art that is aligned with the Revolution and with the socialist project Guevara had envisioned. This could not be farther from my intentions. What I want to suggest is that artists and art critics who have used the label "generation" and the qualifier "new" to describe the most recent batch of artists graduating from art schools in Havana are, perhaps unconsciously, inserted in the same rhetoric they are trying critically to assess. The parallels between Guevara's "new man" and art's categorization are not difficult to find. In 1965 Guevara announced that a "new generation was being born" and trusted that Cuba's youth "played a major role" in society (13-14). Art critics such as Gerardo Mosquera, perhaps the best well-informed scholar on the most recent tendencies in Cuban art, described one of the last "groups" to come out as the "mala hierba" (weed) because of their ability to survive in unfriendly circumstances (De Ferrari, "Cuba" 237). The fixation on the newest proposals made by Cuba's youth compelled Luis Camnitzer to write not only one but two postscripts to his *New Art of Cuba*. When Guevara declared, "the man from the twenty-first century is the one that we should create, even if it is still a subjective and un-systematized aspiration," he was probably not thinking of today's artists. However, the concept of "generation" not only reduces the pluralistic art expression but it also institutionalizes artists into a given bloc, thus giving the impression that artists from past generations but still working today are culturally irrelevant.

The disaffection with the terminology is also felt among writers. In interviews, Wendy Guerra and Ena Lucia Portela, both writers born in 1970 and 1972

respectively, have expressed their position towards what they deem to be an inadequate concept to explain their work. Guerra thinks the term is too broad and admits that she does not use it very often (García). Portela is more emphatic when discussing her thoughts about the term: "I don't like groups, political parties, or crowds, and that thing about generations in literature seems to me quite artificial, a sheer invention of the critics" (Camacho). It is not surprising that the rejection for this nomenclature comes from female artists since the history of Cuban art, as well as the history of the Cuban Revolution, has been founded around circles of men. This is probably why when writing about Tania Bruguera, an artist born only four years after Novoa, Camnitzer had to recur to a second postscript since her style had never fit into any of his generations but her fame was just too hard to overlook. The individuality contained in these female artists' works and the rejection of labels is seen in Novoa's act of taking stock of performance art's past and marking the end of it with the declaration of the ultimate performance. Novoa breaks systematically with the expectancy of who will be the "new artist" or what will the next "generation" contribute to the arts.

"Killing Time," the name of the exhibition, may well be a metaphor for Novoa's ambitions of closing the chapter of Cuban performances from its golden decade: the 1980s. With the end of this period critics can also cease to think of art in the same terms as the Revolution did when Guevara and Fidel articulated the socialist project. The rhetoric of regeneration might have been helpful when artists working in the 80s thought they had the liberty, space, and political support to explore every possibility of artistic expression. The ambiguity with which bureaucrats and censors approached some of the works produced in this decade soon drove the majority of prolific and internationally renowned artists out of the island. As a result, artists born and raised in the Revolution yet living today outside of it, at least have the vantage point to see a more lucid panorama of Cuban art of the past decades. Geared with an Adidas jacket, a camera, an a youtube virtual domain, Novoa takes advantage of a vantage point that allows him to rethink and redefine labels such as bureaucrat, curator, comisario, Revolution, and generation.

About the Author:

Marcela Guerrero's area of research is postcolonial Caribbean art, with an emphasis on photography, installation, and performance art. She is especially interested in understanding the visual economy of the arts from the Caribbean and the strategies used by artists to depict themes of migration, diaspora, transnationality, space, and ethnicity. Ms. Guerrero is Research Coordinator of the International Center for the Arts of the Americas (ICAA) at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH). As a researcher for the ICAA and the Latin American Art Department at the MFAH, she has had the opportunity to investigate primary documents that will result in the Documents of 20th-Century Latin American and Latino Art: A Digital Archive and Publications Project. Additionally, Ms. Guerrero has a long history as an educator teaching college-level Latin American art history and other related courses.

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MARIELLE BARROW

Inverting the Gaze: Subjectivity and Spatial mapping within IN Trinidad

Keywords: gaze, labor, cognitive-mapping, Trinidad, photography

Abstract:

In Trinidad exists between coffee-table centerpiece and academic construction. It combines photography, essays, poetry and song lyrics to give an intricate, nuanced insight into Trinidadian being. Through manipulation of the gaze and selection of authors, the text is uniquely positioned in the socio-political landscape of Trinidad. It is simultaneously strategically positioned within a global network of gazes. The text is analyzed as a cultural object, as manifesting an objective and subjective location through the gaze and as performing a 'cognitive mapping' of a Trinidadian and Caribbean psycho-social and physio-somatic existence.

*The poem, the song, the picture are but water
Drawn from the well of the people
And it must be given back to them
In a cup of beauty,
So they may drink, and
in drinking, understand
themselves.
— Federico Garcia Lorca*

In an introductory essay to the text *In Trinidad* by Pablo Delano and Milla Cozart Riggio, globally acclaimed, Trinidadian costume designer Peter Minshall cites Lorca's poem as demonstrative of the book's intent. It is an apt analogy as the text relates a story of Trinidad through a fluent, creative meld of photographs, poems and lyrics from various genres of Trinidadian music, all introduced through the recognized ingenuity of Peter Minshall and scholarly prowess of Professor Emeritus Gordon Rohlehr in essay form. The text balances precariously between coffee-table centerpiece and

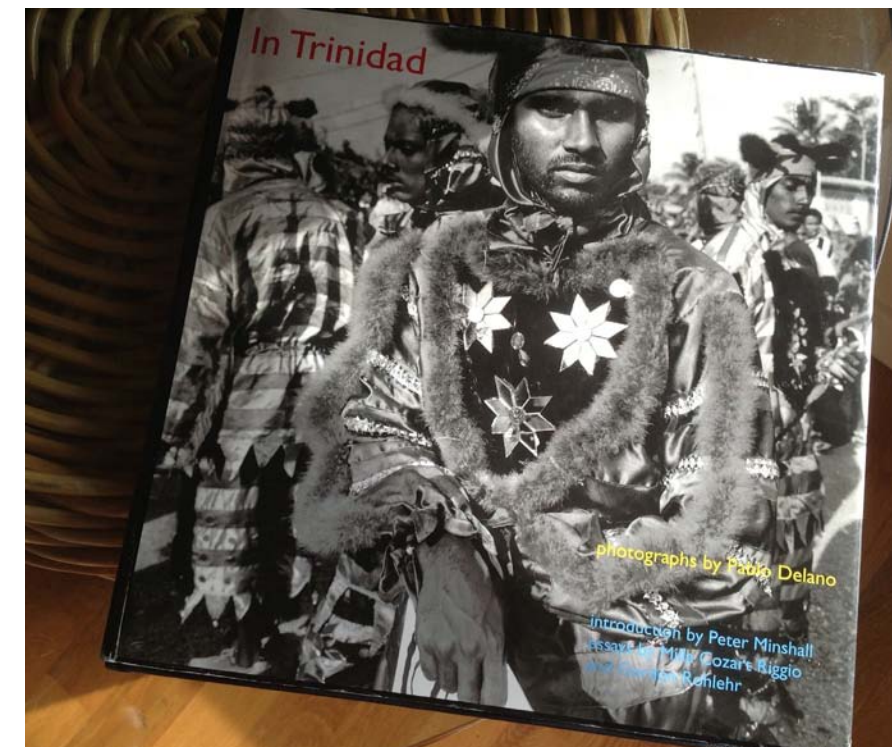
academic construction. Poems, songs, and images are from, or of, the people and create what Lorca believes is a necessary intervention for Caribbean self-recognition—these should be re-presented to Caribbeans to relect their beauty and to awaken a deeper sense of self.

Manipulation of the gaze is an intricate function of the text which merits some pause for consideration. It manifests in circumscribing the text as cultural object by the physical act of looking or audience apprehension and through the material representation of the eye

within the photographs. As an act of seeing and being seen, the gaze becomes a recurring material manifestation within photographs. I attempt to discern how the gaze works within the text and imagine it as a form of labor: as a repeated, focused and time-consuming act, which produces a product of some sort. A Western notion of the gaze is relevant as it is the Western gaze that is being inverted within the text. This process of inversion is a postcolonial tool implicating the postcolonial concept of the gaze as well. Originating in Western theory, the concept of the gaze is a psychoanalytic term made popular by Jacques Lacan. It illustrates the scenario where a physiological effect is derived when the adult self-governing subject witnesses "the observation of himself" in a mirror. The mirror stands in for any exterior object onto which a projection of identity might occur. Autonomy of the subject becomes dubious in the face of this projection, the result of which is the "Gaze" of the object. This theory is wrapped up in the 'mirror stage' theory of childhood where the child begins to perceive the shaping of identities external to himself. Laura Mulvey interprets the gaze through gender binaries where the Male Gaze results in the idea of woman as a "symptom of man" reflecting femininity as a social construct, a feminine object of desire signifying the positive identity of the male through its constitution of male lack. Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin White Masks* elucidates a personal and psychological relationship between colonizer and colonized forming the basis for postcolonial concepts of the gaze where Caribbean subjects are interpolated as the denuded and degraded other, the object of the Western gaze. He reveals however that this denuded subject simultaneously identifies in strange ways with the Western other, hence a "Negro is forever in combat with his own..." (Fanon 233), his own self-image. Within postcolonial discourse, the gaze constitutes the postcolonial subject in dialectical relationship to the construction of the imperial subject. Within the Lacanian concept the gaze of the Other (the imperial subject) produces the mastered other through its discourses of power. This process that postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak refers to as Othering locates the Caribbean both as 'child'

and degraded other of imperial discourse. Otherness is at the same time a physical maternal or paternal subject, or symbolic representations of subconscious or linguistic formations. The process of desire that allows for the construction the gaze of the imperial subject replicates itself in the process of birthing greater desire, as desire is the insatiable force of construction. In return, the Caribbean subject or object of desire engages in labor in a dialectical effort to return the gaze while inverting the gaze and gazing upon itself. Such a dynamic of gazing reflects a depth of meaning, the engendering of alternative paradigms. Performance theory scholars Diana Taylor and Deborah Paredez suggest that the production of alternative frameworks facilitate the emergence of structures of "social knowledge" (Paredez 616).

In ascertaining how the gaze is at work, I take from Cary Nelson, the vocabulary and possibilities of the concept of a space of 'inhabitation' and seek to determine how the gaze might be at work within such a space. While Nelson speaks of a space of 'inhabitation' in relation to poetry, this mode of understanding can be applied to physical spaces as well. With reference to the poetry of Carlos Williams, Nelson suggests that space can be "inhabited- by- consciousness" and that the process of



In Trinidad book. Photograph by Marielle Barrow

inhabitation is an “imaginative act,” a “mental gesture”, an act or gesture that has the potential to create new objects (Nelson 555). Things, shapes and consciousness can all be inhabited (Nelson 553). Discerning how the gaze is at work within location, as a form of labor, as a space for inhabiting within Delano’s works leads us away from an art historical apprehension of the text. Rather it directs us to the possibility of the creation of a ‘trans-identity’, a product of rather a self that is in process, a new perhaps intermediary space of identity. This is the process of inquiry into narrative elements and structures of Trinidadian society as explored through *In Trinidad*.

What are the formal and informal narrative elements that help us to perform a ‘cognitive mapping’ of our psycho-social and physio-somatic existence within *In Trinidad*? I use ‘cognitive mapping’ in much the same way that Greider Jameson uses the term which originates with geographer Kevin Lynch in his text *The Image of the City* (1960). According to Colin McCabe, it is utilized by Lynch to describe the phenomenon by which people make sense of their urban surroundings. Effectively, it works as an intersection of the personal and the social, which enables people to function in the urban spaces through which they move. For Jameson, cognitive mapping is a way of understanding how the individual’s representation of his or her social world can escape the traditional critique of representation as the mapping is intimately related to practice- to the individual’s successful negotiation of urban space. Cognitive mapping in this sense is the metaphor for the processes of the political unconscious. It is also, however, the model for how we might begin to articulate the local and the global. It provides a way of linking the most intimately local, our particular path through the world- and the most global, the crucial features of our political planet (McCabe (xiv). As a result of such factors (the gaze, labor, the portrayal of spaces for inhabiting etc) how is this text positioned in the socio-political landscape of Trinidad and how does it begin to position Trinidad in the vast network of gazes that impact a global Caribbean existence?

I begin, with the positioning of *In Trinidad* through its construction as a cultural object and go on to critique narrative elements at work through visual techniques of photography. An assessment of the

functioning and negating of the gaze follows. Postcolonial inversions of the gaze are conceivably a form of labor that the Caribbean person must engage in an effort to counteract the effects of the gaze of the colonial Other. Attempting a mapping of the gaze in this text also leads to the identification of three sites that are of major significance in this work and within Caribbean literature - the sea, the stage and the street - as a spatio-temporal mapping of a people through their natural and constructed landscape. Finally, do these photographs lead us to a deeper place of self-understanding as suggested by the poem above by Lorca! Do they achieve a spatio-temporal mapping of the gaze through location and labor and allow spaces for inhabiting, which facilitate this new depth of self-conception?

The Book as Cultural Object

Pablo Delano, the photographer whose work is the feature of *In Trinidad* is a Puerto Rican national who studied painting in the US. Delano became engaged in the documentation of Hispanic and Caribbean communities in New York and the Caribbean. His work has been exhibited worldwide and the Smithsonian Institution Press published his first book, *Faces of America*, in 1992. He lectures in photography in Hartford, Connecticut at Trinity College. The publisher selected for *In Trinidad*, Ian Randle Publishers, is a Jamaican-based publishing house in operation for almost twenty years and the first commercial publishing entity in the English-speaking Caribbean to focus on academic and scholarly works. It continues to be the esteemed leader in the industry with books on History, Gender Studies, Politics, and Sociology and more recently with titles in Art, Music, Cookery, Biography, Poetry, and Literature. The company has good online access and circulation throughout the Caribbean and markets its products through reviews in journals and participation in various conferences within the Caribbean and abroad. The introduction and one essay in the book are written by a Caribbean mas’2 maker and scholar respectively and the other is by an English professor, Milla

¹ This poem is quoted by Peter Minshall in his essay at the beginning of *In Trinidad* as describing the objective of his own work as well as the work of Delano.

² Mas’ means masquerade or sometimes costume in Trinidadian jargon

Cozart Riggio, also hailing from Trinity College, who has written extensively on Trinidad Carnival and worked closely with Delano for many years. What do these choices of publishers and essayists mean for an ostensibly Caribbean cultural object that is visually based? And how do we determine meaning in this scenario?

The photographer and an essayist are to varying degrees and by differing means positioned as the Other. Neither Riggio nor Delano are Trinidadian or of Trinidadian parentage. While Riggio has written extensively on Trinidad Carnival, whose voice does she represent? Does this ambivalent voice contaminate the return of the gaze, inflecting it with the desire of the imperial subject? The valence of the photographic works hinges, or balances on a somewhat indeterminate or mixed positioning of its two major authors. While Delano is from an island, which is physically located in the Caribbean, the Western authority that governs Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico is part of the US) alters a Caribbean subjectivity. However, Delano’s fascination, keen eye and sensitivity of his portrayals of Trinidad perhaps reveal a desire for a deeper sense of belonging to a Caribbean heritage. The awkward ambivalence of his positioning in relation to Trinidad disrupts a binary notion of the gaze positioning him perhaps similarly to second generation Caribbeans in their desire for the Caribbean home within the geographical Caribbean that has never been a physical home. The labor of the gaze is thus complex. Delano’s ambivalent positioning is potentially productive of his desire to re-vision Trinidad as doing so, re-positions him with new intimacy to the Caribbean islands of his birth with which he is fascinated. The islands live with him more so than he lives within them and so while probing the physical visions of the Caribbean with which he is confronted, emotion and internal lyrical landscapes are expressed through objective yet prescient selection and sequencing of images and construction of the text.

Visual Techniques and Structure

I conflate analysis of the visual style of the photographs with the structure of the book as I regard the book in itself as a visual construct or a visual object. Physical layout as well as ordering or organization of photographs and text is significant. Therefore, I not

only interrogate the perspective, depth of field, general composition, lighting, tones texture, framing or cropping and dimensions of the photographs themselves, but also the straddling of forms between documentary, art, vernacular street photography and photojournalism. I consider the stated intent in Milla Cozart Riggio’s essay with facts of publishing and photographic impact within a postcolonial context. Riggio says that “Pablo has chosen the stricter discipline of black and white, in the hopes of preserving something of the soul of the people beneath the often commercialized splendor of the emblazoned sunsets and tropical seas. Our aim is to express the will and spirit that turn defeat into victory. To understand with Lloyd Best and RAVhit that the school of life is where children most constructively learn.” (Riggio XVIII).

The fact that this text is published by an academic publisher whose major audience is within the Caribbean suggests that the book’s intent is meant to affect Caribbean subjectivity. It would be logical to conclude that the objective is to invert the gaze in an effort to construct Caribbean subjectivity for the Caribbean individual rather than to return the gaze to (a mostly non-Caribbean) imperial Other. We are left to perform our subjectivity within the frame, perspective and affective representations of self portrayed by the photographer, expressed by the essayists and sung back to us by the words of our paranderos, calypsonians and poets who are quoted as introductions to various groupings of photographs. The arrangement of the book facilitates new readings through an amplified or redefined notion of the essay as a visual as well as textual composition. The essay or visual object then becomes a merger of descriptive essay, academic essay, images, quotations, and lyrical text (songs). This seems to assist in the articulation of a unified perhaps mythical Trinidadian identity rather than the performance of a hyphenated identity (for example Indo-Trinidadian) as the text serves as a unifying element of perhaps disparate imagery. At the same time, lyrical excerpts reflect and introduce complex nuances that are to be read and re-read/re-visited within the photographs. However, the pervasiveness of eye-level shots betrays a somewhat insidious portrayal of Caribbeans. Eye-level, head-on camera shots deny concepts of creolite and opacity as such shots seem to convey straightforwardness

and readability rather than complexity and opacity. Our notions of self are simplified and the valence of the images made somewhat ambivalent through this negation³. We are given a historical and present day context to the life of Trinidad at the beginning of the book, however the photographs are not individually labeled. We are thus encouraged to read the story framed by the sequence of photographs as in photojournalism, relying on our ability to read body language, landscape and composition as the photographs are only titled in an index-like list at the end of the book. Structure or sequence is thus unusually foregrounded as a narrative tool. I trace the structure of the first third of the book in an effort to read and interpret this largely pictorial story.

