SUSTAINABLE ART COMMUNITIES: CREATIVITY AND POLICY IN THE TRANSNATIONAL CARIBBEAN. INTRODUCTION

Leon Wainwright

Abstract

This themed issue of the Open Arts Journal, *'Sustainable Art Communities: Creativity and Policy in the Transnational Caribbean', brings together academics, artists, curators and policymakers from various countries in the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean and their diasporas, the UK and the Netherlands. It explores how the understanding and formation of sustainable community for the Caribbean and its global diaspora may be supported by art practice, curating and museums. The collection was developed through a two-year international research project (2012-14) led by Leon Wainwright, with Co-Investigator Kitty Zijlmans (Leiden University), focused on major public events in Amsterdam and London. The project is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO/Humanities).*

Biographical note
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Related material to this article was presented at the two project conferences for 'Sustainable Art Communities: Creativity and Policy in the Transnational Caribbean', held on 5–6 February 2013 (Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam; KIT, the Netherlands Royal Tropical Institute), and 3–4 December 2013 (Institute for International Visual Arts, Iniva, London, UK). Visit the project webpages here.

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SUSTAINABLE ART COMMUNITIES: CREATIVITY AND POLICY IN THE TRANSNATIONAL CARIBBEAN. INTRODUCTION

**Leon Wainwright,
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> Sun, sand and sea, happy faces, music, dance, rum and entertainment. All that helps to conceal and forget our daily reality.
>
> Tirzo Martha, '*Kolonialismo di Nanzi*: Anansi colonialism' (in this volume)

Perhaps one of the most lively and yet troubled cultural landscapes today anywhere in the world is the contemporary Caribbean. The region underwent dramatic changes in the later part of the twentieth century which it is still coming to terms with today. It has suffered severe economic and political crises since the decades of independence of the 1960s and 1970s, and weathered an array of globalising currents that are putting particular pressures on small islands and territories in this interstitial zone of the Americas. In a climate of mounting national debt and instability, countries such as Suriname saw many years of civil war while other nations, including Jamaica, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, have suffered numerous episodes of political violence and social unrest. The neoliberal aspirations that shape tourism-oriented economies – Barbados, Curaçao, Aruba – are carried on stormy waves of volatile commercial return. Whether voluntary or forced, Caribbean migration has continued apace, to a point where the identities of Caribbean people can no longer be easily associated with a single, regional geography. The challenges to a Caribbean community – fractured by distance and threatened with uncertainty – are being faced by a transnational, global diaspora of people who live on all the shores of the Atlantic. This community is engaging more deeply than ever in re-establishing and maintaining a sense of connection, countering their displacement by building networks, undertaking travel, and exchanging ideas and information.

It is the arts in particular that hold a crucial role in enhancing these networks, creating a shared ground for exchange and understanding. Global change may have serious, seismic implications for a sense of Caribbean community, but the contributors to this volume share the view that a genuinely meaningful response can issue from an inclusive, open and dynamic sphere of activity such as that of the arts. The arts have remarkably porous borders, a wide appeal and a purchase on everyday life that runs both ways: drawing in participants as well as engaging arts audiences, while being able to reach out and shape cultural policy, education and public institutions. The arts in their cognitive capacity reflect on the bonds of community, while being an imaginatively critical and affective force that can have a lasting historical agency. At root, the arts exemplify the dynamic and far-reaching influence of culture in maintaining a sense of identity and in giving meaning to quotidian social relations. They help to extend the reach of the Caribbean community and provide a common framework in which members invest in novel, complex and often very individual ways.

Multiple perspectives

This collection sets out a range of perspectives on such processes, identifying the crucial need to foster a sustainable *arts* community to support and nurture the broader Caribbean culture and society. Equally, it attests forcefully to the view that visual art in particular has a specific contribution to make in forging a more sustainable community. We grant considerable international and comparative attention to a little-studied topic that spans the scholarly and professional fields of art and heritage. Our contributors are artists, policymakers, curators and art historians drawn from the Caribbean (Jamaica, The Bahamas, Barbados, Curaçao and so on) and the several locations of its global diaspora (the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Germany and the United States). They have found instructive comparisons between key linguistic regions of the Caribbean and its diaspora – namely the Anglophone and the Dutch – as a means to negotiate this complex geography, tracing how it crosses national lines and encompasses countries in Europe and North America.

The various parts of this diverse landscape have little knowledge of one another, despite their shared colonial history within the Caribbean and similar patterns of subsequent outward migration to the former imperial metropolises. There is a need for greater awareness of these matters of spatial scale and place, connection and disconnection, and global-local tensions, asking how they bear on making the arts a revealing and contested horizon for envisioning community. As such, this volume underscores the necessity for multi-sited accounts of the breadth of Caribbean art communities, and for

greater mindfulness of the contemporary difficulties and opportunities presented in this distinctive cultural zone.

This collection also outlines the continuing reverberations felt from the developments and outlooks that characterise the Caribbean's recent history of art. During the immediate years of independence, visual practitioners were expected to take the lead over other areas of the arts, such as music or performance, in assuming the social responsibility for representing the nation or the Caribbean region as a whole. Today, artists often try to level this ground, seeking pathways toward wellbeing, and employing visual imagery in tandem with more popular forms of culture, such as time-based, participatory instances of public spectacle. They have exercised art's growing capacity to represent an ostensibly shared cultural experience, and as an instrument for conserving a Caribbean heritage, and have explored the inherent difficulties of understanding the changing nature of heritage in relation to the contingencies of everyday life. Artists occupy a transnational terrain where migration and movement may become the very focus for artistic investigation, with the result of broadening definitions of Caribbean heritage in relation to issues of sustainability.

Art and infrastructure

A widely debated issue in relation to the sustainability of Caribbean culture and community is the infrastructure for artists and art. Caribbean artists, who have been historically underrepresented in the centres of the 'global North', are placing increased emphasis on the need to share their perspectives. Offering critically illuminating scholarly, creative and policy-oriented understandings of sustainable community, our contributors propose a range of analyses and models for a lasting and efficient infrastructure of art production, circulation, reception and memorialisation. The sources for such models are themselves temporally and spatially diverse. Some of them hail from countries of the Atlantic region beyond the Caribbean, which the Caribbean refers to, learning from certain elements and adapting others to its local needs. Conversely, as this collection suggests, the issue of sustainability is something that a transnational diasporic community such as the Caribbean is also addressing in its own unique ways, searching intra-regionally for instruction and initiative. In any case, all authors agree that the resources for exploring the full range of options and conceptualisations of sustainability in the arts have yet to be found. What emerges is a set of claims and polemics about what adequate infrastructural support exists in the Caribbean region

itself, how to influence the arrangements for that provision, and why Caribbean people are seeking to transcend such circumstances by striking up viable alternatives.

Artists' voices

Artists who are based in the Caribbean region itself are contemplating a precarious future, and we have tried to demonstrate the need to appreciate how they cope. The lessons that may be learnt from such experiences for the larger Caribbean community are salutary. The role of cultural institutions in Europe and the Caribbean in turn demand direct scrutiny, as we search for reciprocal ways to grant more support and understanding to the practices and lives of Caribbean artists. As we argue in multiple ways, their help in building a sustainable arts community that centres on the needs and voices of artists is vital.

Many of the essays here focus on the setting up not only of institutions generally, but of networks of various kinds, comprising a mix of formal and informal arts infrastructure. The setting up of networks for those whose professional interests are in the area of visual art has disclosed the specific needs, aspirations and obstacles that are associated with the aim of inaugurating and maintaining a sense of Caribbean community. Such networks are contending both with the distributed nature of contemporary art communities at large (the 'global art-world'), and the archipelagic scattering of Caribbean territories, together with the 'submarine' connections between the geographical Caribbean and its diasporas. New lines of support and communication are being found that intersect and fuse Caribbean interests with those of the globalising art market, with its new spaces of display and forums for debate. As we reveal, however, there are also tensions and frictions between them: disconnections between the micro- and macro-markets for art, and rifts and differentiations among regimes of representation that become palpable through attempts to problematise the contemporary master narrative of a unified and inclusive, postcolonial art community.

The Caribbean and 'the global'

With these differences in view, certain visual practices that we highlight respond creatively to the issue of how to build lasting connections and communities to circumvent the economies and discursive categories of 'the global'. While Caribbean people are asking how to see the way toward alternative, longer-term prospects for understanding and supporting themselves, this widely felt desire to sustain a robust and vibrant community has inspired a plethora of critical responses from the arts. Not without irony have such questions

led to a critical look at how the Caribbean's celebrated diversity and transnationalism is mirrored in the vocabulary used to effusively promote art's globalising currents.

But extolling the alleged benefits for all of contemporary cultural exchange in an expanding field may give little heed to the lived experience of individual artists in relation to globalising processes. For many Caribbean artists, the 'milk and honey' myth of globalisation has covered over their actual struggles to negotiate a livelihood in conditions of inequity. Much of the elaborate theorising about the cultural virtues of global cross-fertilisation and transnational mobility seems unaware of Caribbean experience on the flipside of globalisation. This is an adverse outcome of commodifying the imagined geography of interaction, cultural intermixing and global movement that has long been identified with the Caribbean among cultural analysts. At the same time, the theory machines of 'global contemporary art' (metropolitan curatorial mission statements and interpretative texts, art criticism, advocacy arguments for the charitable funding of art in the 'global South' etc.) are intrigued by accounts of the arts that make a virtue of 'dissensus' among its participants. That authoritative commentators are diverted by the thought of a resistive underside of life in the arts may be a sign of their remove from sites of struggle, as much as how self-alienated such struggles become when their principles and narratives are mediated and adapted to satisfy metropolitan taste. Art of the global contemporary has latterly come to be portrayed as a pedagogical place of productive disagreement, fractious yet bountiful social critique, and redemptive if spectacular culture clash. Yet the means, let alone the will, to take part in such a scene of encounters are not roundly shared by art communities of the Caribbean, nor is the sense of hope that this is a battle that the Caribbean can win on its own terms.

These issues, which bear on the future prospect of sustainable art communities, are especially pertinent across the linguistic divisions of the Caribbean. The more common channels for comparing Caribbean experiences cross-linguistically have tended toward Anglophone, Francophone and Hispanic contexts, and the spectrum of creolisations among them. This has not only overlooked English and Dutch interactions, it has also hidden the losses of dismembering the Caribbean region according to its language units. Bridging the boundary between these typically separate linguistic contexts has caused us to refocus on the primary matter of how and for whom different languages feature significantly in the arts, and the extent to which linguistic diversity is constitutive of the arts at all.

Meanwhile, as we have looked at the challenges of building a sustainable community for the transnational and diasporic Caribbean according to the means offered by the arts, we have paused to reflect on the expectations that may be placed on the arts to serve such a role. The English and Dutch contexts of the Caribbean and its diasporas appear to overlap in their debates on this very issue of how to unpack the values that are laid upon the arts, and how a normative term such as community may share parallels with the normativity of unexamined notions about aesthetics and creativity. Our starting point is to defamiliarise all such terms with attention to the specificity and contingency of art as a discursive practice. Through our political economy of art, we have tried to sketch, in episodic and often localised patterns, how various stakeholders in the contemporary art scene in the Caribbean and its global diasporas (international art agencies, regional art organisers and local bureaucrats) are positioned vis-à-vis international capital, foreign, regional or national cultural policy priorities, and flows of funding. Just as importantly, adopting a self-reflexive mode of debate, we raise the important issue of how claims for a sustainable future for art of the transnational Caribbean have come to shape and direct such policies, to justify the operations of institutions and organisations for the arts, and the morphology and movement of money.

Interventions and contestations

Above all, we hope to provide through this collection an intellectual intervention for the arts that uncovers the myriad ways that artists and arts organisers envision and 'frame' sustainable community in the local and global art environment. Our discussion of this field has highlighted the historical and current shifts in such framing on the part of organising bodies, policy makers and artists, especially the competing claims over what constitutes artistic 'success', 'creativity' or 'innovation'.

In particular, this brings out the implications for cultural production when resources and opportunities are scarce. Competition, whether market or interpersonal competition, is likely to remain among the main challenges to the notion of sustainable community for the Caribbean, not to mention in the contemporary art-world more widely. Here is a space where a sense of community and the principle of social cohesion may be unsteadied, riven or evacuated from creative practices altogether. Individual artists, for example, can sometimes be celebrated as a 'success' in promotional literature, or may ably orchestrate declarative images of their status and achievements such as through social media. But the yield for the Caribbean art community at large is doubtful and still

unsubstantiated. That suggests the prestige or star system surrounding a compact set of Caribbean artists falsifies the 'trickle down' model of broader cultural development.

Other modes of framing the issues that surround sustainable art community may be detected through attention to generational differences. There may be generation 'gaps' that complicate viewpoints on the arts and seem to distribute competitive roles over the meaning and value of the arts. Here it is worth digging beneath the professed claims among artists, organisers, curators and bureaucrats about how generational background orients their personal motivations for taking part in the arts. Generational differences are a guide but not a rule to understanding the range of approaches being taken to life on the artistic stage: seeing art as a platform for the demonstration of cultural altruism, (national) community building, group-consciousness raising etc., or else, polarised to the other extreme, as a launching pad for individualism, a means to gain personal prestige by accruing cultural capital and converting it to material profit. These options can also become fused. An artist who garners a degree of public support and acclaim may also see sustainability as a matter of trying to fit simultaneously within a number of markets for art – from local tourism-related or everyday commercial sites, to commissions and sales from the financial sector or private collectors, whether at home or abroad.

While the policy frameworks designed to deliver a greater economic impact from the arts may employ buzzwords such as creativity, innovation and sustainability, these can be at odds with existing conceptualisations of the arts. For instance, members of communities that have long demanded clearer official objectives and support for the arts may have imagined less instrumental outcomes. Mindful of such disappointment or outspoken disapproval, several government manifestos in the Caribbean have sharpened their rhetoric, arguing harder about the necessity in straitened times for the state to roll back its official involvement, ostensibly to avoid stifling private investment and a diversity of views. Culture and tourism are arranged under joint economic targets when art is regarded as having the potential to become a significant 'industry' for the Caribbean. In response, such measures have been met with alarm in some quarters of the arts community, doubling their efforts to draw a bold line between popular and high art and trying to reinforce those categories, even in the face of examples of art practice that seem to dissolve them. The very same buzzwords – sustainability, community etc. – may also be wielded by bureaucrats trying to justify the spending of public money on projects with

no proven or obvious public benefit. These are cases of unrealised or uneven arts policy, when government resources are squandered through unchecked personal spending. They meet the goals of finding community with arts and heritage bureaucrats outside the Caribbean (largely disconnected from the region's needs and art historical past), and generally sustaining the careers of public servants in the arts and arts education, by funding their private cultural tourism.

Very rarely do the visual arts seem to yield such plain rewards, however in both the formal and informal infrastructure for the arts, substantial long-term, in-kind support often comes from perennially committed volunteers and enthusiasts. Some of these unpaid culture workers will explain that their purpose is to become 'professionalised' in the arts, that their efforts are galvanised by trying to achieve 'blue chip' standards. For a region of the world where there are very few such individuals or benchmarks that identity is all the more esteemed and taking on its mantle can feel like an end in itself. These sorts of participants in the arts may bend their backs in the hope that one day art and artists of the transnational Caribbean will gain 'recognition' and 'visibility'. But these too are pliably abstract terms, with the result that objectives and concerns for the future of the arts can clash with or diverge from one another, regardless of their apparently shared rubric.

Morality and the environment

What seems to be held in common, across all such motivations for getting involved in the arts, are some distinctly *moral* views. There may be impassioned opinion about how the arts are of civic worth or a matter of local pride; how culture can restore a sense of place deemed missing or misrepresented; or how art may become a vehicle for cultural 'autonomy' and 'freedom' – making amends for years of colonial rule and imperial geo-political dominance over culture's arbiters of value and the uses of culture as an agent of control. While participation in the arts bears out for its members a social distinction – distinguishing the members of that community *as* a community – that logic of participation has a moral dimension. Such a community derives a strong sense of belonging from ostensibly shared aspirations and beliefs that are morally encoded, and its membership requires continual, duty-bound maintenance. Participants make themselves present and convey their views in increasingly inventive ways, acts of moral persuasion sometimes projected over considerable geographical distance.

Caribbean art communities have also on occasion based their raison d'être on the need to make clear

how they should be differentiated from the wider Caribbean society, particularly in its alleged indifference to the arts. There is a moral tenor to the polemic set against local authority figures, 'philistines', and even generalisable straw men who supposedly still cannot see how culture 'improves' society. If this leads into a moral maze of deliberation over the case for envisioning culture as a value-added activity which 'enriches' the socio-economic, that is hardly surprising in a context of underinvestment. The relative scarcity of resources points to the need for radical responses to the challenges of community building and the current patterns of communication and knowledge exchange.

The present collection and the project that brought it to fruition bear broad similarities with the existing means of networking, yet they extend its geography by channelling the international transmission of opinion and the performativities of artists, curators, arts organisers, to include stakeholders, audiences and readers that have hitherto paid little attention to the Caribbean. This difference has helped to deepen the process of self-identification for members of an arts community whose moral economy we should hesitate to delineate as simply another political field. The results expose the deeper foundations and style of practices of community-building through a robust exchange of knowledge.

Emboldening the moral case for the Caribbean to achieve a 'sustainable art community' is the ability of that phrase to conjure up associations with a more established and urgent discourse: the global environmental movement, with its warnings about the human-animal misery and world disasters of pollution, the extraction industries, climate change, species collapse, ecological degradation. There is a persuasive energy that comes from the general acceptance of the terminology of environmentalism and it exploits the blurring of distinctions between two loci of rhetoric. The scalar sizing-up of the Caribbean moral case in support of the arts comes about in association with an expanded field of ethical engagement. Here the extant (local) moral economy of Caribbean community is articulated to the codes of a more global-facing morality: a simultaneously spatial and ethical aggrandisement of aims and objectives – planetary sustainability, interspecies community – which are mutual responsibilities thought to transcend cultural contexts and frontiers.

The same metaphor of sustainability has to be handled with care, however, and never embraced tout court. For example, the term sustainability can be co-opted by those who stave off opposition to cutting state provision for the arts – 'the former high level of investment just wasn't sustainable' etc.

While the transnational Caribbean brings plenty of cases of appropriated terminologies that reverberate productively in the cultural field, the currently operative terms – sustainability and community – seem especially prone to subversion. Their otherwise ameliorating potential may be lost through discursive articulations with undisclosed, self-serving ends, and lip service paid to aims and concepts that appear to be underpinned by consensus but are set to starkly contrary or recalcitrant purposes. This is why, through the following commentaries, we have counselled vigilance toward the uptake of any such language and the temptation to prescribe 'what art of the Caribbean needs'. Instead, we sound a cautionary note: the very notion of a sustainable art community is at its most ideological when it comes to seem uncontroversial, and in response we have placed its terms under scrutiny.

Transcending boundaries

By drawing the parameters around the Caribbean for such a discussion about the future of both art and community, the editors of this volume have aimed for a particular viewpoint onto a wider expanse of transdisciplinary discourse. Through a range of examples and cultural settings, we have tried to establish a clearer sense of how diverse stakeholders have come to frame issues of cultural development and sustainability in ways that may work around, against or with one another. The difficulty of how best to describe and explain the contestations taking place in the Caribbean – over what should count as mutual and collective benefit in the arts – is maximally felt. As we will show, what is happening in the transnational Caribbean calls for a sharpening of the current intellectual means to demystify the arts, especially to ground its practices in a critical cultural geography. That the evidence we offer will problematise the initiatives that have issued from art history (after taking its 'global turn'), is second only to our central interest in pursuing social justice for the arts without dissipating our energies through academic in-fighting.

In closing, this volume gestures toward the need to hone our attention to how globalising processes may have uneven (and often detrimental) consequences for the arts community in the Caribbean, and for the wider expanse of transnational and diasporic Caribbean people. It shows up the many challenges in the way of influencing cultural policy and curatorial practice, and the institutional and public reception for Caribbean artists. Our concerted symptomology of this field tries to increase collaboration across all of the boundaries that have separated these areas of activity and interest. At its core is the concern to improve the apparatus for exchanging knowledge and experience within and

across national and linguistic spaces, envisioning a better register of results. We hope that readers will appreciate our shared effort to convey the importance of the Caribbean's art for cultural constituencies that identify with the Caribbean. Of course we are also seeking to reach those who are concerned more generally about how ideas about art and community come to intersect in the social imaginary. Ultimately, we hope that this collection reinforces the belief in contemporary art's role and potential to win through, and to remain sovereign, despite the present uncertainties about the sustainability of art's communities, and the obstacles that stand in the way to a clearer sense of belonging and togetherness. Above all, we have aimed to show how holding up the Caribbean for discussion can help to furnish the way for the arts to become an emancipated space of convergence – discursive, social, ethical, material, imaginative and emotional. In the final analysis, that convergence would be at least as much a collaborative venture as compiling this volume has been.
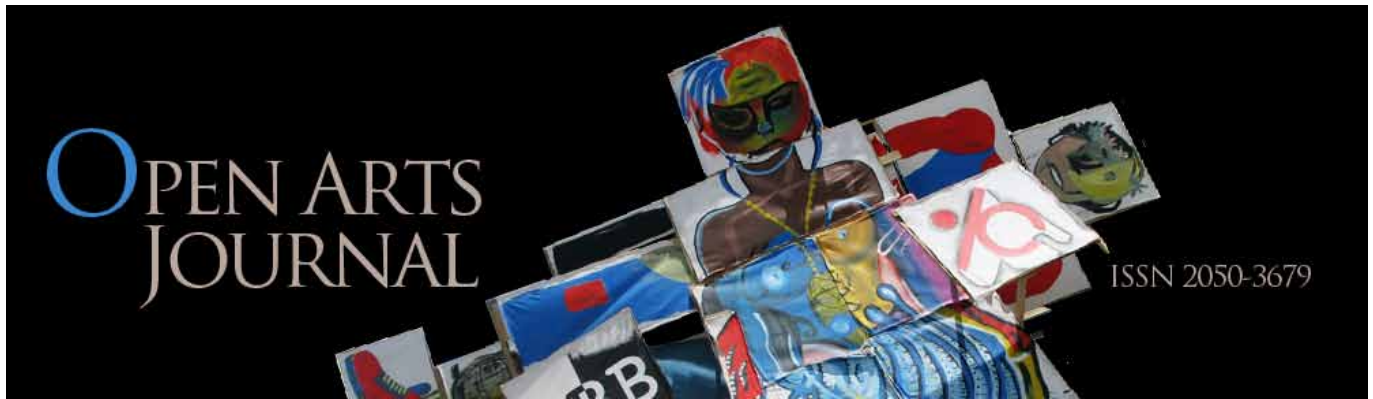
The background to this volume

This collection has its origins in a two-year international research project (2012–14) that explored how the understanding and formation of sustainable community for the Caribbean and its global diaspora may be supported by art practice, curating and museums. It was led by Principal Investigator Leon Wainwright (The Open University, UK) and Co-Investigator Kitty Zijlmans (Leiden University), together with an organising team comprising Wayne Modest (Research Centre for Material Culture, the Netherlands' National Museum of World Cultures), Tessa Jackson OBE (Iniva, the Institute of International Visual Arts, London) and Rosemarijn Höfte (Leiden University). The project successfully fostered networks of exchange and collaboration among academics, artists, curators and policymakers from the UK and the Netherlands, as well as various countries in the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean and their diasporas. Two major, two-day events in Amsterdam and London allowed the opportunity to address in detail the role of networking and exchange for a community focused on contemporary art of the Caribbean. Well-prepared and often vividly illustrated presentations were combined with roundtable and themed panel discussions, informal summaries of the discussions, and interaction with a wide public that attended both events. This enabled the project to encompass a considerable breadth of relevant issues through the sharing of diverse viewpoints. Additionally, we benefitted from the timely production and posting of video material following the first conference, which many speakers watched in

considering their interventions to the second event. Continuity was also established through attendance at both events by every member of the project team, who served as panel chairs and delivered formal presentations from a background of original research.

DREAMS OF UTOPIA: SUSTAINING ART INSTITUTIONS IN THE TRANSNATIONAL CARIBBEAN
Erica Moiah James

Abstract
This article explores the concept of sustainability in relation to formal and informal arts institutions in the Caribbean. Drawing on the American Renny Pritikin's 'Prescription for a healthy art scene', it argues that Pritikin's prescription outlines a utopian dream rather than a living place or real conditions for artistic development. It pictures a 'scene' that would be difficult to realise in America, and even more so in postcolonial Caribbean societies with limited resources and very different historical and cultural relationships to the arts. The article centrally examines the interdependent institutional model, forged during formative years of the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas (NAGB). With very few of the components suggested by the Pritikin model present to draw on, the NAGB developed policies, exhibitions and public programming initiatives in relation to and in partnership with various types of arts organisations and institutional forms, including local and regional artist-run spaces, national galleries, regional festivals, such as CARIFESTA, and directly with practising artists. This was done to fashion a vibrant arts scene, still far removed from Pritikin's utopia, but able to draw from local and transnational resources, fuelling an emergent model particular to and sustainable within the primary community it served.

Biographical note
Erica Moiah James is Assistant Professor jointly appointed in the Departments of the History of Art and African American Studies, Yale University. Before arriving at Yale, she served as the founding Director and Chief Curator of the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas.

Related material to this article was presented at the two project conferences for 'Sustainable Art Communities: Creativity and Policy in the Transnational Caribbean', held on 5–6 February 2013 (Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam; KIT, the Netherlands Royal Tropical Institute), and 3–4 December 2013 (Institute for International Visual Arts, Iniva, London, UK). Visit the project webpages here.

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DREAMS OF UTOPIA

Erica Moiah James, Yale University

Introduction

Sustainability is not about mere survival, but implies an ability to grow and change to both meet and move forward the needs of a community in ways that are mindful and sensitive to the peculiarities of it. During the past few years, many arts bloggers have shared a proposal by the noted American curator and arts administrator Renny Pritikin entitled 'Prescription for a healthy art scene' (Pritikin 2009). In it, Pritikin prescribes, one by one, all of the elements he believes would together result in a healthy and vibrant art scene. It is a place dominated by a critical mass of artists with ample teaching opportunities, fellowships, art schools, accessible museums and curators, studio space, informal exhibition spaces, 'adventurous' dealers, fellowships, publishers, art critics and more. Seduced by this perfect world, few seemed to notice that it lacks the most important thing that defines prescriptions: an action plan on how to take the medicine, or in this case, establish, build, sustain, fund and connect the elements of the proposed art scene in real time, and in the context of actual social and politicised cultures and economies. What Pritikin offers, is a heartfelt dream of an arts utopia, very hard to find in America and almost impossible to imagine in the Caribbean. During my tenure as the founding director and chief curator of the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas (2003–11), I found that few, if any, singular Caribbean society was large enough, resourced enough, or deep enough in local talent to realistically dream of a version of Pritikin's model emerging on its shores.

However, this does not mean that vibrant arts communities have not and are not continually emerging in the Caribbean, or that formal and informal arts institutions and collectives are not continuing to rise, because they are. Despite dire economic and social circumstances, this is a particularly vibrant time for the establishment and growth of alternative informal artist institutions in the region. It also does not mean that new artists and writers are not coming to the fore or that transnational relationships have not been forged and developed. Examples can be easily drawn. But it has meant that in a place where paths are rarely smooth, cycles of growth have paralleled or been followed by periods of stasis while many leaders, artists, formal and informal arts institutions, networks and communities also dream of utopia, failing to recognise, value and deploy what is present and available to them locally and transnationally. Using the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas (NAGB) as a living case study in this article, I examine the ways in which this Caribbean based institution was formed and sustained in part through the development of local networks simultaneously with and in relation to transnational ones. While it never possessed even half of the elements in Pritikin's prescription, it nevertheless thrived. I consider the ways in which the NAGB used what it had to create the society it needed, while mindful of the specificities and histories of the place and constituencies which it served. From the outset, it committed itself to considering successful global models adaptively and critically in consideration of the peculiarities, issues and problems of the local space.

In the Caribbean, a strong dose of pragmatism is helpful in the drive to move art forward. One learns to accept stasis as a part of the natural ebb and flow of cultures and economies, and the natural process of dissolution and reformation of powerful things – much like what happens as hurricanes continually form and reform. I am trying to trust these periods and places where it may seem as if nothing is happening, in order to maintain faith that something is always happening, even if we cannot see it. The Caribbean casts doubt on the possibility of Pritikin's perfect art scenes. It tests one's belief in utopias. What is possible is the potential for change and a belief that every community – no matter how reluctant it may seem – has the desire and the power to stimulate and embrace change. Sustainability requires a commitment to continuous growth and in the Caribbean that means change.

When thinking actively of ways and means to sustain arts communities in The Bahamas and the transnational Caribbean, it is perhaps most productive to begin by considering what 'is' happening locally and transnationally, and seeking to develop and nurture paths and networks that are conceived of in ways that allow these ground works to become mutually sustaining and foundational. This requires one to in part:

1   Release the expectations of perfection or the belief that a sustainable arts community can only take on a single prescribed form.

2   Think of models adaptively, i.e. not assuming a model conceived and working like gangbusters in one space – Amsterdam or New York – can be mapped onto the region and succeed overnight, or at all, without concern to the specificities of spaces and relations.

3   Recognise that no island, nation or department is the same in the way its arts community has been shaped, is funded and culturally engaged. Each has its own peculiarities, issues and problems. A way

forward has to be respectful of differences as much as connections across borders and boundaries, recognising points of intersection where we can mobilise for change, for art policies, art markets and economies, locally and transnationally in ways that can benefit the entire community.

4 Work to ensure that the Caribbean does not become a peripheral figure in its own discourse.

With this in mind, I will first share how the development of local networks, linked with transnational ones, effected positive change and the development of a sustainable arts community in The Bahamas and then discuss sites where attention can be placed to support the growth of this arts community and others, within a global Caribbean network.

The National Art Gallery of The Bahamas (NAGB)

In 2003, the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas (NAGB) opened in a society used to the sale of a limited range of art forms, and without a critical audience used to engaging work that was not for sale, or art made primarily for contemplation (Figure 1.1). Bound by the picturesque, the general population was not familiar with and or accepting of contemporary art forms and processes, and the concept of Bahamian art history, much less Caribbean and global art movements was foreign to many. Its audience was generally unaware of what a curator was or did. Very few individuals had been trained in curatorial practices or art history in The Bahamas, or in the diaspora. There were few local art writers and little critical engagement of work – even among artists. Art criticism in any productive form was completely absent. I recall soon after the opening, encouraging a young staffer to write critical reviews

of local exhibitions for a national newspaper. His first effort, which in my opinion was balanced and fair, was met with such vitriol from the artist under review that he never wrote another word. It was clear that a high level of sensitivity would have to be extended as the NAGB sought to facilitate change.

The NAGB opened in service to a citizenry who primarily believed that art museums and galleries were places for 'the elite' and not for them. As one might expect, a very conservative aesthetic vision prevailed and a general feeling of malaise existed among younger artists, particularly young women who found it exceedingly difficult to near-impossible to practice as an artist fulltime while remaining in the country.

Generally, The Bahamas was also marginal within a broader Caribbean art conversation and seemingly non-existent in terms of more international discourses. In Pritikin's terms, one would expect such a community to be on life support. Yet, I cannot say that it was not sustaining itself. In spite of these conditions, it was an art community that was quite vibrant in terms of the number of exhibitions that occurred, artists that it produced, and its ability to support an art market that managed to nurture several fulltime artists. It was an art community that was sustaining itself or treading water so to speak, but it was not growing. The number of those benefiting from these conditions remained quite limited.

Society needed a turbo boost and that came through the formation of the NAGB and, what I believe to be crucially important, a system of relations the gallery's presence generated that enabled something unscripted to unfold. In 2013, just ten years after the gallery's formation, this tiny country supported a pavilion at the Venice Biennial (see: http://venicebahamas2013.org/). To move that far and fast in the space of ten years is pretty

Figure 1.1: National Art Gallery of The Bahamas. (Photo: Derek Smith)

remarkable. But in order to get here, everything had to change. The community, the culture, the art, the market, the audience had to grow. The gallery was in a position to direct that growth, but could not accomplish it on its own. Therefore, the vision for the institution in relation to the community was important and always prismatic. It had to be, in order for the institution to do the work necessary to cultivate a broader arts community and in turn itself.