The section opens with a black page, a symbol referencing the richness and oil of Trinidad, which is also present in the national flag. The overture images a Spiritual Shouter Baptist (an African-based local religion) woman, arms outstretched and eyes cast down, mirroring the sacrificial position of Christ. Her feet planted in the expansive waters of the sea also reference Christian biblical notions of Christ as the living water. With flowers printed on her black garment, almost as though growing from the water, her form and positioning seem to reference the larger social context of syncretism of religions in Trinidad. The low-intensity background emphasizes the strength and focal point of the figure, however it does not seem to bolster its aesthetic artistic appeal. In the second image, the sea is also a pervasive element, this time, framed by close-up largely silhouetted foliage. Jutting out on a finger of land into the sea (framed by foliage) is a mosque, almost planted in the sea. The close association of symbols of these two very different religions depicts a co-existence of religions in Trinidad. The third image in this trilogy uses a somewhat different photographic language - a low key, low intensity photograph with blurred background, emphasizes the plate of light held by an Indian and, we might assume, Hindu woman. Christian and Baptist religions (also depicted later in the text) also emphasize the power of light over darkness. The dialogue somewhat

³ Creolite is a complexity, difference and hybridity, which is contained in the bodily subject as well as within the 'frame of reference', the language of the photograph. Two aspects of the language of photography are framing and the angle of the shot

abruptly shifts in mood, while retaining its religious subject and argument. Hindu men and women and Muslim men and women are portrayed happily existing side by side in an ambiguous entry way and a very focused and clean image of a mosque is portrayed to the right of it. While the first three images seemed austere and reverential, the fourth is quite light hearted - a dichotomy of attitudes common to the culture of Trinidad. In emphasizing unity rather than sharp contradiction or struggle, the text perhaps mirrors the imperial gaze in its portrayal of paradisiacal harmony, a tropical utopia.

The only color injected into this portrayal of Trinidad is the solid backgrounds of mostly earthy colors upon which white text is often printed. These colors seem to be somewhat symbolically used. The first of these narrations is but two lines "We affirm that we are not a people of the past. We are a people with a past." Ricardo Bharath-Hernandez. Even the name of the author continues to assert the co-existence, heritage and cultural mixture of Trinidad (in this case, Indian and Spanish). This second section consists of four pictures speaking of the original inhabitants of Trinidad - the Arawaks. With the exception of the second photo, the images are mostly middle toned, low intensity photography, with tenuous artistic appeal while possessing strong storytelling capacity. The second image is rich in textures and conjures an alluring mood, with a smoky façade blurring the palm trees in the background and there is a striking juxtaposition of the intricately woven traditional wear with Western/street wear. Delano takes a traditional approach as voyeur in these photographs. Michael Fried notes, in reference to another photographer's work, that the traditional approach of the voyeur is used "in the interest of truth of expression... to depict persons who ... are unaware of being photographed, often because they are absorbed in whatever they are doing, thinking, or feeling" (Fried 29). This positioning has attracted varying response over time. At the end of the 1970's photographers using this method were as it was considered, according to Braissai, as an effort to "trap their subjects off guard, in the erroneous belief that something special will be revealed about them" (Fried 30). However, the intent of these photographs does not seem to be to reveal something special or tell specific stories about the subjects themselves, but rather

to contextualize them within a culture and trace common gestures, beliefs, symbols and ways of being through a sequence of images.

We are invited to "engage imaginatively with the image through motifs" (Fried 19). In this second grouping of photographs, the consistent and striking motif seems to be the use of hands invoking a tactile sensibility of the Arawak peoples complicated in two photographs by an olfactory element as hands are raised to the nose. In others, the tactile sensibility references creative processes - the making of crafts, cooking and so on. While these photographs seem to comply with a Diderotian principle of the tableau in the "use of absorptive motifs and structures to establish the ontological illusion that the beholder does not exist" (Fried 34), the identity of the beholder is a critical feature of the intent of these photographs. The photographs essentially conflate the Caribbean subject with the subject in the photograph in the gazing at self or the inward/inverted gaze.

The third section inscribed on a red page is "Ashe". Four images represent Orisha ceremonies with figured representations in low key. The symbol of the light is repeated as well as the bowl, which appeared in the Carib photos. Once again, the texture of garbs is striking and adds a tactile aesthetic to artistically composed images. Yet another green page introduces a change in subject this time without text. An image of a Baptist ceremony references the symbol of light from a candle (though the candle is not lit), as well as repeating the motif of the cross. A seemingly ad-hoc interjection in the sequence, of a brown page, is followed by another Baptist image of baptism in the sea. What narrative function does this punctuation of brown serve? This page interrupts the rhythm or flow of the sequence of images, introducing an odd beat, a syncopation, an unaccounted for interjection within the visual story, that can perhaps only be read as the unpredictable nature or the opacity⁴ of creolite, a seemingly contrary and contradictory structure paralleling

⁴ Opacity is a postcolonial concept referring to the new expressions of Caribbean people for example language as a deformation of colonial languages combined with African languages. The new language is then opaque or not understood by the non-Caribbean person

the way Di Riggo describes the people of Trinidad. Or is it simply an accommodation to fit the visuals within a format for publishing?

Photographs also function as introductions or prefaces to a section. A textured landscape image fulfills this role in preparing us for a distinct historical visual dialogue. The written introduction on the following page reads "Nelson island: a way station for enslaved Africans, quarantine centre for indentured labourers from India, internment camp for Jewish Refugees during World War II, and detention centre in post-independence Trinidad and Tobago." Empty rooms, with heavy shadows and sharply contrasting lights, many angles of doors and roofs, a sense of abandonment yet a strange beauty and hallowed sagacity draw the reader into this artistic rendering of space. A linear and architectural construction between the buildings themselves and their heavy cast shadows certainly reference the concealing capacity of these spaces, the historical truth and detail of which is only revealed through written text. The most revealing symbol of these six photographs is the Star of David on the gates of the Jewish burial site. The language of the photographs shifts from shadow and desertion but maintains the theme of burial and history in depicting an ornate structure that we can easily read as Muslim through its form.

Pairs and triptychs of photographs perform interjections into the rhythm or sequence of photographs, similar to new characters being introduced to a story. Underlying elements or motifs create a thread of continuity and analogy to past scenes. Hands become a resonating

image. The use of light and shadow also becomes a visual vocabulary within the story through which we begin to interpret the works. In the third to last image of the tomb, the heavily shaded area from which the camera sees is not unlike the angles and density of shadows cast by the doors of empty buildings on Nelson Island. The lighting within this last triptych of the tomb, gently descends from an almost illuminated vision of the tomb to the creeping darkness, creating silhouetted forms as the tomb descends into the sea. The shifting light parallels a gradual descent from sharpness and exactitude to afocality within the photographs. Specific lighting frames the spectacle,

and consistency of the level of the horizon line links the images, both aspects serving to reiterate the plot of the event.

While the visual story is often 'interrupted' with new elements, the trajectory of its plot, if carefully read and referenced is coherent. In order to understand the story of the grouping however, we must refer to the list of descriptions toward the end of the book where it becomes clear that this structure is the replication of a tomb. The story persists in this burial theme unbeknownst to the reader who is not familiar with the tradition as it is told in the three photographs using hands, feet and drums, only then returning to the tomb image and its procession into the sea. This burial rather than signaling an abrupt end, death or despondency is accompanied by some sense of renewal or at least continuity due to the presence of people in these images, as compared to those of Nelson island, from which people were absent.

As a cultural object and image heavy text, In Trinidad might easily be classified under the genre of coffee-table books and be frequently used in this way. Shifts and cultures of reading practice of the visual should be alternatively addressed in this context as Caribbean cultures are often dubbed as visual rather than reading cultures. Caribbean readers are perhaps more likely to thumb through pages randomly rather than linearly absorbing a sequential text. Varying progressions of text and image, diverse juxtapositions of motifs become the reading practice. Perhaps most significantly alternative workings and effects of the gaze are possible through this non-linear interaction with text and images. This cultural dynamic of flipping through or arbitrary selection is in line with the spontaneous nature of Caribbeans concomitantly shifting the practice of gazing from systemic and systematic practice to dynamic, unpredictable and opaque. As In Trinidad straddles the coffee-table and academic text genres, it helps to solidify a new practice of reading the visual of the Caribbean and a new practice of gazing. The replication by Caribbeans of the steady, stereotyping gaze typical of Western interaction with the Caribbean is subordinated in lieu of an alternative postcolonial performance of the gaze- a theatrical involvement, a story created in the random interaction of reader, images and text.

In interpreting In Trinidad as cultural object, it is difficult to pin down a single form of photography. Perhaps this overlapping of types and shifting dialogue within given themes are in themselves instructive and revelatory. Fried notes the comment of Jean Pierre Criqui who organized a retrospective exhibition of Jean-Marc Bustamante's art in 1999. He says of Bustamante that "he would like to see introduced by his work - a non-directive relationship, based on a form of fruitful indeterminacy that he calls "in between" ('entre deux') and which puts the onlooker in the position of becoming "equally responsible for the work" (164-5)" (Fried 20). Perhaps the break from linear storytelling in this book is an effort to establish a non-directive relationship with the viewer by presenting 'excerpts' from stories tied together by motifs within themes. The lack of descriptions alongside each photograph leaves the reader responsible for reading, for recognizing, for connecting the images of Trinidad and the perhaps seemingly contradictory elements of the Trinidadian self.

MAPPING THE GAZE: LOCATION, LABOR AND SPACES OF INHABITATION

A Politics of Re-presentation

Gordo Rohlehr, in an introductory essay to the text entitled "Imaging Trinidad", argues for such an inversion of the gaze as a positioning of the text in relation to the gaze of the Other: "'Black-and-White portrayal simultaneously negates visitor-voyeurism; the fascination with the picturesque; the packaged quarter truths of the brochure; the Tourism Development Company's strenuously colorful efforts at "nation branding"; Black and White offers clean starkness of line, silhouette, the clarity of fine etching, a sharpness of contrasting absolutes, a severity of seeing and representation (Rohlehr xx). Caribbean scholar Krista Thompson comments on the use of photography in a similar vein as voyeurism but taking it a step further to permission and control. Particularly concerning the Caribbean, she says, "Photography and the process of making parts of the islands "like pictures" were intrinsically related to the control of space" (Thompson 16). The ephemeral festival formats (such as Carnival) are often commoditized, documented through the photograph to be sold to the world. These

touristic photographs profess to present an intimate knowing of the space of the Caribbean. Through the gaze of the camera lens, the space of the Caribbean is controlled. Such festivals so easily provide a space for the touristic gaze and Thompson cautions us concerning the relationship between photography and social hegemony. "Attention to photography's relationship to social hegemony will prove essential to understanding touristic representations of the Anglophone Caribbean." (Thompson 16). Rohlehr's comments reveal his concern with this 'labor' of inverting the imperial gaze as a necessary occupation in addressing social hegemony and imagines it as a contemplative pursuit.

Mapping the post-colonial gaze plays into a politics of re-presentation. Possibilities of re-newal, re-visioning and revisionist history are apparent in the works of Caribbeanists Wilson Harris and Derek Walcott (57). Walcott invokes a re-memory in the present making way for a re-visioning of history within the imagination and Harris (58) puts forward the universal unconscious as a space for re-imagining self. Mapping is a strategy of control of the global north used to subordinate the global south (59) and the gaze is used as a visual form of mapping as discussed above. Charting the post-colonial gaze thus seeks to counteract the effects of these strategies while turning inward to self-introspect. Why is such a seemingly pedantic, banal task of re-presentation (mapping the gaze) needful within the current conjecture of a globalized world? Is it a critical juncture within a nationalist context to re-present Trinidad? Understanding the value of the labor involved in the post-colonial gaze as an alternative to the labor of consumer advertising promulgated by the West is critical as the Caribbean is still enmeshed in what Ian Strachan describes as the new Tourist Plantation economy. Bemoaning this persistent endemic condition, Strachan explains that expatriate hotel owners and tourists often "subject Caribbeans to the same systematic nativization, objectification, romanticization and exploitation" (Strachan 16) characteristic of the slave plantation. In addition, the push for sustainable tourism often by the West and with which the Caribbean seems enamored attempts to obfuscate the detrimental foundations upon which tourism is based. Sustainability of a flawed model of gazing and interpolation of

Caribbean peoples through tourism is ignored in favor of economic 'development'. Minshall's project to re-gaze and re-package the Caribbean is in sync with a re-mapping of the post-colonial gaze. It is by these means that we can begin to address the root of a flawed model of tourism, which 'nativizes' the Caribbean rather than attempting to sustain this edifice through 'sustainable tourism'.

In emphasizing the re-presentation achieved through mapping of the post-colonial gaze, do we obfuscate the role Caribbeans play in replicating the touristic gaze? Perhaps we run this risk of concealment, but more pressing is the engagement of the Caribbean person in this process of introspection as Caribbeans themselves seem to ignore their own roles in replicating the Western gaze. It is imperative that Caribbeans learn to distinguish the Caribbean photograph from the Western photograph of the Caribbean and understand the characteristics that replicate the Western gaze in addition to denying this intrusive gaze.

Classifying the Caribbean Photograph.

Delanos' eye-level shots work to distinguish a more objective probing of Caribbean being from the Western touristic representation of the Caribbean. The images lack the artifice and constructedness that is often characteristic of contemporary camera work and editing in touristic photography (Western portrayals of the Caribbean). The photos gaze with a 'straight' eye, directly into the eyes of the gazer. We can perhaps further characterize this labor through an attempt to map and classify this inverted gaze. Firstly, dialectical labor consists in the negation of the gaze and the construction of an inversion, while perhaps also returning the gaze. Perhaps this inversion consists of a somewhat fragmented narrative structure within the sequence of photographs. Inversion is not necessarily a smooth process and the complex and contradictory composition of the Trinidadian people adds to its staccato effect.

Interpreting and classifying the photographs presented in In Trinidad and the kind of labor or work involved in reading them can be at least partially achieved via a Barthian lens. A Barthian notion of classification

presents us with the options of empirical, aesthetic and rhetorical classifications and with the studium, which is unary: “The Photograph is unary when it emphatically transforms reality without doubling it...no duality” (Barthes 41) suggesting that its meaning can be appreciated at a glance; and coded reflecting a universal ordering of pictorial space. The contemplative seems to mirror the interest of the studium in encouraging a process of study, exploration and interrogation of meanings, relationships and subjectivities between the photograph and us. The inversion of the gaze thus involves the labor of contemplation or studium. Labor engages us in a classification of the photographs to arrive at their noeme or essence according to Barthes. He desires “a History of Looking. For the photograph is the advent of myself as other, a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity” (Barthes 12) in an effort to “account for the fundamental roles of emotion and subjectivity in the experience of... photography (Houlihan). Fanon seems to elaborate on a notion of “dissociation of consciousness from identity” in contending “it is normal for the Antillean to be anti-Negro.... the Antillean has taken over all the archetypes belonging to the European. But I too am guilty... There is no help for it: I am a white man. For unconsciously I distrust what is black in me, that is, the whole of my being.” (Fanon 232).

Emotional responses, processes of subjectivity and classification are perhaps thus all performances of labor within the inversion of the gaze. The dissociation of interpolated subjectivity (by the imperial power) from constructions of subjectivity (by the Caribbean person) parallels the dialectic of negating and constructing at work within an inversion of the gaze. Emotion, processes of subjectivity and classification are wrapped up in the spatio-temporal mapping at work within the photographs. We can stage an empirical mapping of time and space within the photographs through an identification of three distinctive physicalities: the sea, the stage and the street. Through an aesthetic lens, the heuristic and thematic locations of gender, race, sexuality, religion, ethnicity and class play themselves out within the emotive and performative acts of fusions and festivals.

Location: the sea, the street and stage

The sea, the stage and the street are certainly not the only locations pictured within In Trinidad however they are significant, poignantly portrayed and public spaces which I choose to focus on for the purposes of this essay. Within the spatial location of the sea, religion is mapped in two of the opening trilogy of photographs - the Baptist woman, the Hindu temple and then in the third grouping of images, the Muslim burial tomb being taken into the water. Temporal mapping takes place within the sea as the Baptist woman and Hindu temple are pictured in the day and the burial tomb as night casts its shadow. The sea serves as an introductory spatial signifier of public space. Mary Morgan submits, it is “sound, and rhythm, movement, the restlessness and... changeable nature of the sea” (Morgan 3). The nature of the sea is mirrored in the Caribbean and Trinidadian character in its movement, restlessness and changeability.

Morgan reflects on the significance of the sea in relation to the poetry of Kamau Brathwaite who writes “song. Song.song/syllable of circle. Pellable of liquid/contralto tonnelle of your tone into fire/and the songs of crossing the river and the dead and/ sea/ of the morning and the brass and bells of the /water.” (Brathwaite). The sea speaks of connection, the completion of the triangular trade of slavery as told by Paul Gilroy in the Black Atlantic, and as nexus. The sea thus maps us temporally within a historical time where slaves perhaps crossed the river and the sea simultaneously overlaying the brief temporality of a day with historical significance.

Delano's focus shifts to the street as the second public space portrayed. Capturing vendors selling produce, a boat being transported, Indian women chanting, Indian festivals being performed, the street is recognized as a space of ritual and celebration where religion, class, gender and race are regularly in performance. Images of the street spatially reference interaction, group dynamics and a diverse texture of life. Street and stage are then depicted simultaneously enacting a structural or spatial interaction between them within the text.

In Delano's portrayal of the street, in addition to transforming the space of these sometimes dilapidated, seemingly insignificant street pavements into place, the imaging of gesture and form of bodies performing on

the street are in contrast to the notion of the ‘disciplined body’ that reflects Western embodiment. Anne Vertinsky and Sherry McKay in *Disciplining Bodies in the Gymnasium* discuss the notion of the disciplined body contending that “just as the Cartesian imperative has traditionally placed mind over body, so has the hegemony of masculinity been enshrined in the training and celebration of the athletic body” (Vertinsky and McKay 1). Likewise Michel Foucault constructs a notion of the disciplined body in *Discipline and Punish* in addition to the idea of the “docile” body, which is shaped in accordance with economic and political regimes to facilitate observation, control and training of these bodies.

Once again, I trace the ‘story’ of these photographs without using their reference to real persons and situations by their titles and descriptions at the end of the text. In symbolically transforming space into place, unexpected and otherwise, worthless objects become signifiers of contradiction, humor, history and belonging. Pages 46 and 47 present the image of the wall of a shop with the words “the latest in... clothing” and “exclusive tailoring” with an adjoining patchwork of galvanize and wrought iron that is a closed gate. Leaning against the wall is a broken table and an old bicycle. It is typically a non-inviting space, and yet the contradiction of ‘exclusivity’ and dilapidation is humorous. It is a recognizable dichotomy to the Trinidadian viewer and thus encourages a sense of belonging or ownership to the space or rather to the sensibility of the space. Indeed it is in these “hole in the wall” shops that the best craftsmanship and products can often be found. On page 45 the image is once again ripe with humor as a sign “Bad dogs” has no visual counterpart or synchronizing image, which it references. Rather behind the gate on which the sign is posted are a series of tall, decorative concrete pillars. On page 44, (See Appendix I, image 4) the sign - an elephant is visual and presented through form rather than words as a wrought iron representation as part of a gate. Facing in the opposite direction to the elephant sign is a cow apparently grazing in the grass. The elephant is not a feature of the Trinidadian landscape and rather references Indian and/or African heritage. It is pitted against a typical Caribbean landscape with the cow.

Historical referencing and the influence of Indian heritage are then easily read within this humorous juxtaposition.

In yet another image on page 48-49 within the same grouping of photographs, what appears to be the representation of an Egyptian eye can be seen within the ordered lines of the wrought iron railing. This gate stands in stark contrast to the disorderly boxes and incongruous lines constructing barriers and a stall for vendors selling bananas and other fruit. (See appendix I, Images 1&2). The image validates a different arrangement and function of bodies, a different form of embodiment within Caribbean space. The relaxed postures and deportment of the figures are opposite to the ‘disciplined bodies’ of which Vertinsky, McKay and Foucault speak. Furthermore, both space and place seem to look back at you through the eye of the gate and the undisciplined body of the figure which faces the viewer and which is centrally positioned in the frame.