There were practical concerns that needed to be considered. The gallery had to operate at a consistently high level that was policy driven, supported and reinforced. This emphasis on governance was necessary for a number of fundamental reasons not specific to The Bahamas. The need to:

1   Establish the NAGB as an institution with core values in the eyes and minds of the people.

2   Define the gallery's mission, and put rules and mechanisms in place that would enable it to implement its values and achieve its mission in ways the community would come to not only to appreciate but also *expect.*

3   Protect the institution from changing governments, political cronyism, entitlements and personal agendas.

4   Spend the money entrusted to it wisely and without a hint of corruption. Bahamian culture is generally suspicious of anything associated with 'government'. It also does not have a comparable culture of philanthropy to the one found in the United States, or a national lottery as one finds in the UK to support the arts. Though the gallery was an independent (government) corporation, its affiliation with the government marked it as a place where money was expected to be mismanaged and this was a reason often cited in response to early requests for donations. Few wanted to give.

Therefore, a major part of the NAGB's strategy to sustain itself was to distinguish itself. It literally could not appear to be a government operation. In other words, it had to be well-managed fiscally and operationally, and it had to be physically maintained.

The pressure level was high because the expectation of failure was higher. The NAGB had to work to cultivate a supportive community that would value it. It had to work to break down prevailing provincialism, encourage local artists not to be fearful, wilfully ignorant or envious of artists and art movements abroad (but to cultivate appreciation, mutual respect and opportunities in both directions). It had to teach about the past even as it engaged the present. It had to break down barriers between The Bahamas, the region

and the world. It recognised that cultivation of the local could not be sacrificed in the vain pursuit of the elusive 'global' and that the way forward would be to focus on local development while connecting the local to regional and global communities.

In 2003, there were ethical and institutional goals and policies in place and an awareness of what was required and what was at stake, but no master plan. The plan, or in modified Pritikin terms: 'the prescription', emerged in response to the community. Programming was developed based on what the staff sensed the community needed, then tweaked and/or expanded based on community response. What emerged was a battle plan on four fronts. The gallery would work to:

1   Research and document the art history of The Bahamas and share this work with the community through exhibitions, the development of an archive through publications, public programmes and teaching this new art history to teachers.

2   Present research and exhibitions using a language that was accessible to the general public, but not without heft and weft.

3   Chart an open future with respect to a broader global community by supporting Bahamian artists no matter where they practiced and creating avenues for them to share their work; insert locally based artists into regional and international communities and enrich the local conversation through artistic interventions.

4   Connect the gallery to a network of local and regional arts institutions in order for its workers to enter a broader collegial environment and to nurture institutional partners.

Many programmes were developed in an attempt to fight on these fronts and I will discuss a few key initiatives that played special roles in building local consciousness, community and a critical language for the arts.

Forging local and global art networks
One of the first broad-based programmes was the development of *Transforming Spaces* (ongoing since 2005)**,** an arts tour aimed at locals with the expressed purpose of introducing the public to spaces that had literally been transformed for the event – a big yard, a deserted building, a living room, a sidewalk – and thus expand its conception of what an arts space could be. Through this process, it was hoped that the tour format would assist in:

1   Demystifying artists, artists' studios and art galleries by allowing the public to enter those spaces and engage with the artist and their work directly.

2   Cultivating new collectors by providing reasonably priced work for sale.

3   Introducing an increasingly receptive public to arts spaces many did not know existed and creating awareness through interaction with this community.

4   Extending the audiences knowledge and appreciation of the variety of work possible in The Bahamas, while developing new social spaces.

5   Assisting in the development of new commercial gallery spaces, expanding the market for new work.

Does this seem to intersect with Pritikin's proposal? Yes, in some ways, but not entirely. The immediate service population was small and the goals compact. The idea was to focus on small steps building towards something larger. In some ways, all of those goals were met through the project and it did stimulate the formation of formal and informal spaces (but we have seen them come and go). *Transforming Spaces* also revealed possible reasons why a New York–styled commercial gallery system has never quite taken root in The Bahamas.

Pritikin's model references size and the need for large pools of working artists tied to a deep buying public. That is not a possibility in The Bahamas nor most of the Caribbean. Even if one considers the visiting tourist population (reportedly 6 million per year for The Bahamas alone), in addition to local populations (approximately 350,000 persons for The Bahamas), the developmental potential of an expansive local market for fine art is limited. Many spaces start with blind faith and enthusiasm rather than a full knowledge and assessment of the market and an accompanying business plan. What is already a tough road becomes filled with thorns as artists who have committed themselves to galleries cut side deals with buyers looking for a break in price. This in effect destroys the gallery's bottom line, undermines the bargaining position of the gallerist in the market and sows enmity in the relationship between gallery and artist.

The sustainability of commercial gallery spaces have also been impacted by gallerists following the New York profit model, but failing to do work that warrants a 60/40 or 50/50 split, not physically caring for art in their possession and failing to learn about the work in ways that would assist in cultivating buyers. Without clear curatorial and business visions, and limited income streams, the hope and enthusiasm that helped launch these spaces tapers off rather quickly. For these and other complex reasons specific to each site and situation, commercial galleries in The Bahamas have for the most part failed. In most cases, the spaces that

continue to survive are those with limited or focused agendas, started by and strongly associated with individual artists. These spaces are more often attached to artists' homes or studios, and are not stand-alone gallery enterprises. There is definitely a competitive advantage to building ownership and direct self-interest into this format, and while not a guaranteed model of 'success' or sustainability, it appears to be a viable model for now. For a time, *Transforming Spaces* reached as many as twelve spaces on a six-hour tour, which for a seven by twenty-one mile island was quite incredible. It stimulated hope and energy in the community, and is still going strong.

Community outreach

The NAGB also developed and cultivated a variety of public programmes and partnerships with a range of organisations, such as theatre companies, musical organisations, foreign embassies, international organisations (such as UNESCO), The College of The Bahamas, Bahamas International Film festival etc., to encourage people interested in other art forms, but who would not think of visiting the gallery, to do just that. These programmes and partnerships encouraged the cross-fertilisation of the arts, and broadened and multiplied linkages within the local community (Figure 1.2). It may seem a simple and obvious task, but these communities were very divided in The Bahamas. The NAGB became a neutral meeting place and the programmes and partnerships that developed across disciplines went a long way in helping to build and diversify the community.

Let me be clear: the NAGB did not have vast monetary resources with which to do this work. After operational expenses, its yearly programme budget in the first eight years, which covered exhibition development, publications, programming etc., never exceeded 100,000 US dollars. What it did have was a building and extensive grounds. It made it known that it was willing to rent out its facilities, and was also interested in working with arts organisations or on arts-related programming through an in-kind donation of space. This, along with the growing support of local professionals, who sometimes volunteered to give their services free of charge, enabled the gallery to develop a vast programming schedule that included film programmes, plays and musical performances, discussions, round tables, even dance classes, in addition to standard gallery fare like artist talks, guest lectures, discussion groups etc.

Sharing its space with these groups (and by extension its growing audience and institutional support) enabled the NAGB to assist in the

Figure 1.2: Poetry reading by Christian Campbell. (Photo: Erica Moiah James)

development of fledgling arts programmes and organisations. I believe that these connections strengthened the arts community in ways we cannot quantify. These programmes brought people to the gallery and were coupled with community-focused programmes that gave the gallery greater visibility beyond its walls. This outreach required that the NAGB work with non-traditional partners such as government ministries, police departments, local businesses, the Nature Conservancy, the Humane Society and even a convent. One of my favourite programmes was called *The Liveable Neighbourhoods Project* (2008–11), designed to use art classes, mural painting and tree planting to transform abandoned parks in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, into spaces that could be used once again by broader sectors of the community. We discovered that except for two incidents involving the desecration of statues of Columbus and Queen Victoria, Bahamians rarely, if ever, defaced public art. This project led to the gallery being invited to supervise murals in schools facing the challenge of graffiti, or in some cases being invited by organisations,

simply because they saw work the programme had completed and wanted art on their walls. The Gallery employed the artist Allan Wallace to lead this charge at various parks and schools, such as Woodcock Primary School, Stapeldon School, St Martin's Convent and others.

The Teacher Workshop Program (2005–11) was another important step in extending the reach of the NAGB. It brought public and private school teachers to the gallery to view new exhibitions and help develop lesson plans in relation to new exhibitions, but also took the teachers into artist studios (to participate in hands-on projects) and on specialised art and architecture tours on the island. The programme was open to educators from any discipline interested in creative learning practices and incorporating the arts into their curricula. In addition to connecting the gallery to a fundamental audience and future partners, projects like these required that the gallery hire artists and craftspeople to facilitate the programmes, allowing it to enter a small, but vital part of the culture industry.

History and criticality

To engage artists directly, the NAGB began to present programmes aimed at them. Workshops on topics from copyright laws to preparing portfolios and classes on art techniques from woodcarving and welding to paper-making and screenprinting were some of these initiatives. These sessions were always taught by artists hired by the gallery. When the time came to challenge artists and the community in the area of practice and accepted notions of 'Bahamian art', the gallery began to invite artists, curators and gallerists from the Caribbean diaspora to come in to share their work and conduct in studio critiques with local artists. To make the exchange as natural as possible, if a local artist attended

Figures 1.3a: Artist talk by intuitive painter and sculptor Wellington Bridgewater; 1.3b: Collector Marina D'Aguilar and Barbadian artist Ras Ishi at Ishi's artist talk; 1.3c: Author with Ras Ishi Butcher and Ras Akyem Ramsey at NAGB (Photos: Erica Moiah James)

the presentation and connected with what the visitor said or did, they voluntarily signed up with NAGB to schedule a studio visit with the guest. It was the first time a formal programme for artists designed to address criticality had occurred and was in response to the single major complaint locally: the desire for critical engagement with work. Artists felt isolated and often lamented that they did not have anyone to really talk to about their work. The level of distrust within the local community at the time was rather high and had to be un-wedged by persons not directly invested in it.

The NAGB began this programme in 2005 by inviting the artist Chris Cozier, and went on to host Peter Minshall, Leroy Clark, Veerle Poupeye, Richard J. Powell, Deborah Jack, Erman Gonzalez, Edouard Duval Carrie, Reynald Lally, and Bahamian artists such as the late Brent Malone, Stanley Burnside, Blue Curry, Antonius Roberts, Lillian Blades and Wellington Bridgewater (Figure 1.3a). Artists began a broader conversation with other artists, but also writers, curators and commercial gallerists from the region, Miami and elsewhere. The intellectual, critical and conversational boundaries kept expanding. The general public and art community responded very quickly to these initiatives, though not without bumps and bruises. The 2003 *Inaugural National Exhibition* reflected a relatively narrow representational art history and practice. This changed slightly for the second national exhibition and by the time the third one rolled around, curated by Krista Thompson, the door was wide open. The community had opened to work beyond the representational, beyond painting and beyond traditional media and processes. Things had changed.

From its early days, the NAGB began sharing information on regional and international art happenings. As interest grew, it began arranging group trips to events such as the Havana Biennial (2006), Art Basel (2007) and in 2008 to CARIFESTA (Caribbean Festival of the Arts) in Guyana. Though the intention was also to exhibit artwork in Guyana, logistical problems made this impossible. However, attending CARIFESTA allowed some of the country's premier artists – in some cases for the very first time – to get a chance to visit another Caribbean country and consider what being a part of that aesthetic and historical discourse might mean to them personally.

Figure 1.4: Exhibition of Bahamian Contemporary art the Nassauischer Kunstverein, Wiesbaden, Germany. The sculptural assemblage *Sacred Women-crossing the Atlantic* by Antonius Roberts is pictured in the foreground. (Photo: Erica Moiah James with permission of the artist)

Each initiative led to another connection, another opportunity. Chris Cozier's visit led to Alice Yard invitations for several artists. CARIFESTA led to Bahamian art being introduced to a Guyanese audience via a group talk Elfrieda Bissember arranged at Castellani House. In Guyana, Bahamian artists encountered the work of Aubrey Williams and were able to meet amazing artists like Philip Moore and Winston Strick. CARIFESTA was also the symbolic beginning of the artist Kishan Munroe's *Universal Human Experience Project* (2008). Networks allow people and ideas not only to move, but also be transformed. They allow the artist and the arts organisation to re-imagine the boundaries of community and extend the system of relations.

Prior to CARIFESTA 2008, in response to requests from artists for exhibition opportunities beyond the islands, the gallery connected with a Bahamian curator based in Germany, Amanda Coulson (the current Director of the NAGB). Coulson wanted to develop a show of contemporary Bahamian art in Germany. The exhibition was a meaningful experience both for what happened and what did not. What happened was an amazing exhibition at the Nassauischer Kunstverein in Wiesbaden, Germany (Figure 1.4). The show led to an exhibition invitation from another European country. The German exhibition happened. The artists felt respected during the process and came through the experience reinvigorated. The director and curators at the Kunstverein understood that the artists wanted to be taken seriously, and that the NAGB wanted the work of the artists to be positioned and engaged in a certain way. The NAGB facilitated the exhibition in Germany, but had to say no to the other opportunity because the organisers of that exhibition wanted work that reflected a touristic kind of exoticism, which the gallery refused to support.

Decisions like this were and are often very hard to make by leaders in the arts. There is a lot of pressure coming from many sides. Artists are sometimes difficult to deal with because the level of trust is not always there and their focus is on the opportunity to show work internationally. They do not always understand the context in which their work will be shown, used or redeployed, and it often takes quite a bit of work to convince them why certain decisions are being made. The experience of the German exhibition allowed some of the participating artists to enter a broader network, and the gallery was able to reinstall the show in Nassau for a Bahamian audience once it closed in Wiesbaden. It was the first purely conceptual art show mounted at the NAGB in 2006.

The National Art Gallery of The Bahamas has been an important organisation for The Bahamas because, without any government interference, it was able to become a means through which local networks could be stimulated. Personal differences that had prevented certain connections and conversations from happening – sometimes for decades – were deflected through, or mediated by, the institution. But, in an increasingly grave economy and with growing social violence, what is required for this arts community to maintain its health and continue to grow locally and within transnational networks? Might these needs intersect with those of other Caribbean locations?

Points of convergence: Regional and transnational relationships

There are no art utopias, but there is still work that can be done to continually cultivate communities in which the arts thrive. For various reasons, the foremost being funding, I am a proponent of the development of a series of national art galleries and museums in the Caribbean as long as they are free of government influence, responsive to their community's needs (historically, in real time and in terms of articulating a vision for the future) and are not stand-alone spaces, but generative bodies working within a network of formal and informal galleries, arts spaces and artist initiatives locally, regionally and transnationally.

To close, I want to step away from the Pritikin prescription by asking and beginning to answer the following question: where can we focus funds and efforts to initiate or sustain programmes that will assist in the ongoing development of formal and informal arts institutions and communities in The Bahamas and the transnational Caribbean? Issues to be dealt with are:

Transnational dialogue: The Caribbean is fragmented both internally by histories, geography, language and politics, and externally through its diaspora. Finding ways to have conversations, like the 2013 conference 'Sustainable Art Communities: Creativity and Policy in the Transnational Caribbean' held at the Tropenmuseum Amsterdam, in order to expand the number and variety of voices and stakeholders, can assist in relieving the isolation cultural workers often feel in small places, while helping to broaden the impact and influence of local art communities through these transnational linkages.

Training and documentation: Transnational networks will also be important for training to move forward. Not everyone who puts a painting on a wall is a curator. Not everyone who can put two words together is a writer. Not everyone who can cite Stuart Hall is

a cultural theorist. We have to figure out ways to continue to train persons interested in working on and within the Caribbean arts. This may ideally happen transnationally, as most individual communities do not have adequate training facilities on their island. The lack of professional training is a serious problem in Caribbean arts and cultural development – and I do not mean just on the level of formal instruction for artists, art critics and historians. Many galleries, museums and archives in the region are in need of collections-management training and assistance. We simply do not have proper records of what we have, how we got it and what exactly it is. It is not a sexy part of arts development, but it is imperative for us to address this because it leads to broader access to collections, knowledge of where to fill in gaps and build collections, broader dissemination of information on the collections both locally and globally, in academia and museums and galleries.

Conservation: The documentation process would also allow for improved maintenance of items in collections. Funding the programmes designed to develop innovative, economical and creative conservation practices in the context of the Caribbean would be of service to the world. I am currently working on a team project centred on a group of nineteenth-century Haitian portraits at Yale that has brought home the dire need for conservation in the region – books, documents, paintings, works of art. Since reading Stuart Hall et al.'s *Policing the Crisis* (1978) in graduate school, I am careful how I deploy the term 'crisis', but in this case, I believe we are facing a crisis. The Caribbean is simply losing too much too quickly within the region, and at the same time it is not fully aware of the incredible objects and materials from its history stored in archives and museum collections across the globe. It would be amazing if transnational conservation projects could be developed with the region that bring and transfer expertise, leaving not only good work, but also trained locals to continue the work.

Exhibition development: I have become wary/weary of the Caribbean being the focus of major blockbuster exhibitions, outside of the geographic Caribbean, that seem unable or unwilling to allocate any funding, or negotiate any agreements to have portions of these shows exhibited in the region, even when they are spearheaded by well-meaning diasporic Caribbean professionals. The Caribbean cannot continue to be a wallflower at its own party and marginal in its own discourse. It is not an object of study, but a generative space capable of and fully interested in self-reflexive engagement and critique through access to these

shows. The number of local curators is relatively small in the Caribbean, but creative ways must be explored to lighten the curatorial burden by having exhibitions move through the region. While online exhibitions are useful, they cannot take the place of direct contact and engagement with the object. How might a show curated in The Bahamas also be shown in Havana and Kingston and vice versa? Much effort and precious resources are invested in exhibition development only to have them die far too quickly and experienced by limited audiences. Understanding transportation limitations, should even more shows be developed in situ? Do we need to learn to pack art differently, move art differently, where jumbo jets are not required to transport massive crates? How can we begin to rise above frustrations and think strategically in order to break through colonial and economic limitations, as well as language barriers?

Leadership: I recently did a cursory review of the length of time individuals have led certain arts institutions in the region and realised in some cases it has been a very long time. Though there may be valid reasons for this in some places, generally these tenures have lasted too long. How can we focus funding efforts to develop leaders in the arts? Even if leaders have made notable contributions, it is my view that arts leadership has to be dynamic. The cultivation of new leaders at larger, more formal institutions (and also less formal ones) must become a part of the culture of these organisations. Too often informal spaces that emerged out of vitally important initiatives die along with their founder and more formal institutions are left rudderless without clear succession plans. The Caribbean has to be vibrant enough, open enough and bold enough to look to its transnational community for local leadership, encourage locals to gain experience abroad, and put mechanisms in place that would ease the transition of trained individuals back into local society.

Publishing and the cultivation of a discourse: At CARIFESTA 2008, an amazing exchange occurred between Derek Walcott and the President of Guyana on a panel chaired by David Dabydeen. The President was commended for appearing on the panel. Though he had agreed in principle to attend, as Mr. Dabydeen intimated, few expected him to follow through. The central question posed to President Jagdeo required an explanation for the lack of active and organised governmental support for the cultivation of the arts across the fifteen nations that comprise CARICOM (The Caribbean Community and Common Market). The President expressed a desire to support the arts,

but indicated that for Guyana, he had to consider that that support stood in competition with servicing the country's debt, the protection of the capital Georgetown from rising sea levels etc. I am notoriously hard on Caribbean politicians, but even I found myself sympathetic to his argument. What Guyana faced seemed daunting to me. At the time, it was paying more than ninety cents out of every dollar it earned to service its debt, as well as having to consider the possibility of moving an entire city, or finding ways to improve seawalls to keep the ocean at bay. Art suddenly seemed insignificant. But Derek Walcott quickly brought me, and all those in attendance out of our sympathetic reverie. He did not stand down to the President, insisting that the test of good leadership is seeing value in all of it and finding ways to meet these needs simultaneously.

The writers Austin Clarke and Earl Lovelace, who were also on the panel, called for a publishing house for the Caribbean and wanted CARICOM to commit 100,000 US dollars towards its start-up costs (not a large sum of money). To my knowledge nothing came of it – but I believe this is a place where possibilities lie for transnational transformation. It is already happening through the work David Scott and others are doing centred on the *Small Axe* journal and its relationship with Duke University Press. While in print, *ARC The Magazine* did a phenomenal job, by physically placing its issues in museum shops around the world, forging connections transnationally and sharing Caribbean contemporary art practices with a global audience. The *Caribbean Review of Books* and *Callaloo Journal*, have both extended their literary focus into the fine arts and there are many other journals both online and in print, that are emerging or have done a yeoman's job for years. Following Walcott and Dabydeen, I want to put forward a proposal for a Caribbean-based press, or a partnership with a more established academic press to produce a series of texts on art, culture and aesthetic practices from across the global Caribbean. I believe that the market is there, but we have to work tirelessly and walk boldly to service it. I am sure the National Art Gallery of Guyana would like to see a complete monograph produced on Philip Moore and other senior artists, and would welcome the support of such an enterprise. Teachers and scholars no doubt wish that they had more texts to turn to on Caribbean art, material and performance culture. The work of the late Petrine Archer Straw, Krista Thompson, Veerle Poupeye, Leon Wainwright and many others have laid and are laying the groundwork for this initiative. We must continually work to expand this archive, making it accessible and available to a global audience.

Working with governments: Though I am a supporter of national institutions in the Caribbean, I generally have very low expectations of governments in terms of art and cultural development. I have witnessed many instances where government bureaucracy and national agendas have stood in the way, handicapped and in some cases ruined arts and culture initiatives. But I have also seen where things can move with warp speed if the power, pull and funds of the government operate in service to the arts. So I am not willing to call the relationship dead or a lost cause just yet. Is it possible to operate transnationally at this level for the benefit of the arts? Are there issues that resonate transnationally that may be helped by broader alliances on the governmental level, or the formation of a lobby group at CARICOM? Recognising that human resources are short, might it be advantageous for such a group to develop virtual forums on the impact of global agreements on Caribbean art, culture and intellectual property (agreements such as the European Partnership Agreement, EPA, and those entered into with the World Trade Organization and Canada). The European Development Fund appears to have money to give for the development of transnational projects, but how does one access it? How do we explain in plain and multiple languages the impact of some of these agreements and their effects on arts policy and practice country by country? I learnt of a recent case where Caribbean-based grant writers made their way through the application maze for one of these funding sources, only to be told that to get the money from their *successful* grant, they would have to raise the same amount locally. We all know how difficult to impossible that prospect will be anywhere in the region. How can we work transnationally to access these funding pools? Can we convince CARICOM, Organization of American States (OAS) and similar transnational government entities to service a pool that would match funds 'won' by arts organisations in their smaller member states, enabling greater access to global funds and greater local resources for the arts? Or better yet, change the terms of these agreements and initiatives to better suit the cultures of the region.

Conclusion

These are just a few critical areas where funding and programmatic efforts can be focused and transnational networks established to develop, impact and sustain the arts in local and diasporic Caribbean communities. They suggest that, though the transnational Caribbean might be far removed from the model of Pritikin's utopia, it is not beyond its intentions. For Caribbean arts to continually evolve, utopia cannot be imagined as a place

or destination, but as a way of being that requires us all to actively contribute to the arts by conceiving and creatively implementing generative strategies that will lead to the fulfilment of clearly defined goals. Utopia can be a state where we consider the limits and difficult peculiarities of our local and transnational communities and commit ourselves to breaking through them.

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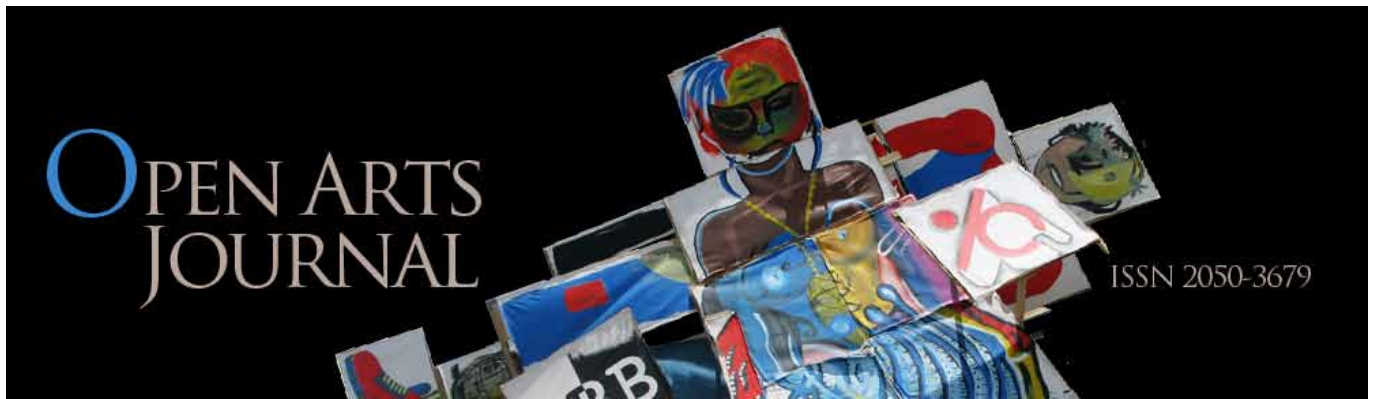
CRITICALITY AND CONTEXT: MIGRATING MEANINGS OF ART FROM THE CARIBBEAN

Therese Hadchity

Abstract

Recent critical attention to art of the Caribbean has sought to render obsolete an older and pervasive interest in trying to define what is 'Caribbean' about the region's art. Such attention has implied the limits of seeing the region as a bounded territorial entity, preferring to celebrate its transnational and diasporic character. Allegedly, the more familiar interconnections between art, identity and nationality have dissolved. Not without contradiction, however, such an emphasis on the need to transcend all boundaries of nation and language has seemed to trade on generalisations of the region's similarities among its many countries and territories, as well as with the wider diasporic community of Caribbean people elsewhere in the Atlantic world.

Through a discussion of three contemporary Barbadian artists, this article argues that such notions of a borderless cultural zone are less open-ended than current criticism admits, and on occasion quite harmful. Drawing on the work of Leon Wainwright and Timothy Brennan (while differentiating between their contributions), Hadchity shows the complexities and contradictions of recent developments that have seen Caribbean artists of an ostensibly cosmopolitan disposition, enjoying access to metropolitan art spaces in the North Atlantic. The author examines the conditionality of this success and explains how certain artistic gestures may be received in different locations. In conclusion, Hadchity argues for a renewed interest in nation-based contextual art histories, as a premise for appreciating the significance of Caribbean art works before and after they make their way into the wider world.

Biographical note

Therese Hadchity is an independent art critic, curator and teacher of art history based in Barbados. She was the owner and lead-curator of the Zemicon Gallery in Bridgetown from 2000–2010. She has authored numerous essays for exhibition catalogues on Barbadian art and artists, including Ras Akyem Ramsay, Ras Ishi Butcher, Nick Whittle, Winston Kellman, Ewan Atkinson and Alison Chapman-Andrews. Her primary research interest is the generational dynamics of visual art in the Anglophone Caribbean, which forms the basis of her doctoral research in Cultural Studies at the University of the West Indies.

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To view the film footage on the Open Arts Archive, www.openartsarchive.org, follow this link: http://www.openartsarchive.org/archive/2nd-conference-sustainable-art-communities-creativity-and-policy-transnational-caribbean-11

CRITICALITY AND CONTEXT: MIGRATING MEANINGS OF ART FROM THE CARIBBEAN

Therese Hadchity

Three points about the history of art in Barbados

It is well established that, from the 1930s to the early 1980s, the dynamics of Barbadian art were effectively inseparable from those of race, class and gender. Beyond a few notable exceptions, this period's practitioners were white, middle-class and female, or black, working-class and male (see, for example, Angel, 1994; Cummins, Thompson and Whittle, 1999). Formal training was almost exclusively a middle-class option, and given the lack of adequate educational facilities on the island, it was by necessity conducted overseas. A pattern developed in which white women artists, who had the necessary time, resources and social connections, took the lead in organising exhibitions and set up galleries and art classes.[1] While these pioneers

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1   A variety of art courses were offered from the mid-1970s, when the Barbados Community College was established.

encouraged all forms of artistic endeavour, their own work often exemplified a 'soft' modernist aesthetic. Although the racial dichotomy began to dissolve in the early decades after Barbadian independence from the United Kingdom, the modernist expression was mainly associated with middle-class women artists who had trained abroad.

In the 1980s, the contribution of the visual arts to the nation-building project entered a more self-conscious phase with the emergence of black artists such as Ras Akyem Ramsay and Ras Ishi Butcher (trained in Jamaica and Barbados respectively). They were determined to show the Barbadian public that art could be culturally affirmative and critical at the same time. In order to divert the spotlight from the 'politely modern' women artists, Butcher and Ramsay introduced a bold and demonstratively virile modernism. Their medium was painting, their style edgy and semi-abstract, and their themes were related to social concerns and the teachings of Rastafari. Examples include Ras Ishi Butcher's monumental synopsis of the transatlantic slave trade *400 Years New World Order* (Figures 2.1a and 2.1b) and Ras Akyem Ramsay's vision of black proliferation and redemption in *Blakk King Ascending* (Figure 2.2) – works which carried overt references to history as well as to former artistic taboos like sexuality and race.

Although their works were perhaps predestined to be seen by many in Barbados as offensive in both form and content, the two artists succeeded in generating exactly the small but influential following that it takes to project the image of an avant-garde. By

Figures 2.1a and 2.1b: Ras Ishi Butcher, *400 Years New World Order*, 1994. Oil on canvas (diptych), 122 x 152cm and 152 x 152cm. Private collection. (Photos: William Cummins)

Figure 2.2: Ras Akyem Ramsay, *Blakk King Ascending*, 1994. Oil on canvas, 213 x 137cm. Private collection. (Photo: Eric Belgrave)

the late 1980s, the exemplification of the cutting-edge Barbadian artist had therefore become black, working-class and male.

This was the scenario to which young women artists Annalee Davis and Joscelyn Gardner returned in the late 1980s after attending art school in the US and Canada respectively. For Barbadian artists of a white minority, it was a difficult undertaking at this time to challenge a male *and* black monopoly on the contemporary. Even so, their bid was launched from a feminist perspective with significant success, as heirs apparent to a progressive tradition of female 'arts activism'.

Davis and Gardner developed a sophisticated and more than occasionally provocative feminist aesthetic that differed from the art of their female predecessors and more obviously from that of their male contemporaries. Their two-dimensional work (Davis' especially) presented a perceptible combination of crude and delicate elements. By also introducing

Figure 2.3: Annalee Davis. *Wounded Innocence*. One panel of triptych, 1994. Mixed media, 244 x 122cm. Private collection. (Photo: Steve Cohn).

Barbadians to performance and installation art, they furthermore restored the former association on the island between women art and artistic innovation (Figures 2.3 and 2.4).

The cutting edge of the Barbadian art scene of the late 1990s thus seemed divided, if not over-determined, along historical and political lines. I suggest that this scene was distinguished by three closely related characteristics:

1   Despite their internal rivalries, artists of the Barbadian avant-garde of the 1990s were visibly invested in the so-called 'nation-building' project. They were also critical of that project, especially from perspectives associated with gender and race. Although the male artists predominantly worked in painting and the female artists mainly print, mixed media and installation, their works were – regardless of gender, race and social status – invariably narrative, serious and critically engaged in real-world issues, as well as in the politics of aesthetics. All these artists were, in short, committed to the development of Barbadian art, but never uncritical of the surrounding political establishment.