Delano explores signage in a significant way within this sequence of photographs. On page 50, signage features once more with painted words of a religious or spiritual nature. The boat with its many occupants, which is wheeled along the road is also a dilapidated structure (See Appendix I, image 3). Signage is inscribed in space through images and form (the elephant and the eye) and written text. It posits scenarios which give further meaning to these signs, which can then be read as implicit (image, form and scenario), or at times, explicit (text). Deoborah Paredes comments on Diana Taylors “Archive and Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas” concerning the distinction between such scenarios and the more clearly understood (though less appropriate) structure and framework of narrative: Taylor attends to the methodological implications that arise from validating the repertoire by calling for a shift from interpreting cultural phenomena as narratives to recognizing them as scenarios or meaning making paradigms that structure social knowledge through formulaic yet adaptable performances. This is more than a semantic distinction: the “scenario” foregrounds the agency of cultural actors because it “predates the script and allows for many possible ‘endings’” (928) and insists on placing spectators within its frame, thus “implicating us

in its ethics and politics (33)"(Paredes 616).

The idea of the scenario reinstates the actor with agency rather than a predetermined material manifestation of narrative. Actors with agency contrasts with the objectified form of the disciplined body. The form of the bodies are not disciplined, they do not perform as objectified bodies within a predictable and formulaic narrative of tourist brochures of the Caribbean but as "meaning making paradigms that structure social knowledge through formulaic yet adaptable performances". (Taylor). The formulaic narrative of disciplined bodies is different from formulaic performances in that their structures are not the result of training and control but rather what becomes a ritual of performance derived through spontaneous interactions. A ritual of performance is distinct from 'ritual performance' as it references the habit of performance as form rather than the content of performance. What is performed is not a discipline act of bodies within a pre-defined, pre-constructed space and time, but rather an abstract coming together of elements in the staging of improvised performance. Taylor's assessment of the meaning making capacity of scenarios also relates to the inverted gaze. The process of inversion produces meaning for those who invert, in re-positioning themselves in their own eyes and in the eyes of the Other.

Through improvisation, notions or 'locations' of class, religion and ethnicity rooted in the human body begin to be mapped in the space of the street, through images of Indian women chanting in groups and various types of painted messages on unpredictable surfaces in incongruous settings. Messages are interwoven into landscapes, bodies and practices telling the story of the conflation of landscape, body and ritual practice, space and time. A temporal mapping takes place in conjunction with a sense of place through the aging of wood in the tailoring photograph and the boat.

I have detailed location as it is signified through the sea and on the street. The space of the stage parallels that of the street in being a space of performance. We can ask similar questions of the stage: How does it map

our location or perform a spatio-temporal mapping of the gaze? Is the stage a space of becoming, which we inhabit? Does the sea represent history and historical roots and connectedness of religions? Is the street a space of living, parody, humor, contradictions, protest etc. and the stage a space of fulfillment, self-realization, representation, a 'special form of consciousness'? Or are these distinctions challenged by the images in this book.

Delano's portrayal of the street reflects a "vernacular history" (Blair) and seems to be portrayed as a conscious and unconscious space of inhabitation, sometimes passive, often visceral. If the gaze is at work through spaces of inhabitation that is processes of "imaginative actions" and "mental gestures" which has the potential to create new objects (Nelson 555) then the process of this gaze validates these spaces (sea, stage and street) as products of the Caribbean, performative and constitutive spaces that rival the television 'space' perpetuated and promoted by Western civilization. The sea, the stage and the street in the context in which they are addressed here are Caribbean 'canon' and replace the labor of time of looking usually allotted to television advertisements for example.

The text allows us to inhabit our own spaces through a gaze that portrays our 'performance' rather than the narrative of exoticism and thus facilitates a sense of ownership, understanding and appreciation. The gaze is un-self-conscious yet self-aware as there is a lack of extreme close ups and shots that grasp and disturb in much the same way as Barthes describes the punctum. The shots are slightly distanced creating a spatial distance between readers and the space of the photograph. Photographs are often low intensity and sometimes low keyed which also serve to create a spatial distance between readers and photograph, as Trinidadian life is in fact mostly vivid, highly textured and colorful. This staging of distance permits a new level of observation and contemplation through a shift in the 'truth' of the scene. The images are also of indeterminate valence that is they do not purport to portray these spaces and practices as backward or progressive but rather portray the 'texture' of life as a rich space for interpretation and

exploration. As such, the images are nonjudgmental and though they may not depict an uncontaminated mode of signs. The shots are not close-up shots that peer into the depths of eyes but rather they render the positionality, spatiality and temporality that describe Trinidadian life. The photographs do not seem to impose what Sara Blair describes as an "ethics of form"(60) as the photographer expresses a recognition of phenomena or scenarios (for example the elephant and the cow) yet is aware of his own consciousness, resisting the portrayal of intimacy in an effort to encourage and allow the viewer his own space for intimacy, identification and analysis of the work. Though head-on shots on the one hand seem to deny the creolite of our existence, as mentioned earlier, they also assist in resisting a sense of obtrusive intimacy between photographer and scenario. Angled shots would suggest intimacy and depth of understanding of the 'angles' and perspectives through which life is understood in Trinidad, while at the head-on shots seem to reflect a simple intention of objectivity and documentary, that creates a distance between the photographer, subject and viewer/reader allowing space that each can inhabit differently.

TOWARD A TRANS-IDENTITY

In Trinidad begins to map our multifaceted composition and the spaces of our performance, including the intricacies and nuances of this performance. Humor, depth and history are portrayed, synchronizations and disparities are revealed through gesture, tactility and olfactory sensibility. W.J.T. Mitchell in *Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture* contends that "Visual culture entails a meditation on blindness, the invisible, the unseen, the unseeable, and the overlooked; also on deafness and the visible language of gesture; it also compels attention to the tactile, the auditory, the haptic, and the phenomena of synesthesia" (Mitchell 90). Synesthesia- the crossing of representational boundaries or forms occurs in the text through the coupling of images with poetry, quotations and critical essays. In Trinidad maps Trinidadian people within global narratives of the invisible-visible, of the unseen and unseeable, thus positioning us within a vast network of looking, mapping us as involved and yet distinct, bearing traces of the world, yet unique. It reflects

notions of vision, positioning and embodiment that synchronize with understandings of visual culture as "the visual construction of the social, not just the social construction of vision. The visual construction of sociality through a politics of location: within the body (religion, class and so on) and also in the streets and on the stage, (which include both scenarios without the human subject as well as those with human and/or animal subject) begins to create a 'positioning'. This positioning firstly gives the Caribbean reader the power of vision as according to Haraway "Vision is always a question of the power to see" (Haraway 680).

Secondly, the specific nature of the vision is significant, that is, this positioning enables a triangulated vision: it facilitates the triangulation of the viewer in relation to his/herself, the photographer and the photographic subject: the subject "sees that it is seen and thereby becomes visible to itself and others" (Mirzoeff 18). This labor of seeing highlights embodiment and the staking of multiple sites of knowledge or the "the grounding of knowledge organized around the imagery of vision"(Haraway 681). Haraway argues "We are not immediately present to ourselves. Self-knowledge requires a semiotic-material technology linking meanings and bodies." (Haraway 680). "Vision requires instruments of vision: an optics is a politics of positioning. Instruments of vision mediate standpoints; there is not immediate vision from the standpoints of the subjugated. Identity, including self-identity, does not produce science; critical positioning does, that is, objectivity. (Haraway 681). In Trinidad, I submit, functions both as a cultural object and a semiotic-material technology.

Objectivity is facilitated through emotional and mental 'space' created by the text. These non-judgmental, reflective spaces promote self-awareness, allowing Trinidadian viewers/readers to rebuild our own narrative forms through performance, gesture and personal stories which connect to the images. The non-judgmental positioning promotes building and storytelling rather than emphasizing fragmentation, as many unexpected links tie images, races, religions, spaces and times together. Thus the cognitive mapping

performed locates us in a psycho-social space of becoming that approaches a new stage of or a 'trans' identity. The positioning of the relaxed body and the performance of improvisation maps a physio-somatic space of becoming. These spaces are reflexive and more reflective of becoming than expectation. Becoming seems to be a product of a contemplative function, while expectation is arguably more likely produced by gripping photographs and those which use special effects, cropping and various angles to heighten a sense of anticipation, or even illicit shock from the viewer.

The images do not shock or grip one in an unexpected manner. Instead they are contemplative, encouraging the reader to understand the 'why' of such a book. It promotes an understanding and working out of self within this taxonomy of races, religions, spaces, times, gestures and humors. It promotes Trinidad as a thinking space, a space of serious enquiry with multiple narratives, or rather performances, and possibilities to be considered.

Perhaps paradoxically it is this very indeterminate positioning of the authors that often characterizes a diverse Caribbean subjectivity - Diasporic peoples, second generation Caribbeans going to the Caribbean to live for the first time, impassioned foreigners and scholars who take up the cause of the Caribbean. The documentary project of these photographs purports to produce a possibility of agency through an inversion of the gaze. These photographs and people, scenes and practices then become indexically referenced (by the reading audience) to the inversion of the gaze. The fact of ambivalence in authorship (in terms of their lack of Trinidadian birth) runs the risk of de-stabilizing these notions of inversion and resistance but perhaps produces greater probability of rich and complex modes and articulations of Caribbean being, at least within this particular project. Nonetheless, the work is cleverly positioned within the socio-political landscape of Trinidad by the selection of internationally acclaimed and nationally respected local, masman Peter Minshall, and further anchored to appeal to an academic audience through the inclusion of an essay by University of the West Indies (St. Augustine, Trinidad), professor emeritus Gordon Rohlehr. It effectively straddles the coffee-table and academic genres in this way. By anchoring

it in Trinidad through commentaries by these national social and academic figures, the fact of non-Trinidadian authors Delano and Riggio becomes to some extent justified and acceptable to a Trinidadian and Caribbean audience. It is also Delano's and Riggio's international appeal that increases the project's amenability to an international audience.

Production of such a book, such a cultural object, begins to position a Trinidadian landscape, giving concrete presence to the oral stories often heard in a non-spectacular format. It does not mimic or imitate the typical documentation process of Caribbean culture. It re-presents Trinidad and represents an alternative perspective that can be easily but differentially read and interpreted by both Trinidadians and their non-Trinidadian counterparts. In the end, the process of re-educating a Caribbean and international audience to a new way of viewing and understanding the Caribbean is a lengthy, tedious and involved process that must be engaged strategically. Straddling genres and creating a Caribbean compartmentalization for knowledge of Caribbeans is a productive strategy of which the tactical intervention of texts such as InTrinidad are worthy steps.

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Marielle graduated with a BS in Hospitality Management from The University of the West Indies, and the University of Technology in Jamaica and earned a Postgraduate Diploma in Arts & Cultural Enterprise Management and an MPhil in Cultural Studies at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad. She is currently a Fulbright scholar and PhD student in Cultural Studies at George Mason University doing research on Art and the Public Sphere and The Politics of Cultural Memory.

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LAURA MAIER

Interview with Rozi Chung

Healing Through Art in Downtown Kingston

Keywords: art therapy, art and community, art in times of crisis

Abstract:

Rozi Chung is an arts activist who founded Studio 174 in downtown Kingston. Her main work is the use of art therapy for traumatized youths. Along that the studio is beautifying the inner-city areas with art projects, hosting events and shows to bring people together, learn something new, exchange, educate and become exposed to art forms they have never seen before.

Roslyn 'Rozi' Chung gleams when she talks about Studio 174. Six years ago, the gallery, now at the forefront of a movement in Kingston's inner city, was an abandoned warehouse.

"It was horrific when I got here. Nobody thought I could turn an old warehouse into this," says Chung about the gallery, which gives aspiring artists a chance to showcase their work.

It also has multiple functions as different events and workshops are held there. All are aimed at educating and exposing people living in the inner city to the arts and approaches to art forms that they had not previously known.

Low living standards and a high crime rate force the people in the inner city areas of Kingston to live under difficult circumstances.

"I learned a lot from the inner city," reflects Chung, "I learned the whole idea of survival, of what it is to be without most of the time." The harsh conditions prompted Chung's decision to suspend her own art

work and open up a studio.

Healing is also a main focus of Chung and Studio 174. The need for healing was sadly emphasized during the Tivoli Gardens incursion. In May 2010, after days of shooting between members of the Shower Posse drug cartel and the Jamaican military, at least 73 civilians were left dead, numerous homes were burned and many community members left traumatized.

"During the time of the incursion, I really wanted to come down and do something. I then got in contact with Dr. Tammy Haynes,' remembers Chung. She and psychologist Dr. Tamika Haynes met at the University Hospital of the West Indies in Kingston eight years before, when Chung started to explore a field very new to Jamaica: Art Therapy.

"I had such a wonderful life with my art and I wanted to share the art or anything to do with the arts with people in the society who are suffering,' says Chung.

At the hospital she soon began to see improvements in the wellbeing of the patients with whom she was working.

Patients, who were mostly suffering from schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, autism and chronic depressions.

"Art Therapy is a communicative device that uses the visual means as a way of language when you cannot verbally say anything," describes Chung. "There is a parallel of the external world and the internal world, and a language system that goes underneath within one's self. The art medium is the only tool I found so far that we can use to get that language out, because it is not using words."

Together with photographer, Max Earle, Chung and Haynes founded the Non Governmental Organization (NGO) Inscape Foundation. The foundation's goal is to conduct projects that can function as a response to trauma and crisis and to offer alternative mental health care.

Art Therapy as a Response to Trauma and Crisis

Just three months after the Tivoli incursion, the Inscape Foundation started the 'Tivoli Resolution Project.' Within the course of the project, ten traumatized boys between the ages of 13 and 18 were offered a program of photographic therapy, under the motto, 'The Courage to Look Inward, The Determination to Move Forward'.

Given great freedom and independence with their digital cameras during shooting, the boys met up with their mentors three times a week to collect and reflect on the pictures that were taken of the boys' families, friends, selves, community and environment. The project offered the boys a way to deal with their past experiences and communicate about something they could not easily verbalize. The media also covered the boys' work, which gave their families a source of pride. Most importantly, "we also used photo therapy because we wanted the boys to tell their story about the incident, the media had a great feel in how they were telling the story," states Chung.

The following exhibition, which displayed photographs

taken by the boys, was shown not only in Kingston, but also New York City, where it was received very positively.

The end of the project did not mean the end of the therapy though. The boys asked for the continuation of the project, because they enjoyed their experiences during the course of the project.

"That's when I took over and I would come to Studio 174 and get into making mini exercises for them, because they were still experiencing education problems, sleepless



nights and so forth,” says Chung, who is now offering free art classes and free art therapy sessions at Studio 174 to any youths in the surrounding inner city. For serious cases where she ‘sees things coming out of the art’, Dr. Haynes comes in and offers counselling sessions.

Healing Through Beautifying

To amplify the use of art as a healing tool and to increase physical and psychical wellness, Studio 174 started to beautify areas in Tivoli hoping that other inner city areas would follow in their footsteps.

“Anything that brings beauty is a healing right away, because it’s something to refocus your mind on out of an ugly situation and to have you feel a sense of pride in an area that was just being devastated before,” Chung says.

Together with members of ‘Manifesto JA’, a Jamaican NGO that seeks youth empowerment through the arts, Chung went to Tivoli Gardens to work on a peace garden with the whole community exactly one year after the massacre took place.

Chung recalls the experience: ““long with other paintings we did a huge heart, which is originally an Adinkra sign from West Africa from West Africa. All the kids then printed their hands inside the heart. It’s not only that they enjoyed doing that, but it was also for them to show ‘I was there. I was a part of that project’”.



Studio 174 is not only a site for healing, but it also tries to open up new chapters in people’s lives. Says Chung, “I wanted the studio to be a space that deals with youth worrying about their identity, because I saw there was a great disorganized self within the identity of the inner city. I also wanted the youth to learn a way that they can have their freedom, using this space instead of going out there, being angry and getting into violence. We use the art form a way where all the violence and their anger can go on paper.”

Education Through Exposure

One event aimed at introducing new and different ways of thinking is the regularly held ‘Dubconscious’ session. Freshly squeezed juice, coconut water and roast corn, ‘things of culture,’ are offered as alternatives to widely available fast food.

Art activist dj Afifa Sol, replaces the Dancehall, heard widely in Kingston with Dub. Dub, according to Chung, provides a more meditative experience than the wild Dancehall. More importantly, many young people from the inner city do not know about Dub. ‘Dubconsciousness’, therefore becomes a tool to teach them about the treasures of their own culture. Chung also recognises music, not only Dub, but also Jazz, Classical, Indian music and other alternative sounds, as an important tool for her work with the youth.

“Music is a part of the Jamaican experience, a part of our culture, everything here has a vibration,” Chung explains, “I did not want to separate that, because I saw it as a part of the process. Sometimes I use music really just to calm the youths because some of them are coming out of situations where their home environment is terrible. They don’t listen to instrumentals and think about what the instruments are doing. It gets them to block out the stuff that is happening around them at least for a time.”

Another much talked about event at Studio 174 was the exhibition, ‘Question Me Black’, which examined ideas of ‘Blackness’, trying to investigate what being Black means from Black people’s perspective.

“It was really to get young people to question themselves. Did the labeling of ‘Black’ imprison them? Did it cause them to be seen in a certain way?” Chung



asks as she described the objective behind the exercise. She says while paintings and drawings by students and artists made up of the exhibition, an additional assignment drew a lot of attention.

“It was shortly after Haiti’s earthquake and somehow the rumours were going around Jamaica that the earthquake happened because of all the voodoo Haitians were doing.”

Chung says to break up these prejudices against Black culture, artists worked on a voodoo installation that led many viewers to questions their assumptions.

“It showed them how there are so many things that are so similar to our culture, and it is only language that separates us.”



Bringing People Together

Chung also wants to bridge the gap between Uptown and Downtown Kingston. She lamented the historical divide.

“Generations of people have continued this nonsense. But when you get together, there’s no division! There’s no labeling, there’s no discrimination. You work together as a unit.”

Having grown up in the United Kingdom, Chung has

always seen herself as a mediator between Western and Caribbean culture. Having gained so much from being exposed to two ways of thinking, feeling and behaving, Chung wants to encourage the exchange not only with people from within Jamaica, but also from outside the island.

Chung sees events at Studio 174 not only as a way of getting people from uptown to come downtown, but also a way of bringing people from abroad in. She believes the events offer an excellent opportunity to mingle and exchange. It gives the youth some feeling of pride when they see that someone is interested in their area, in what they are doing and also helps remove the stigma.

While Chung has many wonderful ideas and plans for future events and workshops, a big problem has always been funding. She says: “The arts can make a difference in the Jamaican context. We just need the right minded people who are not afraid and are willing to invest.”

But support has not been forthcoming from the private sector or government. There are also infrastructural issues. Chung sighs, “the government needs to clean up downtown, get rid of the sewer smell, install more street lights and proper places to through garbage in.”

She thinks her dream of holding an arts festival downtown might hopefully come through if this is done.

“I really would love to see downtown beautiful, because there has been so much horror, bloodshed and death. I just want to change all of that. And I think the arts can do a lot to contribute to that.”

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ALAKE PILGRIM

Interview with Phoebe Farris

“Turning the Gaze”

Keywords: migration, freedom, dislocation, nature

Abstract:

Dr. Phoebe Farris (Powhatan-Renape Nation/Pamunkey) is a recently retired Professor of Art and Women’s Studies at Purdue University in the United States, known for her creative, scholarly and political work with indigenous communities. She is an artist-editor at Cultural Survival Quarterly (CSQ), the award-winning magazine of Cultural Survival, <http://www.culturalsurvival.org/>, an organization that partners with indigenous communities around the world to defend their lands, languages and cultures. Dr. Farris’s career spans more than three decades, with extensive experience in art therapy, arts education and activism. As a researcher, curator and critic, she has helped create wider platforms for the work of indigenous artists, as well as artists from minority groups in the US. As an artist herself, she has used photography to document political and social movements around the world. Dr. Farris is the author/editor of several publications, including *Women Artists of Color: A Bio-critical Sourcebook to 20th Century Artists in the Americas*, *Art Therapy and Psychotherapy: Blending Two Therapeutic Approaches*, and *Voices of Color: Art and Society in the Americas*.

When and why did you begin to bridge the worlds of art, scholarship and activism?

There are several artists in my family and my family has always been politically active and progressive. I think from the very beginning I looked at art as having a social message, being used to protest or bring awareness to different issues like the war in Vietnam, civil rights, the women’s movement. So for me art, creativity, scholarship and activism are all intertwined.

At first I did painting and printmaking, but I also went to a lot of demonstrations, starting in high school, and I always took my camera with me to document from my

own perspective, rather than only having the mainstream media’s perspective. I try to represent our peoples more in terms of celebration; show us doing things that are uplifting, having pow-wows, family gatherings, the more uplifting aspects of our culture. The poverty, the loss of land, alcoholism, the teenage suicide in our indigenous communities: those things are very important, but we can become overwhelmed by the emphasis on the negative. I try to balance out some of that negative imagery that’s in the mainstream media.

Photography has at times formed part of a colonizing and othering gaze in relation to first nation peoples. What drew you to photography as a medium and



issues that are being discussed, rallied around, researched, or acknowledging your involvement in them. I want to be actively involved, as well as taking documentary photography; to be a part of the audience, part of the protest, part of the group that's organizing the event, not always an outsider.

Participant-observation can be both uncomfortable and powerful. Sometimes people think you are just another outsider coming to take photos to use against them, for example for the CIA, FBI etc. who infiltrate all kinds of movements. So if you're a stranger, people want to know, "Who is this person with the camera?" They don't really trust you. I try to be very open about who I am, who I represent, whether I'm there by myself or for an organization, university, or research grant. I always try to get permission before I publish photographs – to give the persons involved some kind of control over their own image being publicized. Especially at pow-wows, I try to get the person's name, their tribe and so on, so that I'm not just infringing without any kind of protocol.

What is "Cultural Survival" and how does it relate to your work?

I am an artist-editor for Cultural Survival Quarterly (CSQ) – the flagship publication of Cultural Survival, an organization whose stated mission is to "work toward a world in which Indigenous Peoples speak their languages, live on their land, control their resources, maintain thriving cultures, and participate in broader society on equal footing with other peoples. They provide

advocacy to amplify Indigenous voices around the world and provide support of their efforts to strengthen communities" (www.culturalsurvival.org). A lot of Native American people have heard of CSQ and don't mind being photographed for an issue in the magazine. Most

people seem to trust the honesty of the research and of the publication in general. CSQ has been around since the 1970's. For the first time they now have a Native American woman as the Executive Director of the entire organization – managing not only the magazine, but also the outreach, philanthropy, and business aspects of the organization. Her name is Suzanne Benally, a Navajo/Santa Clara Tewa environmental advocate.

Cultural Survival's work has an even greater reach now that many indigenous people in different countries are connected to the internet. There is an office in Guatemala for their Guatemala Radio Project, with indigenous staff members Rosendo Pablo Ramirez (Mam) and Ancelmo Xunic (Kaqchikel). You have tribes in Guatemala, in Brazil, and other countries who are very much part of the 21st century and they are fighting for their rights via social and digital media, calling attention to issues worldwide. So indigenous does not mean you're Stone Age! I recently submitted a review to CSQ of a multimedia exhibition titled "Conversations with the Earth: Indigenous Voices on Climate Change", at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in Washington DC - www.conversationsearth.org, <http://www.youtube.com/conversationsearth>, facebook.com/conversationsearth. Indigenous people from 13 countries are represented and the exhibition is open until Jan 2nd, 2012.

What do you see as the potential of the arts in achieving social change?

The arts can reach a lot of people, especially through mass media – film, television, photography, the internet. Everybody can't understand various economic theories, but people can interpret and understand visual images, so I think they reach a broader audience than just the academic elite. I was an Art Therapist for ten years in the Washington DC school system, working with special education students who had various disabilities - emotional, physical and cognitive. I had a long career in Art Therapy, using art for healing purposes, working with children who were sexually or physically abused. They may not have been able to verbalize what happened to them, but they could express it through play, or painting,

drawing or acting. So art therapy, art education, art criticism: these are all areas I have been involved in, and value deeply.

Have you come across certain hierarchies in "the arts" and if so, how do you address them in your work?

A few years ago I edited a book called Women Artists of Color. I focused on artists of the Americas – Native American, African American, Asian American and Latina – women artists who were also professors, curators, critics – people who combined their art, their aesthetic sense, with some kind of social consciousness. They're feminists, they're artists, they're activists, they're in touch with their culture. Some artists were more grassroots, some were more mainstream, some were more international – a wide range of viewpoints and a wide range of locations in the so-called professional art world.

I think the capitalist elite decides who's professional, who's amateur, who's a craftsperson and who's a fine artist. They may decide that because somebody was self-taught and has a particular style, that they are "primitive artists". People who make quilts or pottery within their own community and work among their family and close friends may be labeled "outsider artists". When they are brought into the mainstream art world the profits go largely to the organization that sells their work and very little goes back to the people who created it in the first place. How do you get to be in those different categories? And who benefits from those labels?

When an indigenous artist is dead and someone finds their work, say a piece of pottery, it may be put in a museum or sold for millions of dollars to a private owner. In some cases, there is the question of how the work was acquired: was it dug up, purchased, stolen, or exchanged in trade? Who should have ownership of this work: the tribe it came from, a museum, or private owner? This gets into repatriation issues that are very important for Native Americans. And Cultural Survival is involved with these issues not only in this country, but with people who are indigenous in Africa, Asia, South America, and the Caribbean.

how do you approach your practice differently?

Turning the gaze back on ourselves is really important to me, as is participant observation. I think that if you're trying to be totally "objective" and not involved in helping the causes you are documenting, that can be a colonizing approach – looking on but not trying to help the various

Why did your work take you to Bermuda and how do you relate to indigenous peoples in the wider Caribbean?

Nation-states are often artificial states with artificial boundaries. For instance, in the 1600s, some of the members of the Pequot tribe, in what is now Connecticut, were enslaved under the British Empire and sent to Bermuda during King Philip's War. Most of them tried to maintain their heritage, marrying each other and keeping some of their culture, even though they were enslaved and made connections with Africans who were also enslaved in the same islands. Recently they've made contact with their ancestors in the United States. Tribal members from Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island visit them in Bermuda and have ceremonies together, conferences etc.

Although it's been a long time, family and oral tradition kept those memories alive as best they could.

I always look at this whole hemisphere as "Indian country". Cuba, Jamaica, Trinidad: at one time, these were countries with indigenous populations similar to some of the cultures in North America. People say, "Indigenous culture in the Caribbean was wiped out after African enslavement. It just died out". But that is a superficial look at what happened. There are groups in Cuba, although they are part of the mainstream, that still maintain aspects of their Taino culture. There are groups like that in Puerto Rico. The Kalinago have a reservation in Dominica. There is an installation from that reservation at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in the United States. People throughout the Caribbean have maintained elements of indigenous cultures. And that has always interested me, the intermingling of cultures, how people formed new cultural groups.

There is sometimes a presentation of indigenous cultures that is heavily focused on the past. What is your take on the dynamic between cultural preservation and change?

No culture is static. Every culture has to evolve otherwise you're not going to survive. You have to change. You can try to keep your core beliefs, but you have to adapt to new peoples, new cultures, new religions, new government takeovers etc. I think people are always thinking about what they want to keep and what they will change and adapt to. Language revitalization is very important. If you keep your native language, it's one of the best links to your past. Many indigenous languages are now extinct. There is a tribe in Massachusetts, the Wampanoag, which has in the past ten or twenty years, through a linguist, revitalized their language, and are now teaching their kids how to speak fluent



Wôpanâak. They now have charter schools for the children, from pre-school and up, offering immersion in their native language. This was done through a linguist in their own tribe: Jessie Little Doe Baird. She is also an advisor and partner to Cultural Survival's Endangered Languages Program and won a MacArthur Foundation "genius grant" for her work.

Given the financial crisis and ongoing economic recovery, is there a corresponding crisis in the arts for social change? What are you fighting for in this area?

Right now we are at a crucial stage in trying to maintain national funding organizations, such as the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), that make this kind of work possible. They are being threatened by the current right-wing element in Congress. I'm a volunteer at the White House Office of Correspondence and do volunteer lobbying for the NEH through the National Alliance for the Humanities. And that is the fight right now – to maintain funding for work in the arts and humanities that may be seen by some right-wing groups as superfluous and anti-establishment.

The United States is a unique country in the sense that every culture is represented here, so you can't be totally isolated in the arts, technology, science, or any area of inquiry and creativity. People from every nationality, ethnicity, race, creed and religion live here. They may not always get treated as equal people, but they are here. The arts remind us of that reality.

About the Author:

Alake Pilgrim, a writer based in Trinidad & Tobago and MA graduate of New York University's Latin American and Caribbean Studies program, recently met online with Professor Farris to discuss the arts and social change in relation to her work.

LEANNE HAYNES

Interview with Holly Bynoe & Nadia Huggins Changing Spaces, Reaching Out

Keywords: Primitivism, Haiti, Graffiti art, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Hector Hyppolite

Abstract:

In March 2012, Holly Bynoe and Nadia Huggins, founders of the Caribbean arts and culture magazine ARC, were commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme to work on a project called Youth-IN Visions. Commissioned as producers, Bynoe and Huggins were contracted to produce a series of webisodes, in total over 30 5-minute focus pieces on individuals, highlighting the aspirations and interests of youth across eight Caribbean countries including: St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, Jamaica, The Bahamas and Dominica. I spoke to Bynoe and Huggins in July to find out more about the Youth-IN Visions project and their reflections on its progress so far.

Leanne Haynes: **Can you tell me more about how your involvement in the UNDP Youth-IN Visions came about?**

Holly Bynoe: Sometime in October last year [2011], we were involved in a conversation with Annalee Davis, Director of Fresh Milk, Nicholas Laughlin, Sean Leonard, Nicolas Laughlin and Chris Cozier from Alice Yard, Amanda Coulson from the National Art Gallery of the Bahamas and that was in conjunction with the UNPD director, Paula Hidalgo, Project Coordinator of Youth-IN. They wanted to create a residency programme that circulated 50 artists across 8 Caribbean territories, practicing artists and writers so that we are better able to understand what we have here as well as try to figure out how to support artists that are leaving schools and universities. So that culminated in a meeting in November 2011, where we met in Trinidad and discussed the possibility of extending the proposals and supporting them financially. Our proposal was geared towards 8 Caribbean territories and documenting

50 artists, which was taken in by them and adapted. We were then given a new brief, one that was very open, very broad cross section of Caribbean youth, and it wasn't specifically geared towards the cultural industries and visual art. To have this opportunity and visit all these islands . . . well we probably would never have the chance, so the negotiation and sacrifice [of the original proposal] was worth it for the experience.

LH: **So the candidates had to fill in an application form?**

Nadia Huggins: Yes. They had to answer questions that the UNDP selected with our recommendation. The criterion for selection was based on how well they answered these questions, those who did so fully and coherently were selected. Questions included: Why are you the most suitable candidate for the Youth-IN Visions Webisode Project? How do you live your life and what inspires and challenges you daily? Candidates were also asked to provide a video link, where they outlined their suitability for the project.

LH: **And how many people applied in total?**

NH: We had 110 people apply in total. We got some really intriguing applicants and made some interesting connections.

LH: **Did you anticipate more or less applicants?**

NH: I expected a lot less especially given the challenges we were working with, for example, distributing the information. It was difficult. I mean, getting it out online is all well and good but the kind of people we really wanted to reach, I don't think they would have been in the network that we made online. We have a very specific network online so getting the information out through the ministries is difficult; I mean they have very specific ways of disseminating information, which I don't think always reaches the people that it always needed to reach. So that was a bit challenging for us and we didn't really get a chance to pull in the right amount of people.

HB: Not to mention that fact that we signed a contract in March [2012] and began working that month. So we were left with little time to do the actual work that we needed to do to set up the proper networks, to mobilise people, to make them interested, and have them communicate with us. I mean, you touch down on an island and have X amount of resources, so you use those resources to see what you can do.

LH: **So if you had more time, support and resources, maybe from the ministries and help with the dissemination of the information, do you think you would have pulled in some more applicants?**

NH: Absolutely.

HB: Yes. We would have been able to target a more dynamic group, not that the group that we targeted wasn't dynamic but I think we missed some fine opportunities.

LH: **Can you tell me more about each of your individual roles in the project?**

HB: Basically I was a production manager. I was more heavily involved in handling the applications. So I think a lot of the application process revolves around recruiting, getting the information out there, press, working with

outreach, ministries, identifying candidates, working with the identified applicants to get their applications to the best possible standard because most of them were incomplete. The process involved encouraging applicants to engage with us a little bit more as well as figuring out who was competitive because some of them were very poor. Some did not understand the terms of reference that we put out so we worked with the applicants to ensure that we were able to fill in all the application forms for the UN. This means I can also justify why we chose them at the end of the day. Because some of these people who applied knew what we were doing, and were very aware of the supported brand we are trying to commit



Sonia Farmer, Letter Press specialist and Poet, Nassau, "What's funny is despite the digitized world, The Caribbean remains such a fragmented space—not only in our own communities, but between them as well. We're used to operating within our own vacuums, but it's to our detriment—we have so much to exchange, to learn from one another, to inspire with, and yet we have few ways of connecting in order to do this. I really hope as a collection of mini documentaries it can help us make the connections we need to operate outside of our vacuums, to collaborate and think bigger—and I hope it can be the beginnings of a major platform that young leaders in the region can add to with their own projects and ideas".

to, they obviously wanted to work with us. Out of 30 candidates we had about 7 who really knew what we do and were interested. So we had more engagement with them as opposed to people who were just strangers. If I needed more information, I would call, talk to them and find out more information, i.e. to find out what visual accompaniments they envisaged for the production. So that was the kind of working relationship I had with the candidates. My other roles included communicating with the UNDP, setting up the production, figuring out the schedule for production, doing everything with regards to the production, liaising and developing a timeline for the production in the various countries. Of course that also included managing accommodation, figuring out where we were going to stay, sorting out the nitty gritty parts related to visiting a country that we had never visited before.

NH: Yes, all the stuff that drives me crazy! I dealt mostly with the directing. Just general production, so trying to come up with a very specific format for the webisodes so there is some consistency, selecting locations, setting shots and basically trying to find a way to make the production very dynamic, and done in such a way as it can target a specific people. I guess, to some extent, I am also managing the edits. We do have an editor but there is a very specific style we are trying to achieve. Basically, I was involved in creating an aesthetic for the project as well as the camera work and lugging around equipment!

LH: **Why do you think it's important to have projects like this one?**

NH: There isn't really anything being done like it in the region, maybe on a local level, like different islands might have their own little projects, highlighting youth doing positive things in their community, but in terms of on a regional scale I don't think it's being done. I think it is important to have that connection, so we see what other people are doing, try to create a network, and see how we can collaborate because I think the bigger picture is to work towards regional integration, and I think projects like this help shed some light on certain aspects.

LH: **Are there any places that presented certain challenges or were more difficult to engage with than others?**

HB: Both St. Lucia and St. Vincent were our biggest challenges, simply because it is where we know a lot of people and a lot of people knew about the project, yet we struggled to get applicants from both of these locations. In St. Vincent, for example, there was not enough help with outreach, but on the other hand, we were granted a customs exemption for the equipment we had to buy for all of this. There was a lack of interest from the Ministries of Culture and Education; they had no hand in it, even though every effort was made to encourage involvement [phone calls, every effort to communicate]. But I can completely understand this, considering the country's economic downturn; it's completely bankrupt so producing webisodes about the youth of the country might not necessarily be high on the agenda. But it's so important because it will facilitate an idea that will consider coming from the Caribbean in a different light. I am talking about meta-narrative and how we are struggling accept the many changes that we've gone through, and us being perceived as backwards isn't the case. You have very competitive people interested in working with economics; working with their limitations, and being very crafty because they are in an economy that negates that.

NH: I'd say Dominica [was challenging]. The outreach was a little difficult there because of our weak network. When we got there we only had 1 person confirmed to film and no one else seemed to be coming through, but in the end we managed to get some really interesting youth who fit into the criteria. I still feel like we could have gotten the call out earlier and pulled in a few more applicants.

LH: **If St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Dominica presented the most challenges then which country/countries did you feel most engaged with?**

HB: St. Lucia and St. Vincent were the most challenging but Suriname was definitely my most favourite experience simply because a mixture of things. I have never been to South America, I have always had this very idealised and romantic idea of the land and the people, and when I went it completely blew me away, particularly the collision of cultures and how they work together. I think they have managed to have a better understanding of what that post-colonial experience is, how to factor in economy and how to actually help yourself, the avenues you can

bring together to be pro-active, as well as engage with many things that are still very taboo in the Anglophone Caribbean, like sexuality.

NH: It was Suriname for me as well. I think it was probably the most humbling experience of them all. Being on the continent and experiencing the vastness of the natural surroundings was pretty overwhelming. I found it really interesting that in Paramaribo (closer to the coast) everything felt very familiar, like being on a Caribbean island, but as we travelled further inland it transformed into something else, a culture completely unfamiliar to me. Also, the youth we interviewed seemed to have a really thorough understanding of their roles in their various fields and in their society. They seemed really focused and unapologetic about who they were, and I really admired that.

LH: **Do you think projects like this one will encourage similar projects or initiatives?**

HB: I hope so, I really hope so. I think it all comes down to organisations and initiatives that want to support such projects. To have it levelled and competitive, you would need to go into other CARICOM countries and do similar work. So, if we are able to convince them that it's needed, then yes. However, I know the budget, I know the numbers and I know it probably will not happen until the new fiscal year or until they get new funding. But I think it is easily something that will encourage more youth to explore their potential, to understand that they are not alone, to combat that feeling of isolation, and to understand that there is someone else on a different island doing something that you want to do, these are the conditions they are working with, similar to their own, but they are doing something about it and they are changing their spaces, they are having that conversation, they are being critical, so they can also get up and do it. It's a matter of encouraging youth who are completely disadvantaged.

NH: Yes. I hope so. Of course the biggest factor was the funding. The UNDP has specific funding to dedicate to something like this. And I hope there is funding for similar projects in the future because I think it is needed, especially something geared towards younger people.