2   These artists worked in an environment with virtually no critical or institutional support. In the anglophone Caribbean, there has been very little academic engagement with visual art and, more than six decades after the first proposal for a national
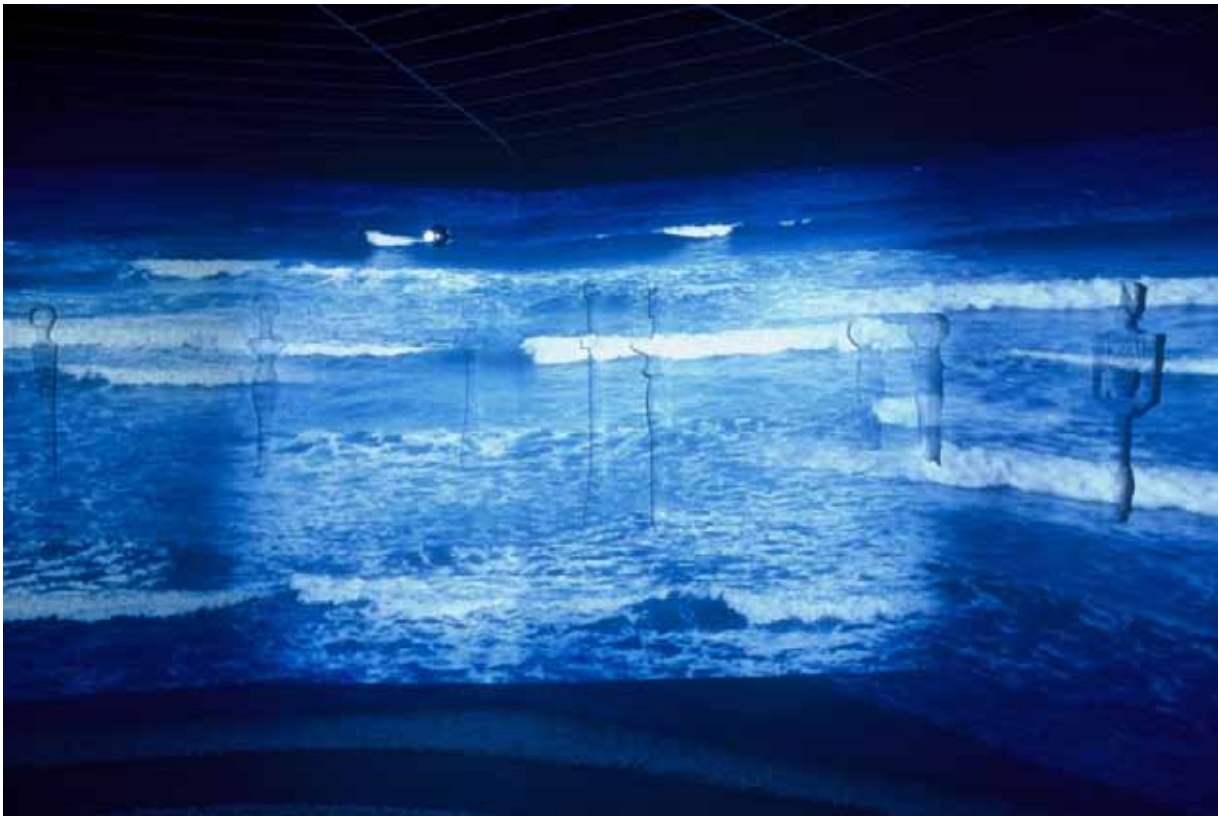

Figure 2.4: Joscelyn Gardner, *Virtual Omphalos,* 1996. Multimedia installation at the Sao Paolo Biennial, variable dimensions. Collection of the artist. (Photo: Pontus Kyander)

gallery, the national collection of Barbados has no permanent premises or display and remains inaccessible to the public. Much of the energy of these artists was channelled towards the call for infrastructure and cultural institutions.

3   Additionally, as Joscelyn Gardner (1999) has pointed out, there has been a historical tendency to interpret Barbadian art through the person of the artist. Rather than an attempt to *overcome* social divides, a work of art is automatically seen as the projection of a black or white, working- or middle-class experience. This may be related to small island dynamics, and a history fraught with racial and social tension, as well perhaps as an innate scepticism about the artwork's transformative potential. Above all, the over-attention to the ethnic and social background of an artist may reflect an absence of institutions and art criticism. In these circumstances there is little to encourage a more nuanced perception of the artwork among its audiences, beyond the default assumption that it simply manifests a particular identity.

With this background in view, I will now demonstrate how works by three younger Barbadian artists may benefit from a dialectical approach that relates them to this particular 'national situation'. I offer this to counter the denunciation of such attention to the 'national' as a continuing preoccupation for artists (i.e. as an art that remains invested in national development), and to show that interpreting their work without attention to its particular Barbadian context is to misconstrue their critical inflection and historical importance.

Two stories of success

Ewan Atkinson's first solo show after his return from art school in the United States was entitled 'Personality Disorder Machine'. It was held in 2002 and presented a body of poetically enigmatic works that discretely dealt with social education and gender conformity. In *The Olde Palmetto Royale* (Figure 2.5) Barbados is denoted by the Royal Palm, and the enclosure may thus signify the 'nation' and its conventional family structures. The artist, who is here suggested to be the literal 'outsider', is trying to connect and find a place within these structures.

The exhibition earned Atkinson equal acclaim with the Barbadian public and audiences in the wider Caribbean region. Unlike those of the earlier avant-garde, these works did not reflect the usual divisions of class and ethnicity. The artist had also replaced the previous generation's forceful tone with a less confrontational aesthetic, and if his work had political ramifications, they were subtly framed. While his private references to gay sexuality might have alienated some audiences, my impression was that the

Figure 2.5: Ewan Atkinson, *The Olde Palmetto Royale*, 2001. Mixed media, 61 x 92cm. Private collection. (Photo: Ewan Atkinson)

oblique metaphors and careful character of the work gave way to a palpable sense of relief in the exhibition-going Barbadian public. I attribute this response to the perception that Atkinson transcended the deep divisions within the nation, seen among the former generation. Its particular emotional needs (and inhibitions) thus conditioned the viewing community to largely bypass the works' potentially controversial issues. Instead, they were received as the much-needed synthesis between historically antagonistic positions across lines of race and gender. Within Barbados, and possibly in spite of himself, Atkinson thus became a catalyst for a less troubled national narrative.

In so far as it became known to wider Caribbean and diasporic audiences, what ostensibly came to matter was not Atkinson's inadvertent ability to transcend a national quandary. On the contrary, it was an apparent departure from a focus on 'the nation' as an end in itself. Outside Barbados, his work signalled a transition from the Afro-Creole nationalist paradigm,[2] which had framed the contentions of the preceding artistic generation, toward a more open-ended concept of identity as pluralised, hybrid and performative. Indeed, Atkinson's emergence as a gay, mixed-race artist was conveniently matched with the post-colonialist succession from a contestation over the national space (in the aftermath of national independence) to various articulations of 'difference' that ran beyond older racial and ethnicised positions. This transition has offered a contextualisation for Caribbean art within a broader transnational or diaspora aesthetic as outlined, for instance, by Kobena Mercer (1988) in the United

Figure 2.6: Ewan Atkinson, *Many boys and girls live in flats,* 2005. Mixed media, 62.5 x 40.5cm. Barbados National Collection. (Photo: Ewan Atkinson)

Kingdom, through his writing on Isaac Julien, or in the classic theorisations of Stuart Hall (1994; 2003) and Homi Bhabha (1994) – where articulations of difference, ambivalence and syncretism are celebrated as markers of an ostensibly shared postcolonial condition.

Due to their preoccupation with the constructed and performative character of identity – the process of self-identification as contingent, open-ended and

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2   For further discussion, see the description of 'creolization' as a political commodity in Wainwright (2011, p.89), as well as the extensive critique of 'hybridity' in Puri (2004).

evolving – Atkinson's works also exuded a playfulness that, in a sense, showed up and challenged the seriousness of the previous generation.

That Atkinson's next major body of work was created for an exhibition in Miami, is symptomatic of the rising currency of artworks that can sustain these common tropes in cultural analysis. The new works were more overtly about gender and sexual identity, yet their air of ironic distance had become more pronounced. In a range of digital compositions, photographs of the artist in sexually charged scenarios were inserted into a variety of 'doll's house' settings. In *Many boys and girls live in flats* (Figure 2.6), he appears as a juvenile cross-dresser in front of two doorways, each equally inapplicable to his gender (with a blue and a red chair denoting 'boy' and 'girl' respectively). The series on the whole thus portrayed the artist's increasing degree of sexual assertiveness, which was at once enhanced and tempered by an aura of nostalgia for childhood innocence.

Such ambivalence became more pervasive still in the 2007 show 'Fiction', which was slated as a kind of visual arts soap opera. Although issues of queer sexuality were unmistakable in some of the works (for example, *A couple running blindly,* Figure 2.7), the 'storytelling' invoked by the title was of a distinctly non-linear and interrupted character. The work explored a fantasy world, whose geography and temporality was far from specific. Its message was further diffused by a multitude of fictional leads without an obvious master narrative.[3] Since the potentially subversive political content was contained by a technique of opacity, it followed that viewers could not be altogether certain about the artist's intentions. Once again, the exhibition's overwhelmingly positive reception, I submit, was a testament to the artist's ability to channel attention away from the emphatic focus on race and nation typical of the former artistic generation. It did much to consolidate Atkinson's status as a contemporary *post-nationalist* artist of the 'next generation', whose work nevertheless enters into an important dialogue with that of the previous generation.

Considering the first artistic generation in post-colonial Trinidad, the Jamaican critic Annie Paul has suggested a relationship between artists' choice of style (namely in painting and sculpture) and their expectations of success in the international art-world. She observes that in the years just after independence: 'the work of modernists was considered suitable for export, (whereas) the traditionalists were favoured

for internal consumption' (2007, p.30). Taking license to apply Paul's argument to the present day, there is evidence of a similar relationship between artists' international prospects and their choice of medium. In recent decades and throughout the Caribbean, the new media of performance, installation and digital images now automatically connote 'contemporaneity' and an obvious rejection of 'traditionalism' (which in turn enfolds the once 'exportable' modernist aesthetic of the anti-colonial generation).

The ambiguity of Atkinson's work and the obliqueness of his references to the Caribbean is doubled by his use of mixed media. That mixed quality in itself embodies a form of hybridity; to those predisposed for such a reading, his works have very likely registered as 'intertextual' and 'discursive'. Altogether, I contend, their features have added up to an *apparent cosmopolitanism*, which has been immediately rewarded by interest in these works, also from abroad.

While the concept of cosmopolitanism can be traced back to Kant and the cross-cultural encounters of early modernity, it has recently been re-asserted as a means to capture a desirable ethos of openness and tolerance in an increasingly globalised world (Nussbaum, 1994; Anderson, 1998). Mignolo has further argued for a critical 'subaltern cosmopolitanism' (2002), and Byrne and Schoene propose a serial version, which 'is about acknowledging and interacting with other cosmopolitanisms' (2013, p.4). What is being proposed, in other words, is a global culture, to which each can contribute through the use of his 'own language and cultural symbols' (Beck cited in Byrne and Schoene, 2003, p.2).

In agreement with the more positive of these outlooks, the community of metropolitan curators can be taken to regard itself as inherently 'cosmopolitan' – open and tolerant towards the diversity of the world – and expecting to be met with an attitude of reciprocal openness from the non-metropolitan world. Contrary to these generally optimistic assumptions, however, Brennan (1997; 2001) maintains that cosmopolitanism in its present articulation is little more than a veil for American universalism, which he exposes as a sort of 'velvet-imperialism'. As Brennan (1997; 2001) and Mignolo (2002) point out, cosmopolitanism's desire to enjoy a 'global community' is contradictory in practice: it translates into a principled rejection of absolutes and yet advocates for the adoption of a shared language and conceptual framework issuing inevitably from its metropolitan base of experience.

Cosmopolitanism is of course marked by an objection to all forms of imperialism, but equally by

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3   This work has later been revived in virtual form as 'The Neighborhood Report', which can be found at: http://theneighbourhoodreport.tumblr.com/.

Figure 2.7: Ewan Atkinson, *A couple running blindly* (from the *Fiction-series*), 2007. Mixed media, 76.2 x 56cm. Collection of the artist. (Photo: Ewan Atkinson)

disillusionment with corrupted nation-building schemes across the post-colonial world. Rather than sweeping collective trajectories, cosmopolitanism promotes diverse subjectivities and calls for the greater visibility of 'difference' – particularly those identities that have been marginalised in post-colonial nation-states. In the visual arts, cosmopolitanism thus finds expression in a lexicon of hybridity, ambivalence and 'in-betweenness', and in the rejection of the anti-colonial generation's didactic and often militant aesthetic. However, what appears to be a concession on the part of all involved, for the benefit of a new global hegemony, is effectively an elevation of values and languages that pose no threat whatsoever to Western sovereignty, to a universal matrix of 'progressiveness'. Cosmopolitanism, Brennan argues, thus dismantles the weapons of cultural nationalism in subtle and unexpected ways.

I raise this discussion in part to underline that the efforts towards 'differencing' in Atkinson's work are neither intentionally 'cosmopolitan', nor explicitly 'post-nationalist'. This is where I see the need for a more careful consideration of certain art and artists from the Caribbean which would serve, on the one hand, as a contribution to the ongoing critique of globalisation, and, on the other, to an exploration of current tensions surrounding nationalism in the postcolonial world.

Atkinson's enthusiastic reception *abroad* cannot be separated from the assumption that the tenor of his work is cosmopolitan. Yet, his equally warm reception at home is evidence that his art carries a distinctive meaning in a national context, where it speaks to a set of self-representations, tensions and anxieties. In Barbados, Atkinson's work can therefore be seen as an attempt to reconcile divisions along markers of racial, gendered and social difference, and as part of ongoing nation-building efforts. And yet, in a metropolitan academic context, the very same art has been taken to signal a decidedly post-nationalist turn. It is significant that Atkinson's aesthetic of ambiguity and hybridity simultaneously suffuses his positive reception among Caribbean critics of a post-colonialist stripe. For this faction too, such manoeuvres are perceived to indicate a departure from the previous generation's nationalist priorities and as an invitation to a global conversation. This points to the conclusion that, for the Caribbean post-colonial artist, such an overlap leaves no obvious *visual* strategies of differentiation between Brennan's metropolitan and Mignolo's subaltern cosmopolitanisms.

The crucial interplay between the critical function of artworks and their particular national contexts can be further exemplified through the work of recently-emergent Barbadian artists. When Atkinson's successor

as the nation's 'young hopeful' finally emerged, she came in the figure of Sheena Rose. Within a year of completing the visual arts programme at the Barbados Community College, Rose was selected to participate in the 2009 BDVA symposium.[4] For this event, she created an animation entitled 'Town', which described quotidian aspects of her daily life through images and text.

The symposium triggered a domino effect for Rose's career, and in subsequent years she has exhibited and presented her work in countless locations on both sides of the Atlantic. Closing in on her declared ambition of becoming 'a famous artist', Rose has represented Barbados in several prestigious exhibitions; she has appeared on TedX, Bridgetown; often served as artist-in-residence; and her work continues to feature in books and magazines, on occasion as the cover image. In the course of her growing success, Rose's art has taken a more performative turn than the graphic work that first attracted critical attention. In 2012, she paraded posters with images and bands of text through public spaces (a beach and a public market) in order to engage fellow citizens about the damaging effects of 'gossip' (Figure 2.8).

Increasingly, Rose has also become her own work-in-progress. A glance at her page on the website 'tumblr', brings up a multitude of images (Figure 2.9) of the artist as a fashionista embodying 'modern blackness'. Here is Rose in various guises, suggesting multiple and interchangeable identities, and Rose as the 'quintessential artist'. These efforts to maintain a public presence have become indistinguishable from Rose's work per se, and while she seems to reach for individuality and agency, her declarations of purpose are at the same moment collapsed with the effort to stay in the spotlight. Her gestures certainly take a literal approach to Hall's idea of 'putting the self in the frame' (2004, n.p.).

For all her gains in securing such a brand of 'visibility', there is little consensus about the meaning of Rose's art itself, and no way of knowing what audiences make of her at once assertive and vulnerable personality and precarious prominence. Presently, her main significance among Barbadian peers seems to be that of someone who has made it into the international arena. Looking

4   The Black Diaspora Visual Arts-partnership (BDVA) was the outcome of an alliance (forged in a cultural policy climate, which strongly emphasised 'sustainability') between the Barbadian National Art Gallery Committee and the International Curators Forum. It entailed a series of symposia from 2008–2010 of which the BDVA-symposium was the largest. Prominent members of the disaporic arts community were invited to Barbados, in the hope that they might broker opportunities for local artists.

Figure 2.8: Sheena Rose, *Sweet Gossip,* 2012. Performance. (Photo: Adrian Richards)

Figure 2.9: Portrait of Sheena Rose, 2014.
(Photo: Adrian Richards)

no further, however, than the first 'Sustainable Arts Communities' symposium held in Amsterdam,[5] one UK-based artist referred to Rose as an artist who makes exciting 'interventions into a localised space', while at the second project symposium, a member of the London audience identified Rose as a 'typical Barbadian artist, who portrays ordinary life'. She is, in other words, seen as emblematically 'international' at home, and quintessentially 'local' abroad. In any case, if Rose's meteoric rise is related to the general practice of 'putting the self in the frame', it has not been asked whether further frames of reference – geographical, political, historical – are being assumed or, conversely, obscured.

Clearly we need to address the spatial and temporal circumstances under which Caribbean art is being produced, rather than rely on broad principles drawn from the politics of cultural representation from elsewhere, such as Britain (which was the focus of Hall's attention). Without doing so, we are bound to overlook the very conditions that motivate and give meaning to the critical positioning of Caribbean art. As Wainwright (2006; 2011) has pointed out, there are compounded and decisive differences between black artistic practices in the Caribbean and the United States, as well as

5   See the introduction to this issue and the project web-site: http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/sac/.

the varieties of black identification that exist among artists in Britain. He further cautions that it is best to avoid the assumption (which nonetheless seems prevalent) that a 'diffusion' of concepts and practices is what we are witnessing: changes or currents that emanate from a perceived 'centre' of diaspora culture – namely the United States – and trickle down towards the geographical margins of the diasporic formation. Such a 'metro-centric' view of diaspora aesthetics is sustained by a view of the Caribbean as being in a stage of 'belatedness'. The allegedly counter-hegemonic field of African diaspora representation, Wainwright points out, thus reproduces a 'politics of time', which is at play in the notionally 'global' art-world at large. The power to define 'the contemporary', which is vested in institutionally resourceful metropolitan centres, thus reveals its self-preserving tendency by conscripting less advantaged regions to the role of merely 'catching up'. And while metropolitan artists of the Caribbean diaspora may have moved from margins to centre in their own national pecking-order (as persuasively described by Hall, 2004), 'incoming' artists from the post-colonial Caribbean find themselves needing to assimilate conceptualisations of diasporic difference that they had little or no role in producing.

To find favour in metropolitan art spaces, Caribbean artists from the global south are therefore left with fairly narrow options. They face the perception of being markers of 'post-colonial difference', yet may also be regarded as champions of cosmopolitan 'progressiveness'.

On this basis, it needs to be asked how any artistic impulse towards the portrayal of 'ordinary Barbadian life' (shopping, gossiping) may be construed as 'progressive', when so much of Caribbean visual culture – starting with photographic renditions of the colonial picturesque (see Thompson, 2006) – has depended on a constructed image of the 'ordinary' and 'everyday'. With her contemporary snapshots of 'Barbadian life', Rose's art may be interpreted as an effort to speak back to the tropicalisation that played out during an earlier historical period through the proliferation of touristic images of the Caribbean and that continued with the modern film and advertising industry. And yet, with their accelerated circulation through networks of communication and changing image technologies, Rose's art faces the tension of becoming as deeply implicated in projecting an affable image of Barbados and Barbadians as were those postcards of the early tourism industry. The use of social media, digital photography and animation may be new media for old subject matter. Judging by the comments made about Rose that I mentioned above, it is precisely a

harmonious, normalised projection of the post-colony that some Caribbean art audiences will continue to find appealing.

For certain other audiences, however, Rose's work may have a different inflection. After decades of tussles and disputes with *their* national art establishment, artists of the Caribbean diaspora located in metropolitan centres of the North Atlantic may presently find themselves in a position from which it is safe to challenge the global art establishment. In this climate, a particular status is conferred on art that appears to have an anti-institutional inflection (happenings, performance and participatory works), and this would grant value to works of that media by Sheena Rose. However, I would suggest that when a Barbadian artist embraces these forms of expression, it is less an attempt to challenge a powerful institution than a means of compensating for the *absence* of such institutions as they exist in the metropole. Rose's internet presence thus attempts to 'do the job of the institution' (validating her work and redeeming the hope of fame) rather than to destabilise it. Further, by turning to the internet (or other public spaces) as a means of gaining visibility, such works offer an approach to art in the Caribbean which is proto- rather than post-institutional.

Even if the premise for Rose's strategies may not answer to a conventional metropolitan perception of art as an anti-establishment or counter-hegemonic intervention, her public performances do carry an implicit critique of cultural policy in post-independence Barbados. The island has shown an increasingly instrumental approach to the arts. Although initially committed to the construction of national identity through more popular expressive forms, such as music and festivals, Barbadian cultural policy has become increasingly predicated on the prospect of economic gain, as well as market diversification. Thus, the visual arts have been pressed into the role of a driver for economic development and a complement to the island's tourism and heritage industries. By literally taking her 'gossip-posters' to the market place – threading her way among Bridgetown hawkers and vendors – it is tempting to see Rose as offering a parody of official policy and its 'market-expectations'. Furthermore, with their participatory and immersive approach, such artworks can be said to reiterate the need for social outreach and community building, which was politically encouraged in the early phase of the nation-building project.

Therefore, if Rose's work at some level is subversive, it is primarily so in ways that can only be recognized within their specific national context. This is why I

would agree with Jameson's assertion (2008) that every artistic statement by necessity must be reflective of a national situation; and that, notably, the more marginal the nation is, then the more its 'national concerns' tend to impose themselves on its art. In current Caribbean criticism, however, a mode of evaluation that bases itself on a historical and largely national dialectic has seemed rather less pressing than the resumed expediency of a diaspora aesthetic – which for the most part is based on the experience of artists of Caribbean descent based in the north Atlantic.

I have offered discussions of just two artists – Atkinson and Rose – but pose these as examples of wider problems of art historical critique. Such problems arise from the recent methodological repositioning of Caribbean art that has sought to promote transnational experiences and cultural practices over national ones. The wide enthusiasm for artists like Sheena Rose and Ewan Atkinson may be differently motivated in local and metropolitan fora (including among members of the Caribbean diaspora community). I contend that elements which audiences outside of Barbados may interpret as cosmopolitan are misrecognised as such by having their national context stripped away. Of course, such practices are in dialogue with the same cosmopolitan approaches to art that configure the metropolitan mainstream. But the ability of artists like Atkinson and Rose to simultaneously gratify audiences of potentially conflicting outlooks and interests, must force us to take more seriously the contingencies and locations in which Caribbean art is made, received and historicised through scholarly and curatorial representation, as well as popular promotion. The oversimplifications need addressing, picking apart assumptions that such art is antithetical to nationalist endeavours, or that it conforms readily to the conventions of a transnational or diasporic field of art discourse. In sum, any belief that all art of the Caribbean is a palpable visualisation of a critical impulse toward 'resistance' demands serious scrutiny.

Evading the matrix?

I turn to another young Barbadian artist in order to exemplify what conversely falls outside the parameters of a (putatively) cosmopolitan, diaspora aesthetic in Barbados, yet still demonstrates a historical awareness and critical approach to its context. When Alicia Alleyne's work was exhibited in the 2009 portfolio show at the Barbados Community College,[6] a friendly dispute erupted among tutors eager to buy her works. In this small forum, it was clearly perceived that Alleyne

6   The annual exhibition of works by artists graduating from the college's BFA programme.

offered an aesthetic without precedent in Barbados. Her ideas are typically expressed in small works on paper. These range from experimental photography to alternative printing and painting techniques and explore the relationship between random and intended marks, evolving or interrupted patterns, odd symmetries and subtle disturbances. Many works gesture towards the collapse of meaning through the implosion or explosion of ideal geometric shapes and thereby undertake a form-orientation that rejects rather than seeks to transcend the historical trajectory of Barbadian art (Figures 2.10 and 2.11). The relatively small scale of these works and their avoidance of subject matter may be seen as a retreat from the optimism and subsequently thwarted ambitions of previous artistic generations. Alleyne also shows a resolute determination to foreclose interpretation of the work through the artist's social or ethnic identity.

One of Alleyne's pieces (Figure 2.10) is a black rectangle in duplicate. The upper version is flat, the lower one built up with black glitter, resembling perhaps a volcanic landscape. Meanwhile, the strange and untidy splotches and stains on the edges of the lower version and of the paper itself, challenge the linear accuracy of the upper rectangle. They indicate that the replication of the upper shape has in some way 'failed'. I see this deliberate sense of non-conformity and, the refusal to comply with an established matrix, as an emblematic aspect of Alleyne's work. The metaphor may be extended powerfully to her refusal of past and present avenues for art making in Barbados:
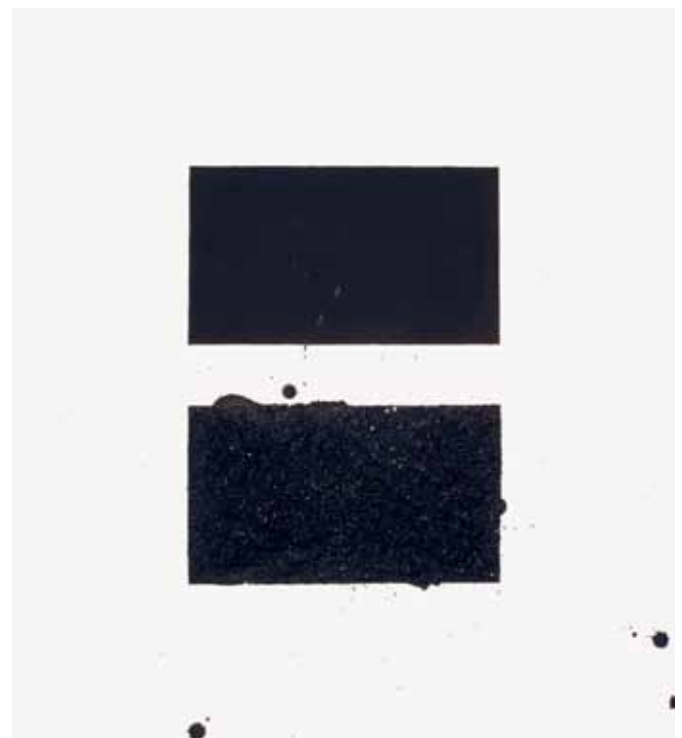

Figure 2.10: Alicia Alleyne, *Untitled*, 2009. Mixed media, 63.5 x 56cm. Private collection. (Photo: Alicia Alleyne)

the picturesque landscapes of empire; the Creole modernism of the anti-colonial generation;[7] the pure abstraction of international modernism; or the more recent brand of postcolonial 'cosmopolitanism' and diaspora aesthetics.

Measured against her tutors' enthusiasm for Alleyne's work, the wider reception of her art has been disappointingly lukewarm. When a joint exhibition of works by Alleyne and photographer Mark King was staged at the Zemicon Gallery (an exhibition space that I established and ran from 2000–2010), some members of the artistic community were excited about the novelty of the works. Yet my lasting impression was a sense of uncertainty on the part of the community of artists. Many older artists might have regarded complete abstraction an unaffordable indulgence, and younger artists (registered their uncertainty…) registered their sense of uncertainty toward art that was hardly approached in the performative or quasi-political manner of Atkinson, Rose and others contributing to the 'postcolonial contemporary'. Then there was the plain reactionary appeal to matters of 'quality', with an openly hostile response online by the journalist Ian Bourne (2010), who dismissively captioned one of the works as follows: 'This is not sludge. It is an extreme close-up of Alicia Alleyne's work – not impressed'.

The reception of Alleyne among visiting artists and curators has been similarly tentative. Although her work in many ways can be regarded as ambiguous and possibly even as 'deconstructive' in its assault on the perfectly finished, immutable shape, it also represents a kind of formalist essentialism, which certainly does not come across as hybrid, ironic or politically inflected. And while Alleyne's work complies with the current disavowal of emphasis on 'Caribbeanness', she has avoided playing the contemporary game of inscribing the work into the more fluid and geographically unspecific category of a transnational, diasporic Caribbean. Wainwright has picked up on this, observing Alleyne's 'refusal to be co-opted or subsumed into dominant art spaces' (2012, p.46).

Altogether, these features leave Alleyne's work with little 'use-value' for any faction of the Caribbean arts community. Nor has she been offered much opportunity to take part in international exhibitions of new or contemporary Caribbean art, in a way that would indicate significant recognition in the wider diasporic communities. Whether Alleyne has fallen victim to or oddly succeeded in her own resistive efforts has to be pondered within view of the wider

7   For a fuller exploration of this concept, see Hadchity (2015).

Figure 2.11: Alicia Alleyne, *Untitled,* 2011. Gouache on paper, 22 x 25cm. Private collection. (Photo: Alicia Alleyne)

issues of reception that characterise the field of possibilities for Caribbean artists.

Final reflections
The works I have discussed, arguably derive their most poignant critical inflection in a strictly Barbadian context, where they respond dialectically to a particular set of historical conditions and of the art of the nation's own past. As I have outlined, these include an art historical trajectory with pronounced race, class and gender divisions, very little institutional support, and a tendency to read the artwork through the artist's biography or identity.

It may be an inevitable upshot of the choices artists make in their critical practices that important aspects of their works at times will be overlooked or suppressed at a national level. Indeed, from an artist's point of view, being released from a national context can be liberating. Controversial issues broached by Ewan Atkinson's work, for example, were initially overlooked by Barbadian audiences, yet in turn they were picked up and given value through international exposure. However, when Caribbean artworks are embraced precisely because of their apparent criticality or 'progressive' purpose, it forces us to ask how such an apprehension of their meaning is changed through the work travelling and being received at different locations. In a metropolitan setting, where there is a more established practice of artists bringing out issues around queer sexualities, such work can hardly

be regarded as particularly challenging or counter-hegemonic in the same way as in a more socially conservative environment such as the Caribbean. Even so, it is clearly possible that works deemed to be politically subversive for a Barbados audience will become trophies for those in the metropole who are keen to be seen as patrons for artists earmarked as progressive in the post-colonial South.

The situation becomes more complex in the case of artists such as Sheena Rose. Her example seems representative of more concerted international aspirations on the part of Caribbean artists. Yet, while gratifying a Barbadian audience by their mere ability to draw ever wider audiences, Rose's art may ultimately not match current metropolitan or post-colonialist expectations for a 'forward-looking' practice. Moreover, the polarities between which Rose finds herself suspended, are redoubled by generational tensions. While her persistent endeavour to 'put herself in the frame' appears to replicate an older generation's militancy, she re-directs its energies towards the maintenance of a market share in the arts. Ironically, her mutating self-image has nothing to do with the collective drive towards constructing Caribbean subjectivity or identity that so motivated artists of the previous generation.

Finally, there has been a complete failure on the part of the wider diasporic community to absorb the resolutely counter-hegemonic character of Alicia Alleyne's work. It is a failing that extends to much of the local community in Barbados as well. At the very least, this says something about the prospects – in a world of hugely discrepant institutional resources and critical support – for a cosmopolitan global culture in which each individual may participate through the use of their 'own language and cultural symbols' (Beck cited in Byrne and Schoene, 2013, p.2).

Against this background of attention to individual artists, this article has sought to make two main points. First, that the almost unanimously applauded concept of a 'transnational Caribbean' carries internal hierarchies, and that these somewhat replicate the centre-margin dynamic that such claims for transcending the national have tried to render obsolete. Second, that the departure from the 'national' as an interpretive lens may at times obscure fundamental differences in the transatlantic art community with the effect of reinforcing them. The dilemma remains how art criticism may tackle the specificities of place and come to recognise the importance of individual artistic strategies, while drawing on global lessons, in order to bring about a historical reading of art of the contemporary Caribbean.

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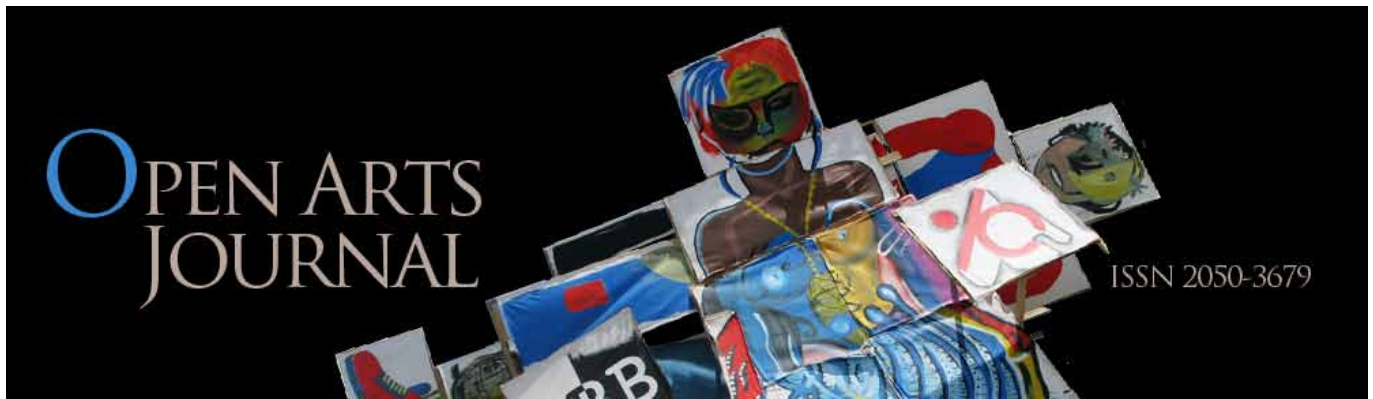
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NOTES ON IMAGINING AFROPEA
Charl Landvreugd

Abstract

The title of this article refers to a form of imagining that takes place from a personal and artistic subject position. Imagining, it is assumed, is always a given feature of creativity and inevitably culturally hybrid. In Landvreugd's practice as an artist, he complements his visual work by exploring a sense of belonging, processes of identification and self-identification, and by positing the significance of his creative endeavours in relation to that of his peers. The purpose of this article is to tease out the relevant artistic subject positions that may be taken by artists in a European setting, specifically in the Netherlands. Pushing the boundaries that result from historical circumstances, the discussion shows that turning toward the imagination is a means to explore how distinct cultures are coalescing, in order to model a new artistic environment that lies beyond an older critical concern with the processes of representation. Dutch artists of the African diaspora, such as Landvreugd, are producing works shaped by different cultural heritages and media cultures. Their creative explorations have resulted in new subjectivities that are diasporic and belong to a wider transatlantic Afro community and yet, at the same time, have a direct bearing on the Netherlands. The changing nature of cultural difference implied in such a process constitutes a field of conceptualisation that may be described under the provisional heading of 'Afropea'.