LH: **I know you were impressed with all the candidates but were there any particular favourites? Or perhaps one that appealed more to your own artistic interests? Or stood out for you, in particular?**

NH: That's kind of tough because everywhere we went, I felt very connected to most of the people because we kind of built up a really strong relation with them. We wanted them to be comfortable when we interviewed them, so you just kind of made yourself really vulnerable from the beginning, so we shared that with each other. One girl in particular from Jamaica [Nicole Nation] works with autistic children, and I think she was one of the most phenomenal ones for me. She is 19 years old and comes from a very poor family, a very difficult community to grow up in, with a lot of violence and she just seemed to stay really focused, she got a scholarship to study at UWI and now wants to become a doctor, it's really incredible to meet someone that young, doing those kinds of things. It's very difficult working with kids with special needs. She took us to one of the schools in her community and it was just incredible, that she could do that work at such a young age, be so dedicated and talk so eloquently about it.

HB: Sonia Farmer, a Letterpress specialist and Poet, was really intriguing. I mean, the resurrection of a dead thing is pretty incredible. Also, Deny Rose, a HIV Educator in Suriname, is a positive candidate who has made the decision to help, whenever he can. We went with him to hand out condoms to prostitutes and sex workers, which was a really surreal experience. Also Catherine Miles, a dancer from Jamaica. It was a mixture of the location, her spirit and her craft, which transported me and blew me away!

LH: **What does the project tell us about the 21st century Caribbean?**

HB: That we are still grappling to understand what independence means to us. Coming out from colonial rule, you are left picking up the pieces of the identity, the social constructs of your country, the economic make up, and then you have to figure out how you are actually going to make it happen. The larger picture I see coming out is that we have a lot of dynamic positive youth who are walking on a very fine line, either of wanting to exceed



Catherine Miles, Dance Teacher, Jamaica “My aims are to remain true to myself .To continue to live, create, share and inspire”.



Nile Saulter, Filmmaker, Jamaica “Young people are doing extraordinary things. I hope a light is shone on the things that truly matter in our culture from a development point of view. I was honored to be a part of the process. I feel these projects should definitely continue and grow, because the long-term value is clear”.

Photographs by Nadia Huggins

and give that extra push or completely giving up. A lot of youths are working in a violent bubble but they are trying to figure out how these limitations affect them, of what they are becoming and who is actually out there, willing and able to lend support because they desperately need it. They understand the reality of things and don't get fooled by it or trapped into thinking that support will come easily. They understand they have to work hard. That's what I was engaged with, that sort of fine struggle, understanding that you have to remain positive, and you have to look out, you have to always keep looking out of yourself and the situation that you exist in to make things better for you, and I think in a larger sense, that is what the project is going to highlight.

LH: *I know the project is still underway but up to this point, would you consider it a success?*

NH: Well, it's not complete as yet but in terms of the reach and the connections we made, I think yes, definitely it's been successful. We've been able to make some really powerful connections, especially with what we're doing with ARC, it's good to meet people outside of the art world doing things and you can always find ways to integrate it into what we do, even though it might not seem relevant at the time: you know there is something more that can come of it. I hope it's successful to the people we put it out there to, but in terms of what we've gained from it, it's been tremendous. The ultimate aim of the project is to inspire youth and quite frankly, even if no one else is inspired, just me experiencing it, I have completely changed the way I view things and it has been a really humbling experience. I thoroughly appreciate having the opportunity.

About the Author:

Leanne Haynes has recently finished a PhD at the University of Essex, which was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research. Her thesis specialises in St. Lucian literature and maps out the island's rich literary landscape. She also completed her MA (Postcolonial Studies) and BA (Literature) at the University of Essex. Haynes has presented material at conferences in the UK and Europe. She is a keen creative writer and amateur photographer, with publications in the UK and US.

JACQUELINE SAMPLE

Fernando Botero in the Caribbean: Adam and Eve for St. Martin's Nativity; “Colombia's pain” at Dominican Rep. National Gallery

Keywords: migration, freedom, dislocation, nature

Abstract:

JAL Creations founder (limited edition handcrafted precious metal/semi-precious stones jewelry); former president of Black Dimensions in Art, Inc. (BDA); and art curator. She has organized BDA exhibitions for the New York State Museum and Schenectady Museum. Sample is a principal consultant to House of Nehesi Publishers in its partnership for the annual St. Martin Book Fair.

ST. MARTIN, Caribbean—The cover design of *Nativity/Nativité/Natividad*, a new poetry book out of St. Martin, appears to be asking us to enter the epic poem through a portal of two towering sculptures by Fernando Botero.

The images that dominate the cover are of the colossal Adán and Eva bronze statues, measuring 222x110x63 and 226x90x75, housed at the Museo de Antioquia in Medellín, the Colombian city where the great artist was born in 1932. House of Nehesi Publishers (HNP) published *Nativity*, a trilingual volume by Lasana M. Sekou in 2010. It might be the first book published in the Caribbean with cover art by the acclaimed painter and sculptor. Botero has been called a most “Beloved artist of the Americas” and as one of the world's most successful contemporary artists, his iconic paintings sell for millions of dollars. (Artcity 21)

The “presence” of Botero's work in St. Martin—standing relief on the book cover of a St. Martin/Caribbean literary text—probably should not be taken lightly. “We all expand

through this connectivity,” said Laura Richardson, director of the island's important Roland Richardson Gallery. To the art director there is an essential connection between publisher, author, an artist's work in relation to the book's presentation, and the cultural consciousness of an “emerging nation” like St. Martin.

Regionally, the Botero images on a Caribbean book could stir conscious and subconscious questions, discussions, and casual comments about “what is art.” In St. Martin, recognizing beauty or emotional power in the masterpieces, can cause some to find new meaning in the exciting promise and serious production of the native art scene. If the book in any way increases the amount of people who would see the art, especially in the home, then the Botero pieces could also relate to the value of art, to greater appreciation for and comparison with the works of the island's own great painters, Roland Richardson and Cynric Griffith to name some, and other fascinating artists from the region.

Imagine that by “taking in” artistic images, while handling

and consuming a cultural creation or product like *Nativity*, wider interest could be generated in art. In this regard, the art of an artist of the magnitude of Botero, viewed from the forum of a book cover, could also inspire further wonder and excellence in producing art in St. Martin, in the Caribbean. All of this while representing artistic and cultural identities that will last beyond the “don’t player-hate” mediocrity competing for prominence in our times.

HNP has placed work by outstanding artists on and in a number of its books. The mastery of Roland Richardson and the late Romare Bearden; the nouveau art genius of Cozbi Sanchez and Ras Mosera; the avant-garde and multimedia art of Drisana Jack and Angelo Rombley, tell of a few artists whose works have represented an essential art link between publisher, author, artist, book, and the cultural and creative consciousness of reader or nation. The cover of *Nativity* continues building this gallery of “connectivity.”

While HNP was wrapping up the “use permission” protocol with the Museo de Antioquia for the Adam and Eve images, the Dominican Republic had already cleared the way for the maestro’s work to be in that Caribbean country – launching the UNESCO designation of Santo Domingo as the American Capital of Culture for 2010.

This would be the first major solo exhibition by Botero in the Caribbean. I specify solo because of group shows at the University of Puerto Rico in 1970, and recently at FIART in the Dominican Republic. There were embassy showings of reproductions in Trinidad in 2006 and originals in Jamaica in 2007. And I am mindful not to say the Caribbean “region” as that would include parts of Colombia and Botero’s early history at Tolu. Of course there are art experts far more knowledgeable than I who claim Botero as “one of Latin America’s, or the Caribbean’s – depending on which geography you follow, most famous artists.” (CAW magazine; Latin American Art)

The exhibition – “Fernando Botero: el dolor de Colombia” (Fernando Botero: Colombia’s Pain) – was on view at the National Gallery of Fine Arts in the historical capital from February 4 until April 4, 2010. The 25 oil paintings, 36 drawings, and 6 water colors were reviewed

as the “artist’s denunciation of the history of violence in the last few decades in Colombia.” (listindiario.com; repeatingislands.com)

Botero is known for speaking his mind and for his generosity, which can be robust as his gorgeously fat paintings and sculptures. His “Boisterous, Provocative Artwork” (Chicago Sun Times.com) can be elegantly playful as *The dancers*, which by the way is mentioned, “todas gorditas gorditas,” in *Nativity* (p. 133). Botero’s art can be powerfully iconic as the paintings of the Abu Ghraib tortures that caused uproar in the USA and that in 2006 were said to evoke “images of Christian martyrs.” (nytimes.com)

The exhibition of Fernando Botero in the Caribbean in 2010, was an art happening. Whether it was on a book’s cover, in a national gallery, or through news of the exhibit, such a happening should stimulate some aspect of the human relationship to art. An aspect of that relationship is how people come to know each other across borders through art.

In polyglot St. Martin, while discussing the Botero images and the French translation of *Nativity* alongside its new English original and Spanish translation, Frantz Gumbs observed that, “the size of countries and territories does not prevent the networking and exchange among cultures, cultural works, and artists in the pursuit of excellence and coexistence.” (thedailyherald.com) Gumbs is president of the Collectivity of St. Martin, a colony of France. The Southern part of the island is a territory of the Netherlands. Sekou and his work advocate “independence and unification” for both parts of his St. Martin nation. (mtmkobbe.blogspot.com)

We may quicker understand great art on display in a gallery or in a museum, but what might art do for literature? According to literary critic Fabian Badejo, *Nativity/Nativité/Natividad* is a revolutionary text, written in the canto general style of the Americas. Botero’s Adam and Eve may be just the illustrative match to help light up new meaning about what this poetry is attempting to say ... and what can be done with poetry, or any other genre of the arts, for life’s sake.

VISUAL ESSAYS

The first seven of these artists presented represent components of a visual essay entitled “Art as Community Building” compiled by cover curator Annalee Davis, whose activist work centers on the notion of art for social transformation. The final two artists, Andrea Chung and Charles Campbell are individual submissions critiqued by Marielle Barrow.

ANNALEE DAVIS *Art as Community Building*

How do we consider the value of visual culture within a given context and how do creatives meaningfully engage with collective space and a common audience? What is our relationship to the commons and how might the public engage with aesthetic interventions?

This visual essay responds to *Caribbean InTransit’s* call to contemplate the transformative potential of art in the contemporary world. The selection of works, culled from artists who work in the Caribbean or have a relationship to the region, expose a variety of contexts in which makers interface with public space and the contemporary moment while building audience through networks of communication. The suite of images reveals direct interventions into public space, commentary on topical issues such as violence, performative actions and community-based projects. In many cases the works are temporal in nature, allowing us to observe the elasticity of practices emerging throughout the region - adjusting to the constantly shifting communities we are continually becoming. The seven artists considered here include Laura Anderson Barbata (Mexico/USA), Mark King (Barbados/USA), Ebony Patterson (Jamaica/USA), Sheena Rose (Barbados), Adele Todd (Trinidad & Tobago), Rodell Warner (Trinidad & Tobago) and Alberta Whittle (Barbados/UK).



AURA ANDERSON BARBATA

“GRAS is a papermaking project that started in 2001 and takes place within the local school of Grande Riviere. The school adopted papermaking into their curricula, creating the possibility for children to develop their creative skills and be involved in art through recycling. These young people were invited to lead a number of workshops in schools throughout Trinidad and successfully taught and shared their papermaking knowledge with over 200 hundred children and adults. The goal of the project was to become a self-sustaining producer of fine quality 100% natural fiber paper, recycled paper, and block prints. This project provides the people of Grande Riviere an empowering alternative for generating a means of revenue without having to leave their village in search of a job in the city, where their quality of life would be greatly diminished. GRAS is an extension of Barbata’s work that began in the Amazon of Venezuela, where she initiated a paper- and bookmaking project with the Yanomami people in 1992.”



“On November 2011 in New York, Barbata collaborated with the Brooklyn Jumbies to present Intervention: Wall Street – a performance that took place on Wall Street in New York City’s Financial District. Intervention: Wall Street was conceived as a response to the dire economic crisis that became most evident in 2008 afflicting Americans and impacting 99% of the global population. Financial speculation and banking abuses by the largest and most powerful institutions on Wall Street have brought misery to individuals, institutions and to entire countries. In this public performance which took place in November 2011, Laura Anderson Barbata and the Brooklyn Jumbies brought to the Financial District of New York a world-wide practice to remind viewers of the global impact of this crisis and the urgent need to elevate and change the values and practices of the New York Financial Industry. Anderson Barbata and the Brooklyn Jumbies towered over the Financial District in a performance that incorporated stilt dancers wearing 12ft high business suits, music and a collaborative spirit. The public was invited to join and support the intervention/dance wearing a business suit and participating in the 30 minute performance.”(Right



About the Artist:

Laura Anderson Barbata was born in Mexico City. She lives and works in New York City and Mexico City where she is a professor at the Escuela Nacional de Escultura, Pintura y Grabado La Esmeralda of the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, México. Since 1992 she has worked primarily in the social realm and has initiated projects in the Amazon of Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, Norway, the USA, and Mexico.



MARK KING

About the Artist:

Mark King is a Barbadian artist who has lived and worked in the US, Canada, Belgium and the Bahamas. He graduated with an MFA in Photography from the Academy of Art University, San Francisco. Having recently returned to live in Barbados after spending most of his adolescence and adult life off the island, King is reading social space anew, interfacing with and documenting the street through his photographic practice. King teaches photography and art production at the EBCCI, Cave Hill campus, UWI.

“For Call and Response, I wrote directly on a few of the ‘Jesus is Coming!’ signs that decorate the Barbados landscape. The intervention was a reaction to the wheat-pasted and hand painted signs I passed just about everywhere I went in Barbados. I felt compelled to add some humor to the heavy message being broadcast. Armed with a king-sized permanent marker, I offered added instructions, which were to be read while walking on Pine Road in the Belleville district.

Step 1: Jesus is Coming!; Tuck your chain

Step 2: Jesus is Coming!; Look busy

Step 3: Jesus is Coming!; Wait here

The reaction to the images was mostly positive. I even caught wind of a few people who had seen the signs before they were taken down. With religion being such a sensitive topic in Barbados, it was interesting that most people who experienced the work in picture form or on the street actually found them cheeky. I assume those who posted the ‘Jesus is Coming!’ signs in the first place did not.”

EBONY PATTERSON



“During my two week residency in Port-of-Spain, sponsored by Alice Yard, I made nine coffins – one for each person that died in a little over a week during my visit there. The piece was made to recognize the lives lost during the course of this period of the visit, and to call into the urgency of a spiraling murder and crime rate in Trinidad. Coming from a similar experience in Jamaica I thought it was a worthy project, understanding the circumstances of the current climate of Trinidad. The project has taken the form of a ‘bling funeral’, which is strongly informed by dancehall and I dare to even say, Revivalist and Baptist cultures. In a ‘bling funeral’, loved ones who have ‘passed are truly celebrated in fine style, with shrine like coffins and ‘bashment’ patrons/ mourners.’ While at Alice Yard, I collaborated with the internationally recognized Rapso Group, 3 Canal for a sound portion of the project which led the procession of coffins through the streets of the Woodbrook neighborhood.”



About the Artist:

Ebony Patterson was born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1981. She graduated from the Edna Manley College with an honors diploma in painting and pursued her MFA in printmaking and drawing from the Sam Fox College of Design & Visual at Washington University in St. Louis. She has taught at the University of Virginia and is currently an Assistant Professor in Painting at the University of Kentucky.



S HEENA ROSE

is a Barbadian based artist who has recently completed residencies in Kentucky, South Africa, Trinidad and Suriname. She works with painting, animation and, more recently, performance art. Rose represented Barbados at the 2012 Habana Biennial and is the founder of an artist-led initiative, Projects and Space (2011) which creates the possibility of coordinating art projects in public spaces throughout Barbados.



“Sweet Gossip is a collaborative project with photographer Adrian Richards and writer Natalie McGuire. The project looks at the Pop culture of Barbados and the phrases or comments that Barbadians use when gossiping or in a certain situation. The intervention into the streets of the capital city of Bridgetown included the artist posing with her paintings like roving broadsides.


The illustrated text used by the artist in the suite of paintings reflected the vernacular heard on the street. The performative actions of carrying these images into the shops on Swan Street reflected the dialect back into the public space and provided the public with a humorous reflection of itself.

Viewers, curious about these performances, interacted with those collaborating with Rose, adding comments to the phrases they saw on the paintings. Most viewers found the project very humorous and relatable.

Sweet Gossip has developed through a number of formats and stages: first there were paintings, then live performances and public interventions, and subsequently photography. The project “Sweet Gossip” will now be showing in many different social network sites where persons gossip and comment. The internet has become the gallery space.” (Extracted from text by Natalie McGuire)

<https://vimeo.com/48307222>





Adele Todd is a Graphic Designer, Fine Artist and Lecturer of the Visual Communications Design Associate Degree Programme at the John S Donaldson Technical Institute. She holds a degree in Graphic Design from the Pratt Institute. Adele's work focuses on the intricate and intimate technique of embroidery, though it is not limited to this process. She also works with silhouetted shapes, found objects and any media suited to her subject of interest, which is predominantly pulled from current headlined events in the pages of newspapers of Trinidad and Tobago.

ADELE TODD

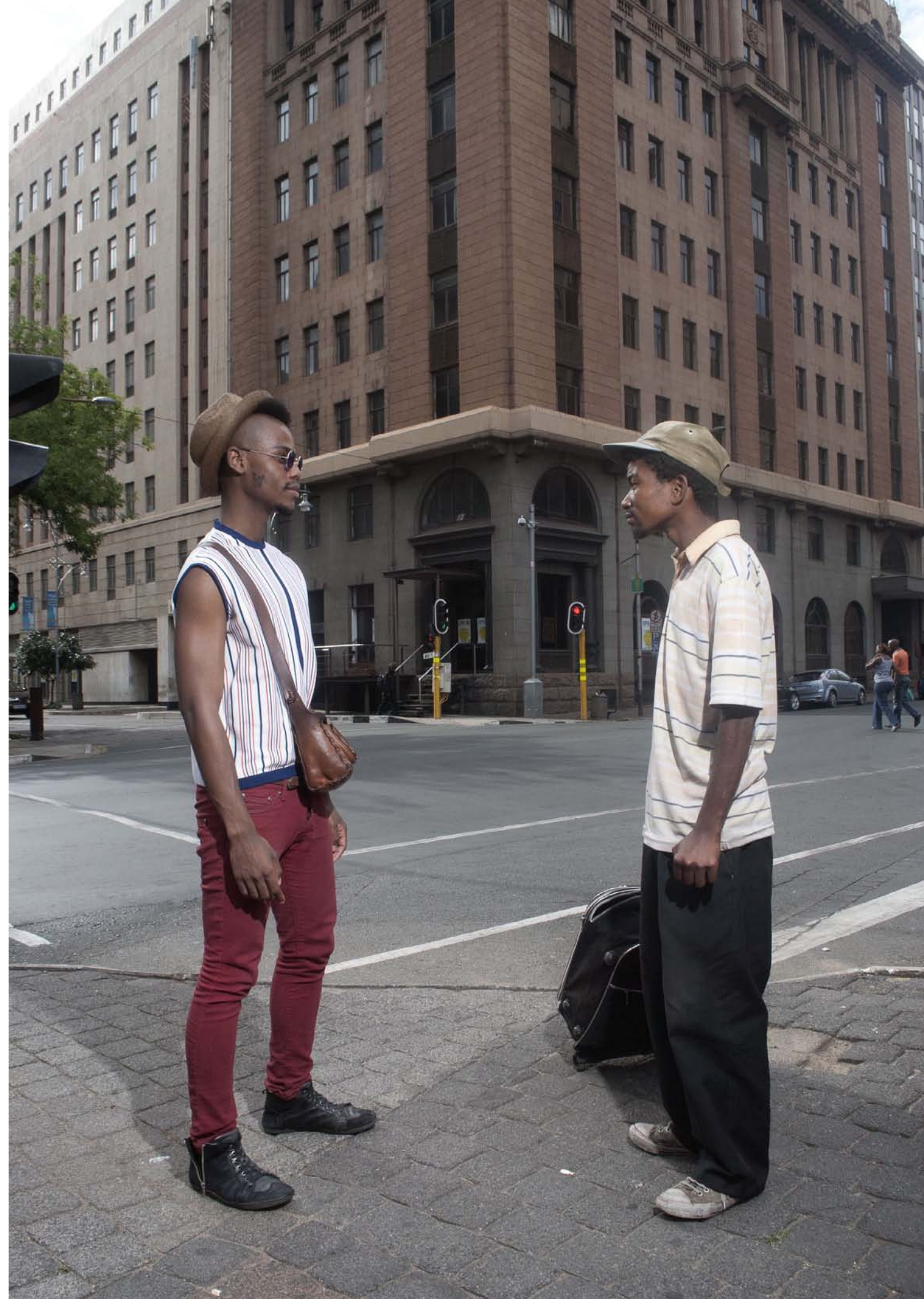


“‘Police and Thief’ is my response, along with the work, ‘Patrimony’, to ‘domestic’ violence in Trinidad and Tobago as it relates to how we react and respond to each other in society. With ‘Police and Thief,’ I specifically separate the pieces into four sections, police, thief, judiciary and victims. I ask that we look at ourselves, look at the way we embroider into the fabric of society certain attitudes, morals and mores. We stand observing, completely impotent, wondering what went wrong and why we cannot fix the mess we have helped create.”



RODELL WARNER

Rodell Warner is a photographer and graphic designer working in Trinidad and Tobago. His photographs range from images of community-based environmental protection and enhancement program workers to an exploration between public and private spaces. Filled with energy, creativity and excitement, Warner's photographs provide a specific take on memory and experience. Often working collaboratively, Warner also creates and executes his own projects, consistently exploring and presenting new conversations about the ways we see ourselves. He has recently completed residencies in South Africa and Barbados. Common Room is a project that developed both in Trinidad and South Africa.



"In 2009, sensing an overwhelming discomfort with making eye contact with anyone in Port of Spain, and wondering if this extended to others, I had some friends help me to get strangers to stand for a photo together, asking them to make eye contact. We did this on a busy Saturday morning on the Brian Lara Promenade. The pairs of people in the photos, who hadn't met before, were asked to participate as they passed by. The result is this photo series, a record of the range of responses to having to look at someone unfamiliar in Port of Spain.



In Johannesburg, in 2011, as part of my first major exhibition, 'Common Room,' which was made of a number of works concerned with public-to-public communication, I again had help to create and record the situation in the CBD.

In Port of Spain my friends and colleagues Michelle Isava, Brianna McCarthy, Stefan Simmons, Dave Williams, and my brother Russell were the friendly faces that got the pedestrians to participate. In Johannesburg I was lucky to have the assistance of friends, the artists Donna Kukama and Ezra Wube, and the curator Portia Malatjie, especially considering the sometimes problematic language barrier."

ALBERTA WHITTLE





About the Artist:

Alberta Whittle is a Barbadian artist based in Glasgow. Since graduating with an MFA from the Glasgow School of Art, Whittle has participated in residencies in Berlin, the Czech Republic, Poland and South Africa and is about to begin a ten week residency at the Fresh Milk Art Platform Inc. She choreographs interactive installations, interventions and performances as site-specific artworks in public and private spaces. Her practice is concerned with the construction of stereotypes of race, nationality and gender, considering the motivation behind the perpetuation and the different forms in which they are manifested.



“Pikswart” is an Afrikaans word that means pitch black. During a residency in Wellington in South Africa, I paint this phrase repeatedly on different surfaces in the rural landscape. Using thick blackstrap molasses that glistens in the sunlight, both disgusting and appealing, this performative gesture recalls the industry of slavery, land, forced migration and boundaries and its impact on notions of blackness. Its smell attracts insects and baboons. Referring to the color black as a social construct referring to race as well as its painterly attributes, I hope to use the audience’s experiences and knowledge of the past to inform my work, where they can make sense of the clues from the past and the suggestion of shared histories.

Located in the Boland, a rural wine making community and witnessed by local residents and other artists, the molasses was painted on different surfaces throughout the Havequas mountains. The etymological roots of the phrase, Pikswart, were discussed. Pikswart is from the Dutch words, Pik and Swart. Pik means both penis and pitch. Swart means black. Suggestions were made to paint the phrase on phallic structures like trees and felled tree trunks, reflecting the rape of the land by European explorers. Discussions pertaining to land, lust and territory were undertaken as well as curiosity about the significance of the molasses. The molasses can be taken as a reference to the landscape being devoured by man.





TRANSPORTERS

Charles Campbell is a Caribbean artist based in Canada, has exhibited widely in North America, the Caribbean and Europe, representing Jamaica in events such as the Havana Biennial and the Brooklyn Museum's Infinite Islands exhibition. His work uses images culled from the Caribbean's history of slavery and emancipation to investigate the intersection between meaning and image and to open up the possibility of personal and social transformation.

Night Object – Hyatt Regency (Desalines SOE
Transporter, 2011. Medium: vinyl, corrugated
plastic and fibreglass. 80" x 80" x 80"



Transporter 5 (Machete), 2011. Medium: screen print on card, metal clips. 40"x 40"x 40"

Like Chung's work history takes alternative forms in Campbell's "Transporters". Campbell constructs narratives of history through mobile orb forms in lieu of historical monographs or even paintings. Slave canoes, shackles and other historical imagery create decorative, recurring graphic designs on the orbs' surfaces. Interspaced with these designs are rhythmically spaced cuts, which allow the onlooker to see beyond the solid surface to the inside, through the orb. The form encourages the viewer to set them in motion, to interact with historical form. Through a simultaneous solidity and openness of the structure,

the artist pushes himself and the onlooker to view history differently: to peer within it, recognize its gaps, envision the ways in which its potential movement can displace established narratives. Placing the form in myriad spaces both gallery spaces and urban landscapes also speaks to a displacement of historical narratives and a re-figuring of urban spaces through the uncanny presence of historical reference of the orb within contemporary sites. Campbell says that the work, "looks at the contradictory forces of 'attraction and repulsion' that motivate human movements as well as the notion of complicity and agency

that act within it. The exhibition combines forms such as the geodesic dome, indicative of ideas of a rational utopia, with images suggestive of repression, freedom, labour, conflict and economic subjugation.

[Transporter] brings a light touch to these weighty topics, filling space with objects whose beauty conflicts with the heavy narratives that revolve around their surface. [The] aim here is to open up the work's meaning though deeply embedding its contradictions, suggesting the potency and complexity of humans forced to migrate."

With equilateral triangles shaped into the orb, this transporter appears to be covered with a white silhouette of a person riding a horse. With three dimensions to this beautiful yet foreboding image, the street, the round object, and the arches of an elaborate entrance, what this image presents is an interference with death implied by the constructed narrative of this conjunction. The looming architecture of arches dramatized

space, stained walls, the shadows of trees and electricity lines form the perimeter of a cemetery. If Campbell's works speak to issues of geographic migration, the displacement of the work to this urban cityscape suggests migration between realms of life and death. Contradiction and subversive narratives begin to be elicited as the lightheartedness of the white silhouetted riders and the orb form meet at the entrance to death. Troubling distinctions and boundaries between life and death, the work pushes us to probe death, what is buried, by what means and how. Can death inspire mobility, can it force some kind of mobilization?

Marielle Barrow



Night Object – Lapeyrouse (Desalines SOE Transporter, 2011). Medium: vinyl, corrugated plastic and fibreglass. 80" x 80" x 80"



ANDREA CHUNG

This selection of 5 series by artist Andrea Chung is significant within the context of “Arts for Social Change”. In some ways Chung’s work functions as a critical pillar around which issues of social change can be understood as it directly addresses issues of uncritical consumption of mass media imagery and everyday activity. Her body of work as it is traced here begins with two intricate renditions of her grandmother.

Aligning memory with medium and engaging a historical materialist approach to her subject matter, Chung conveys the intensity of her grandmother’s spirit by using a paste of brown sugar and water. The image drips and dissolves like a fading memory but is anchored by the use of the medium of sugar to convey the historical veracity of the form of labor practiced by Caribbean peoples - sugar cultivation.

The concept of social change here is perhaps subtle, but Chung paints a counter-memory - a re-telling of the pervasiveness of sugar in determining Caribbean identities, a re-construction of the matter of her own personal memory but also the sharing of the identity of her grandmother that was perhaps a neglected identity, an unsung hero.

In “Invisible Cargo”, Chung shifts modes of practice and representation by presenting a recipe in artistic form. But this form conveys much more of Caribbean reality than the Western form of writing or printing recipes: it speaks of migration, it speaks of a fragile yet sturdy architecture of memory. Daunting in its construction, pallet upon bottle, upon pallet, this structure, without nails, bolts or dowels shifts our ideas of what is possible: it re-configures how we think of building, arrangements, patterns, form. It attempts to enable us to understand the nature of Afro-Caribbean memory, its architecture, mobility, its fragility, its longevity.

Agatha Barton III, 2007
71 1/2 x 30 inches, Brown sugar on wall
Portrait of my grandmother made in brown
sugar, water, paste on sheet rock wall

About the Artist:

Andrea Chung was born in Newark, NJ and raised in Houston, Texas. She received a BFA at Parsons School of Design, a MFA at the Mount Royal School of Art at the Maryland Institute College of Art, and received a Fulbright Scholarship to Mauritius in 2008. She also attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and the Headlands Center for the Art. Chung's work has been featured at NEXT exhibition at Art Chicago, Off Color, curated by Hank Willis Thomas and Kalia Brooks at RUSH Arts, Conner Contemporary in Washington, D.C., Arlington Arts Center in Virginia, Sonya Hayes Stone Center at UNC Chapel Hill, Columbia University, Deutsche Bank's 60 Wall Street, the Museum of Contemporary Diasporan Art, and most recently at the Art Museum of the Americas Her work has appeared in the academic journals, Small Axe, ARC Magazine and Representations. Chung will be featured in the 2012 Jamaican Biennale in Kingston, Jamaica.

Guest Editor Toby Jenkins makes known the "growing need to develop critical art consumers, performers, and intellectuals in a world that is dominated by popular culture." In "Come Back to Jamaica" Chung critiques the ways in which Caribbean peoples are interpellated as native, subaltern others, invisible and anonymous except for the stereotypical representations through accents and phrases which encourage the tourist to enjoy a paradisaical landscape. It is a landscape in which the native other is a mere unknown animation, a nostalgic memory. The labor performed by the natives in this text is but a subtext of the narrative of romance and the tropics. What is often neglected within the Caribbean is the labor of the artist. Similarly, in "Agatha Tears" Chung de-constructs the touristic image, peeling back the layers in unearthing the realities of the Caribbean context. Chung herself labors to create a counter-narrative whose critical value is evident but which is nevertheless dependent on circulation in order to enliven a counter-memory within the Caribbean imaginary.



Detail top

Invisible Cargo: Curry, 2007
47 x 44 1/2 x 58 1/4 inches, Spices/
foodstuffs and mason jars on wooden
shipping pallets. Ingredients from top to
bottom: curry (pallet 1), chickpeas (pallet 2),
coconut, allspice, thyme (pallet 3),
garlic, onion (pallet 4), and rice (pallet 5).
Each pallet is stacked with mason jars to
my nose height. This is a visual recipe for
traditional Jamaican curry dish.

Intervening in gender relations, Chung comments on the interruptive nature of sexual harassment on the streets. She presents the issue as an absurdity in placing false security guards to chaperone women during their everyday activities. Interrupting the normal of the everyday, Chung attempts to de-familiarize the familiar, creating a critical distance for onlookers to re-consider their norms.

Marielle Barrow



Chrysal, Port Louis



Nantasia, Flac au Flac



Gino & Thany, Trois aux Riches

SECURICORP, 2009. Documentation of performance.

Securicorp is a performance in which a young boy named Gino and I dress as security guards and escort women in locations where instances of street harassment have taken place. These locations include (but are not limited to) bus stops, riding on the bus, walking on the street, the beach, the market and also while walking to school. The absurdity of a security guard escorting women as they perform mundane activities highlights the inability of women to lead normal lives due to frequent and unwanted harassment. Securicorp is a response to Alyssa Fine's research on street harassment in Mauritius. After listening to the stories Alyssa collected, I created artwork that depicted the ways in which women's daily lives are interrupted by street harassment.



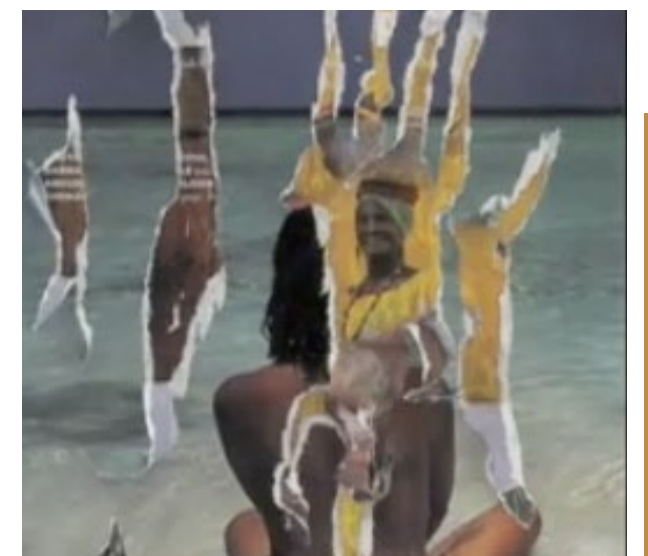
Come Back to Jamaica, 2009
Stop animation, 1:11 min.



"Untitled (Agatha Tears)"



Still shot from the short film
Click on the title: "Come Back to Jamaica" to play



Still shots from the short film
Click on the title: "Untitled (Agatha Tears)" to play



ANDREA
CHUNG

POETRY & NON FICTION

HEATHER PINNOCK

Pathetic Fallacy

First Published in Axis Journal of the Caribbean School of Architecture Issue No 1. November 1997.

KEISHA-GAYE ANDERSON

Stones

PATHETIC FALLACY

My name is Leah
I live at 1184 Anonymous Street
I live in a project
You may have drafted
And let me tell you:
You and your standards
Where I live is not a 'unit'
I am not a statistic
I am a real person.

Not made for me
Or anyone real
They all look the same
The same colour
The same size
The same shapes
And soon...
The same faces,
Is that what you see?

Life with a purpose.

You are the one
With the power
By the wave of your wrist
And with a little imagination
I could have had a garden
A patch of ground
A tree, a view,
A memorable place
And maybe
A more meaningful life.

I long to feel at home
A sense of place
To belong here
There are days
I'd like to curl up in a corner
And feel at peace
But there is nothing here
Worth remembering
Nothing I'd call my 'own'.

I'm grateful,
Don't get me wrong –
For a space to live
A roof
A floor
And walls
Ten by ten by ten
Thank God for windows
My only escape
If I turn my head

My name is Leah
I live in a box,
With windows
Ten by ten by ten
And no hope of personality:
Was it the Housing Trust,
Or the Public Works,
Or was it you?
Did you design this?

Sometimes I get lost,
Lost in this scheme
Of things

At just the right angle
I can see the mountains
Or, perhaps, the sea

Who is Leah?

She is a little girl who lives in a high-rise tenement, she is a college student with her first apartment in the city; she is a mother of two who lives in a small government subsidised house; she is a retiree who has been placed in a nursing home. She is a real person. Architects design these places and they are inhabited by real people.

When you get the opportunity, build a memorable place to help make life meaningful.

Pathetic Fallacy is the descriptive humanising of inanimate objects.

Heather A. E. Pinnock is an independently registered Jamaican Project Management and Sustainability consultant with formal training in Architecture, Urban Design and Development Planning as well as over 12 years of experience in the housing, water, construction and development sectors. Her current portfolio focuses mainly on the areas of climate change, renewables, energy efficiency and environmental regulation. She also teaches architectural design studio, blogs about sustainable development in the Caribbean built environment (www.hill60bump.com) and volunteers with disaster management causes. twitter: @heatherpinnock

STONES

We tumbled into this life
knowing how to become stones
us star light gate keepers
who pushed the world
through our wombs
in the onyx dawn of
chaos

Only to stumble in the
night
over discarded petticoats
suckle babies
not our own
warm the bodies of creatures
thinking themselves men

Only to fan flies away from fish
for a tuppence worth of
hope
muzzle identity
and culture's melody
to clean toilets
in the land of plenty

Only to squeeze curves into
less magnificent molds
to keep the sun out of their
eyes
and bend smiles
into white flags
to dodge hatchets
in the corporate gauntlet

Yes,
Mamma knows
how to become like granite
take the licks
become inert
in order to remain
just remain
on this earth

But don't judge me for being rough
my children
because inside this tamarind heart
is a churning volcano
ready to erupt for you
and rain black earth
onto asphalt
so that you can take root
and grow yourself
into a new rainbow

See through all of
our eyes
and recognize
the constellation
of your existence
formed from the primordial dust
of those who resisted

Shape thoughts
that forge a new world
from our burning hearts

destroy the illusion
custom fit for our vision
imitations of life
clawing at the risen

Stand on the foundation
of my soul, my children,
and make me molten
once more
so I can explode into new worlds
paint colors your eyes can't see

Set the captives free
Set the captives free

It's time for an avalanche of love
to put ignorance out of its
misery
reveal the mystery
in the seed of life
that flows through every
artery

Open our beings
to the buried memory
that rides on a shooting star
drop the masquerade
of identity
become fully
what we are

Keisha-Gaye Anderson is a Jamaican-born poet, author, screenwriter, and transmedia producer. She is concluding an M.F.A. in Creative Writing at The City College, CUNY. Her work has appeared in Small Axe Salon, The Killens Review of Arts and Letters, Streetnotes: Cross Cultural Poetics, Afrobeat Journal, and The Mom Egg. She is a founding poet with Poets for Ayiti and a contributor to their chapbook, For The Crowns of Your Heads. In 2010, Keisha received a fellowship from the North Country Institute for Writers of Color.