Biographical note

Charl Landvreugd studied fine art and art history at Goldsmiths, University of London. As a Fulbright Fellow, he obtained an MA in Modern Art: Critical and Curatorial Studies at Columbia University, New York. He is the recipient of several scholarships and grants, and is currently a doctoral student at London's Royal College of Art, in the field of curating contemporary art. He uses sculpture, performance, installation, video, curating and writing to develop his research into African diaspora aesthetics in continental Europe and specifically the Netherlands.

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To view the film footage on the Open Arts Archive, www.openartsarchive.org, follow this link:
http://www.openartsarchive.org/archive/2nd-conference-sustainable-art-communities-creativity-and-policy-transnational-caribbean-1

NOTES ON IMAGINING AFROPEA

Charl Landvreugd, Royal College of Art

Locating origins
Rotterdam, 2015

I was born a creole. In the Amazon, on the northern edge of the forest, in Paramaribo, Suriname. In this multi-ethnic society, creole is understood as referring to people of African descent with multiple racial backgrounds. My ancestry may be traced through centuries of forced and voluntary migration from a range of places, including West Africa, Iberia, India and China to the continent of South America. My creoleness comprises contributions from enslaved people, slave traders, free blacks and indentured labourers. What they all share is a history of oppression, migration, survival and adaptation. Whatever line of ancestry one explores, what emerges as foundational to creole subjectivity are multiple diasporas and an internal cultural multiplicity. The national space in which this creole was nurtured is the Netherlands. I came to live in Rotterdam after my parents joined the great migration from Suriname to the Netherlands around the time of Suriname's independence in 1975 (Hoefte, 2013, p.110). These circumstances of an individual who has a domestic culture (life among family 'at home'), which is embedded in a larger national culture, should be recognisable to all. For children of parents who migrated, the roots of these two cultures are constructed and talked about differently. As a consequence, these children are compelled to combine at least two modern cultures and transform them into something new. Habits, sensibilities and concepts from the country of origin lose their meaning through diasporic displacement, or at least they are meaningfully altered in the new and emerging constellation of a lived cultural heritage.

Understanding myself as a creole seems always to involve an ethnic category that is native to another land, a form of belonging elsewhere. The Caribbean then, is held up as one's geographical area of physical origin. In the Netherlands, I am perceived as black (with a small 'b', denoting colour rather than politics) and automatically as someone with an immigrant background; in Suriname as creole, but Dutch; in the UK perception points towards Black British; in the USA as African-American or Black; and in Egypt as either a Nubian or European – the identification here seems to go either way. Being perceived as racially African, ethnically South American and culturally European calls for a rethinking of that particular creole subjectivity,

Figure 3.1: Charl Landvreugd, *movt nr. 8; Late Birds,* 2015. Performance/photograph, C-print, size variable. (Courtesy of the artist)

challenging the category altogether. Depending on the location, cultural identity as a construct (which includes ethnicity and expected social status) seems to shift, changing with the context. The historical significance and lived experience of creoleness, in particular its inherent multiplicity, is always lost in translation in any of these locations.

In response to this sense of loss, I have sought to frame this problem by way of a few questions. How is one to gain a contemporary sense of self which allows for an understanding of my cultural identity as both hailing from the European continent (specifically the Netherlands), and yet also as a creole person? How can this identification with Europe and the African diaspora simultaneously articulate a conceptualisation of the self? In 'One Finger Does Not Drink Okra Soup' Gloria Wekker explains that the 'I' in Surinamese (working class) creole subjects is conceptualised as a multiplicity. One is partly biological and partly spiritual. One's *Kra* (an immortal soul that consists of male and female elements), is bestowed upon the physical body by one's male and female *Dyodyo* (parents in the world of the gods) at birth. These four elements are conceived as personalities with their own characteristics and together they define one's personality, intellect, consciousness, character traits and mind. Their individual agency is reflected in the different ways one can speak about the self or act in different situations. A person thus is physical and spiritual, male and female and all combinations thereof. This conceptualisation gives an entry into understanding the cultural multiplicity of this sense of self. The European thus is an additional personality to the creole parts of the 'I' as a 'kaleidoscopic, ever-moving sequence' (Wekker, 1997, p.336) that is always a multiplicity. What I have in view is an understanding of a creole cultural multiplicity that is enriched by diasporic life in continental Europe. I am suggesting the need to allow for a multiplicity of subject positions and the appreciation of shifting perspectives, moving away therefore from attention to a fixed cultural identity in order to think more seriously about multi-layered subjectivities as exemplified by the 'I' in the Surinamese creole sense of the word. With this conceptualisation in mind, it is clear that articulating the self as (culturally) Dutch is never in contradiction with speaking about the self as part of the African diaspora, or vice versa.

In the Netherlands however, a distinction is made by the CBS (Central Agency for Statistics, known as Statistics Netherlands) between allochthonous (from elsewhere) and autochthonous (indigenous) individuals. The allochthonous are divided between Western (Westerners, Indonesians and Japanese on the basis of social, economic and cultural positions) and non-Western (Turks, Africans, Latin Americans and Asians). The government develops public policy on the basis of these target groups. The major groups are people from Suriname, the Dutch Antilles and Aruba, Morocco and Turkey. One belongs to one of these groups if at least one parent is born in one of the target group countries. When both parents are born in the Netherlands one is considered autochthonous by the CBS definition. However, this autochthonous definition does not hold in actual practice, since everyday life dictates that an allochthonous identity applies to anyone who is not considered white, including those of Indonesian and Japanese ancestry. It is evident that cultural self-identification as Dutch is not necessarily in line with how one is perceived by society or governmental bodies. Consequently, self-identification as Surinamese, Dutch-Surinamese, Surinamese-Dutch or Dutch becomes a political choice in reaction to the status quo. Contemporary Afro-awareness is showing that some Dutch artists, including myself, are trying to imagine themselves beyond the post-colonial, and beyond migrant spaces and histories that would compel us to choose either of these identifications.

Due to a lack of art critique and general public engagement dealing with the Dutch colonial past and its legacies, efforts to speak about us as artists depend heavily on British and American scholarship pertaining to the Black experience and so-called Black Art. This scholarship and the (until recently) lack of local (Black) scholars contesting these experiences from a Dutch perspective, has set limits for how these artists are spoken about. The artists' practices and their outcomes are consequently connected to the artistic space of their (parents') region of origin, or the African diaspora in the UK or Americas. This strategy generally overlooks the specificities that address local Dutch concerns and fits well into the public denial of the relevance of our colonial past to the present day. Therefore, works of art are, more often than not, criticised on the basis of their relation to conversations taking place outside the Netherlands. For the purpose of finding a starting point from which to speak about these artistic practices and locating them as native to the Netherlands, the American, British and Caribbean scholarship on belonging, processes of identification and self-identification that are used to criticise art made by diaspora artists should be taken as a given and understood to be native to the original hybrid space from which this imagining jumps off. Having said that, concepts and the language originating in or deriving from these discourses, need to be investigated to determine the extent to which their significance

applies to the Dutch situation and with what revisions. By adopting them too readily, they sometimes deny local sensibilities and push the discussion in unwanted directions.

As the political anthropologist David Scott rightly points out in his book *Conscripts of Modernity,* 'an adequate interrogation of the present (postcolonial or otherwise) depends on identifying the difference between the questions that animated former presents and those that animate our own' (2004, p.3). For the purpose of doing so, he conceptualised the idea of a problem-space. A problem-space is a specific historical period with its own particular problems that brings forth its own questions and creates a horizon of future goals to achieve. It is meant to demarcate a discursive context, a context of language and argument and therefore a context of intervention. It is defined by 'questions that seem worth asking and the kind of answers that seem worth having' (p.4). A problem-space has a temporal dimension that alters historically because the shape of the problems changes. 'In new historical conditions … the old paths between questions and answers … remain visible as the norm or the convention' (p.4), but these paths do not necessarily lead to answers as the 'stakes involved in walking them have dissolved' (p.4). '[W]hat was a "horizon of the future" for *them* has become *our* "futures past" – a horizon which we can "no longer imagine, seek after, inhabit", or indeed create in, *see* or *represent* in the same way' (Hall, 2006, p.7). The concept of the problem-space is a useful tool to start looking at the problem of borrowed concepts and language stemming from other historical periods and places. In the case of the Netherlands, the question may be asked whether the current issues are influenced by the same sort of social and political circumstances as those of the original space in which the borrowed concepts and terms emerged? Even though parallels can be drawn: do the questions about art of the African diaspora, which I am raising with regard to the European continental mainland, need the same type of answers as those from the UK and the US? What type of intervention may be needed on the continent and what possibilities lie at the horizon of the future?

Where is Afropea?

There are currently three terms that I have singled out in order to speak about practices of identification and subjectivity in this article: Black, Afro-European/Dutch and the neologism 'Afropean'. My contention is that the historical developments that took place in the United States resulting in Black indicating African-American and in Britain, where the Black or black British label has

historically also has been embraced by people of other backgrounds, need to be carefully studied but set aside from Dutch histories and present circumstances so these can develop on their own terms. At present, Black serves only as an often-used borrowed denomination, without actual, concrete consensus on its meaning or applicability among members of the African diaspora in the Netherlands. Since a Black– or better still Afro–self-awareness is growing, naming all such subjects as Black at this point in time is (possibly prematurely) advancing a case for recognition of a specific continental European Black condition. Such a distinctive cultural and political identity on the European mainland is still at a nascent stage and far from reaching any conclusion. I therefore see possibilities for rethinking this term and, more so, for intervening in this problem-space for the arts. What is clear is that the Dutch context reveals subjectivities that are in a state of becoming: a definite Afro space (indicating a community of African descent), but one that points to distinct possibilities for political agency, cultural creativity and subject production.

The term Afro-European echoes the term Afro-American, Afro-Cuban etc., but its uses and limits are different. This identifier summons up the discourse of the historical merger of Africans with the country or continent in which they now live. Countries in the New World could not have developed into what they are today without African input and labour physically present. This literally gives the descendants of those African peoples the grounds for claiming civil rights, but also land rights and cultural sovereignty – suggesting that their ancestral contributions were foundational to the settlement and advancement of territories in the New World. However, such 'Afro' communities have held a different, if no less integral, relationship to the development of European nations. The label Afro-European then indicates a problematic: Europe seems to occupy a normative status, with its Afro-presence somehow grafted on, deviating from, if not diluting, its purity. Since there is little equivalence between the sort of hyphenated identities of elsewhere (African-American, Afro-Latin, etc.), it should be clear why Afro-European (and Afro-Dutch) is a term that I would use to refer to the social and political circumstances connected to the addition of Afro to the idea of Europe.

Indeed, both Black and Afro-European fall short in fully encapsulating the subjectivities that I have in mind. The terms position artists and other subjects, such as myself, much against our will, drawing us into the prevailing 'Americo-centric discourse' (Gilroy, 2004, p.xvi) on race, a discourse that needs to be questioned, if not transcended (see Wainwright, 2013). What I

am looking for is not Afro-Dutch, which indicates an African diaspora form of normative Dutchness, but a Dutch Afro condition that points towards a Dutch cultural form of Afro-ness. The term that comes closest to allowing this Dutch Afro subjectivity to come into being as European, and self-referentially Afro and diasporic, was coined by David Byrne in 1993 when he reissued Zap Mama's first recordings, naming them *Adventures in Afropea*. As he has written:

> Afropea is of course a virtual continent. It's [sic] physical location is Europe, but it's [sic] ethos and attitudes are Europe overlaid with African sensibilities. Not all of Europe is part of this continent, and some have been members longer than others – but all reap the benefits and are effected [sic] by the invisible continent.
>
> (Byrne, 2002)

With the album *Adventures in Afropea* (1993) a space was imagined in which the African diaspora community in Europe could be culturally native. Afropea is a real environment for those who shape it by leaving marks. The marks create culture and the culture in turn realises the Afropean in a mutual and simultaneous state of becoming. In Afropea, the Afropean is the diasporic subject who transcends social and political circumstances of her Afro-Europeanness, and claims humanity through cultural practices. The resulting subject is a European individual centralised in Afro-ness that takes Europeanness as an inherent quality and part of its subjectivity as an Afro multiplicity. She exemplifies the need for awareness of hybridity on top of the already existing hybridity. Afropea then is born from the in-between magical space of hybridity, yet it is more than the sum of its parts. It is fruitful to imagine Afropea as a wholly new cultural space that leaves intact its contributing structures, including the in-between space from which it originates. It is the space where the rules that are in place on all sides of the hybridity spectrum, including hybridity itself, are part of the multiplicity.

This construction suggests that Afropea is a multi-layered space, much like the Afropean subjectivity encapsulated in the Surinamese 'I', as a multiplicity outlined previously. Afropea can be said to function as an inhabited cultural space, while Afropean describes its embodied subjectivity. In both instances, the individual agency of all the points along a spectrum of cultural differences have their own characteristics and together define personality, intellect, consciousness, character traits and mind. This opens up the possibility of imagining space as a subjectivity and subjectivity as a space. Here one can locate the continental

Afro-European through an expressly native Afropean subjectivity. The best way to sum this up is to note that such a subjectivity is self-referential, with a multiple 'I' that has the potential to break away from seeing the self through the Afro-European condition and the lens of race-based, identity-driven identification.

Horizons of the future: Getting to Afropea

In order to understand the shifting problem-spaces of art production that delimit Afropea for Dutch artists, I will briefly outline the conditions that created the various horizons that emerged about a century ago in the United States. I am interested in doing so because it is specifically through African-American and British history that certain terms and ways of thinking about ethnic relations may be said to underlie and motivate current cultural debates in the Netherlands.

With the move of African Americans from rural to urban centres around 1900, the philosophies of Black leaders changed in regard to self-expression and the means to gain political power. W.E.B. Dubois' work led, from Booker T. Washington's Atlanta Compromise (Washington, [1895] 1974), to the formation of the Niagara movement. The Niagara Movement advocated a strategy that was not based on patience and submission to white political rule, but on active demands on political, social and economic levels (Dubois and Trotter, 1905). Out of this development came the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909. From this climate and what is known as the first Great Migration (1910–30) emerged the most famous African-American art movement to date. Henry Louis Gates Jr. has described the Harlem Renaissance to have taken its artistic inspiration from Europeans. The European appreciation of African art and its subsequent move into view for the avant-garde, broadening the 'cultural imagination of the West', also opened up its potential for political use (Gates, 2012, p.453). (I mention this specific quote as an example of how thought and visual language can move from Africa to Europe and then on to North America, and in each location result in a movement with its own specific lexicon, strengths and sensibilities. After almost a century, it jumps the ocean again to inspire artists and thinkers in Europe.) This movement succeeded in placing the Black experience in the frame of American experience and with its political message and core of racial consciousness forever changed how African Americans are viewed around the world.

The Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s saw a series of events and a plethora of organisations that strove to undo the disenfranchisement of Blacks in the United States following in the footsteps of

previous activists. Organising boycotts, protests, sit-ins, Freedom rides, marches, non-violent and violent action, and court battles were part of the strategy of civil resistance in favour of improving life for African Americans. It was 'the intersection of art and activism' (Levesque, 2014). The movement was made up of all layers of the Black community, and supported by the American-Jewish community and white sympathisers. From the Civil Rights movement emerged the Black Power movement that was prominent in the 1960s and 1970s, with an accompanying Black Arts movement that served as the Black Power movement's 'aesthetic and spiritual sister' (Neal, 2000, p.236). In 1968 Larry Neal claimed: 'The new aesthetic is mostly predicted on an ethics which asks the question: Whose vision of the world is finally more meaningful, ours or the white oppressors? What is truth? Or more precisely, whose truth shall we express, that of the oppressed or the oppressors?' (Neal, 1968, p.29). And, in the same year, Ron Karenga stated that 'all Black art, irregardless [sic] of any technical requirements, must have three basic characteristics which make it revolutionary. In brief, it must be functional, collective and committed' (Cunningham, 1968, p.5). The Black Power movement gave rise to the Black is Beautiful movement celebrating black skin, hair and facial features rejecting standards of white beauty. This development generated a celebration of blackness notably with Afro/natural hairstyles, name changes and handshakes. In this problem-space, culture took the role of politics among those whose motivation it was to bring together ethics and aesthetics. This development acted as a link between diverse political strategies and articulated a new black consciousness (Van Deburg, 1992, p.190). From a common ancestral past, the Black Power movement used all forms of expression to advocate for self-determination and self-definition. The American problem-space that shifted through time from resignation to the situation of the Atlanta Compromise, according to which Southern Blacks were supposed to submit to white political rule as second-class citizens, and then further into the era of Black Power, also shifted the horizons of what was possible for African Americans. They found a way beyond the situation of being addressed by diminutive names such as 'boy', and of being told to look up to whiteness, spelling out this change through the declarations 'I am a Man' and 'Black is Beautiful'. The horizons of becoming full citizens and what one could do with Black Power produced two notable 'renaissances' with a plethora of artists operating in diverse cultural, public and political spaces.

Across the Atlantic in Europe, Stuart Hall, has described the British situation for Black people after World War II, as the first of 'three moments in post-war black visual arts in the UK'. In Hall's 2004 speech at London's Conway Hall, he underlined that there was 'no single "movement" here, evolving teleologically, to which, say, all the artists … can be said to belong', but rather moments in which different kinds of elements, generations and types of works converge (2006, p.3). He spoke of the 'last colonials' who were born in the early 1900s and came to Britain after WWII in the 1950s and 1960s 'on the eve of decolonization – following, in the Caribbean case, the political upheavals of the 1930s, or in India and Africa the rise of the independence movements' (p.4). This 'first' generation entered Britain to fulfil their artistic ambitions and to participate in the heady atmosphere of the most advanced centres of artistic innovation at that time, producing distinctive writers and artists. They came as subjects of the Modern movement with the 'promise of decolonization' (p.5), firing their ambition and sense of themselves as 'modern persons', a conceptualisation that 'liberated them from any lingering sense of inferiority' (p.5). Indeed, '"modern art" was seen by them as an international creed, fully consistent with anti-colonialism which was regarded as intrinsic to a modern consciousness' (p.6). Their 'horizon of the future' was independence and a new era of progress in which 'sights and sounds, cultures and tradition, histories and memories of their places of origin …' were seen 'within a modern vision-field, via the modern consciousness of a certain "de-territorialisation" of colour and form' (p.15). Such artists and writers were seeking that vision of 'progress and freedom which would be the basis for a new, post-colonial culture as well as enhancing the individual's capacity for creative innovation' (p.15). In the late 1960s, Black Power jumped the Atlantic and was adopted in Britain. This intersected with Michael X and the London Free School's involvement in the 'Carnival of the Poor' that developed from a 'jump up' street party for children in 1966 to an organised strengthening of community cohesion in 1967 (Notting Hill Carnival, 2015). By the 1970s this first generation, who for a while were 'central to the *avant-garde* of the day' (Hall, 2006, p.16), became disenchanted due to 'institutional indifference' (Araeen, 2001, p.95) and the shift in attitudes towards Modernism, among other things. The situation changed and politically the 'shadow of race' fully entered the discussion by the mid-1970s (Hall, 2006, p.16).

It is with this horizon of race rather than anti-colonialism that the 'second generation – the first "post colonials" – who were born in Britain' emerged (Hall, 2006, p.1). Political and artistically active artists stormed the scene in a reaction to the extent of racial

discrimination. They pioneered the Black Art Movement and the creative explosion of the 1980s, and were 'anti-racist, culturally relativist and identity-driven.' They were politically polemical, collage-based artists embracing the figural and more subjective strategy of 'putting the self in the frame' (p.1). Who are we, where do we come from and where do we really belong were central questions in this period of identity politics, which surfaced after the 1970s. This new problem-space in which not anti-colonialism but race and identity were defining the 'moment' 'produced a polemical and politicized art: a highly graphic, iconographic art of line and montage, cut-out and collage, image and slogan; the "message" often appearing too pressing, too immediate, too literal, to brook formal delay and, instead, breaking insistently into "writing"' (p.17). Black Art became a tool to 'assist in the struggle for liberation' (Chambers, 1981). Hall argues that:

> the emergence of the identity question constituted a compelling and productive 'horizon' for artists: not so much the celebration of an essential identity fixed in time and 'true' to its origins, but rather … what we would now call 'the production of a new, black subject'. And since that is a conception of identity and subjectivity which can only be constituted within, rather than outside, representation, the 'answers' in practice which music and the visual arts provided were absolutely critical. (2006, p.19)

What Hall is describing is the performative side of identity that was brought out in a 'new Pan-African diasporic imaginary … redeeming through image and sound the breaches and terrors of a broken history' (p.18). An example of this would be Bob Marley's 'roots' reggae with its contemporary masquerade as traditional music. Through different practices of this era that made central the 'black body' as a visible object, a foreign body, a site of excavation, a canvas, a point of convergence, a gendered body, a sexual body, the body as subject rather than object, its belonging was put into question. In his essay 'New ethnicities', Hall explained that there is a 'diversity of subjective positions social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category "black"'. Black is 'essentially a political and cultural constructed category' (Hall, 1996, p.443). The result was an enormous diversity of meanings around blackness and what Hall called 'the end of the essential black subject' during the 1990s (Hall, 2006, p.20).

Taking note of developments in the United States and Hall's account of Britain, I would like to draw out some crucial distinctions surrounding the situation in the Netherlands, in particular efforts to define the contemporary Afro-Dutch history of art and its accompanying practices of belonging, identity and identification. In the Netherlands mass immigration of people of African descent, including those from Suriname in the Caribbean began in the 1970s. Already the timing of those migrations signals a discrepancy of generation, differing from the main decades of migratory movement to the United Kingdom from its colonies and former colonies in the Caribbean. Unlike in the US and the Caribbean there was not a demonstrable Black culture in the Netherlands that they could connect to. Black history, taught as part of national history, was never part of the school education system. When the topic did arise, the history of slavery and its legacies were discussed only in the context of the United States, never in relation to the Netherlands. Consequently, many Dutch people understood that Black people had come from the colonies without realising the underlying history of slavery and its consequences. Even though the first generations of adults were experiencing discrimination, and issues of adaptation and integration, many of my generation grew up believing in meritocracy. As a child, little incidents occurred that challenged this idea but to my mind, there was nothing that would unseat the power of merit and personality for exercising one's entitlement to a place in society.

There was an earlier generation of contemporary artists that tackled issues of migration, integration and subjectivity. The successful writer Edgar Cairo (1948 – 2000) is a great example of a Dutch thinker who was trying to enhance the individual's capacity for the creative production of a sense of self. His book *Ik ga dood om jullie hoofd* (1977) takes its title from a phrase in Suriname's lingua franca, Sranan Tongo, meaning 'I care for you deeply' (literally, 'I am dying because of your head'). The book is a collection of weekly columns, originally published in several newspapers, that discusses the issues of discrimination and adaptation experienced by Surinamese people. His style of writing often takes Sranan Tongo and translates it directly into Dutch as is often done by people of Afro-Surinamese descent. Through it he demonstrates the already existing hybridity of the Dutch language and advocates for acceptance of one's own cultural and linguistic specificity as part of the integration process. Cairo is one of the first generation of Dutch artists who today prove to be a great inspiration for contemporary Afro-Dutch creative practitioners such as myself. The point he makes in the book anticipated the current usage of translated Surinamese words and expression in contemporary Dutch language.

By the time Music Television arrived on the European continent in the early 1980s, the majority of Afro-Europeans were still only of the first generation. The youth culture that developed found many of its tools through MTV, starting perhaps with Michael Jackson's *Thriller* (1982). It was the aesthetics of music videos that provided examples and the basis for activating a creative subjectivity that could integrate the creole and the Dutch. My peers and I, emulating televised American (Black) street coolness, produced a 1980s sense of self through expressions (dance, rap, graffiti, language, posturing), signs (graffiti tags) and other countercultural symbols. Central to the production of this sense of self after this initial period is the development of media through the digital. Internet penetration starting in the early nineties brought other diaspora experiences closer; Afro-Europeans could now place their experiences in a much larger African diasporic context. Embodied experience found resonance in what were until then hidden diaspora stories being told elsewhere. Moving into the new century, growing Internet literacy stimulated the creative and intellectual production of a budding Afro-awareness that was native to Europe. In the Netherlands, Internet penetration at home grew from 61% in 2003 to 95 % in 2014 (Eurostat, 2015). This development provided the tools for self-naming strategies that have either embraced or denied the more globally circulating representations of diaspora identity, bringing out the areas of difference but also important similarities. For present-day Afro-Dutch artists, mediating a sense of self through the digital has held the promise of challenging the status quo, and through newly found strategies establishing ways of being Dutch, Afro and Afropean.

Apart from the Internet, the government also played a role in the process of Afro-awareness with the 'cultuurnota' (cultural policy report) that is issued every four years. Since 1992, the idea of cultural identity has been incorporated into this report. The cultuurnota that followed it (in 1996) advanced the idea that 'cultural diversity has become a reality and there is a growing urgency for active exchange between diverse cultural traditions' (Bleeker, 2005, p.42). It was in 2000 that cultural diversity based on target groups (including women, youth and people outside of the major cities) became one of the priorities of the art policy. It was here that a significant change occurred because culturally diverse artists seemed to receive preferential treatment and they were looked at askance by their white colleagues. As one artist told me in private: 'All of a sudden we were not just good artists, but good because we were Black'. Such artists already knew they were Afro-Dutch but now they were made so explicitly

through arts policy. The cultuurnota that followed in 2004 also spoke about the importance of cultural diversity, but it rejected the target group approach with separate measures and a focus on cooperation between institutes (Bleeker, 2005, p.42). It was in this situation that artists Remy Jungerman, Michael Tedja and Gillion Grantsaan applied for the Intendant Cultural Diversity project (by Fonds BKVB now merged with the Mondriaan Fund) with the Wakaman Project (2006-10). The project included a dialogue that questioned 'the issues they came across as non-Western artists living in the West when it comes to categorization, recognition and interpretation' (Mondriaanfonds, 2010). They were looking for a theoretical framework in which the specific visual language and symbolism used by artists with a Surinamese background could be placed. Their approach to cultural diversity and the vision carried by a range of artists resulted in three publications: Wakaman: Drawing Lines, Connecting Dots (Grantsaan and Jungerman, 2009), Hosselen (Tedja, 2009) and *Eat the Frame!* (Tedja, 2009). I argue that this moment and the published record that came out of it, are essential for understanding present-day Afro-Dutch visual arts, in particular the ways that artists have been dealing through their practices with a growing Afro-awareness in the Netherlands.

By 2010, it could be said that this Afro-awareness had grown into a modest movement, producing books, exhibitions and a voice of protest. Due to Internet saturation and the use of social media, most artistic and political expressions gained wider support than ever before among both the black and white communities. The desire for 'Black self-discovery and race vindication' (Anderson, 2007, p.302) produced even more protests, non-violent actions and court cases. Annual events such as Natural Black Hair and African Homecoming (2012–14), stressing consciousness, style and fashion, drew large crowds of mostly young people who joined the debate on contemporary aesthetics in a global Afro-Chic mode. All these different culture makers have together worked towards forms of cultural emancipation: their sense of self as a Dutch development of their Afro subjectivity is acknowledged to have shaped national culture in the Netherlands. This is a line of cultural resistance with the aim to self-actualise and self-define. The different and conflicting views on how to reach this goal have brought about wide debate in the Afro-Dutch community.

In 2010, I began to understand this issue better. With the rise of the borrowed political term Black, taken as a provisional self-identifier within the Afro-Dutch artistic community, and given the aim to engage critically with,

Figure 3.2: Charl Landvreugd, *movt nr. 4; Mill Stone Ruff,* 2010. Photograph, C-print, size variable. (Courtesy of the artist)

what I then called, 'a Black-Dutch consciousness in the visual arts', Patricia Kaersenhout and I organised the debate 'Am I Black Enough', taking the phrase from the eponymous song by Billy Paul recorded in 1972. The question was asked: How do cultural producers contribute towards a broader Black awareness? (Landvreugd, 2010). The conversation evolved into a discussion about the usefulness of the word Black and the practice of making Blackness explicit within a work of art, as well as the dilemma over whether to raise the matter of Blackness at all in the professional environment for creativity. The general feeling was that drawing attention to Blackness, unless one is specifically asked to do so, was harmful for career opportunities both in an artistic setting and the wider world of work. Cultural practitioners felt trapped between the private experience of Afro-Europeanness and the public expression thereof. We felt that Afro-awareness remained a private matter with little bearing on the public sphere. The way to change that was by choosing to intervene through the use of strategies drawn from the historical problematisation of race and diaspora, and adapt these to our personal situation. These tools were considered useful to define and work through our problem-space by confronting the blind spots within representation and foregrounding cultural practices. We have advocated taking an approach that considers the economic and political dimensions of artists' working lives, as well as the discussions that the artist may choose to enter, in those cases where there is a motivation to become critically engaged or seek empowerment through public debate. There was, overall in our project, a desire to break free from the confining circumstances and silence that we encountered in the Netherlands.

What is at stake here is not only how to produce the contemporary 'political and cultural constructed category' (Hall, 1996, p.443) of Black and Afro-Dutch, but also how to resist and overcome its limitations. Some artists have embraced the formation of this category, while others, like myself, insist that it fails to capture their individual experience and personal subject positions. This does not mean that embracing and rejecting are mutually exclusive. It all seems to depend on the need for strategic essentialism in situations that forward ethnic relations. So far there is an unresolved push and pull between the impulse to foreground the 'black body' (meaning all non-white bodies) in the national discourse while holding on to the notion of meritocracy that puts no such emphasis on a racialised or ethnicised subjectivity. The objective to balance these is hindered by the language that is available. In the case of Afro-ethnicities, the problem

lies in the terms that originate from the American and British responses to cultural resistance, since these are not native to the Dutch context (see also Keaton et al., 2012, for how this plays out in France). Do questions about the relationship between art and difference in the Netherlands (or the wider European mainland) deserve the same type of answers as elsewhere?

Through processes of translation to the Netherlands, the terms of diasporic sameness and difference come to lose, as well as gain, meaning. The more established terminology in the US and UK needs to be translated into Dutch, both linguistically and culturally, in order to make real sense to us. This is not always easy, because a term such as Black (when this indicates racial difference) does not necessarily apply as a Dutch cultural signifier.

Rather than producing a 'carbon copy of equivalence or the linear projection of progress' (Hantel, 2013, p.110), this process of translation is more expansive, akin to Glissant's 'spiral retelling'. 'The move from translation to spiral retelling undermines the illusion of global translatability and the possibility of pure transparency because we move through and across scales only by way of the opacity of others and their language' (Hantel, 2013, p.112). 'A spiral retelling, then, is the movement out to the multiple from this economy of the One, but it is rhizomatic in the sense of producing a rootedness in the world' (p.111). In this sense the developments in the Netherlands are not lagging behind on other diaspora spaces but are rather (re)telling certain parts of the diasporic story from a specific sensibility and geographical location.

The most prevalent one of these sensibilities is that the public discourse in the Netherlands is framed around culture and the national idea (self-image) of non-racist racial equivalence. This idea of equivalence is anchored in the constitution and has resulted in a society where historically, tolerance for others tends to take priority over actual full acceptance. Perceived ethnic or racial otherness is discussed as cultural difference post WWII. In this context, to use race-based terminology, when addressing culture, is thought to be undesirable, since it contradicts and upsets the national self-image of non-racist equivalence. To speak of race as an Afro person in the Netherlands is to point directly to the blind spot that has emerged after the Second World War out of the legacies of colonialism. Suggesting that racism may be at work here serves to point to nationalism in the form of an assumed Dutch cultural superiority. Consequently, mentioning race and racism at all is thought to hinder open communication and results in fierce national opposition. As a result, issues that are spoken about as having a basis in the

problem of race in other parts of the African diaspora, were, until recent developments, spoken about as culturally motivated in the Netherlands. The fact that the issue of whether the Zwarte Piet (Black Pete) character is blackface and should change its appearance was raised as a racist phenomenon connected to a post-colonial problem. It resulted in violent opposition by the majority. This line of questioning contradicts the non-racist national self-image and is a good example of a race-based discourse being translated with extreme difficulty into an environment where culture-centred discourse prevails. What it does is refute this self-image and simultaneously question who decides what Dutch culture is and will be.