RONNIE MCGRATH

Diasfrican

DIASFRICAN

I put myself on the line and might never be published/might never be liked/
might never be needed/my poetry wild as innovation/lights ablaze with
language/reservoirs of some radical speech act/ emotions running high/rich in
haiku-globin/in and out of form/jouissance/buck wild and naked poetry art/
untamed voice of some past etching seeping through my verse/alphabetically
coded fridge magnets waking me from sleep/ from psychotherapy/from
costume dramas of Freudian dream tablets/scopophilic movie houses/spray
painting rooms with manifestos of dada-glyphics /manifestos of hierarchical-
glyphics/the spectacle of spectacle poems looking back on Sankofa birds/the
past of our present findings/trapped here/in a culture of wires and technology/
tuning me in/dropping me out/tuning me in/dropping me out/my eyes of
computer screens/a virtual surface noise in saliva and steel/tattooed body
armour/expressionist fish scale/broken off/severed/amputated/i am closed/
hermetically sealed/persona non-grata/fucked/putting myself on the line/a
textile pattern in fluorescent daybreak/writing in some Jackson Pollock rendition
of serendipity/scratched upon flesh of palimpsest scars/superimposed ancient

graffiti paintwork/older than cobwebs/than lime scale/than numerals/than
times infinity/than repetition/the tattooed language of needle tongues/the
knife-sharp language of expletives/like the speed driven bodies of crashed
cars/swollen vehicles/beaten into submission/beaten into pan/beaten into
calypso and rhythm/sparrows news item mightier than a sword/a weh di man
wid de hammer go?/tell me/a weh di man wi di hammer go?/Nubian cyborgs
of my peoples language in plumes of exotic affluenza/ contagious offerings to
the high priestess/to the vernacular women of vernacular cultures/interneti-
zens of the virtual world/carnivores of some female paradissimo/putting me
on the line/my locality global/got me thinking in the general and the specific
of these paradigm shifts/my linguistic furnishing/my linguistic clothes/the
hypertextualised transsexual frameworks of some rapid ear movement/
eavesdropping on rippled water/exoteric silk circles in the guise of magic/
vignetted shades of the plain and silent shapes of things to come/

END

Ronnie McGrath is a surrealist poet and founding member of the defunct musical group The London Afro Blok who toured throughout Europe, performed for the Queen and opened the 1994 Commonwealth Games in British Columbia, Canada. In 1993 he was commended for his writing by ACER who also published and awarded first place for his writing in 1994. He has published work in IC3 The Penguin Book of New Black Writing in Britain, a novel entitled On The Verge of Losing iT, ankhademia press 2005, two chapbooks of poetry entitled Poems for The Tired Lips of Newspapers, the Tall-lighthouse press 2004-2005, and Gumbo Talk, ankhademia press 2010. As well as appearing on the BBC 4 television documentary Front Room in 2008, he has published some of his paintings in Callaloo: Journal of African American Arts and Letters (special issue commemorating Barack Obama's inauguration). Samples of Ronnie's poetry are available for download from the Salt Audio Books website www.saltpublishing.com/books/audio Data Trace, Ronnie's first full collection of poetry was published by Salt in 2010. To date he is Creative Writing Lecturer at Imperial College London.

KARIN LACHMISING

'Brasa' or hold?

* keywords: migration, freedom, dislocation, nature

Abstract:

When moving back to Suriname the country of my origin, I sensed somehow people show a kind of fear for the beauty the country stands for. Instead of embracing the land, its nature, its peoples, there seems to be a strange kind of fear giving you the feeling of being 'in a stranglehold? While trying to shine light on this paradox of this fear and freedom I address the impact of my childhood in the Netherlands, share the stories of the elders, and compare the global abuse of fear as a tool to oppress groups. I question the effect of our dislocation. How fear stands at the opposite of Love. What will it take for a society to feel home in a place they were forced to live in? An essay that tries to open a discussion on embracing our land: changing into a society of strength and courage.

Note: Brasa is the Surinamese word for embracement, a warm embracement, an alright okay embracement. When somebody says brasa and gives you one you know it means more than just embracement, it is the total of good feelings in which the person holds you.

Sometimes no words are needed, just an embracement, a "brasa", showing how good we feel to have each other. A token of how natural the blend can be between persons. For me this 'brasa', the Surinamese word for a warm embrace says it all. It is a feeling of belonging. It is this natural blend I have always felt with Suriname, a "brasa" with the land I live upon. This 'brasa' with the land seems not as natural as I experienced it, as I discovered when moving and living in different areas of my country.

When finding a home, many remarks seem to be infused by a form of anxiety, hidden in opinions and judgments and anxiety based mind concepts. Barriers

which troubled the possibility of following the natural signs the land and its nature can offer me to attune home and environment.

In movies we are treated with quite an easily recognizable form of fear and anxiety. The fear of Suriname's people is of a different kind. I even wonder whether the nearly half a million inhabitants are aware of their anxiety towards their own land. This is a population living mostly on the coastline, far from the dense Amazon rainforest.

The influence of anxiety and fear on how to select a home in this wide country surprised me. How could there be such a feeling of fear and anxiety in the

minds of so many people for the land where our lives are attached to. No 'brasa' here, no blending with nature.

It is strange to discover that people living in a country covered with almost eighty percent of pristine rainforest can be so out of touch with nature. As a child of the Suriname Diaspora I grew up in Holland. I felt that dark mass of houses in an over organized country were the reason why people lost their touch with nature. My parents came back to Suriname in the seventies and after seven years of Suriname I found myself back in the Netherlands again to study and to find out there was hype: Western oppressed spirits traveled to Indian ashrams to get back in balance, to transfer fear and anxiety in love and tranquility, which has a healing effect.

Was Suriname supposed to give me a healing affect after finishing my studies, leaving my diaspora status behind, going back to the rich nature of my country? Space and nature seemed the parameters for immense freedom of mind and spirit. But in reality Suriname isn't as free as space and nature would want you to believe. For many people nature forms the borderline with their daily life, which out of fear, is not likely to be crossed. Trying to discover what kind of fear and anxiety keeps Suriname and its inhabitants in her suffocating hold is a journey through the jungle of our own diversity and history.

When looking at the fragmented and difficult development process of Suriname during its early colonial stage, fear can be called a 'symptom', a symptom of people enslaved by fear. The atmosphere, even the physical, can take your breath away. Driving through the capital city, built by the Dutch colonial rulers, it seems as if the houses are forced together in a tight embracement to protect themselves from any intrusion. The contrast with the wide expanse of nature is awkward when traveling over the wide rivers of the interior. There are places where maroon houses are built close together,

in contrast with the open space nature offers. Tradition and culture are two reasons to find the houses in a close circular way but there is also the influence of fear. Their choice of living on small islands in the river, the so called "tabbetjes", separated by the river from the frightening bush, gives a feeling of safety.

In contrary, villages of the Amerindian people use much more space. Different blocks of huts are situated in the bush about 2 miles off the main village and are connected through bush paths. Once I asked if they were never afraid of a wild animal suddenly crossing their path. The answer was, 'yes'. On my reply 'then what do you do?' The villager answered as follows "I look the animal in the eyes, and then he naturally continues his way". Confronting your fear probably requires a natural unity of man and environment.

During colonialism in Suriname the Dutch oppressor had no interest in unity of man and environment. Fear manifested itself in a densely built Paramaribo to defend itself from the diverse groups that were brought as slaves and immigrants to this land. Was this an artificial security out of fear? How contradictory the life in the Colony was when Portuguese Jews established in Suriname. They could practice their religion in freedom while as slavemasters they withhold others their freedom. Our soil is fertile, but of from all what peoples' hands have worked so hard to grow on this land, this anxiety seems the only thing that has kept growing and flourishing.

The church also plays an important role in the daily life of this Caribbean country. From behind their pulpit, the preachers seem to instill a fear of God. To expect any disclosure of the church to bring solutions to loosen the bond of fear is there for maybe to much to ask. If paradise awaits us only after death how can we be in control of creating our paradise here on earth? Controlling by fear is being used to repress all over the

world, and throughout history to legitimately suppress groups of people. This suppression seems a good reason not to be confronted with one's own fear and not to be confronted with one's own limitations.

How this can affect groups, but also individual lives, brings me automatically to the memory of my late grandmother living in the eastern outskirts of Holland. Her work for Amnesty International often brought former Irish political prisoners from Northern Ireland to Holland to recover from the tremendous torture of English oppressors who were in a fight of fear against the Catholic Irish people. She also had a foster child in Guatemala, helped a Kenyan woman who was searching for her imprisoned husband. Out of love for people she opened the doors of her home to give freedom: a life and space to breath again without limitation nor anxiety or fear for their differences. As Neal Walsch writes in 'Conversations with God', "Fear is the energy that shuts off, tightens, hides, while love is the energy of expanding, opening, disclosing, sharing and creating".

So I grew up in two worlds, making life in Suriname at times quite confusing because it is impossible to have freedom with so much anxiety. People live in fear, of the forest, of the animals, of different cultures, of their environment, and of the goodwill of the ancestors. Freedom opens and anxiety closes; anxiety is a natural emotion, against which you do not need to defend yourself. It is an energy that is the opposite of love.

If fear is the opposite of love, then is love what is missing in Suriname? We have to find something that outweighs the fear for the land we live upon, and gives us the courage to break out of our artificial security structures, our own enslavement by fear. How narrow the mind that thinks freedom is an exclusive right for a chosen group. So what will it take to hold our land in a 'brasa', and break through our own creations of living a life where courage is strictly guarded?

On one of my trips to South Africa, with its overwhelming nature and with the history of institutionalized apartheid, the South African people showed their love for their land in how they conquered fear. They have shown us that no barricades, barbed wire, imprisonment, townships or laws have been able to displace freedom by fear. Ahmed Kathrada, a former prisoner of Robbeneiland, gives words to conquering fear, when he says "We are not victims. We stand for the triumph of human strength, of wisdom of character and mind, opposed to the limited minds and pettiness, the triumph of courage and determination over human frailty and weakness".

Is Surinamese society one of courage, great character and strong mind? If we dare to break away from the fear that puts us in a hold and to embrace the land we live on, our society would testify of courage. It will enable our natural blending with the land we live upon, following the natural signs of this land of ours, something our indigenous people have been doing all their life. It will be the triumph of a people who out of love tell themselves 'welcome home' and who by doing so, can give the land the 'brasa'. Brasa!

About the Author

Karin writes poetry, essays, columns and directs documentaries. She is inspired by nature and is attuned with various cultural levels and groups. As part of the Amazon Conservation Team she works with the indigenous tribes in South Suriname, promoting integration and validation of traditional knowledge for the benefit of a better understanding of nature and cultural issues.

SAFI HARRIOTT



Fearless Softness

A Possibility for Dancing, Witnessing, and Being with Others



SAFI HARRIOTT

Fearless Softness

A Possibility for Dancing, Witnessing, and Being with Others

Kingston Jamaica

It can be difficult to open up. In my admittedly short years I've noticed that vulnerability, that capacity to be transparent, naked even, is not high on our collective priority list. It is difficult to be a shy thing, or a soft thing. We have to toughen up, get wise, get cunning. We must grow exoskeletons; become nearly impenetrable. But do we remember our underneath? How often do we or can we experience the soft yielding of that inner body? How do we touch or treat it? How do we even find it, spending so much time in the harder social exterior?

What, if anything, can direct us inward? What facilitates our remembering that inner flesh? What, if anything, moves us or invites us to move differently? I write body and moving because I dance. Living in my body, experiencing the world as a being that is embodied, the distinctions of what is mental, emotional and physical activity begin to blur. I'm all body; all sensing, feeling, and thinking body. From this perspective so is everyone else, although their attention may be elsewhere. Still, if we look for example at anger, frustration, gladness or anticipation, they are arguably as much states of body as anything else. I am interested in what has happened, and continues to happen, to our bodies in social space. I am interested in a certain distance or hardness, protective or aggressive, that keeps popping up moment by moment passing each other on the sidewalk. I feel my outer shell harden. I wonder what is happening to me.

I wonder how we go about relating to one another with this social hardness; with this great bubble preserving interpersonal distance. I try to keep you as far from my underbelly as I can possibly manage; while at the same time my own sharp edges seek to find and puncture your "weak" spots. We go on this way as our normal state of affairs. Blessedly, we make exceptions. But where, for whom, and how often? I want to suggest that this hardness occurs not only on an interpersonal level, but also between ourselves and our artistic work. I

want to suggest that the two instances are connected; and that if we intervene on either side we can emerge softer as well as braver. Brave enough to be soft. Brave enough to be seen. Brave enough to be affected. What would we be if nothing could touch us; and if we could not really feel that touch?

Dance for me is fundamentally a practice of freedom; of finding freedom in my own body. This is a body that feels injury, that feels devalued, that feels like it comes up lacking. Yet this is also a body that opens, that is intelligent and constantly learning, that can be strong as well as light, and that has memory. This is a body that is itself an entire, deep and complex world. It is through dance, and through mindful physical practices such as yoga, that I have come to this experience of my body-self. I can actively spend time getting to know my own bones, muscles, and blood; getting to know my body in space; getting to know my body among and in contact with other bodies. It is with these practices that I access feeling, memory, and alternative possibilities for relating to myself and to others. Through these practices I have been able to notice and identify my own exoskeleton; and understand that I do not have to wear it always.

For me to write about practice now calls up the word "process". I am writing about a continuous process of exploration and research at our most intimate site which is the body. I offer this notion as an addition to any definition or prevailing concept of what is "dance". I would advocate that the experience, and yes the discipline, of exploration and research are yet more reasons for people of all ages and life stages to dance, to move, to play. The opportunity to find depth, spaciousness, suppleness and strength in your body-self; to notice your changing physical, psychological and emotional states (all fundamentally embodied); to perceive the detail and complexity of your structure and body systems on a felt, experiential basis surely has vast transformative potential

for (y)our individual and collective lives. If I feel myself differently, mightn't I also sense and feel you differently? However in order to do this we may need to actively seek out contexts and facilitators who can direct us inward. We may need to examine and reevaluate our goals and perspectives as both teachers and learners. We may need to create a bit of wiggle room to allow ourselves to probe, question, and feel differently. I want to suggest that dance, as process and practice (and one instance of actively living in our body-selves), has the potential to help us peel back our hard exteriors; to make our way more softly towards each other. But we must infuse our practice, our teaching and our learning and our playing, with just such an intention. We must notice ourselves in our work. I have no illusion that this is painless. Ask any moist and crawling thing suddenly exposed to heat, dryness and light. Ask anything that has to first be broken in order to reform. This is why we have to be brave to immerse in and commit to process, practice. We have to be brave to touch what is hurting or hidden or unknown.

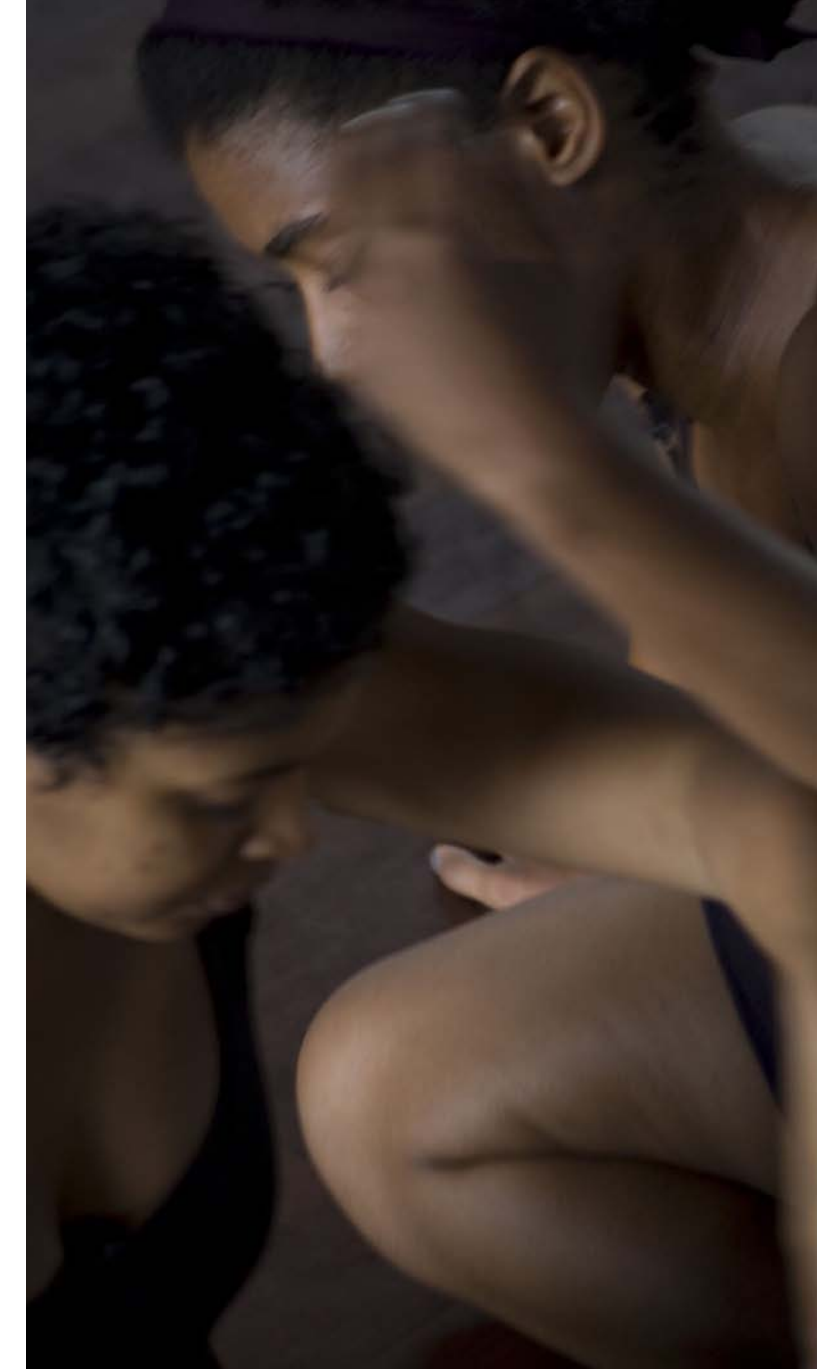
But we also must be brave to be witnesses. When we go to the theatre to see the product of a process, what do we hope or expect to see? When we watch a performance, or numerous and endlessly repeatable YouTube snippets, what is it that grabs us? I would guess, and hope, that the answers are varied. But the many possible wishes and expectations of us as prospective audience members, does not necessarily match the reality of what exists and enjoys support in our artistic environment. I will not take it upon myself to discuss the relationship between perceived audience expectations, production marketability, the weight of tradition, or any number of factors that contribute to what ends up on stage (or in the streets, or in the parks) and how well it is supported. I am not a lady for that job (at least not at this point in time). I propose however that there is more space in our environment than we imagine; space to play, experiment, and to process in view and context of a public and the many subgroups within it. I propose that this public actively be (because isn't it inevitably?) part of the continuous process of research and exploration which integral to the practice of dance. Having mulled this over with my mother, I agree that sometimes we go to

the theatre solely for the purpose of being entertained. We may enjoy virtuosic demonstrations of technique. We may enjoy the direct, linear narrative of well known and well loved stories and tropes guiding by easily accessible music and lyrics. We enjoy the comfort of the familiar, of the safe, of reiterations of that which we already know, accept and hold dear. But these are not the eternal laws of "good theatre".

It is not a new suggestion that there is a place in the arts for the provocative, the shocking, the ambiguous, the disturbing or the grotesque. It is not a new suggestion that the arts claim permission to deal with the uncomfortable or the unsettling in manners that are themselves "unsettling" because of differences in vision or execution. I may tell a different story; and I may also tell a familiar story very differently. I propose that there is space here, in our home, for such work. I propose that we be brave enough to open more space to such work and to engage deeply as witnesses to such work as it currently exists and as it will continue to develop. Other approaches need not suffer. We can hold them high for different reasons. But we can also allow ourselves and our views to be de-centred; allow perhaps extended moments of discomfort; allow for confusion and even outrage. In this way we help to extend a critical process in our individual and collective development. We become part of a shared process, practitioners and witnesses alike (because we are essentially both). Through engaging with "difficult" or "different" work, and expanding our set of expectations, we create and nurture a necessary space for dialogue, and for the presentation of alternative perspectives. But this is not merely the blank reception or cold consideration of the perspective, thesis or recommendation of a given performance. I am suggesting an opening to vulnerability on the part of all of us as witnesses. I am suggesting that we expand our tolerance for uncertainty, open-endedness, and non-linear stories. I'm advocating that we also seek to know and yes, love work that does not give us answers but that lets us into a process of seeking, churning and working with vulnerable stuffs. This is work that shows its underbelly; invites us to experience our own underbellies and to make contact in this state with each other. Here we are, squirming in our armour. Here we are, peeling back

our outer hide, shifting slowly towards each other, tentatively testing the new ground with our softer selves. Practice. Process. Patience.