Afro-Dutch artists and activists are actively changing Dutch culture with their art. One such artist is the the popular singer Typhoon who was invited to sing for the King, the Queen and their guests during the opening ceremony for the celebration of 200 years of the Kingdom in 2013. As Typhoon puts it: 'Zonder donker kan het licht zichzelf niet kennen, vandaar de onwetendheid rond 5 december' ('Without darkness, light cannot know itself, hence the ignorance around 5 December') (Typhoon, 2014). He was referring to Black Pete and the annual Saint Nicholas celebrations, in a reminder of the larger society's unwillingness to face up to its colonial past. In this song, the artist speaks of the greatness, the accomplishments and culture of the Netherlands and not about race. He reminds us to keep the power with the people and release fear of change because we are judged by where we are going and not by where we were (Typhoon, 2014).

It is important then to try to avoid the impression that opting for a focus on race, in a context dominated by attention to culture, would repeat the steps of political progress made elsewhere in the African diaspora. Not only would this carry a view of the Netherlands as lagging behind the wider Atlantic, but it would remove the possibility for alternatives worked on through our local circumstances. Rather than pressing for a change of debate from culture to race, I see possibilities for reframing the discussion on cultural tolerance for other ethnicities to one of cultural acceptance. This may occur in a rapidly changing national culture in an effort to artistically include diverse ethnicities in our national identity. It is here where I would advocate for working on a customised language that builds on an existing cultural base and opens onto more transformative avenues for the production of Afro subjectivity. How such tactics function and how they enable a deeper exploration of the idea of Afropea is a central concern of my ongoing research for which this article offers a first foray.

Afropea

While discussing the last of the three moments in the development of art among Black British practitioners, Stuart Hall proclaimed that 'the end of the essential black subject' was fully palpable by the decade of the 1990s (Hall, 1996, p.443). This third moment, he suggested, was the least politicised of all: 'artistically neo-conceptual, multi-media and installation-based' (Hall, 2006, p.2), a time in Britain when '"black" by itself – in the age of refugees, asylum seekers and global dispersal – will no longer do' (p.13). This sense of going beyond a single, essential Blackness emerged from the specificity of a problem-space that British artists have contended with, and this idea is echoed in the United States by claims for the uses of a new category of 'post-Black' culture – as coined by Thelma Golden and Glen Ligon. In such post-Black art, race and racism are brought into view while simultaneously the concept rejects any interaction between them. Certain artists may be adamant about not being labelled 'Black', yet their work is steeped, through deep interest, in the task of redefining notions of blackness and making them necessarily more complex and contemporary (Golden, 2001, p.14). Effectively the term 'post-Black' tries to move beyond the deadlock of Black-and-White relations in the field of visual representation.

For all its promise, however, the aspiration to move beyond an essential blackness, beyond the double-bind of Black self-representation, is still contained within the specificities of British and American problem-space. A category such as Continental Afro-European Art is distinct from these conditions, since its art and identities have not yet been properly described or canonised. To make this happen, the salient theoretical frameworks and art histories that have characterised such counter-modernity during the past century need to be brought under further scrutiny to ensure that the local gets the chance to develop on its own terms. The Netherlands has moved from barely any Afro-awareness to full-blown artistic activism in as little as ten years. All the steps of vindication, emancipation, representation and the drive beyond representation connected to wider Atlantic problem-spaces are being made simultaneously on the European mainland, constituting what is effectively a new sort of problem-space which holds the potential for different outcomes. In order to grasp the significance of such developments in the Dutch situation, I recommend the term Afropea – exploiting its analytical and imaginative potential as a term that can be filled with meaning drawn from the actual experience of Dutch cultural change. The constructive paradox of Afropea is that it embraces Afro-ness while speaking of it not as race or ethnicity

but as culture. It is diaspora in a self-referential manner, meaning a full awareness of its embodied Afro-genealogy, while confirming cultural native-ness to Europe. It is space and subjectivity at the same time. This results in artists operating in different historical diaspora problem-spaces simultaneously while claiming their shared humanity.

It is here where three ideas, the British end of the essential black subject, the American post-Black and the continental Afropea diverge. They are concerned with the same problem of going beyond representation but originate from different problem-spaces that yield different results.

As discussed earlier, Afro-European and Afropean both contain the word Afro and can pose a positioning problem when thinking about the paradox in the working environment of Dutch artists. Afro-European and Afropean are an indication of social and geographical borders that can limit the agency of artists. Current developments in the Netherlands entail a movement from Afro to Black while, using historical tools, asking the question of how useful it is to become Black in the twentieth-century, anti-colonial, Civil Rights sense of the word. Drawing new attention to the Afropea concept may bring certain benefits: inhabiting a zone of separation from the existing art discourse on blackness, while establishing a novel category that seeks to confirms its nativeness in Dutch and diaspora-cultural discourse. As a term that finds relevance on the European mainland, Afropea points toward a meaningful articulation of the Black diaspora – elaborating its own powerful vocabulary in order to imagine an alternative future for the shared continental condition.

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KOLONIALISMO DI NANZI: ANANSI COLONIALISM

Tirzo Martha

Abstract

In his essay, Curaçao artist Tirzo Martha signals the problems and needs of Curaçao society to which he has given a voice through his art, performances and projects. For Martha, growing up on the island of Curaçao between the 1960s and 1980s was a somewhat surreal experience. The island's unstable social and political developments had a direct impact on a sense of community, with events such as the revolt of 30 May 1969 demonstrating how extreme and out-of-hand the situation had become. The economic decay that was tormenting the island gave rise to corruption and abuses of power in Curaçao's political, governmental and social structures. In the more disadvantaged neighbourhoods, people were cheating and hustling just to survive – a situation that step-by-step became the norm at all layers of society. Circumstances became so bad as to evoke the stories of Anansi, set within a contemporary colonial society. In response, a voice was needed that could encapsulate and communicate the needs of Curaçao society. It would speak to and from the visual arts, through actions, interventions and performances in the community, working to remove the burden of dysfunction and decay. The voice took many other forms before finally issuing from the fictive persona of Captain Caribbean.

This text is published as a counterpart to the contribution to Sustainable Art Communities from the art historian Kitty Zijlmans.

Biographical note

Tirzo Martha is a visual artist and co-founder of the Instituto Buena Bista, Curacao Center for Contemporary Art. As a socially and politically engaged artist, he seeks to turn his artworks into tangible actions that may contribute to the development and growth of Curaçao and the wider Caribbean.

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To view the film footage on the Open Arts Archive, www.openartsarchive.org, follow this link: http://www.openartsarchive.org/archive/1st-conference-sustainable-art-communities-creativity-and-policy-transnational-caribbean-7

KOLONIALISMO DI NANZI: ANANSI COLONIALISM

Tirzo Martha

Through the narrative that I am about to tell, I hope to convey my deep concern for the future of art and the future of Curaçao, expanding on these themes to address the Caribbean as a whole.

The story begins
Growing up, I listened to Anansi stories. The stories that were told referred to guys walking around in layers of clothing with bizarre hair-dos, bizarre headgear, carrying bundles of stuff gathered together in such a creative way that it was impossible to tell exactly what it was. At the same time, these guys were walking in the killing heat of the sun, their bare feet on the burning asphalt. My parents were socially aware people, trying to help others; I was the kind of boy who also shared his lunch with three or four other students because they did not have anything to eat at home or to bring

Figure 4.1: Tirzo Martha, *Caribbean Cathedral* (detail), 2013, installation, Museum De Fundatie (Netherlands). (Photo: Tirzo Martha)

to school. Sometimes they were absent from school for days because they did not have shoes or clothes to wear. I was a boy surrounded by people seeking refuge in religion in prayer and in their altars at home; a boy whose neighbourhood had at least five different churches from different religions, not to mention the religions gathering at the different homes (Figure 4.1). I was a boy confronted with politicians giving intensive performances during their political campaign in the neighbourhood, making promises that floated away with them, as soon as they left in their triumphal processions, leaving people even more desperate through the false sympathy they offered. This same boy helped people to collect whatever they could use, to build a roof over their heads to protect them from the fury of the Caribbean sun and the other elements. This construction was also their main luxury, keeping them in competition with neighbours who lived in more substantial dwellings. Looking back on all that the boy went through in those years, it is not so strange that he should become a man who walks around in goggles with a KFC bucket on his head (Figure 4.2).

The world the boy grew up in was beyond all belief. He was safe at home, certainly. Home was a place of comfort. But the moment he stepped out of his safe haven he was back once again facing a cruel reality (which would turn him eventually into the public spectacle of a man wearing a bucket for a hat). The boy's perspective was from the grass roots of a community that shares nothing of the humour and sense of irony that outsiders feel defines it. Consider those on our streets who are trying to survive by begging, hustling and being tricksters, trying only to

Figure 4.2: Tirzo Martha, *Captain Caribbean* performance still), 2009, video loop 5 min, Curaçao.

meet their most basic needs in the most depressing conditions. They are the subject of everyone's cruel mockery and a system from which they yearn to be liberated. They want freedom not only from their dire living conditions, but also from the historical past that bequeathed our present traditions, values and myths. Ignoring such circumstances is easy for outsiders who consider Curaçao to be an island paradise, those who only see the beautiful, exotic and romantic parts of the country, dazzled by our big welcoming smiles. Sun, sand and sea, happy faces, music, dance, rum and entertainment. All that helps to conceal and forget our daily reality. It made this boy ask himself: Why? (Figure 4.3)

Why do I have to believe all the arguments that our politicians throw at us? Why should I be preoccupied with their versions of the past, while the present day is my immediate problem? Historical narratives have tended to be manipulated to suit the interests of the few – cliques that have tried to define our future. These were the political and financial powers that have aimed for independence from the Netherlands. In 2005, when a referendum was held, all their efforts seemed to have paid off. The people wanted autonomy (Figure 4.4).

One day, the same politicians pushing for independence decided that if the colour of your skin is black, then inevitably you have African heritage or so-called African roots. Being an 'Afro-something' is a label that gets stuck on people, and if you do not want to be labelled that way, then you are hardly a real native of the island. The politicians also decided that they needed more money to satisfy their greed. So they suggested exploring a whole host of topics as a way of reaching out to the masses: identity, slavery, colonialism, social injustice and so on. But this was a mere trick to keep the attention of the national community focused somewhere else, a distraction from what political leaders were actually doing.

I say a trick because this sort of behaviour, to attract sympathy and support, much resembles the antics of the all-time trickster Anansi. What has marked Curaçao in recent years is what I would call Anansi Colonialism, a system in which politicians have employed creole tactics, in the name of independence, but with the same miserable outcomes, strategies and structures as were the domain of the former colonists. Whether colony or independent country, Curaçao has nothing less than a exploitative political establishment, with a concomitant

Culture vs Tradition vs History vs Popularity vs The People
installation
Curacao, 2008

Figure 4.3: Tirzo Martha, *Culture vs tradition vs politics vs history vs the people*, 2007, installation, dimensions variable. (Photo: Tirzo Martha)

Figure 4.4: Tirzo Martha, *The Last Sonata of Curaçao*, 2010, installation with sound, 300 x 400 x 200cm, presented at the Curaçao Museum. (Photo: Tirzo Martha)

Figure 4.5: Tirzo Martha, *Afro-Healing*, 2012, assemblage, 80 x 30cm, presented at Centrum Beeldende Kunsten Zuid Oost (Netherlands). (Photo: Tirzo Martha)

programme of the acquisition of territory – in the present circumstances, not foreign land, but the very ground on which we stand. The unequal relationship and abuse of power by the government reflects and confirms the characteristics of the old colonial structures, thinly disguised in a new outfit and executed by the country's own natives (Figure 4.5).

Anansi in real life

As the boy was growing up, he had the feeling that the social conditions and the behaviour of the politicians in his community were a vivid visualisation of the Anansi stories once narrated by his parents and at his school. The action and reactions from the community fitted almost identically with the patterns of the characters and circumstances of the stories. To illustrate this, here is a description of the Anansi, from the book *How Anansi Fooled the King*, a compilation of Anansi stories recorded by Nilda Pinto (2005):

> Anansi the spider fooled not only the king but also the tiger, the devil and even his friends. He is not only a greedy lazy-bones but a super-clever smart guy, as well. He always finds a way to get

himself out of difficulties, especially by using the stupidity of others. As we say in my native language Papiamento: 'Nanzi a bira rey', Anansi was now crowned King.

It was the anti-social situation that instigated the urge and necessity of the boy to communicate the conditions, frustrations, hopes and dreams that the people of Curaçao were experiencing. There was no space in the boy's head for being creative or artistic, no drawing or painting, just the daily images that went by. These images made him aware of the existence of the people's urge to find an escape from it all and this initiated the visualisation of a world rarely seen by others. No colours, no sunshine, no dreams of becoming rich; only suffocation and a longing for freedom and tranquillity. People were trying to find an escape by going back to their so-called roots in an attempt to understand what went wrong. However, this journey brought more confusion, division and injustice to the community. About these situations someone once said to the boy as an encouragement: 'There is always a light at the end of the tunnel', to which the boy responded: 'But this is the Caribbean and power failures are very common.' (Figure 4.6)
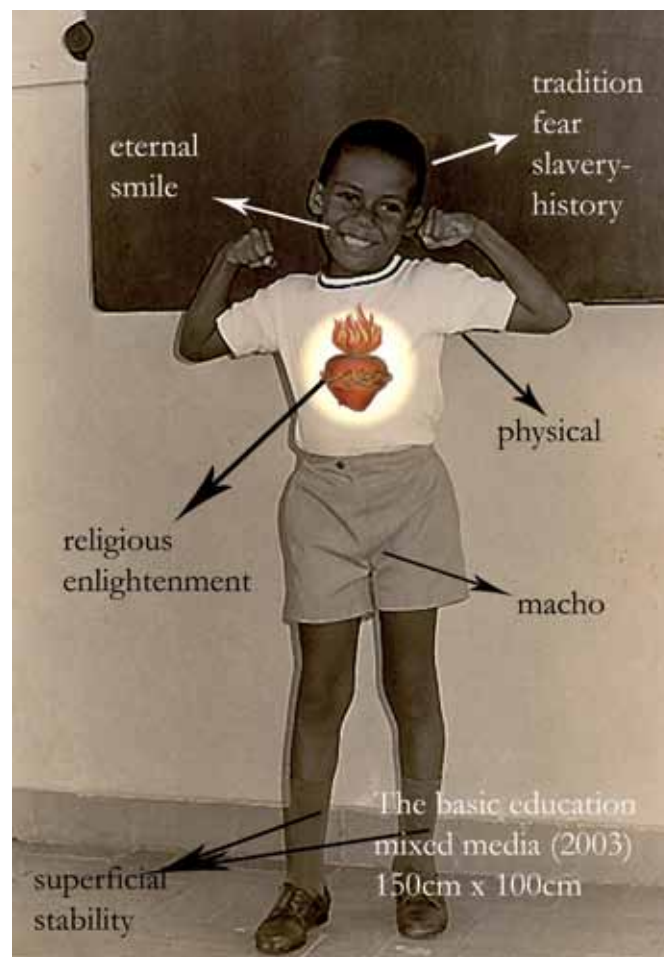

Figure 4.7: Tirzo Martha, *The Basic Education*, 2003, mixed media, 100 x 40cm, presented in Curaçao. (Photo: Tirzo Martha)

The Basic Education is meant to give more insight into the enormous impact the conditions surrounding the boy had on his thoughts. This is all based on the boy's reaction (Figure 4.7).

The boy said: 'Until now, I do not know why, but there is genuine fear of being confronted with the "freedom" promised by the political classes. I came to the conclusion that the same fear is used as a tool to avoid the disappointment and frustration that come with knowing how empty and meaningless such freedom can be.'

In this way, my answer to that question of 'Why?' may seem unorthodox to most readers. But still, for me, I hold out hope that beyond the current circumstances there is an actual, reachable, true sort of freedom – which has an essence, beauty and strength.

I believe that, for Curaçao, dreaming is the only realistic state of freedom. Everything around me is grey. Grey like the smoke from the refinery over the roofs of our houses. Grey like the concrete bricks of the houses that cannot be finished. Grey like the colour of the hair of the only people still working and trying to keep Curaçao society functioning. Grey like the last breath from our polluted minds and bodies.

Figure 4.6: Tirzo Martha, *Tell Me the Truth*, 2003, performance, video loop 10 min, presented in Curaçao. (Photo: Tirzo Martha)

Figure 4.8: Tirzo Martha, *Spirit of the Caribbean*, 2005, installation with video, 500 x 400cm, presented at Brooklyn Museum, New York. (Photo: Tirzo Martha)

The manipulations of the colonial era and slavery have made mental liberation and expression difficult. Often the 'Afro' label is used to imprint and to indoctrinate us, creating uncertainty and making people fearful about their identities. This is what happens when people are told that their only background, the essence for their identity, has to be traced to the history of slavery, their so-called roots in Africa.

What is wrong with being just yiu di Kòrsou or children of Curaçao, as we have been calling ourselves, and not this Afro-Curaçao thing? What about having our own identity based on our own culture, context, opinions, and our own achievements, and being determined to move forwards towards a new future defined by ourselves? In this new future, not only Curaçao but the entire Caribbean will achieve real unity, supported by the involvement of all the islands and territories. Such a collective strength would make it possible for the people to remain in the Caribbean and to work, to strengthen their own countries instead of fleeing from it in search of better prospects. What they need is to be able to look their fellow countrymen in the eye, knowing that everything is going to be all right.

Living with these different thoughts and dreams brought the boy to the visual arts, which made communication, space and imagining a new world possible. This was the exact tool he needed to reflect and comment on the society he was living in. The arts offer an instrument that you can apply to criticise and comment on reality but also a strong framework on which to build and develop. For him, the arts were also the perfect medium to visualise the weird world he was experiencing and wanted to change. At the same time, the arts became a space that he desperately wanted to share with others. It allowed room for comprehending the creation of a sustainable society, a society that is steady, strong and evolving.

The boy would go on to use the arts as a tool to make various interventions (Figure 4.8).

The first intervention

When the boy, now a grown man, finished his art studies, he was determined to go back to his society so that he could contribute to creating a new vision, perspective and direction at a political, social and cultural level.

Back on his native island, he started making his interventions and giving performances in public spaces. He was not going to wait for invitations for exhibitions in the local galleries or museums. Ultimately, that wasn't the reason for his engagement with art. He was creating his own conditions and outlooks, from which he could develop a new construction for furthering the visual arts and addressing social issues.

The boy, now a trained artist, began collecting objects and searching for unusual spaces to create his work. He constructed installations and gave his performances in the neighbourhood, in the local post office, in the carnival parade, or wherever he had the chance to perform. Even his parents' house was used as

Figure 4.9: Tirzo Martha, *Greetings from the Caribbean*, 2005, performance, intervention in public spaces in Curaçao. (Photo: Tirzo Martha)

Figure 4.10: Tirzo Martha, *The invasion of The Netherlands supported by Chavez (Chavez had to stop at IKEA in Spain to buy himself a new presidential chair)*, 2008, installation with video, presented at the Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe (ZKM, Germany). (Photo: Tirzo Martha)

a platform to show his work. Public spaces, monuments and so on, all became the perfect location at which he could elaborate and perform the images that were then still only floating in his head.

In tandem with this, Akvile Eglinskaite wrote about his artwork (Figure 4.10), a contribution to the exhibition 'Global Contemporary: Art Worlds After 1989': [1]

> The installations and performances of Caribbean artist Tirzo Martha represent an ironic mirror of the socio-political state of Caribbean societies. With his multi-media, open works, Martha undertakes a social analysis and thus traverses the fine line between fiction and reality.
>
> [The installation] *The Invasion of the Netherlands supported by Chavez (Chavez had to stop at IKEA in Spain to buy himself a new presidential chair)* is a remarkable collection of everyday objects – a construction made of used furniture, crockery, and various domestic materials. Reminiscent of improvised street barricades in the context of political protest movements or of patchwork altars, among others, the work consists of IKEA furniture, collected as talismans of Western culture, of Caribbean souvenir articles, or small replicas of chintzy Catholic symbols.
>
> Martha's ironic and sarcastic reflections focus on the present-day constitution of postcolonial Caribbean societies, marked by poverty and dependency on international tourism and other, more recent forms of slavery, and show the people's disappointments, the anger, and the daily fight for survival. At the same time, he refers to their dreams and the vitality of a new Creole identity and culture, which positions itself confidently in the area of the 'in-between'. In addition, Martha confronts the observers with the cliché of a colourful and naïve Caribbean art, or a corresponding attitude of expectation.
>
> (Eglinskaite, 2011, p.71)

1   Held at the Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe (ZKM), Germany, 17.9.2011 to 5.2.2012.

The second intervention

As soon as he started making his art, he also began his social projects. He pursued the belief that art and these projects go hand in hand and cannot be separated.

He started giving workshops in schools. He took the students out onto the streets and worked there with them, together with other people from the neighbourhood. While these were taking place, he was asked to help rebuild the local (so-called) art academy, but by then, it was already too late. He was one of the five artists who fought to the end in the struggle to keep the academy open, even as the government decided that it was no longer going to subsidise the school and resolved to shut it down. He would not allow the matter to rest. He would continue to make art education a reality.

His next step was towards the local prison where he worked with long-term prisoners. He challenged them to use their skills and to make objects inspired by their hopes, wishes and dreams. For two weeks, he spent the whole day eating, relaxing and working with the prisoners. He asked them to work on developing their ideas, starting with the outline of a Christmas tree. It was a great experience to see how skilful and creative so many of the prisoners were. The result of this workshop was shown in downtown Willemstad.

In this period (1992-2003), financial grants did not exist. The one foundation on the island with the financial means to support these projects did not understand them and could not see their added value. So the projects were executed with the materials collected by the artist himself. It was all very hands-on!

It was when he joined forces with his colleague David Bade and art historian Nancy Hoffmann, through the foundation Arte Swa, that he started to carry out social-cultural projects that were more lasting. For the results of such efforts to endure was essential for him in his aim to really help people. By creating conditions that can guarantee continuity, you can invest and structure the support you are giving to the people with whom you are working (Figure 4.11). You can then bring the various groups from your society together and let them work with one another, by using the creative processes presented by the arts to stimulate communication, to gain an understanding of one another and to develop social skills.

However, still at the back of his mind, the artist was thinking about the academy that had closed and the need to create a replacement, a place where younger talent could develop in a natural and healthy environment. He had in view a space dedicated to creating a collection of artworks that could be seen as cultural heritage in the field of the visual arts. This aspiration was nurtured by the experience of working with young talent during the Arte Swa projects (Figures 4.12 and 4.13).

Figure 4.11: Tirzo Martha and the Arte Swa team, *Social-cultural project with psychiatric clinic Capriles*, 2005, Carnival parade, presented during Curaçao Carnival. (Photo: Tirzo Martha)

Figure 4.12: Tirzo Martha and the Arte Swa team, *Social-cultural project with Juan Pablo Duarte School*, 2005, Carnival Teener parade, presented during Curaçao Teen Carnival. (Photo: Tirzo Martha)

Figure 4.13: Tirzo Martha and the Arte Swa team, *Social-cultural project with Juan Pablo Duarte School*, 2005, Carnival Teener parade, presented during Curaçao Teen Carnival. (Photo: Tirzo Martha)

The third intervention

Figure 4.14: IBB logo, 2012. (Image: Tirzo Martha)

It was at about this time that the two artists – Bade and Martha – really began to strive for the realisation of an institute where all of this could be possible. Consequently, in 2006, Instituto Buena Bista (IBB), the Curaçao Centre for Contemporary Art, became a reality (Figure 4.14). The institute also came to life in the same way that an intervention emerges. One day, there was nothing and the next day, there it was, standing and existing in a space where it had seemed so difficult to be. The IBB provides preparatory visual-arts-training for talented young people who have the ambition to continue at an art academy or in some form of creative study. The programme is supported by three artist-in-residence opportunities – a national one, an international one and a local residency – where the artists are also required to teach. Teaching allows the students to gather experience in a supportive environment where they may develop their talents and skills. Each artist who undertakes a residency is also asked to leave a work of art behind, one made during their residency. In this way, a collection of artworks ranging from drawings to large installations came to life, and the collection is growing year by year (Figure 4.15).

Situated on the compound of a psychiatric clinic, the IBB came to collaborate with the nearby institution in an effort to change the way that the wider society sees it. For years, the clinic had been regarded as a place to put crazy people behind bars, to shut them away. Because of the earlier projects that Arte Swa had carried out with the clinic, we had a basis on which our collaboration could proceed. Every day, the IBB receives patients who come to the institute to paint, draw, build, record songs or just to chill for a while. In collaboration with the students at the IBB, the patients receive guidance and support. At the same time, the IBB still runs social-cultural projects with schools and other organisations. At least twice a year, there is also an action in public spaces for which the students create a project. Carnival, for instance, has regularly been a stage for these actions. Right now, the IBB is working on a sculpture garden for the clinic. This is a collaborative enterprise that includes patients, students and the artists in residence at the IBB. The sculpture garden is also an effort to bring people into the clinic and to create a new image of the clinic (Figure 4.16).

In March 2013, we finally received confirmation that we have been given a building in the same compound as the clinic. We are going to adapt it into an exhibition space, a depot for our collection and an extensive library and archive. This rebuilt space will also be open to the public (Figure 4.17).

Figure 4.15: Tirzo Martha, IBB students and clients Capriles clinic, *untitled*, 2011, mixed media, 700 x 600 cm, Route Carnival parade Curaçao. (Photo: Tirzo Martha)

Figure 4.16: IBB, students floating an installation on water, 2009, IBB Curaçao. (Photo: Tirzo Martha)

Figure 4.17: Tirzo Martha, David Bade and IBB students, *Rocket of the Future of Curaçao*, 2012, sculpture, dimensions variable, Willemstad, Curaçao. (Photo: Tirzo Martha)

The fourth intervention

Meanwhile, against the background of all these activities, a new character was emerging, one who had been waiting for the right moment, living for years in the head of the boy and later on, in the mind of the artist. It was time to bring Captain Caribbean to life: a hero fighting for justice and equality, striving for a sustainable society. This is the hero who came to fight the Anansi who was governing the land and determining its course. With the blessing of the heroes resting at the National Heroes Park in Kingston, Jamaica, Captain Caribbean has become the central focus for the artist, and a vehicle through which he can combine his art and his socially engaged projects more directly (Figure 4.18).

The forthcoming projects will create a new vision of the issues being played out on his native island Curaçao and in the other Caribbean societies.

The artist's hope is that with both IBB and Captain Caribbean, he will be able to create more interaction, exchange, collaboration and unity in the Caribbean region (Figure 4.19).

With these actions, the artist believes that he can contribute to creating a sustainable society, and moreover, that he can foster greater insight into the added value that art has for the development of a new social vision, a new perspective and a new direction. All these activities will contribute to achieving greater appreciation of the arts and at the same time nourish them (Figure 4.20).

Figure 4.18: Tirzo Martha, *The Initiation of Captain Caribbean*, 2010, performance, video loop 20 min, Heroes Park Kingston (Jamaica). (Photo: Tirzo Martha)
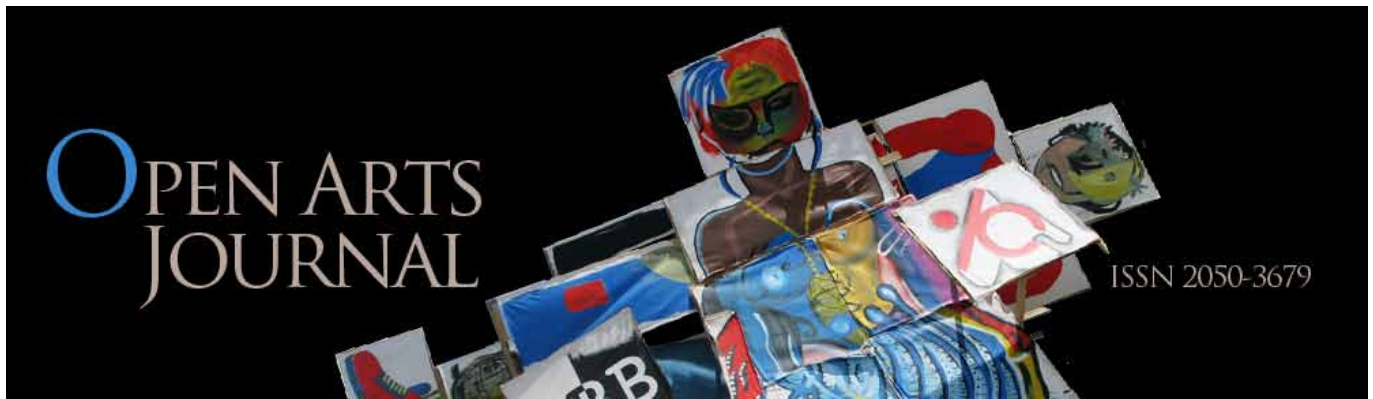
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Figure 4.19: Tirzo Martha, *Captain Caribbean Receives His First Tula Stigmata*, 2013, performance video, video loop 5 min, performed in Curaçao. (Photo: Tirzo Martha)

Figure 4.20: Tirzo Martha, *The Resurrection of the Hereditary Performance*, 2013, performance video, video loop 3 min, performed in Curaçao. (Photo: Tirzo Martha)

ART AND AGENCY IN CONTEMPORARY CURAÇAO: TIRZO MARTHA'S *BLIJF MAAR PLAKKEN*

Kitty Zijlmans

Abstract

Through a discussion of the artwork Blijf maar plakken *by Curaçaoan artist Tirzo Martha, this paper discusses how a collaborative artwork not only reinforces bonds between its participants, but also taps into a local community's cultural memory, prompting stories and creating cultural identity rather than merely representing or reflecting it.*

This text is published as a counterpart to the contribution to Sustainable Art Communities from the artist Tirzo Martha.

Biographical note

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To view the film footage on the Open Arts Archive, www.openartsarchive.org, follow this link:
http://www.openartsarchive.org/archive/1st-conference-sustainable-art-communities-creativity-and-policy-transnational-caribbean-6

ART AND AGENCY IN CONTEMPORARY CURAÇAO: TIRZO MARTHA'S *BLIJF MAAR PLAKKEN*

Kitty Zijlmans, Leiden University

In 2009, I was invited by artists David Bade and Tirzo Martha of the Instituto Buena Bista (IBB), the Curaçao Center for Contemporary Art, to visit the organisation and give a lecture for the local art community. It was a unique opportunity to be taken on a trip around the island by Tirzo Martha. Having been born and raised there, Martha knows Curaçao inside out and took my husband, Rudi Struik, and me to places a tourist could not easily reach. He showed us several of his art projects, including an installation entitled *Blijf maar plakken*, located in Bandabou, towards the northwest of the island. Produced in 2008, the work's title can be literally translated as 'Just Keep Adding On' but it also has another connotation, which I will clarify in the course of my discussion. For me, this art project was like a crash course in Curaçaoan society: it touches on the island's social stratification, the antagonism between countryside and city, and all kinds of local habits. Moreover, in its engagement with Curaçao's social complexity and politics, *Blijf maar plakken* transcends mere art practice by becoming what may be described as a socio-cultural intervention in its own right.

In this essay, my aim is to elaborate on the ways in which Martha's art practice can help with understanding how to establish a sustainable (art) community on Curaçao from the ground up. As will also become clear, Martha's art project as well as the novels and columns of Curaçao writers Frank Martinus Arion and Boeli van Leeuwen testify deeply to the island's customs. The assumption here is that art may indeed open up ways to connect with people, tapping into their social and psychological competencies, revealing latent skills and thus forging more lasting bonds between not just the 'kids' involved in an art project but also any local inhabitants who are drawn into it because they feel addressed and invited to respond.