At the moment we have opened a discussion, explicitly framed by the recent Rex Nettleford Arts Conference at Edna Manley College, of the role of the arts in national and regional development. We look at the economic potential of the "culture industry" and how to harness it. Again, I am not a lady to offer insight in this direction (at least not at this time). However I want to highlight that we have much more than profits at stake in considering the role of the arts in society, here at home. By leaning towards the felt experience of artistic practice, dance being one of possible avenues, and on the experience of audience witnessing we can make spaces for a transformative softness to creep into being in our wider social experience. What happens in the classroom and in the theatre space does not have to be confined there. How we dance, with ourselves and with others, and how we witness both are meaningful and socially relevant. From these experiential possibilities we might connect with a greater process of transformation; enabling us to be gentler, more supple creatures than presently possible and to support these qualities in others. Feel yourself. Now feel me. Feel the space between us soften and the outer shell give way. Be brave.



ERROL BREWSTER

Anointed for Sacrifice Video Review

Keywords: Kaieteur, Environment, activism.

The need for serious reform to the regulation governing gold and diamond mining in Guyana is what has prompted the development of this two minute video featuring the world's highest single drop water fall - Kaieteur. Found in the district of the Potaro, it is the single most recognizable geological feature of the Guianas. Potaro is an area where gold and diamond mining has long been a prevalent economic activity involving small scale cyanide using dredging operations. Environmental damage to this resource is not yet at crisis proportions, but an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure! The country has already experienced a major cyanide spill caused by the operations of the Canadian mining company OMAI in the Mazaruni River in 1995.

The "ALL THAT GLITTERS: GOLD MINING IN GUYANA" report by the International Human Rights Clinic, Human Rights Program, Harvard Law School - March 2007, is the inspiration and motivation for creating this tool for use in a mass communication campaign with the potential to popularize the concept of the responsibility of the individual for contributing to efforts for effective environmental protection. It seeks to do so by referring to the 'Legend of

Kaieteur' - a well known local myth. The basis of the myth involves a single individual - the Leader of the PATAMONA, solidifying, as only creation myth can, the possibility of the effectiveness of individual action as a frontline strategy for precipitating socio political and environmental change. His dramatic act of sacrificing his life, dashed (for the prosperity of his tribe, and in thanks an praise for an enduring peace) over the lip of Kaieteur, half a mile to the rocks below, is the supreme example. Not unexpectedly, the resulting media tool is yet to find traction on the broadcast landscape of the country.

Mining in the context of the Guyanese economy represents 11% of GDP and was the leading export earner at US\$103.9 million in 2003. It is conducted in six districts of which Potaro is the main one. Small-scale mining claims make up the overwhelming majority of mining claims in the country, making the industry near impossible to effectively regulate. Only eleven mine officers enforce the regulations for the thousands of mining operations in the country at this time.

First hand observation reveals that the major damage to the environment caused by small scale mining include drastic increases in the sediment content of river water;

increased exposure to mercury in the affected rivers; creation of artificial sandbars in rivers; deforestation, degradation of land fertility; and mosquito infestation and malaria. These activities are exclusively conducted in the interior where the majority of the population is indigenous, with the result being that Amerindians are disproportionately affected. Corruption in the process of oversight of these operations is prevalent and mining activities also bring about an increase of prostitution, HIV infection and domestic trafficking in persons.

Guyanese law gives the government a virtually unlimited right to the minerals in the ground and gives subsurface rights priority over surface rights. As a consequence, government policies place the rights of miners to access subsurface minerals ahead of the rights of surface holders and also ahead of environmental concerns. This leads to environmental damage, interference with the land use rights of Amerindians and other property holders. The failure to place more strict and specific regulations on mining activities as well as the haphazard granting of mining claims and permits has resulted in increasing difficulty for regulators. Their monthly wage of US\$270.00 is hardly enough to support the cost of living and is less than the value of one ounce of gold, which ranges at time of writing at between US\$400 and US\$575, rendering regulators highly susceptible to corruption.

All of these issues are not featured in this video but they are the motivational factors for its creation, and the inspiration for its call to individuals to take a stand in answering the question of the importance of the natural environment over wealth generation. The range of issues that motivate this film were thoroughly treated within the 1990 commission I received from the Caribbean Conference of Churches to produce a videographic feature on the impact of mining and road building on interior communities. It is entitled "Ebesoa" - an Arawak word for changing into something else. It is a forty minute NTSC SVHS production that marked the beginning of my

activism on environmental issues.

It is hoped that by providing dramatic visualization of the issue this video would supplement existing efforts; expand the outreach of the campaign for remedial action, especially internationally and among younger age people, by its presence on YouTube; and would intensify the emotional dimension as a strategic input of the protest and reform movement.

KAIETEUR: Anointed for a Sacrifice

<http://www.youtube.com/user/vidoe9?blend=9&ob=5#p/u/8/yuSijwINFGA>

About the Filmmaker:

Errol Ross Brewster is a multi-media artist and cultural activist who has served as adviser to the Guyanese Minister of Culture and as Director of Studies of the National Art School. Currently he resides in Barbados where he has served on the adjudication panel of the National Independence Festival of Arts and is a regular contributor to the tri-lingual arts journal Cariforum and the E-journal Caribarts. He makes really nice sugar-cake and other favourite childhood snacks.

Bahamas ART as Dialogue and Community

Keywords: gaze, labor, mapping, Trinidad, photography

"Here's my studio, let's have a conversation, maybe we can inspire each other."

Antonius Roberts

Bahamian artists have been fortunate to meet a ready and willing community that supports artistry. Perhaps it is one that is smaller than desired in the eyes of some, nevertheless, the relative few involved form a dynamic, engaged and supportive network that allows the visual arts of the Bahamas to be at the forefront of artistic practice in the Anglophone Caribbean. The frequency of collaborative practice, mentorship, exhibitions and projects is notable. This review looks at three events that took place in the Bahamas during the Summer of 2012: the Summer Arts Symposium in Schooner Bay, Abaco; "Conversations with artists" a series begun at the new establishment of Hillside House, Nassau, Bahamas; and "The Small Art Auction House," an auction staged by Jonathan Murray. These initiatives provide a snapshot into informal artistic practice in the Bahamas.

Piano Schooner Bay, Abaco, July 2012

Critical to the arts initiative at Schooner Bay is the practice of dialogue as an act of community. In this way, art harbors the potential not simply for community engagement but for re-direction of a society. As the first town to be created in the Caribbean within the last century, Schooner seeks to create a new model of community living based on sustainability. At the physical and metaphorical center of the

development project is the artist whose role is to inspire an ethos of creativity, innovation and contemplation of alternatives to rituals of urban life. To this end, resident artist Antonius Roberts resides in the first house constructed at Schooner Bay. At the entrance to the property, the artist's studio is an open house, a community space that welcomes employees, residents, guests and visitors.

On the occasion of the third Schooner Bay symposium this year, a diverse group came together to create art. The team included resident Schooner Bay artist Antonius Roberts; Curator of the National Art Gallery John Cox; two professors from the School of Art at George Mason University (GMU), Virginia and also members of the Working Man Collective, Peter Winant and Tom Ashcraft; Popup Gallery prize winners, Veronica Dorsett, Stephen Schmidt, Christina Darville and Yutavia George; former pastor of the New Providence Community Church, Clint Kemp and myself, a PhD student of Cultural Studies at GMU. In keeping with the objective of gradual expansion of the program, lecturers Peter Winant and Tom Ashcraft of George Mason University were invited to embark on this collaborative project as part of the Eco-Cultural Awareness Symposium organized by myself.

Entering the process of collaboration from a historical point, group members articulated their values and modes of arts practice. For the duration of the engagement, dialogue served as pause for internal processes



of rationalization and analysis inciting physical engagement with objects of art making. As a tool of art in and of itself, dialogue created indelible marks that served to frame the composition of the artwork itself. Natural synergies evolved from the community oriented arts practice of the Working Man Collective and Roberts' principles of arts engagement. The idea of art making as 'space-making' was introduced and with it the exercise of walking on the

beach to collect the objects spit out by the sea, proved to be a process of thought rather than an action of gathering and collecting raw material for the art object.

The bench became the metaphorical pivot in embarking on this collaboration. Both Roberts and the Collective have engaged in bench making projects in their respective geographic domains. The bench, a simple utilitarian work symbolizes and activates conservation preserving an aesthetic of harmony with the contours of nature in Roberts' projects. Winant expressed the ethic of Working Man Collective, which encapsulated the broader thinking within the group. He explained Working Man Collective's philosophies of construction using the bench as a point of departure, divulging that it was the thinking behind the bench that mattered, "Someone can make a bench and someone can make a bench". Ashcraft helped to complete his extrapolation inviting the group to consider how dialogue informs how one wants to exist and not simply what one wants to be. The functionality and dialogues inform the role rather than the role informing the function. One can draw a parallel to this argument using the duality of content and form. Content should inform the form rather than form determining the content. In separate conversations both Roberts and Cox expressed similar alternative angles to the same principle. Cox acceded that Popup is his art installation-when persons interact with the space and the content of the space, it is performance art, it is about community. Likewise, Roberts in a comfortable acceptance of this inversion of form and content, insists that his studio is his artwork. For both artists, the form of art is no longer simply the object but the process, the exchange, the space, interface and community with the underlying objective or message of community development.

Roberts invited the group to consider a site that overlooked the development as the site for creation of an artwork. He

identified it as "the Temple". Critical questions and considerations surfaced through a discussion of the site as a temple. Perhaps the experience of the mountaintop cannot be surpassed and sometimes art can be about simply clearing things out in the apprehension of greatness emanating from a space. Questions of arts practice and definition also arose: the definition of art should perhaps be expanded to include process more distinctly. Clint Kemp raised more visceral and spiritual musings apart from the labor of art. He suggested that art wakes us up to ourselves, that we are so detached from who we are that we often live outside of ourselves. Ashcraft and Winant introduced the language of stewardship of a site. If you delineate a space as a temple, is it already meaningful? Can the space become a portal for one idea to open a space for connection with a host of other ideas? If one is able to make this clearing how does one create the muscle memory of stewardship of a space?

The conversations gave rise to the deployment of novel tools of the artistic trade, a dD8 and a roller stood in for the pencil and paintbrush. Ricky, environmentalist and tour guide on Abaco alerted us to the specific flora and fauna of the site and how artistic practice could potentially assist in the prevention of erosion, conservation and even economic development of the island. Physical labor of clearing underbrush with machetes, shovels, rakes and machetes, taking pains to preserve certain plants and avoid coming into contact with others, walking large rocks and stones into their new configuration of a stone wall replaced the mounting of canvas on frame and the composition based on arbitrary markers. Following the undulating contours of the land, the group mapped a Temple that could be recognized and accessed by the larger community, a site that opened a spectacular vista of gentle rises of foliage, focal points of isles off the coast and a panorama of the town of Schooner Bay. In the words of one of the students, Yutavia George, "we cleared a space

for people to clear their minds".

Further dialogue punctuated and followed the intervention into community development concerning the potential of these young artists to influence the social climate of their communities and even the country and students spoke of their take away from the project. Critical thinking and analysis of speech acts apart, students were anchored by an increased sense of self-simultaneous with a recognition of the power of team work.

Enamored with the feeling of being a part of something bigger than herself, Veronica was relieved of a sense of burden in being able to share the load with a team. Her analogy painted a shift in scale and universalization of the lesson learned: she mused that it was not about the Prime Minister leasing the country but that it was all those other people who form their small teams and committees who created the bigger picture that really held the power to shift the dynamics of a space and time. For Yutavia, the value of team work was at the helm of this experience. Individualized action is the modus operandi at home: "Everyone wants to do their own thing at home and if you mess up it's you" and a lot of time is spent picking up



the pieces, but with a team a buffer is created so that the fall does not have to be destructive. She recognized that teamwork can create more problems in some regard but more solutions are also generated. Christina was thrilled by the passion and the tireless energy of the team. It was an energy that for her seemed pervasive and sustained and like a sponge soaked it up. Tantalized by this alternative pedagogical process, she left with a sense of her ability to inspire and provoke change in the society.

At the end the question posed to the students was: So did you create art? "Yes, we did".

Hillside House, Nassau, Bahamas 2012

Hillside House is a new establishment opened in March this year by Antonius Roberts and partners. Relationship minded and conservation focused, Roberts intends his studio-gallery to be a community-oriented space that features innovative and cross-disciplinary programming. To this end a weekly coffee hour with

free refreshments takes place 10:00 am-12:00pm every Wednesday and the space is opened to artists and crafts persons to display their work.

Dialogue is a critical aspect of the approach to community engagement and thus the first "Conversations with artists" took place on July 25th during Hillside's House weekly Wednesday Coffee Hour. The event is intended to be an ongoing project that takes up the mandate of engaging artists in conversation focused on various themes and foci including: their current work, conversations happening between artists and their audiences, questions and concerns that emerge through artwork, and community practice.

Several artists took part in the first event that served as a focus group session toward the upcoming book project *A Sense of Place: Public Art, Political Space and The Sacred* based on Sacred Space at Clifton Pier and Bahamian Arts Practice more generally. The second event welcomed Vaughn Roberts, former Managing Director

and Current Board Member of the Downtown Nassau Partnership - a public - private partnership formed to enable urban renewal of downtown Nassau.

The first "Conversations with artists" was meant to examine the intersections between various arts communities: between the visual artists, Junkanoo, musicians, fashion and graphic designers, was also of interest. However, the richness of the interface and willingness of each artist to express his/her point of view left little time to touch on all of these possibilities. After re-hashing the strengths and development opportunities offered by former programs such as the FINCO Summer Art program and the National Endowment for the Arts, the subject of Junkanoo became the focus and the artists had much to say about the relationship between their artistic practice and this art form, the final consensus being that Junkanoo was equal in status to the Fine arts.

Questions of identity were posed that stirred a story telling mode. Migrant populations and inter-national marriages produce complex relationships on Bahamian soil but questions of identity go far beyond race, ethnicity and nationality to encompass issues of legitimacy or illegitimacy of birth, education and even ways of understanding oneself as an artist. Bringing these often unspoken personal experiences to the fore gave rise to issues of ego (to which the artists frequently made reference). The dialogue began to shift perceptions and creating a platform for further more profound understanding and relationships between the artistic community.

Hillside House provides a forum for mentorship, artistic development and exhibition adding to the menu of arts opportunities and events in downtown Nassau. Artists are invited to host conversations on topics that interest them on a regular basis during Coffee Hour simply by contacting the gallery.

The Small Art Auction House

On July 12 2012, members of the Arts



community came together to stage an arts auction to raise funds for Jonathon Murray to pursue a post-graduate degree in Art History abroad. Jonathon's presence was a memorable one even to those who may have known him only by name previously. A man of slim elegant stature whose form seemed to sway with his gestures, greeted the audience at the entrance. A plaid bowtie framed by a slim cut white shirt and most poignantly an almost copper coloured pointed moustache shaped a perfect fit with the displays of the Bahamas Historical Society who offered the space at no cost for the event to be staged. Indeed Johnathan Murray's style and his moustache would become central to the auctioneers sales pitch.

While The Endowment for the Arts in the Bahamas has auctioned major pieces of work, one or two at a time at cocktail events, this auction took a more typical form in that 45 works were up for bid. Most of the works were 8 x 10 and were all donated by the artists



with 100% of profits going toward the cause. Participating bidders were invited to sign their details at the entrance and were granted the privilege of their bidding numbers.

The event was a snapshot of the vibrancy, closeness and commitment of the arts community. Noted art collectors, Dawn Davies and Saskia D'Aguilar sat in the front row. Art photographer Roland Rose, and daughter of the father of Bahamian art [1], Marissa Malone were all noted members of the audience. But other key members of the arts community also placed their bids including the Director of the National Gallery of the Bahamas, while the curator of the National Gallery of the Bahamas offered a work for auction. Members of the wider arts community also made their presence felt including acclaimed Bahamian poet, Obediah Smith.

No less charismatic and fashionably arrayed Margot Bethel introduced Jonathon Murray, co-founder with Margot of *The Hub* art space. After jovially alerting the audience to his eccentricities but also the dynamic and driven personality that he is, in more sobered tones, she solicited the audience's support. Jonathan thanked the artists who gave easily and willingly mentioning the donations of those who gave just on hearing of the event through others. All the artists donated without asking for a percentage to be returned to them.

The affair assisted a discerning onlooker in understanding what value and how value is ascribed to Bahamian artworks. Five categories of value seemed to arise as auction sales of pieces ranged from \$50 to \$1700: the value of the actual artwork based on technique, content and medium; the promise of upcoming talent and career; past known career, name and education; relationship to and support of artistic community and finally the presence of the artist in other exhibitions or texts if the artist's name was not particularly well known. The sales pitches, which characterized these values making them known, in addition to the flair and moustache of Mr. Murray, made for a theatrical engagement of suspense and excitement as bids rose rapidly for coveted works. To increase the intrigue, a few bidders, unknown to the close knit community of collectors and arts enthusiasts, were identified only by the auctioneer's calls: "sold to the lady in blue", or "sold to the gentleman behind". Such

pronouncements from the auctioneer sparked the curious questioning of the veteran art collectors "But who is this lady in blue?"

All were involved as arts supporters stood with clipboard in hand recording the numbers of bidders who had copped the works. The 'clipboard ladies', esteemed young women in their own right, were sometimes enjoined to the auctioneer's role specifically on the several occasions when the bids were so tight that there was some doubt as to who had captured the prize. At times this allowed the price of the work to go up one or two more increments of \$25, \$50 or \$100 in order to make a clear determination on final ownership while at other times it was left with the assumed and all too happy owner. External bidders too were able to participate remotely and the auctioneer often started with their bid with small works starting at \$50 and one or two works even starting at \$500. All of this while sponsored wine from Young's Champaign was enjoyed liberally.

Art worlds is taken from Howard Becker and is an apt description of the events and scenarios presented here. Becker calls upon Dickie's definition which states that, "[an] art world consists of a bundle of systems: each of which furnishes an institutional background for the conferring of status on objects within its domain" (Becker 158). This understanding of the term art worlds is of relevance here as it involves interlocking or intersecting systems, which is closer to the Caribbean reality of the Arts rather than a single institution operating within an industry context. While industry remains a significant principle not to be ignored within the discussion of Art, the concept of the art world is useful in this context as it provides a somewhat looser framework where financial reward is not the sole focus. This is perhaps one of the more distinguishing factors between the terms 'art worlds' and 'industry'. Artworlds also allows a deeper consideration of the various players who straddle roles and carve their own niches; that is, artworlds allows us to think of boundaries between roles as fluid and allows us to imagine new roles or categories that may not be already formulated in industry models. This Review begins to map the artworld of the Bahamas by looking at artistic practices, roles and players as well as the platforms and activities through which they are connected.





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