The IBB

To give a clear insight into the nature of Tirzo Martha's *Blijf maar plakken* project, it is important to explain first how it is framed by the Instituto Buena Bista. The IBB was founded in 2006 by Curaçao-born artists David

Bade and Tirzo Martha in close association with the Dutch art historian Nancy Hoffmann, with the goal of creating a solid platform for art and education.[1] The IBB combines a pre-academy training institute for talented Curaçaoan youngsters aged between 14 and 24, and a laboratory for contemporary art through an artists' residency programme. The IBB is located in the Orkidia pavilion on the compound of the Klinika Capriles psychiatric hospital – perhaps not the most obvious place at first glance, but, according to David Bade, the location is 'totally inspirational' because of the site's integration in the local infrastructure. Here contemporary art is not detached from society but right in the middle of it. The IBB strives to see talented young people from Curaçao enrolled in Dutch art schools, allowing them to develop their recently discovered talent.

Curaçao lacks a proper art-education infrastructure, the IBB is laying the foundations for its development. Currently, aspirant art students tend to go abroad in search of further education. The choice of the Netherlands for art academies or other degree-level creative schooling is an obvious one: due to the island's history as a Dutch colony Curaçaoan students have Dutch citizenship and do not need to obtain a visa or a residency permit. Since 2010, Curaçao has been an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands and its citizens have Dutch nationality. Moreover, the students are able to speak Dutch (in addition to their native Papiamentu), and are entitled to school funding.

Some forty students are currently continuing their art training in the Netherlands and, apart from having to adapt to Dutch customs and the climate, overall, they are doing well. In order to increase the sustainability of the art infrastructure in Curaçao, the best-case scenario would be for these more educated art students to return to the country after their studies. As Bade and Martha told me when we met in the Netherlands in April 2015, some do return and are joining the IBB educational training programme as supervisors (Bade & Martha, 2015).

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1   Both David Bade (*1970) and Tirzo Martha (*1965) were born on Curaçao, Bade to Dutch and Martha to Curaçao-born parents. At the age of four, Bade moved to the Netherlands with his parents and later studied at De Ateliers in Amsterdam. Martha studied at the Akademia di Arte Korzou in Curaçao and subsequently in the Netherlands at the HKU University of the Arts in Utrecht and the Molenaar Fashion School. In 1999, he also attended a training and refreshment course dealing with socially-excluded children in anticipation of what he was going to develop in the near future in Curaçao. Following their education in Europe, Bade and Martha returned to Curaçao.

The achievements of the IBB are also recognised by the Dutch government, which subsidises the institute through the Mondriaan Fund and other funding bodies.[2] This shows how the IBB is firmly situated within Curaçao society while maintaining strong bonds with the Netherlands. One of the subsidisers, the DOEN Foundation, informed me that it sees the IBB's work as an important way in which the Netherlands, as former coloniser, can demonstrate its sense of responsibility towards the people of Curaçao (Stichting DOEN, 2014).

Postcolonial thinking and migration studies (Hall, 1990; Gilroy, 1993; Glissant, 1999) have led to the recognition that the community of Caribbean people can no longer be reduced to a single, regional geography. The Caribbean is as diverse as its number of islands and regions and has a huge transnational diaspora. But there is also a strong feeling of connection throughout the region as a whole, promoted by the exchange of information and experience between Caribbean contemporary art centres.[3] The IBB's connection to these networks of arts spaces in the region stimulates a flow of artists around the Caribbean. Moreover, through the IBB's residency programme, artists from all over the world visit Curaçao to work and teach its students. On its website and in many of the art projects and workshops Bade and Martha undertake internationally, the IBB is presented as an art centre that is stimulated by the urgency to create what I would call a specific cultural ecology, in the mutual interaction between people, their culture and the island. The art project *Blijf maar plakken* alludes to and connects with that local culture and habits, within the larger frame of social groups, hierarchies, institutions and power relations on the island. I will explain how this happens below. It should also be said that the project ties in with processes of globalisation, given that even such a small island as Curaçao is part of the global fabric of trade, finance, travel, the exchange of goods and ideas, and the World Wide Web.

Curaçao after the arrival of the Western colonisers

For the Spanish explorers who first visited the Caribbean islands around 1500, the region served mainly as a stepping stone for the colonisation of the Americas. They also called at Curaçao but soon left it aside because of its lack of natural resources, such as fresh water (for farming) or gold. The Dutch, however, who arrived in the early seventeenth century, saw the benefit of the islands' proximity to mainland South America for trade and further exploitation of the region. In the first decades of the seventeenth century, the Dutch made Curaçao a centre for the slave trade. Enslaved people were brought from West Africa to Curaçao and sold to nearby plantations or put to work on the island. Curaçao also served as a storage depot for European trade and a junction for international shipping, with people from all over the world crossing the island. The Dutch never left Curaçao. Because of its harbour and stable political climate, in 1915 Royal Dutch Shell chose the island to build an oil refinery, bringing work (it became the island's biggest employer) but also heavy pollution. In 1985, Curaçao's government nationalised the refinery and leased it to Venezuela's state-owned oil company PDVSA.

Despite its small size Curaçao is a melting pot. Not many of the original indigenous population, the Arawak, remain and because of the slave trade a large number of Curaçaoans are of African descent. Over the centuries, many ethnic groups have settled on the island resulting in its multi-ethnic mix. All these 'presences', to use a concept from Stuart Hall (1990), are very tangible. To Hall, the interaction of various historically developed cultural 'presences' creates a culture of diversity and difference. This is today's reality in Curaçao. But being an intercultural society does not mean that there are no social divisions on the island. Not only does Martha's art project *Blijf maar plakken* allude to this, and such social and ethnic differences are also a recurrent theme in Curaçao literature. The novels, short stories and columns of Frank Martinus Arion and Boeli van Leeuwen, for instance, attest to (ethnic) tensions and feelings of inequality and frustration. These more widely felt sentiments are mostly directed towards the more powerful and wealthier white population, the big companies (oil, among others) and hotel chains, which bring in their own employees and take the profits, leaving little or nothing for the local inhabitants. The tensions *between* the wider spectrum of the island's ethnic groups are also an undercurrent in their writings (Arion, 1973; van Leeuwen, 1988 and 1990).

With its Caribbean climate, beautiful beaches and reefs for scuba diving, the island derives much of its income from tourism. As Arion and van Leeuwen also point out, this money does not in the main flow back to the local inhabitants, but instead goes to the large tourism companies and hotel chains. Huge cruise ships stop at Curaçao, where their passengers alight

2   For more detailed information on the educational and artist programmes of the Instituto Buena Bista, see: http://www.institutobuenabista.com.

3   For an overview of the art centres, projects and exchanges, see: http://freshmilkbarbados.com/projects/map-caribbean-art-spaces/.

to visit the historical sites of Otrabanda and Punda, and to shop at small pop-up markets. There are also commercial galleries that sell works by Curaçaoan artists to both tourists and locals, and much of this revenue benefits the local artists. While visiting Curaçao, I noticed a certain tension between the IBB and these galleries: whereas the IBB aims to establish an art infrastructure connecting the local, regional and international art scenes, the galleries focus primarily on the local market. The two appear to belong to completely distinct art worlds that have no interaction. In addition, there are feelings of inequality on the part of the local art galleries since the IBB is funded by the Dutch government and partly run by Dutch people.

Because Curaçao was a Dutch colony for centuries, the Dutch presence is still tangible in its institutions of government and administration, the education system and in business, in which many Dutch people or those of Dutch descent occupy powerful positions. Curaçao was under Dutch rule for so long and the prospect of simply erasing the island's colonial history is not without its problems and contradictions, with many Curaçaoans still feeling dominated by the Dutch.

The island faces many social problems due to unemployment, poverty and limited access to education. There is not only a wide gap between the rich visitors and the local inhabitants, but, as will become clear when discussing the artwork in question, also between the Curaçaoan people themselves. It is precisely these tensions that are revealed by *Blijf maar plakken*.

Negotiating identity

When we drove down to Bandabou to see the work *Blijf maar plakken*, I had no idea what I was going to see. The work is located off the island's main road in the district of Bandabou, a somewhat remote area (if one can speak in these terms considering Curaçao's small size: it covers an area of only 444 km^2). But even on such a small island, issues such as the disparity between the city and the countryside are strongly felt. Bandabou is in the poorer, rural western side of the island. It has an arid, predominantly desert-like terrain and there are few employment opportunities for the local people, who consequently feel neglected. There, in a yard in the middle of nowhere, I was confronted by a large construction made from all manner of building materials and household goods and appliances (Figure 5.1). There were wooden planks, loose bricks, a rotary washing line with clothes hanging from it, a palm

Figure 5.1: Tirzo Martha, *Blijf maar plakken*, 2009, outdoor installation, mixed media, Bandabou Curacao. (Photo: Tirzo Martha)
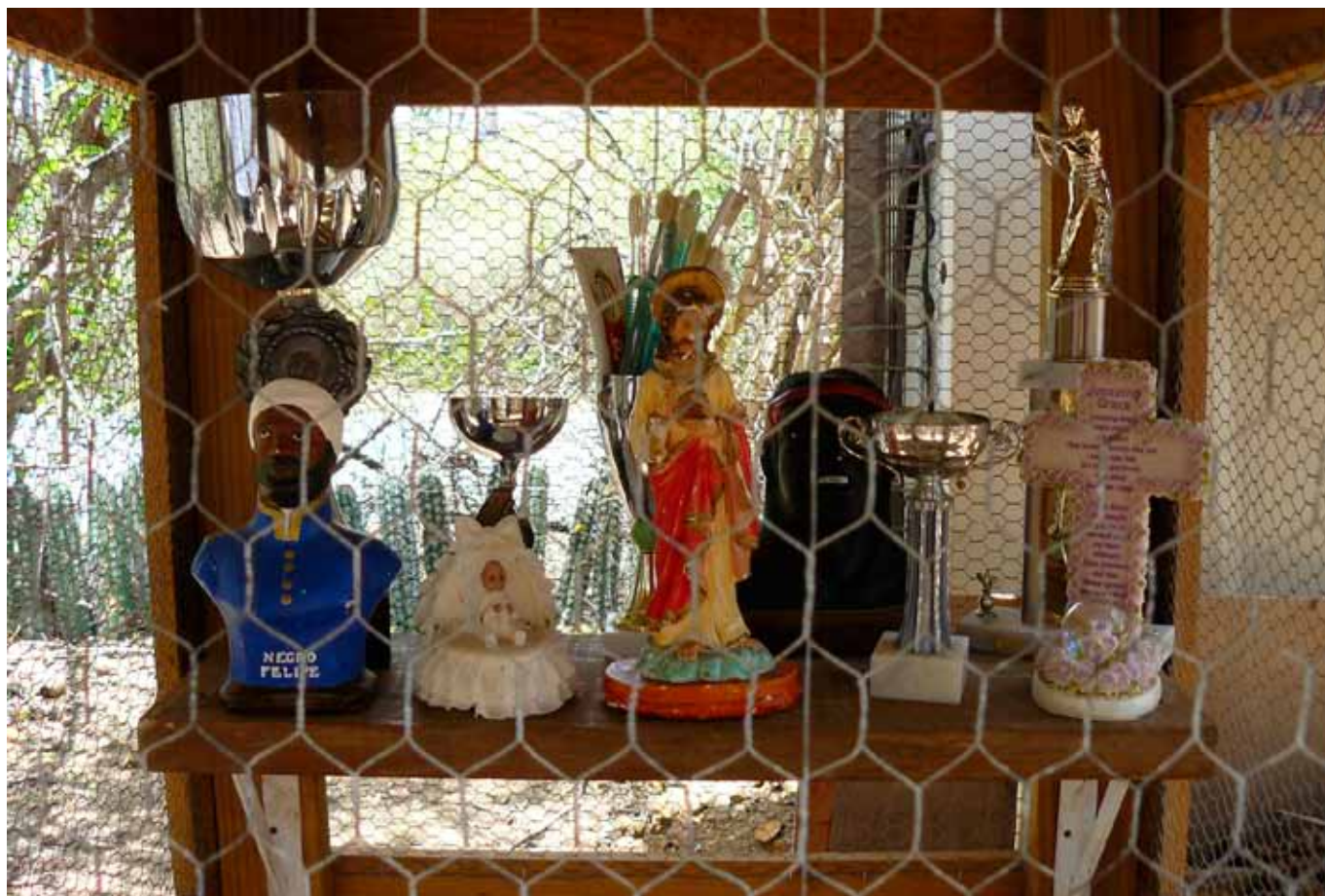
Figure 5.2: Tirzo Martha, *Blijf maar plakken*, 2009, outdoor installation, mixed media, Bandabou Curacao. (Photo: Kitty Zijlmans)

Figure 5.3: Tirzo Martha, *Blijf maar plakken*, 2009, outdoor installation, mixed media, Bandabou Curacao. (Photo: Kitty Zijlmans)

Figure 5.4: Tirzo Martha, *Blijf maar plakken*, 2009, outdoor installation, mixed media, Bandabou Curacao. (Photo: Kitty Zijlmans)

planted in a toilet bowl, stacks of plates and washing-up bowls, a dozen coffee machines, rows of shopping bags hanging from a free-standing wall, Coca-Cola crates, an accumulation of religious objects and statues in a case with chicken-wire doors (Figure 5.2), a silver goblet filled with toothbrushes, trophies etc., etc. The installation's title, *Blijf maar plakken* (*Just Keep Adding On*), refers to Martha's gradual process of accumulation: continually adding elements to the structure (Figure 5.3).

As the artist explained, this practice of 'adding on' relates to a phenomenon that is emblematic of Curaçao's socio-economic problems. Curaçao's politicians ignore the nation's growing social problems while the population conceals its poverty with cosmetic displays of wealth through the accumulation of commodities. Many households have three cars, fridges or air-conditioning units, one or more of which is probably broken; that hardly matters as long as they *appear* to be well off (Figure 5.4). Perhaps the most visible aspect of this bluff is the phenomenon of people constantly building extensions (Figure 5.5). This also resonates in the novel *Double Play* by Frank Martinus Arion (1973) and the aforementioned columns that

Boeli van Leeuwen wrote for the *Curaçaosche Courant* in 1989.[4] According to van Leeuwen, the title 'Ingenious Anarchy' expresses in a nutshell the main trait of the Curaçaoan people: they know how to fix anything if they feel like it but they are more likely to just let it disintegrate (Figure 5.6). He writes that Curaçao has been in a 'permanent state of going to pieces' since Johannes van Walbeeck, director of the Dutch West India Company, first set foot on the island in 1634, and those who cannot cope with this had better leave (van Leeuwen, 1990, p.8). Thus, people flaunt their supposed wealth by continuously adding on to their houses, but let the rest fall to pieces. Arion's *Double Play* also describes this phenomenon and *Blijf maar plakken* mimics it.

Despite the rather less than positive reading this gives of Curaçao, local people responded very enthusiastically to Martha's project. After overcoming their initial surprise that what they saw could actually be 'art', they started to engage with it, recognising

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4   The weekly columns, written in his idiosyncratic, razor-sharp, humorous Dutch mixed with Papiamento, Spanish, English, French and Latin, are collected in the volume *Geniale Anarchie* (1990).

Figure 5.5: Tirzo Martha, *Blijf maar plakken*, 2009, outdoor installation, mixed media, Bandabou Curacao. (Photo: Kitty Zijlmans)

elements and objects that are part of their daily life and environment. This was the point at which the installation really started to *work* on the viewers, as Martha clarified. Stirred by what they saw, people came forward with elaborate interpretations including stories about their experience of what it is like to live on the island. *Blijf maar plakken* set in motion trains of thought and emotions and prompted highly personal stories, creating a bond between the local residents and the work, as well as between each other. Clearly, the artwork appealed to them because it was *about* them, but it also left room for them to add on their own elements.

In *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy (1993) discusses how for centuries storytelling and its performance have been foundational in creating alternative public domains in which new cultural identities are formed. The stories may have changed over time, but their significance has not. As in many other regions around the world,

the Caribbean has a strong tradition of storytelling. Important elements within this oral folklore tradition are the ancient Anansi stories, which can be traced back to the arrival of those enslaved from Ghana (Beckwith, 1924). The stories revolve around a cunning creature, usually a spider, but he may sometimes appear as a man. Curaçao's rich tradition of storytelling reveals much about social undercurrent, tensions and entanglements as well as local habits and beliefs. Much of Arion's novel *Double Play* consists of 'tales' told by four domino players to one another (or to themselves). This orality is strongly connected to politics, identity and cultural memory, as the stories prompted by *Blijf maar plakken* also indicate.

However, the work reveals more. With these kinds of interventions, Martha aspires to create a serious and critical bottom-up analysis of his complicated island community. He argues that the external world and in particular hip-hop culture influences the local

Figure 5.6: Tirzo Martha, *Blijf maar plakken*, 2009, outdoor installation, mixed media, Bandabou Curacao. (Photo: Kitty Zijlmans)

population through television, the internet and social media, with an impact on its aspirational fashions, lifestyles and ways of speaking. Parts of the population copy these sources uncritically, but because they lack the funds to purchase luxury goods, they improvise as best they can, creating inferior derivatives just to show off. The local participants in Martha's project recognised this mania for collecting things and understood its reference to people sitting around with little or nothing to do – since *Blijf maar plakken* can also indicate a condition of remaining 'stuck'.

Martha's analysis of Curaçaoan society through his artwork is simultaneously critical of local habits as well as being full of understanding of them. More than once during my visit, I heard the criticism that the (Dutch) media only see the rubble and the ruins on the island, not taking into account that the local culture has its own ways and should be respected for what it is. Ultimately, of importance for Martha and

what he wishes to propagate, is how people from the neighbourhood responded to the intervention. In fact, the work *Blijf maar plakken* is merely the material basis for activating a response from the community. In a play of estrangement and identification, it opens up a way of approaching socio-cultural issues such as belonging, identity and difference. The work itself speaks the local language and prompts stories, thus producing cultural identity instead of merely representing it.

Working together

Blijf maar plakken was commissioned by the MAI Foundation (mai is 'mother' in Papiamentu), an organisation that strives to fight poverty and social problems on the island by helping to increase educational and social development of the deprived, as well as helping them to find employment. The foundation asked Martha to organise a project that would refer to the local social problems, especially

among adolescents, and people's response to these problems, in which Martha has a deep interest. I have noted how, in 1999, Martha had taken a training course in dealing with children from disadvantaged backgrounds in the Netherlands. The difficulty of bringing together people from underprivileged, rural Bandabou and the better off Punda (a neighbourhood of the capital Willemstad), inspired Martha to develop a project in which youngsters from the city (those he recruited from the IBB) and Bandabou had to work together. He was inspired to do so because the groups tend to discriminate against each other. The IBB kids look down on their Bandabou counterparts even though 85% of them come from low-income families themselves; a classic scenario of city-vs-countryside divisions.

Initially, the IBB kids were reluctant and the Bandabou kids felt they were being teased by their urban neighbours. To overcome this deadlock Martha gave them assignments according to their interests – building, making pictures, carpentry and so on – to make them feel comfortable and generate an environment of cooperation. Working on the principle that creative acts spur discovery and unleash the imagination, these tasks tapped into the participants' skills and interests, making them more eager to be involved and bringing to the surface latent talents.

A work such as *Blijf maar plakken* takes art into the realm of human interactions, turning it into a kind of training experience. For these young people such art can play a key role in their education and, considering the response of the adult community to the work, it also raised their cultural awareness. These forms of collaboration can stimulate creativity and artistic ability among both amateurs and aspiring professionals such as those who attended the IBB. It is dependent on first-hand experience: physical labour, as well as the fun of constructing a physical work with no predetermined plan. The project grew organically through the adding-on of materials and objects by the participants, and subsequently it grew further in the stories of the people whom it enticed. So *Blijf maar plakken* also stands for the adding on of stories, adding meaning to the work and reinforcing local culture.

Thanks to Tirzo Martha (and David Bade) I was fortunate enough to see the island of Curaçao not as tourists do but also to glimpse it from the inside. If we want to grasp something of the island's culture, communities and politics we need the eyes of the artist, and the engagement of a community through art practices, to offer an oblique perspective on its complexity.

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BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE: LOCAL-GLOBAL DYNAMICS OF FUNDING AND SPONSORSHIP IN CARIBBEAN ART

Winston Kellman

Abstract

This article argues in favour of a series of concepts whose origins hail directly from the Caribbean space. They encapsulate ideas that are significant to the production and development of Caribbean art, and are here expressed through the framework of the 'local'. They include notions of poverty, Caribbean identity, embodied practice, geographic location, nationalism, memory, trauma, the 'longue durée' and the effects of arts institutions. Globalisation, with its built-in power to determine and influence state policy in the forms of cultural elites with access to sponsorship and funding sources, is used as a counter position to be critiqued. The article also examines artworks by Ras Ishi Butcher and Winston Kellman, the author of the article. These two artists from Barbados work at the site of 'the local' and remain resolutely engaged in the traditional medium of painting, still critically articulating relevant ideas in the visual arts in Barbados and possessing what could be called a global sense of the local.

Biographical note

Winston Kellman was born in Barbados in 1952. He studied at Gloucestershire College of Art and Design, Cheltenham, and Chelsea College of Art and Design, gaining a B.A. Fine Art (Hons) in 1981 and a postgraduate Diploma in History and Theory of Modern Art in 1990, respectively. After two decades as a London-based artist, he returned to Barbados in 1992. He is a practising painter and tutor of Studio Art and Art History at the Barbados Community College and has had several solo exhibitions, as well as representing Barbados on a number of occasions at international exhibitions. He recently completed an M.A. in Cultural Studies at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados.

Related material to this article was presented at the two project conferences for 'Sustainable Art Communities: Creativity and Policy in the Transnational Caribbean', held on 5–6 February 2013 (Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam; KIT, the Netherlands Royal Tropical Institute), and 3–4 December 2013 (Institute for International Visual Arts, Iniva, London, UK). Visit the project webpages here.

To view the film footage on the Open Arts Archive, www.openartsarchive.org, follow this link: http://www.openartsarchive.org/archive/1st-conference-sustainable-art-communities-creativity-and-policy-transnational-caribbean-12

BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE: LOCAL-GLOBAL DYNAMICS OF FUNDING AND SPONSORSHIP IN CARIBBEAN ART

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The creative tension between the local and the global has been articulated by contemporary curators in ways that illuminate the functioning and sustainability of artistic communities in the Caribbean. The local, with its attendant ideas of nationalism and invented notions of traditional artistic production, is pitted against the global with its universalising tendencies and standards. In what follows, I examine this theoretical conflict between local specificity and the homogenising force of the contemporary (a term that can be linked to globalisation). I analyse the relationship between these local and global positions and the circuits that have been created by funding and sponsorship agencies for the visual arts, along with the roles they have played in terms of influencing artistic production and sustainability in the Caribbean over the last two decades. A better view onto these processes allows an approach to scholarship that could help to inform a more inclusive and developmental curatorial practice in and for the region.

What really is traditional Caribbean art? Is contemporary Caribbean art a rupture or a continuation of such a tradition in a different form? These interrogations into the field could provide the possibility of opening frames of reference to go beyond the tropes of immigration, hybridity, creolisation, border crossings, diaspora, new-media communications and post-black aesthetics, whose thematic exhibitions seem to dominate curatorial decisions in the Caribbean. Here I propose an 'aesthetics of place' which will hopefully move the perception of 'the local' to a definition beyond its current designated position – at best, a mere marker of identification, at worst a site of retrogressive nostalgia.

Framing the local: history and poverty

The concept of poverty, which is directly linked to funding and sponsorship, can be seen as a fundamental issue in relation to sustainability in the arts in the Caribbean. This poverty is the direct result of the infinite variations of imperialist, colonist domination in the region that has left most of the territories in a state of economic dependency. It is generally agreed, as proposed by Clive Thomas (1988, pp.37–8), that this early period of colonial rule was a time when a comparatively small group of countries – British, French and Dutch colonisers – emerged at the centre of the world capitalist systems and became their main benefactors, while the larger group – the colonised – remained at the 'periphery'. The growth and development of these colonial economies was based on policies dictated by and to the benefit of the colonial centre. The periphery by contrast is wholly dependent on the system because growth is considered to be largely a reflex of development internationally. This 'inherited' poverty becomes a large part of our Barbadian or Caribbean basic identity, as it shapes and conditions our daily lives as an inherited legacy and leads to a type of socio-cultural poverty in terms of consciousness and creative production. This has come about as a result of systems and institutions, which were essentially designed to maintain and enforce a certain type of cultural attitude that had its origins in the same 'centres', and where the notion of acculturation was and is the prescribed cultural norm for these dependent territories.

Counter to this cultural poverty however, alongside the antagonisms and conflicts, a system of what can be called indigenous values and thought processes, a characteristic way of looking at and perceiving the world, emerged. In other words, a regional social consciousness was forged and is reflected in the arts, literature, music, theatre, dance and religious practices. Against the backdrop of such contradictions, such contrariness, even such chaos, stands the unifying space, in which an identity that defies stasis, while it promotes order and stability is being forged. This concept of the 'local' sees Caribbeanness according to Édouard Glissant (1992, pp.221–22) as a thin thread woven together from one side of the Caribbean to the other. It is a culture-specific area with an African or East Indian base and a European peak, derived from plantations, insular civilisations, a language of compromise, general cultural phenomena of creolisation, patterns of encounter and synthesis, and a persistent African presence.

Nationalism and its construct

The consciousness that was forged had its origins in the independence struggles of the 1960s in the Caribbean region. It must be said that these efforts at

self-actualisation represent an exceptionally important period in the cultural life of these territories. The need for a reorientation of the culture found its formal outlets in institutions like national galleries and theatres, as well as in literature, music and dance with its concomitant festivals. This stimulated a national consciousness that looked beyond the universalist, global notion of 'social harmony', imported from the metropolis and conceived as the plantation model, to one of struggle that was defined indigenously and was democratically conscious of the historical legacy of the region. The 'nation' therefore played an important role as a site or locality/territory to be taken back from the coloniser, that is, from the global spread of empire that had determined the cultural formulations from inception. Patrick Taylor (1989, p.94) observes that, as a liberating narrative, the 'national' made the transformation of the drama of colonisation to the history of liberation possible.

This transition to politically independent states, the institutional phase of the liberation narrative, came with the expectation of a sustained effort at a reorientation of culture. In Barbados, an examination of the institutions and national events, whose features should have given a stronger sense of selfhood and identity nearly fifty years after their creation, reveals a kind of post-independence stasis as the determining feature of our cultural norms. What remains is in fact a vague cultural area that is polarised between a distancing 'afro-saxon' sensibility, to use Lloyd Best's descriptive term (2004), and token gestures of Afrocentricity combined with the intellectual remains of liberation ideas, and a sort of hysterical North American 'intervention' into the already splintered and fragile culture. The fact that there is still only a vague sense of national identity, one which is divisive and unruly, is perhaps due to an unremarkable production from the cultural areas (as outlined above), which have not allowed any kind of permeation into the society from these critical areas of orientation, a sort of negligence of their socio-cultural responsibility. These areas of cultural production or their lack will be addressed later in this article (under Institutions) and suggestions will be made of ways to encourage their development and sustainability.

In spite or perhaps because of the cultural conditions of the island of Barbados, the past two decades have witnessed the emergence of an 'alternative vision' of the Caribbean in the visual arts. This vision seeks to give legitimacy to certain forms and dismiss others. This approach suggests that the field of scholarship located in anti-imperial and anti-colonial battles has been fought, and that those visions and productions have been exhausted or dried up, or are deemed to be no longer relevant to our contemporary artistic cultural needs. The contemporary curators responsible for these decisions would have us believe that the 'national' should be seen as an outdated Afro-Caribbean concern and that contemporary new-media production offers a more 'nuanced' reality for the region.

This conceptual error seems to stem from the linking of 'national' with 'traditional' and does not take into account the uneven development of the 'traditional' to the 'modern', or even for that matter, to the 'contemporary' in these former colonies. It also denies the evolutionary development of new stories, new ways of thinking, new histories that come out of the same 'traditional' areas. I am suggesting that 'nationalism' should therefore not be seen as a national political unit linked to one ethnic group, but rather as an organic being that has been endowed with a uniqueness, a unique individuality, which should be acknowledged and cultivated by all in that particular society. This essentially paves the way for a concept of identity that takes into account and includes the significant historical, cultural changes and developments that have contributed to the ongoing developments in that particular place. This identity is therefore grounded and linked to a specificity of place.

Place as geographic location

Doreen Massey (1997) offers a conception of place in terms of qualities of uniqueness or specificity that holds additional promise. A place full of internal conflicts, not fixed but always in a state of change, capable of definitions not coming from the outside, but based on linkages with the outside, can enhance one's sense of identity in this troubled era of time-space compression, the result of globalisation.

This involves a character of place that is constructed through the linking of that specific place to areas beyond. This then demands a construction of your place, by the creative inhabitant who carries with him/her a kind of truth based on the lived experience. The descriptive creative practice that sheds light on this place resonates a kind of authenticity. This is perhaps one of the greatest challenges artists face: how to convey that lived intensity with identity that comes from being inhabited with and by place; that sense of inside-ness that brings with it an intuitive knowledge of place that goes way beyond surface appearances in representational forms. Location then becomes a conceptual tool to contextualise creative efforts. The representation of a place that is constructed on such specific historic principles of colonial expansion, conquest and domination, on such a structure of

violence, which brings with it an added obligation to reveal essential truths of that place, so Massey argues, particularly when significant elements remain embedded within that contemporary culture. If one is indeed trying to present a progressive sense of place, it would and should acknowledge those characteristics without being or feeling threatened by them.

Memory, trauma and the longue durée

Simon Schama (1995, pp.6–7) suggests that before it can be the repose for the senses, landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from memory as from layers of rock. Location affords belonging, memories, routines, visions, and containment, a bounded space, a space, as Simon Njami (2010) suggests, reflecting on the nature of islands, whose contours are defined by the inhabitants, where one becomes essentially the architect of one's own confinement. The imagination is then put to work to transcend the historical limitations on the place.

It is generally agreed by the poets in the Caribbean (e.g., Aimee Cesaire, Derek Walcott) that to work with the memory of slavery is to work without witnesses; to work with the ideas of places is to work without ruins or with the absence of archaeological stele, the stone slabs or columns of commemorative events. To do this is to examine traces from oral histories, objects, buildings, images and traditions. In certain territories, Barbados for example, the memory of slavery is suppressed in favour of the apparent necessity to transform reality towards an idea of future renewal. But a renewal of what? The visual arts are signs and manifestations that involve cultural linkages to the history of colonialism and control, and as such cultural memory represents a significant inclusion in the range of artistic production. The logic of not wanting to interrogate the colonial past for fear of a resurgence of 'social disruption' is one that effectively denies a country its history and memory. When living memory is no longer present what then are the forms of remembrance?

German art historian Detlef Hoffmann (2006) observes that in the short term the artistic response to horrific events is not a deep one. Artistic production only reaches a significant level, the second level, when feelings about what has been destroyed or eradicated, or what has been traumatising can perhaps be represented. This second level of cultural memory refers to the symbolic order in the form of representations, produced by media institutions and in artistic practices, by which a shared past is constructed by affected social groups. Artists need some distance, more distance in time and sometimes generational distance. This type of artistic production relates to the concept of the 'longue durée', the long, slow, silent, seemingly motionless character that it possesses. It is a form of artistic production conscious of trauma that attempts to open up the discourse between the political and the aesthetic, between history and text, between engagement and the mission and function of art in these territories no matter how troubling it is. Memory then becomes the catalyst for work that forms an interpretive study of these human experiences, sometimes in order to clarify and give significance to centres of one's own experience through the lived intensity of place. The resort to memory, as opposed to a nostalgic construction of tradition, can then be seen to be a form of resistance to the utopia of a globalised vision that denies personal memory. This resistance offers a way of re-anchoring ourselves in space and time. Memory then has a redemptive power in response to disruptions of globalisation and its associated loss of place, involving feelings of loss, rootlessness and not belonging.

In dealing with the relative weight of history and memory and the construction of place, my image of the iconic rocks off the east coast of Barbados, consumed by visitors and locals alike, presents a visual engagement with the history of representations of the island. This series of mine is an attempt to deconstruct notions of the Exotic. Outsider views of 'tropical paradise' are transformed into personal 'insider' memories and reflections on the significance of the land and the sea, and its associations with the Black Atlantic. By working with the two ideas simultaneously, the past is unfolded into the present and offers a reinterpretation of a past's determined iconography while providing a visual gateway to other forms of representations of the place. This creative exercise relates to the concept of auto-ethnography, in which the artist undertakes to describe his position through images that historically others have determined as pleasurable representations of place. This surfers' 'paradise' is in fact the Atlantic coast of the island. The pleasure paradise is then progressively deconstructed to gesture to an alternative reading of the Atlantic: a reminder of the middle passage to these shores and the cultural memory of death that is carried in these waters. This is suggested by the highly charged emotional use of colours and the turbulent expressive treatment of water. The same view is further fragmented with subsequent renderings, visually as well as metaphorically indicating a breaking up of this idyll. The process of deconstruction does not suggest that there is no history or subjectivity, but simply questions the privileging of identity, for instance in tourist brochures and their construction of 'truth'.

Figure 6.1: Winston Kellman, from the *Bathsheba Series,* 2012. Oil on canvas, 45 x 60cm. Private collection London. (Photo: Winston Kellman)
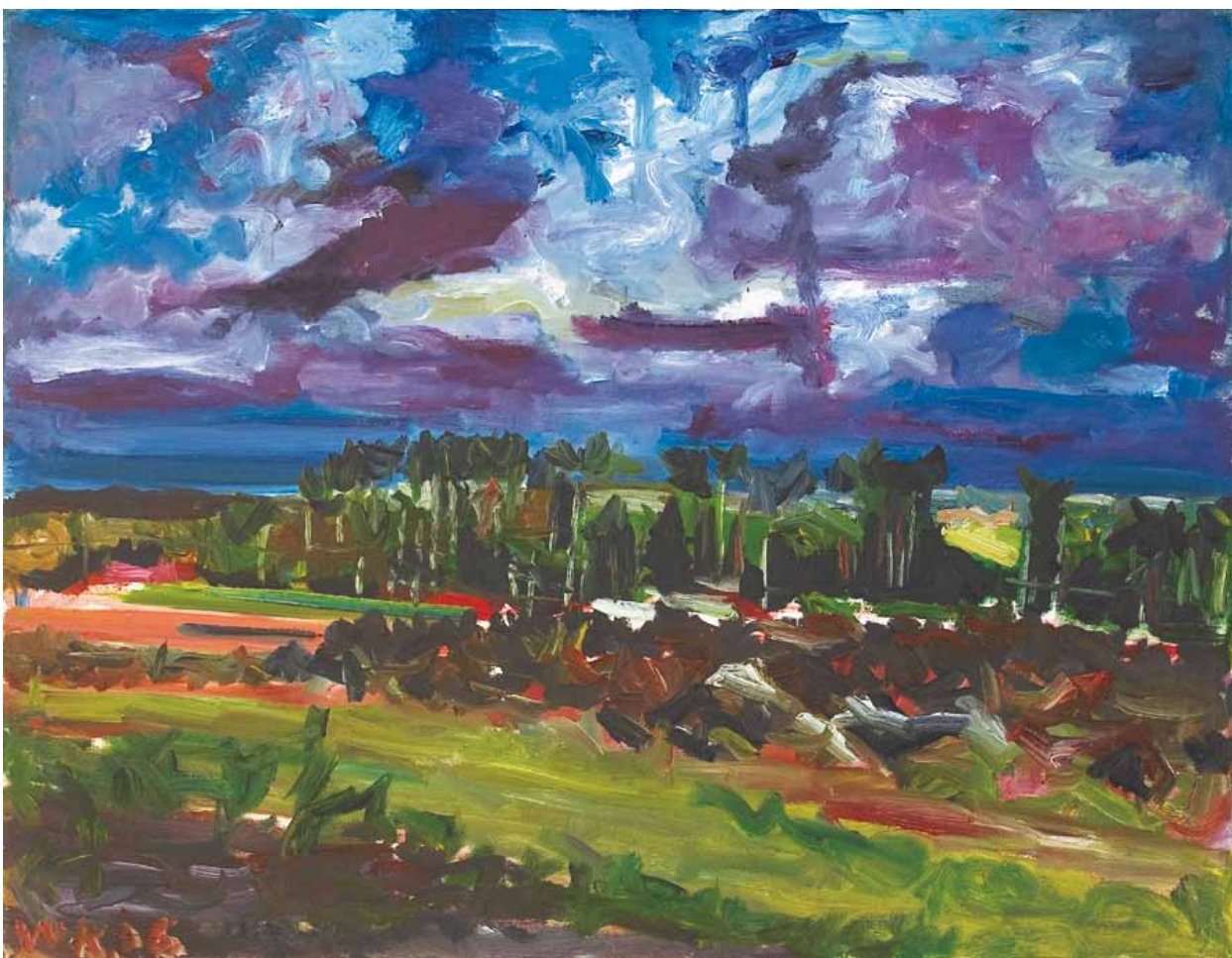

Figure 6.2: Winston Kellman, from the *Mud and Flowers Series*, 2004. Oil on canvas, 110 x 77cm. National Art Gallery of Barbados. (Photo: National Art Gallery Committee)

The material remains of processes that have shaped the land have informed the series of *Mud and Flowers*. The land is treated as an embodiment of cultural memory. These fields are essentially graveyards to the previously enslaved population, the negro yards, their material remains transformed into mud. Memory here is understood as that fluid negotiation between the desires of the present and legacies of the past. An attempt to represent the island that is neither the interpretation of an imposed colonial model or archetype, nor a false category of a mythic, nostalgic past, but rather an expression that allows memory to re-anchor and therefore hopefully to create a sense of belonging, bringing peace at sites of contestation.

Institutions and globalisation: United States and Caribbean art

Finding a place to exhibit artworks was always a major challenge for Caribbean artists as the need to be 'international' is seen as the final seal of success and approval for artists who are coming from that Caribbean space. With globalisation and the rise of the 'internationalisation' of Caribbean art which occurred in the past two decades, an analysis of the system reveals how the functioning and networks of curatorship and institutional policy have determined the outcomes and the visibility of Caribbean art.

This cultural shift towards the international occurred essentially in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the Caribbean region during this period, cultural loyalties were established based on shifting socio-political involvements, as well as available development and funding opportunities. In the English-speaking region, this was towards the USA and away from Great Britain, whose interests progressively dwindled following decolonisation. The United States therefore initiated these efforts with the first of the 'Caribbean Survey Exhibitions'. This was essentially the first of such exhibitions, focused on Caribbean carnival, under the heading 'Festival Arts'. It was supported by the Smithsonian Institute in 1989. This was really a travelling show and possibly set the tone for others to follow.

In the catalogue for the most recent exhibition in 2012, entitled 'Caribbean Art Crossroads of the World' (Cullen and Fuentes, 2012), Edward T. Sullivan (2012) charts the rise and development of these 'themed shows' up to the present. The contemporary Caribbean shows of the last decade and their continual proliferation appears, on examination, to be dominated by curators and critics attached to those large US institutions, museums and universities (like the Brooklyn Museum and the Art Museum of the Americas, Washington), who seem to possess what can only be described as a shared knowledge of theory, expertise and curatorial preference as demonstrated by an unrelenting sameness of selection. This privileged insider position for the most part dictates the funding and sponsoring opportunities. They function as essentially brokers between the institutions and funding agencies and as such determine what gets visibility as definitive of the region.

These groups of individuals, the international curators, are themselves trans-cultural, global operators and therefore do not demonstrate any real cultural-historical loyalty to any area. They interpret Caribbean cultures according to themselves, which creates and contributes to the disseminating practice of what is remembered as cultural definitions of the places covered in these exhibitions. In doing this, it again confirms and reinforces views and definitions from outside the region as the determining and significant cultural features of these local cultures. This is effectively achieved and constructed by a form of saturation of the field of production by what is deemed contemporary effectively eradicating any semblance of a 'past' Caribbean, which is actually still presently unfolding. These areas include thematic renderings of creolisation, migration, diaspora, digitally driven communication, installation and performance to the exclusion of other areas that are seen as traditionally orientated, for example, painting and sculpture. Painting and sculpture have been ascribed the qualities of possessing an assumed backwardness, thus representing media that must presumably be overcome in order to qualify for entry into the ranks of the contemporary.

In addition to the medium, the themes of the exhibitions, given and decided by the curators, impose limitations. In an insightful essay on African diasporic art history, Krista Thompson (2011, pp.19-20) makes the observation that some parties, in hailing creolisation and cultural blending, may in fact be hostile to the idea of African diasporic cultures. In the broader, theoretical claiming of diaspora, the term becomes less associated with place, that is, with Africa, and more with a process of becoming. This non-acknowledgement of place therefore presents a number of obstacles to cultural development especially in societies where the African diasporic presence and perspective is subsumed into a category of non-importance as it relates to dominant cultural norms, and where the cultural origins and formulations of society deny or ignore constituent components of that same history.

This form of 'Internationalism', seen from the region, is predominately driven by a North American perspective, where funding is supported by institutions (linked to universities or colleges) and museums that

claim to represent a Caribbean diaspora. Hence, the wide geographical catchment areas of these themed exhibitions. The very real possibility of collapsing the Caribbean into this new world space in fact leaves the physical, actual Caribbean behind or out of the question of relevance. Does a physical Caribbean exist as a tangible lived place? Is it of interest to anyone? Does its history, memory and the daily grind of the imaginary, and by extension its future, have a place in the story of Caribbean art?

These particular concepts of the global Caribbean, which have been applied to contemporary art, run I believe the risk of over-determining the Caribbean, as they operate entirely in the realms of theory and abstraction, neglecting both concrete events and processes that are occurring in the present. The result is a reduction of the reality of life and the overshadowing of daily engagements 'on the ground', while at the same time ignoring the possibility of developing narratives at the source and site of continued contestation. This is a significant omission in Caribbean art.

The fact that some institutions in the Caribbean region seem to encourage the production of work to meet the market needs of an outward/international-looking audience means, to some extent, that younger artists are in danger of denying their lived realities in order to find acceptance in this more globalised space. It is possible to observe that lived realities are now being constructed in this virtual space and actual physical space does not represent a significant reality in any form. This formulation however, does not sufficiently factor in the economic dimension to the production that drives this form of creativity (an advanced technological set of aesthetic practices), which is still enacted at the 'local'. There is still a general understanding that without resources, infrastructure, funding, a certain ease of travel, access to technological systems, easy involvement and access to this virtual world, the production possibilities for digital works, installations and large-scale 'conceptual' works, could and will be compromised or limited to available infrastructure. This then introduces and renders an unsustainable element to the production because it is ultimately predicated on an economic assumption of stability at the site of production. The idea of economic stability for the inhabitants of the region has always been a contested notion.

With this avenue of visibility secured through the same universities and museums, and facilitated by travelling curators, the acceptance factor for recognition now becomes an issue, and another dynamic unfolds. What is occurring in these societies is in fact an adaptation to a new situation defined by relations between the dominant and the dominated. These themed shows essentially occupy a peripheral place in the global art markets. If and when they make their appearances, they are essentially tacked on to 'bigger ideas' coming from the usual centres New York, Washington, New Jersey and several other large American cities. Their interloper status is confirmed by the general aura of provincialism clinging to the exhibited works as they fill the appropriate gap for 'Caribbean art'. The follow-up usually reveals a lack of positive reviews, dealerships or representation in these same centres, if and when they are acknowledged in the (inter)national press.

This paradoxical situation of wanting to belong and being dissatisfied at the level of belonging can be traced to the degree of control determined by institutional involvement and management in the region. How much autonomy does the region have when presenting itself? What are the policies that determine involvement? Who are the facilitators? How do we represent ourselves? All of these questions are to a great extent tied to local institutional policy and decision.

The very agents who help to generate production in the region through institutions, and the roles they have played and continue to play in shaping and developing artistic production, have to be considered ready for re-evaluation if we are to remain optimistic about artistic production and sustainability.

Institutions and globalisation: United Kingdom and Caribbean art

Stuart Hall (1990) states that in culture, the polarising tendencies present everywhere in that highly contradictory formation called 'globalisation' (between the pull towards fundamentalism, ethnic and religious particularism on the one hand and the homogenising, evangelising assimilations on the other) have left the ground in-between more embattled. On the other hand, the black diaspora arts stand in a more engaged position in relation to contemporary art practice, in part because the art world has been obliged to become more 'global', though some parts of the globe remain, in this respect, more 'global' than others.

The institutional involvement of the Caribbean with Britain that began in the colonial period has continued into the present and charts the socio-cultural involvement through the arts from dependent territories to independent states. Institutional structures were initiated through the British Council, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Arts Council of Great Britain and the Commonwealth Institute, meaning that continuity was determined by

collaborations. The local, infrastructural, educational component and the 'international opportunities' for exposure were some of the ways the region benefited from these arrangements. The reciprocal benefits to Britain can be assumed to be in the areas of showing the absorption of multicultural influences in society, a consequence of the colonial involvement. In 1948, what was originally the Commonwealth of Nations under the colonial British crown was reconfigured as the Commonwealth of Independent Nation. Part of this organisation's mandate was to create cultural, educational and economic exchanges and the Commonwealth Institute in London became an important venue.

Initially, this commonwealth generation of artists, those who went to Britain, had some measure of support and recognition. The varying outcomes for most of these artists is testimony to the uncertain value of their acceptance as part of a British artistic avant-garde in the 1960s, as the careers and reputations of these artists have yet to receive serious scholarly attention. Jean Fisher (2009) in her thought-provoking essay on the 1989 exhibition 'The Other Story', a survey exhibition in London at the Hayward Gallery curated by Rasheed Araeen, suggests other reasons for this falling off of interest. One main reason was that by 1973 the British Government had lost its enthusiasm for the Commonwealth as an economic and cultural market and joined the European Community. At the same time, Britain was increasing political associations with the USA, and the Caribbean was dropped from the cultural list of important areas. The Commonwealth Institute continued with reduced activities because of difficulties with funding and support. One of the first major international art events for the region coming out of Britain was the exhibition '1492–1992: A New Look at Caribbean Art' (Un Nouveau Regard sur Les Caribes) at Espace Carpeaux, Courbevoie, France, which was sponsored and facilitated by the Commonwealth Institute in 1992.

This exhibition still has a particular significance for me in both personal and professional terms. I was a participating artist representing Barbados, and 1992 was also the year I relocated to Barbados after having been a London-based artist for two decades. This was the first exhibition of Caribbean art in Europe that reflected on post-colonial legacies. However, it did this within a frame that involved the quincentenary 'celebration' of Columbus' arrival in the new world. This resulted in a number of contested situations in the region that challenged the 'celebratory' position of the exhibition, and there were deliberately staged alternative exhibitions that suggested counter-narratives and other stories of Columbus' arrival in the region, for example, 'Haiti/500 Years' by Jean-Marie Drot and Florence Alexis. This exhibition traced the history of Haiti from 1492-1992, as recounted by its painters, a response to the other self-celebrating ceremonies at the time. Although well intended, and global in its reach, the disappointments of '1492-1992: A New Look at Caribbean Art', again showed how there was a (dis)connection between local and global expectations for Caribbean arts.

It has been noted that the last decade, at the turn of the twenty-first century, has brought about an important shift with the emergence of British-born black artists who have the same Commonwealth-Caribbean genealogy. Unlike the Commonwealth generation of artists, they have insisted in getting their voices heard and articulating their relevance to British society through art and education, possibly because there was 'nowhere to return to'; the option offered to and taken by some Commonwealth artists of the previous generation. This is indeed a considerable achievement given the relative economic disadvantages and socio-political hostilities directed at this group of British citizens during this period.

These black British artists have in turn have demonstrated an acknowledgement of past legacies and have moved to forge links with the Caribbean by setting up initiatives for bringing educational and exhibition possibilities to the region through this shared historical connection. This took the form of the Black Diaspora Visual Arts Symposium in 2009 and the International Curators Forum, an open conceptual network that was designed to meet emerging issues of curatorial practice in relation to the international circuit. In essence, it is this British Commonwealth connection, the history that links Britain to its former colonies that presents the possibility of connectivity at the critical site of cultural convergence, this acknowledgement of the shared past. It is through institutions like this, in my view, that sustainability can be considered through the creative linking of resources and educational opportunities that are bilateral, collaborative and discursive in approach.

The local-global alliance: the idea of the Commonwealth as a site of regeneration

What I would now like to propose is the notion of the 'commonwealth' as a site of hope, a cultural institution if you like, but in fact it is more 'the ideals of a Commonwealth', in the sense of mutual exchanges based on a recognition of shared identities defined by the entanglements of colonial history. This acknowledgement I believe, is crucial in the English-speaking Caribbean and Barbados in particular.

In a very interesting and thought-provoking essay on the legacies of colonialism, Ruth Craggs (2010) concludes her extensive investigations by suggesting that a Commonwealth that insists on its modernity and its break from the past, yet continues to unquestioningly utilise ideas that originate in imperial discourse and practice will struggle to overcome the deep inequalities and problematic relationships on which these ideas are based. In summary, a Commonwealth that is open but critical of its imperial heritage can be more successful in its stated aims of reducing economic and socio-political inequality.

These ideas that argue for bringing the Commonwealth as a concept or an area of cultural involvement into critical view, fostered through sites and schemes such as exhibition spaces and financial support for scholarship would promote an understanding of the networks that continue to link Britain to its former colonies creating what could possibly be seen as a creative bridge between the local and the global. In this area of reflection on ideas and analysis, particular descriptions of shared experiences can create a site of shared heritage that I believe is an avenue for growth and sustainability as both sides of the story will have to be articulated with regard to their present positions.

Funding and sponsorship which looks at a shared responsibility, as opposed to one that dictates the terms of engagement based on narrow concepts of 'inclusion,' which in essence means that the region should try to 'catch up' with an established mainstream, therefore holds to my mind more hope for arts communities in the Caribbean.

An aesthetics of place or visual arts as post-colonial response

Octavio Paz (1961) states that art cannot be reduced to the land, the people and the time that produce it, nevertheless it is inseparable from them. It escapes history, but is marked by it. Place then sets the frame of reference for the analysis; location matters, because the drama of colonisation took place *somewhere*.

In these post-modern times, painting exists generally in a constant curious relationship between its present situation deemed passé or moribund, and its past heritage of traditional importance. Did it ever have credibility in the Caribbean as an artistic form? Its continual presence allows us however to review the various ways of viewing the 'past' in the region and by virtue of the short period of modern developments in the visual arts, it can therefore function first and foremost as a reflective field.

Why are they still painting when all around technology seems to have determined the means of artistic communication? The simple answer is that this direct way of constructing forms of representation speaks to an engagement, a bodily engagement, a ritual that has its roots in a particular place and time. It also acknowledges the accumulation of related experiences through a sustained involvement with the medium. The works by both artists in this article therefore suggest how this artistic production located within local histories and memories helps us deconstruct particular readings of history, and how historical content can be the catalyst used to inform artistic creations. This reinterpretation or (re)presentation heightens our awareness and sensitivities, and leads us to the formation of new realities.

In the works of Ras Ishi Butcher, the images of place reveal an interest in transformations of history and culture.

Figure 6.3: Ras Ishi Butcher, *Piece of the Rock*, 2006-08. Mixed Media, 167.6 x 416.5cm. Collection the artist. (Photo: Ras Ishi Butcher)

The chattel house and the colonial plantation figure, two iconic motifs relating to the colonial past and present, are separated by a gulf of historical details. These details of personal observation, art-historical references and collective images of cultural domestic details serve as an anchor to these two polarities. The narrative therefore is one of separate existences in the same place although a shared history links them. The fact that they are presented together in one piece creates a stark graphic image of social separation, a separation the artist insists remains present in contemporary society, and leaves the field open to speculation on the consciousness each area has of the other's existence.

These works although painted in the early 1990s carry a strong cultural emotional charge as they refer to an actual, present landscape activity, that of indentured labourers working in the canefields on the

Figure 6.4: Ras Ishi Butcher, *Black Orchids*, 1993. Oil on canvas, 152.4 x 189.9cm. Private collection Barbados. (Photo: Ras Ishi Butcher)

plantation. The formal language is one of abstraction and figuration, demonstrating a skilful use of the medium that does not obscure the conceptual ideas. Indeed this use of painting strengthens these ideas as it presents the multiple layers of images and activity simultaneously. Workers are completely integrated into the body of the works, so as to make them almost indistinguishable from the land. The workers of the land become the land. A potent series of paintings, which to my mind give layers of meaning to the expressions 'shaping the land' or 'sons and daughters of the soil', as well as the notion that identity is intricately intertwined with the land and its history.

Conclusion

These works are essentially based on emotional responses to the landscape. By emphasising our surroundings as active forces, the environment is used not only to reinterpret the past but also to conceptualise new subjectivities. The emotions play a significant role in the way that memories are shaped by art production. The vantage point of 'painting emotion' – a structure of feeling – allows space for indigenous artists to address social issues within a framework of self-determination, decolonisation and social justice.

Without a deeper knowledge of one's place and faithfulness to it, it is inevitable that place will be used and described carelessly, perhaps eventually even destroyed. The art produced will be superficial and decorative, functioning only as a symbol of prestige, the attributes of an 'in-group'.

The works I have examined are concerned with showing landscapes of memory and history, beyond the associations of the tropics as a scene of pleasure. Such painted landscapes carry the 'uncomfortable truths' of loss, pain, trauma and deep social fractures, the other elements that serve as a horizon for memory.

Places and communities such as ours, that have undergone brutal violent histories, are now in the process of forging a collective identity no matter how hybrid or fragmented that identity may have been before, during or after colonisation. As such, the retrieval and re-inscription of a fragmented past becomes a crucial contemporary site for determining a resistant collective identity. Hopefully, such an approach can provide the possibility of a reconciliation with the historical past, and lead to a deeper understanding of the cultural heritage of place.

Artists whose position or frame of reference is still an African diasporic one are finding themselves included among selections of contemporary art from the Caribbean region, and this inscribes a sense of presence and indeed a greater sense of place itself.

Establishing this sense through art serves the purpose of expanding awareness of the Caribbean – taking us beyond the status of being just a holiday destination or simply a place you pass through. In turn, this will assist in the goal of locating Caribbean arts communities that are worth sustaining.
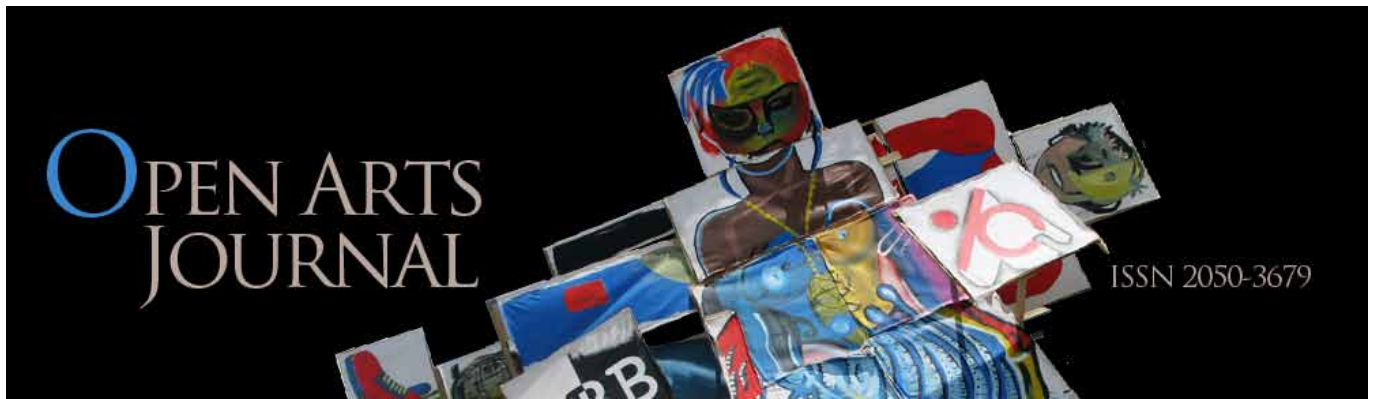
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RANDNOTIZEN: NOTES FROM THE EDGE
Nicholas Morris

Abstract
The 'practice of art' – taken here to mean communication through the expressive manipulation of objects – may be described as a torch-lit search, aided only by a fragmentary map: an artwork flashes up to briefly illuminate the location and imagination of the artist. In this text, Nicholas Morris uses self-examination to describe some examples of such moments of illumination for a Caribbean artist living first 'at home' and then in diaspora. A series of movements as a practising artist and educator, migrating between various locations in the Caribbean and in other cultural and linguistic spaces, are addressed in the following. They show up the unevenness of the existing support structures for art, as well as perceptions of appropriate creative or critical spaces in transitional regions and, finally, at the edge – for example, at 'frontiers' such as central Germany.

Biographical note
Nicholas Morris was born in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1967. Having spent his early life in Jamaica and Barbados, he received a BA in Visual Studies from Dartmouth College, USA, in 1989, a Postgraduate Diploma in Visual Art from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art in Scotland in 1990 and an MFA from Stanford University, USA, in 1994. A tutor for painting and installation at the Edna Manley College of Visual and Performing Arts in Kingston from 1995 to 2001, he is now living, working and teaching in Darmstadt, Germany, and visits his grandchildren in Manchester, UK, as often as he can.

Related material to this article was presented at the two project conferences for 'Sustainable Art Communities: Creativity and Policy in the Transnational Caribbean', held on 5–6 February 2013 (Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam; KIT, the Netherlands Royal Tropical Institute), and 3–4 December 2013 (Institute for International Visual Arts, Iniva, London, UK). Visit the project webpages here.

To view the film footage on the Open Arts Archive, www.openartsarchive.org, follow this link:
http://www.openartsarchive.org/archive/1st-conference-sustainable-art-communities-creativity-and-policy-transnational-caribbean-10

RANDNOTIZEN: NOTES FROM THE EDGE

Nicholas Morris, Artist and Art Educator, Kingston/Jamaica and Darmstadt/Germany

The first illustration is *Denkzeichen Güterbahnhof* in Darmstadt, Germany, a public memorial to the resident Jews and Roma who were deported to concentration camps from the local freight train station during the Nazi regime. It consists essentially of tracks and a glass cube measuring just over 150cm on each side. This cube is filled with the names of the deported, engraved onto glass that then was broken into shards.

To get closer to my work as an artist, it might be helpful to look at a few of the shapes I claim to contain: I was born in Jamaica and raised in Jamaica and Barbados. I have lived and been educated in the USA and the UK. My German passport is one result of that country's naturalisation process and my loss of a Jamaican passport is a second result. My home today is in Darmstadt, roughly in the geographical middle of today's Germany. I am of Ibo, other West African, Irish, English, German and Portuguese descent, as far as I know. My father's grandparents were Sephardic Jews and I was raised more or less as a Protestant Christian. At least one great-grandparent of my mother experienced, as a child, actual slavery, as well as its official end in Jamaica; at exactly the same time but in a very different, nearby space, another child who also would become a great-grandparent of my mother lost the ownership of slaves he otherwise would have inherited. At home with two older generations of my family, English was spoken for shopping lists, Spanish for secrets and Jamaican for emphasis.

In the Caribbean, of course, such a family is not unusual. However, despite producing me – and very many others like me – I see the elements mentioned as remaining irreconcilable, instead of passively 'melting' over generations to form an unarticulated 'pot'.

Forged through the ongoing movement from state to state, such lists of multiple connections could also be made in the future: my granddaughter may also one day describe who she believes to be. She may cite, for example, a Jewish father and a Muslim mother, both from families with histories of violent displacement, or
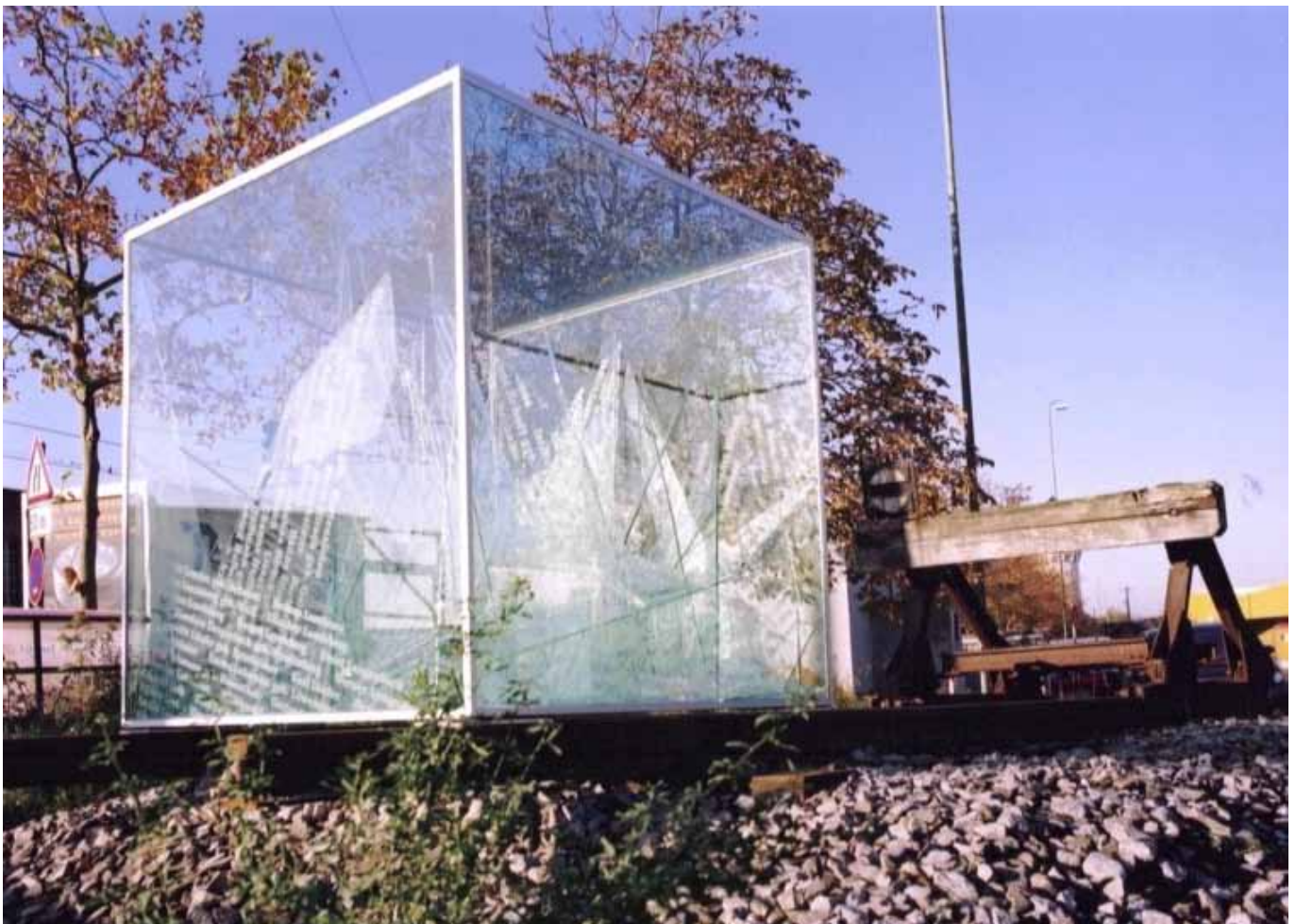

Figure 7.1: Nicholas Morris and Ritula Fränkel, *Denkzeichen Güterbahnhof (Freight train station sign of thought)*, completed 2006. Glass, steel, wood, stone, c.250 x 300 x 500cm. Public installation, Darmstadt, Germany. (Photo: Renate Gruber)

she may examine the global geometry formed by linking the geographical and temporal points from which her forebears set off. Today, she speaks English and German and understands Bangla. She has three grandparents with Jamaican passports, but hers is British and she attends preschool in Manchester. Is she 'Caribbean'? I do not really know. Perhaps I should be asking instead, what 'being Caribbean' will mean when she is old enough to articulate the concept.

In the house I mentioned, the maps I played with as a child were simple, bright-coloured tools. On almost all of them, Jamaica loomed large, while Ireland was easily noticeable, and Africa's valleys were locatable in space but somehow, nonetheless, further away in time. Cuba was on a particular, separate map for ceremonies such as on those evenings when my grandparents would dance. Germany, the place brought to Jamaica in the trunk of an unimaginable great-grandfather – and the land in which I would be naturalised more than a hundred years later – was an unfocused white space.

Two conversations in my early years in Germany show the differences between maps, on a terrain that this particular great-grandfather indeed may have been unable to draw. I will recount one now and the other later in this text.

Having just completed the *Denkzeichen* work, I was approached in the hall of my school by a fellow teacher. With the opening 'Was fällt Ihnen ein?' (a strong admonition that is formulated literally as 'What is falling to you [from elsewhere, unexpectedly]?' and would compare with an accusatory 'What were/are you thinking?'), she questioned my being qualified to address the German past. Her argument was that an immigrant, fundamentally and inalterably unable to grasp the history of a new land in its breadth and depth, could not claim entitlement to publish an opinion on this history. She supposed that my opinion could be based only on a particularly incomplete knowledge. Sheer politeness would recommend silence: it would never have fallen to her, she said, to go to Jamaica to say anything to anybody. Her final question seemed to me even more aggressive and desperate: 'Sind Sie Betroffener?' 'Have you been affected (by it)?'

In her statements and questions, I heard not only a reminder that I was not and could not be German, as well as the suspicion that I was not even Jewish or Roma, but furthermore an insistence that I was not really in Germany at all: that my work of art was a confusion between a sketch that I had drawn for myself and the land on which I had mistakenly assumed to be standing and looking. I stuttered to say that I had already seen precisely what she could not imagine: that most of the histories of my home region were tied to literally new objects with assumedly older meanings:

Figure 7.2: *Denkzeichen*, detail. (Photo: Renate Gruber)

'African' drums and ceremonial abeng horns in the village of Accompong, my grandparents' 'Irish' furniture in Kingston or the slanted roofs of German-Jamaican houses in Seaford Town, prepared generations ago for snow that never came. All these were created under duress by people who came from elsewhere and chose, or were forced, to speak in new languages about the fragments of things that they had brought, found and made.

In this light, my accusing colleague's last question may be seen as an attempt to locate me among the glass shards, implicit as an unborn ghost hovering beside the name of perhaps another great-great-grandfather who had never managed to leave Germany for Jamaica. This sort of vanishing – my not-being-there – would have made me easier for her to find.

The irony that my colleague was a German teaching French in Germany occurred to me only later.

The first segments of my work were perhaps as simple as the childhood maps I have attempted to describe. I thought of myself as a still-life painter, making images of things to show other people what, where and how I thought these things were.

Citing the European still-life tradition seemed perfect and appropriate to me – as much as I thought about something so self-obvious at the time. Such a practice was 'perfect' in the sense that modernist investigations of simultaneities in form, surface, standpoint and time seemed graphically related to a sort of Caribbean multiplicity that I knew well. Still-life was 'appropriate' because of my continued acceptance of a Jamaican, middle-class privilege that, in its broadest sense,

Figure 7.3: Nicholas Morris, *Still life*, 1989. Mixed media on paper on canvas, 80 x 80cm. Private collection, Kingston, Jamaica. (Photo: Nicholas Morris)

specifically allowed the choice of a language.

One must remember, nonetheless, that upon my return to Jamaica in the mid-1990s, after studying and making art in the USA and Europe, I was just one of a newer generation of painters, photographers and installation artists in Kingston – including Petrona Morrison, Charles Campbell and Roberta Stoddart – who were also resettling there, or passing through. We had 'come back' after family emigration or education abroad, and were eager to ask through our artworks or in other ways about what Jamaica was, or might be or could be or should be. We were concerned about what one had missed and missed out on, as well as what one should have been catching up on. Of course, such observers and commentators were also, by their presence, changing the nature of the thing observed

and, in turn, observing and postulating channels for this change. Several artists, such as Morrison and Campbell, assumed temporary roles as journalists and curators, while also publicly posing the unanswerable question of a 'fair' language for the discussion of art in Jamaica (Campbell, 1998, p.1D).

Contemporary critical texts, such as in the very first issue of the *Small Axe* (see in particular Paul, 1997) and an essay in the *Jamaica Journal* (Poupeye, 1998), as well as earlier public discussions surrounding the 'Young Talent' exhibition in the National Gallery of Jamaica (1995) and the 'Young Generation' exhibition in the Mutual Life Gallery (1993), suggest that significant and lasting insecurities were shared by these artists and their public. Linked to ideas of legitimacy, entitlement and the very ephemeral but very desirable
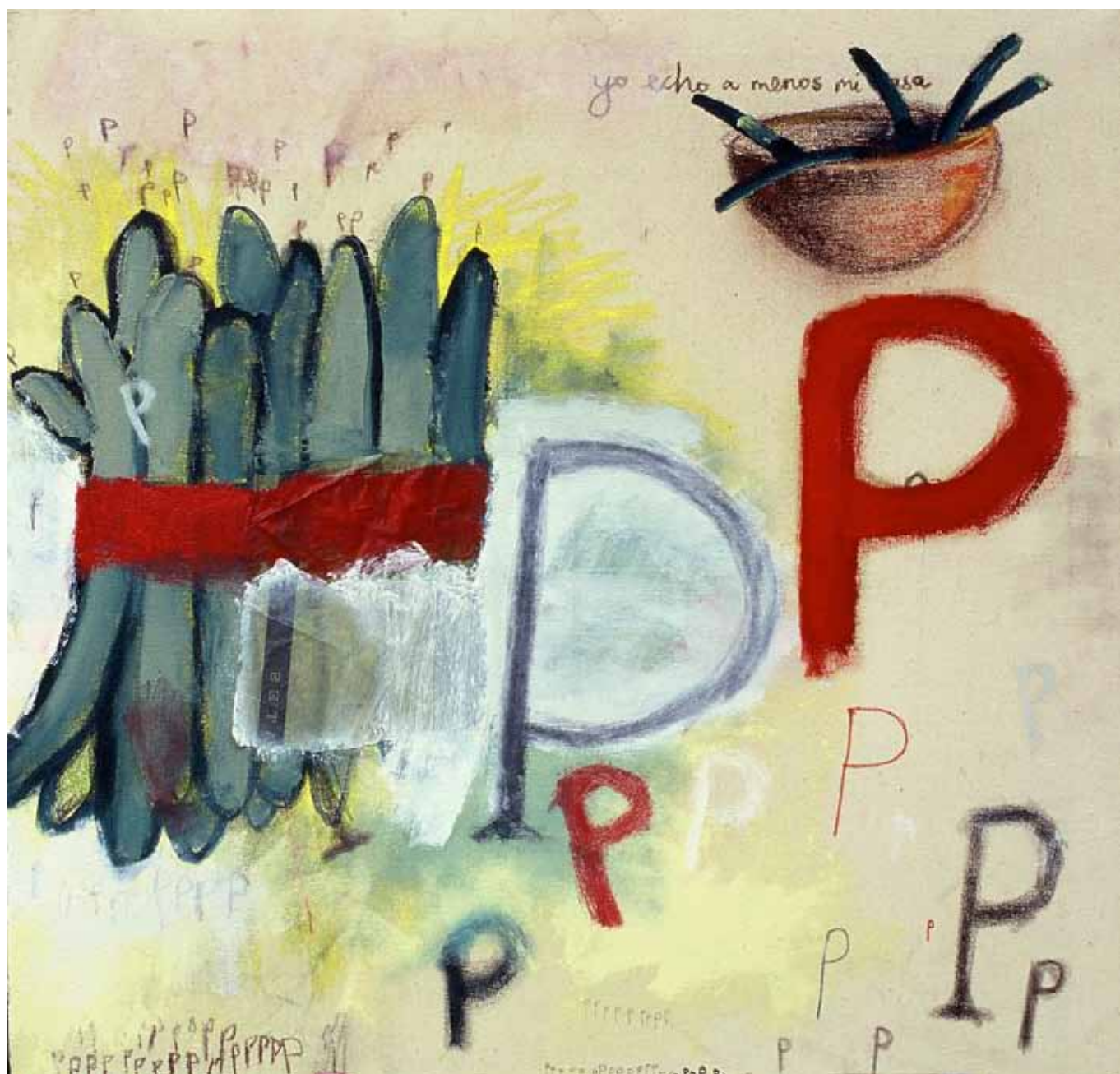
Figure 7.4: Nicholas Morris, *Still life*, 1992. Mixed media on canvas, 75 x 75cm. Private collection, Palo Alto, USA. (Photo: Nicholas Morris)

'authenticity' and 'honesty' of a work, these insecurities were perhaps comparable to those felt by my fellow teacher later in Darmstadt. In Jamaica, however, these particular qualities also seemed knotted with an equally ephemeral concept of 'identity', which was part of an unresolved struggle to integrate ambiguous ideas around the role and mandate of a 'pure' or 'undiluted' Jamaican artist, as already articulated by the curator David Boxer in 'The Intuitive Eye' exhibition at the National Gallery (1979).

In the mid- to late 1990s, installation artists such as Petrona Morrison and Lawrence Graham-Brown sought such authenticity through the personal voice that directly addressed issues of chosen and unchosen 'otherness' within specifically local contexts. Radical positions towards absolute Jamaicanness were being assumed by a group of mixed-media artists centred around tutors of the Edna Manley School of Art, where I had begun to teach. Curated during this period by David Boxer was the exhibition 'Black as Colour', staged at the National Gallery of Jamaica (1997). It presented an examination of the particularly Jamaican vocabulary of colour, material and texture, while a series of contemporary drawings by Robert Cookhorne addressed 'authenticity' in some of its personal, ethnic and political contexts by incorporating the actual hair of the artist himself. In several installations by the artist Cheryl Phillips (Netifnet Maat-Ra), the machete as a found object posed actual, physical danger. Declaring this tool and weapon to be

Figure 7.5: Nicholas Morris, *Landscape*, 1990. Oil on canvas, 90 x 90 cm. Private collection, Dundee, Scotland. (Photo: Nicholas Morris)

a more closely charged symbol of Jamaica's past and present than the official images of the hummingbird or lignum vitae tree, her works essentially and effectively made their own space un-crossable and un-negotiable. A discussion of 'authenticity' in this frame was cast as the relation of the artist and viewer to 'inside' and 'outside' – or 'nearer' and 'farther' – spaces.

For my part however, I imagined my return to Jamaica as a negotiation similar to the processes taking place on the surface of an artwork. The elements in my paintings had broken apart into formal experiments with surface and high-key colour. Painting canvases on the floor, I imagined a viewer searching for landmarks from above.

Begun in Scotland, these imaginary views formed the conceptual basis for a later series of real and imaginary flags painted in Jamaica.

The soft fantasy landscapes had to be compared and combined with the hard meanings of flags. The painterly efforts were intended to introduce time, subjectivity and movement into these otherwise fixed spaces. My personal ideas about these flags had been tested. Having spent my early adulthood going between the Caribbean, the USA and Europe, I had been made very aware of the business of crossing and the separate business of staying; of the power concentrated at borders; and what may seem to be a simple, hanging, coloured cloth above a gate.

These paintings were sometimes also conceived as windows and they led to my first successful installations: a series of false doors. One of these was for the Annual National Exhibition in 2000, painted directly onto an inner wall of the National Gallery in Kingston. The institution itself is obviously an influential one in the region, and it may be imagined in part as a moveable set of gates between various stakeholders who steer and structure the production and maintenance of values assigned to art in Jamaica – an administrative agency that also certifies or assigns various values to Jamaican art for those outside of Jamaica.

These formal, painterly reductions also gave rise to a series of self-portraits. These sought to describe some unrealised ambitions, such as with *Self-portrait as a writer*. Or else the portraits resulted in a row of formal works intended to re-use the graphic mechanisms of the flag in order to convey intimate and incomplete messages to an imaginary and solitary viewer and reader. Over time, these images lost almost all colour and began to refer directly to the figure.

Figure 7.6: Nicholas Morris, *Flag*, 1992. Mixed media on paper, 40 x 50 cm. Collection of the artist, Kingston, Jamaica. (Photo: Nicholas Morris)
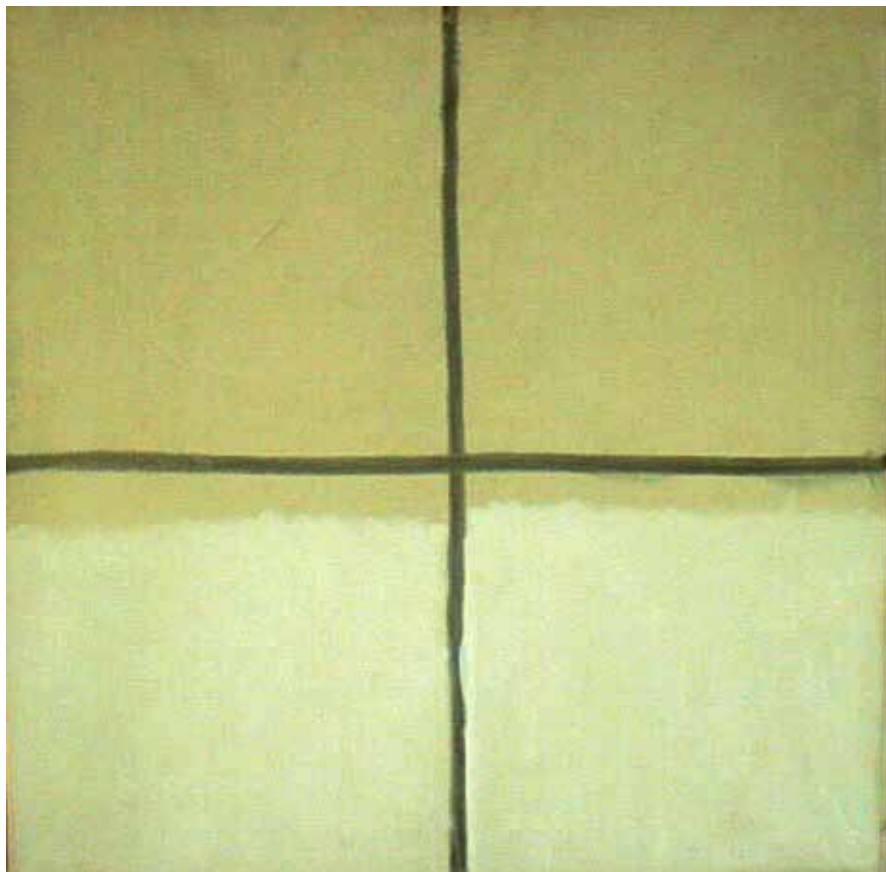
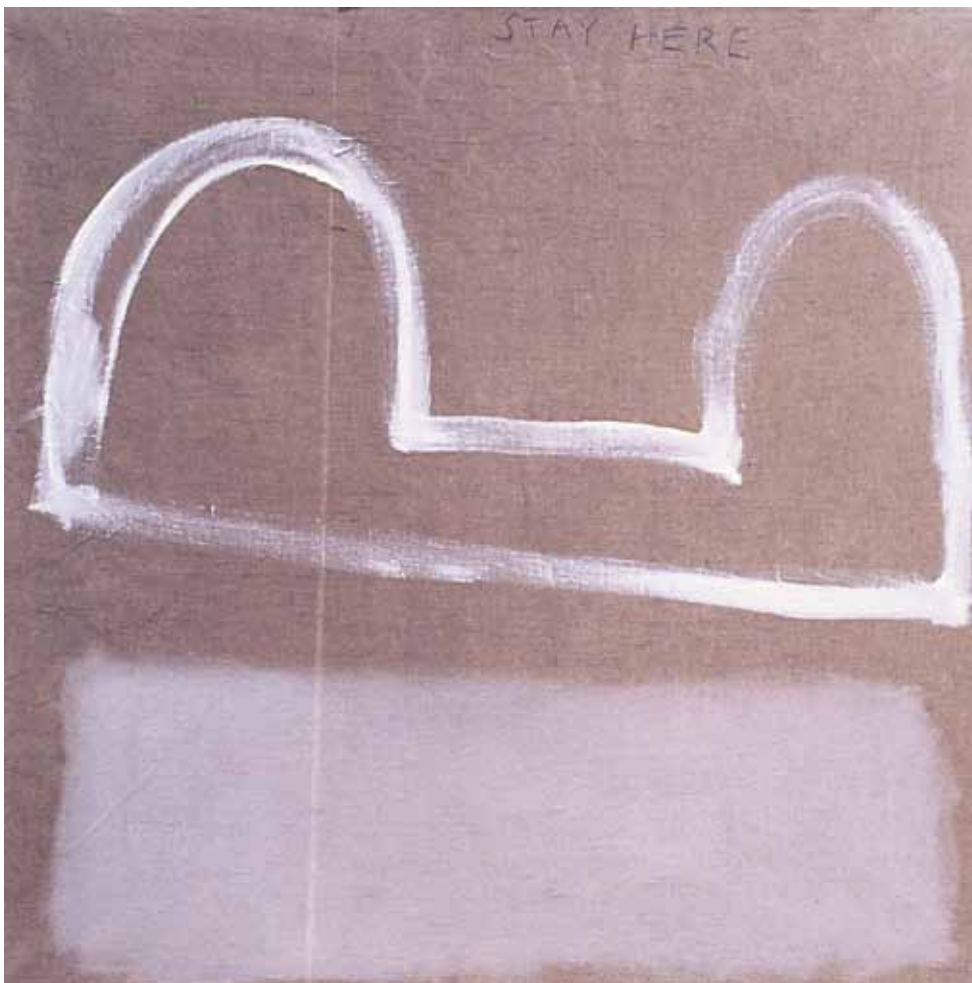Figure 7.7: Nicholas Morris, *A view to Germany*, 1995. Mixed media on paper on canvas, 80 x 80cm. Private collection, Kingston, Jamaica.
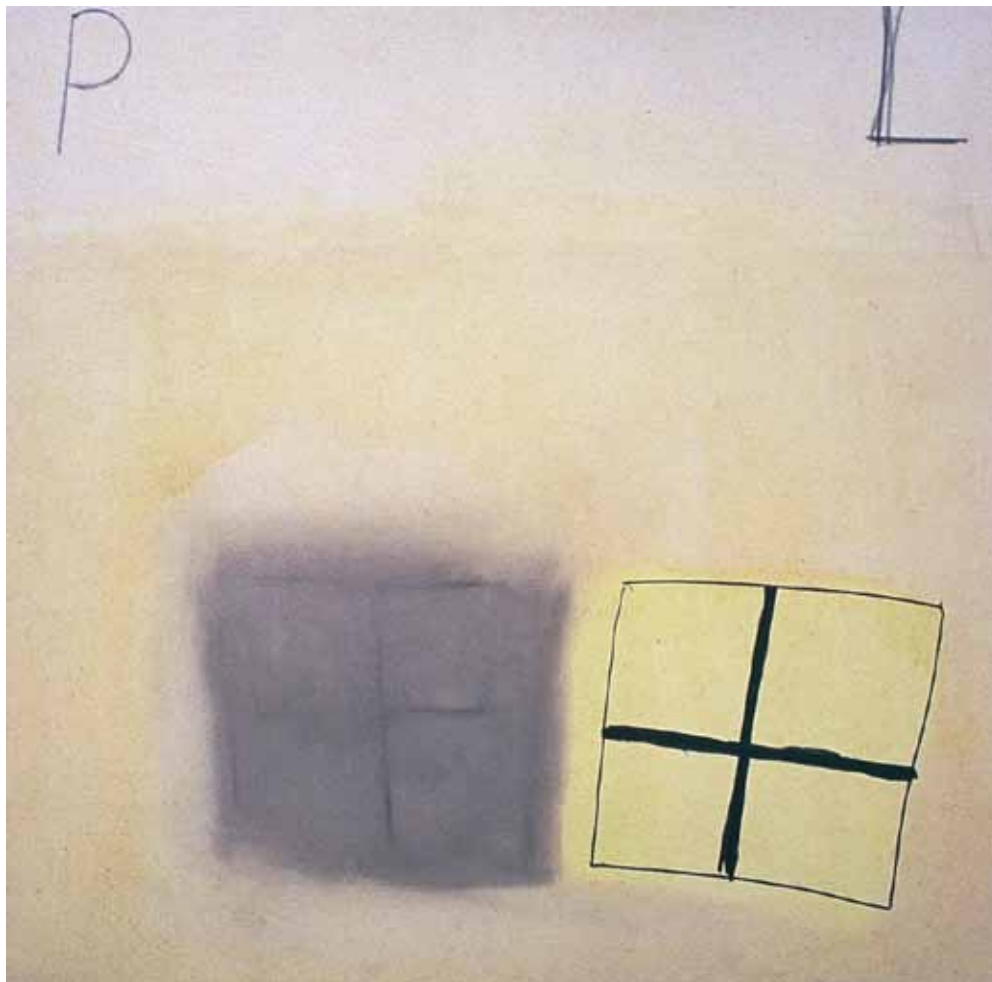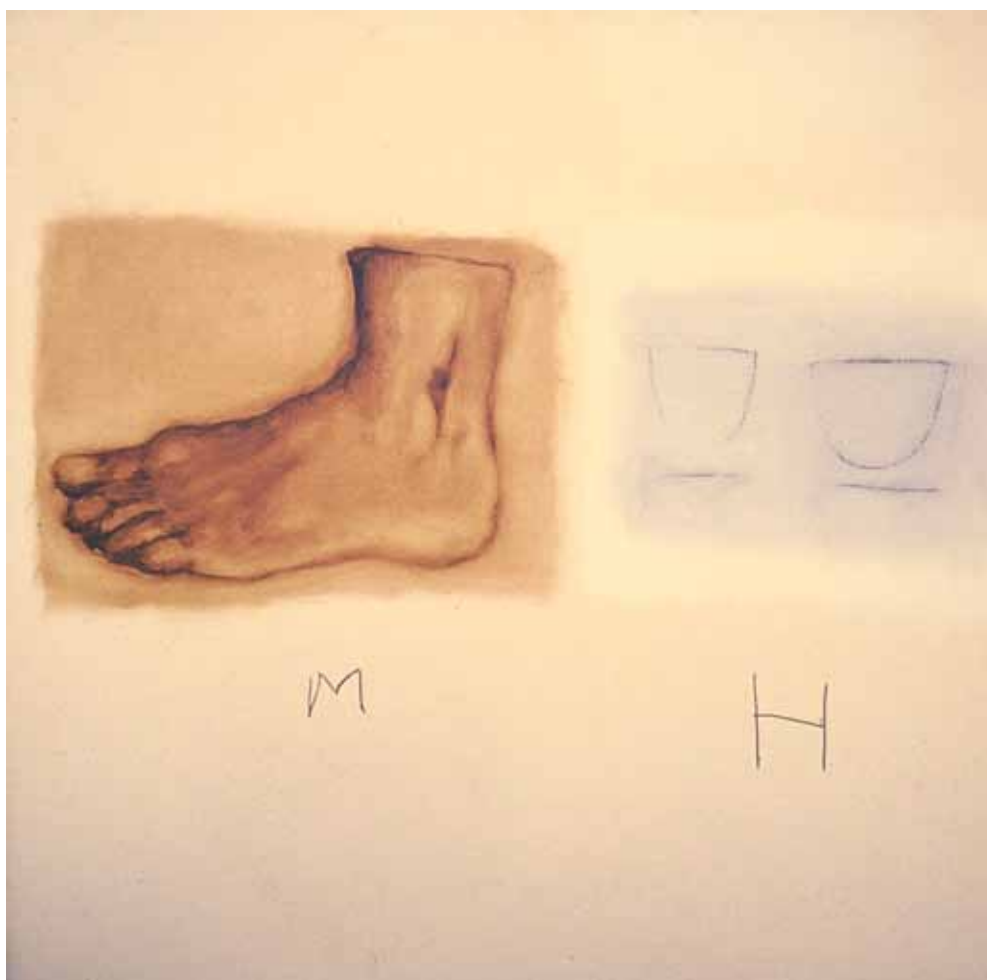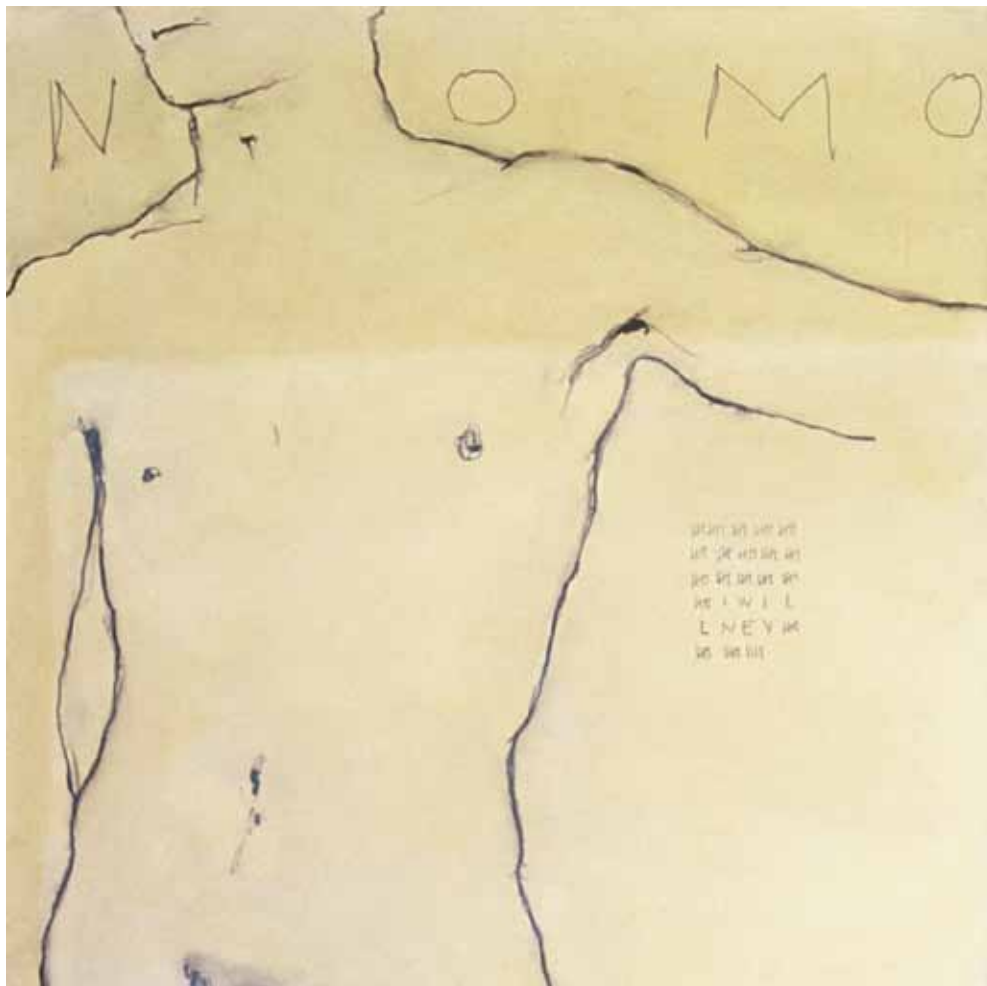(Photo: Nicholas Morris)

Figure 7.8: Nicholas Morris, *Self-portrait as a writer*, 1995. Mixed dry media on paper, 40cm x 50cm. Collection of the artist, Kingston, Jamaica.
(Photo: Nicholas Morris)

Figure 7.9: Nicholas Morris, *Please*, 1996. Mixed media on paper on canvas, 90 x 90cm. Collection of the artist, Kingston, Jamaica. (Photo: Nicholas Morris)

Figure 7.10: Nicholas Morris, *Stay here*, 1996. Mixed media on paper on linen, 100 x 100cm. Collection of the artist, Kingston, Jamaica. (Photo: Nicholas Morris)
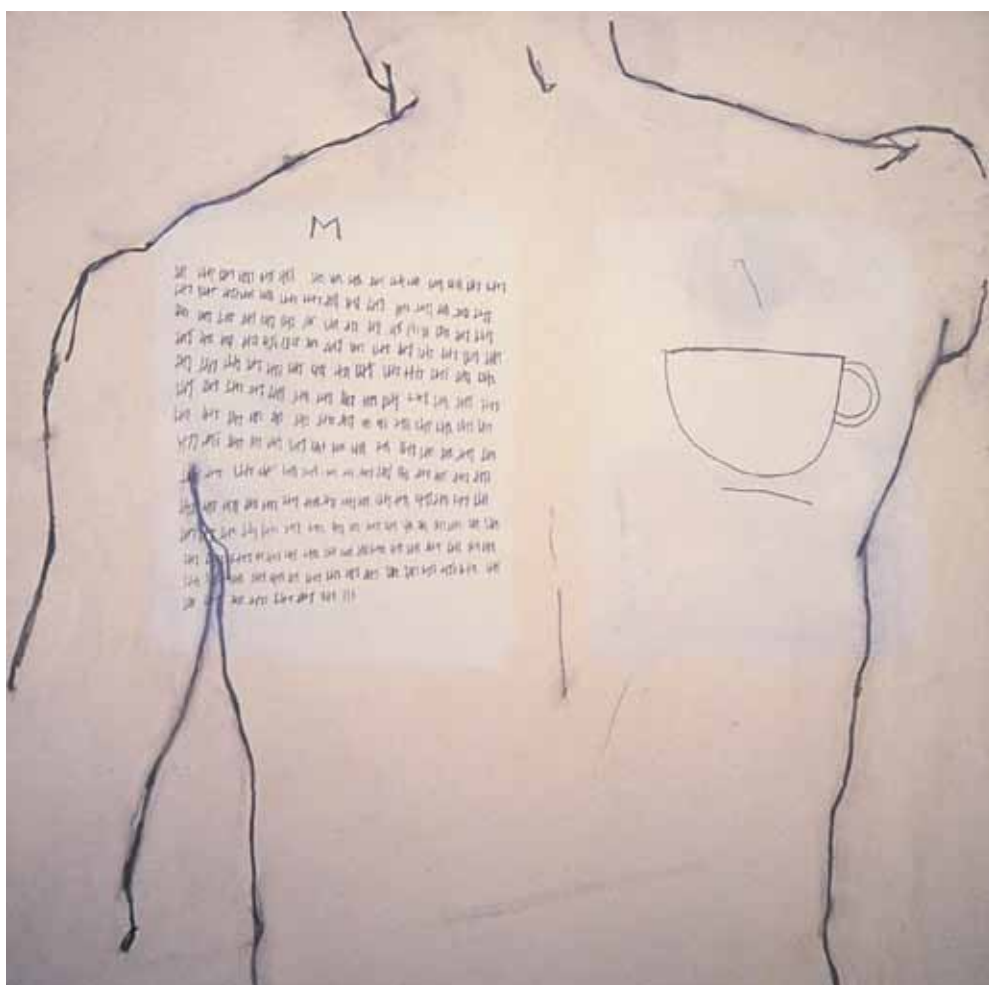
Figure 7.11: Nicholas Morris, *THISOGEOVRCAL*, 1996. Mixed media on paper on canvas, 75 x 75cm. Private collection, Kingston, Jamaica. (Photo: Nicholas Morris)

Figure 7.12: Nicholas Morris, *Come now*, 1996. Mixed media on paper on linen, 100 x 100cm. Private collection, Kingston, Jamaica. (Photo: Nicholas Morris)

Figure 7.13: Nicholas Morris, *The two presents*, 1996. Mixed media on paper on canvas, 100 x 100cm. Collection of the artist, Kingston, Jamaica. (Photo: Nicholas Morris)

Figure 7.14: Nicholas Morris, *M and H*, 1997. Mixed media on paper on canvas, 100 x 100cm. Private collection, Kingston, Jamaica. (Photo: Nicholas Morris)

Figure 7.15: Nicholas Morris, *NOMO*, 1997. Mixed media on paper on canvas, 80 x 80cm. Private collection, Kingston, Jamaica.
(Photo: Nicholas Morris)

Figure 7.16: Nicholas Morris, *The back tally*, 1998. Mixed media on paper on canvas, 80 x 80cm. Private collection, Kingston, Jamaica.
(Photo: Nicholas Morris)

My move to Germany over a decade ago came after the completion of this series of paintings. In practical terms, it was a more-or-less accidental result of a combination of familial and other factors. It also has meant accepting another set of markers on my back, partially replacing others.

My own experience of migrating to Germany has taken place within a larger context. Today, certain regions of Germany are experiencing the presence of diverse diaspora communities through a fundamental demographic change (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2013a, pp.26–9). Despite the accelerating pace of immigration to Germany, the country often seems unprepared, institutionally and in practical terms, especially in its ability to grasp the ideas and tools of multiplicity that are already so familiar in the Caribbean and its diaspora. For instance, there is the case of 'multinational' families formed by groups of people maintaining their primary relationships with each other yet crossing borders, as temporary or permanent migrants, for reasons that include economic necessity and education.

Although such a background may not immediately be obvious in appearance or accent, it may be helpful to remember that in 2012 nearly one-fifth of the national resident population of Germany had a 'background of migration' (what is termed by the federal bureau of statistics, a 'Migrationshintergrund'; Statistisches Bundesamt, 2013b, pp.35-9, pp.357-74). Further, of the entire national resident population, the approximately ten percent in possession of a non-German passport may be found in some significant places: with an above-average concentration in the politically, economically and academically influential federal states of Baden-Württemberg, Hessen and North-Rhein-Westphalia, as well as in leading cities such as Berlin and Hamburg (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2013a, pp.27–62).

The German nation can no longer be credibly described – if, indeed, it ever could – as a political community made up of a homogeneous citizenry, along the lines of a romantic notion of the 'German folk'. Changes to the demography of Germany have brought consequences for policy development and the allotment of public funding for city planning and education. More pertinent to the cultural field are a variety of impacts of migration on cultural policy, recognised most easily in the official acknowledgment of the need for diverse ethnicities to have their days of holiday, and the fair provision of public spaces in which to celebrate them.

Nonetheless, as I have mentioned, the relinquishing of my Jamaican passport was an indispensable condition for my being given a German one. I want to quote the letter of law on the avoidance of multiple citizenship, which has been described by past and current governments as 'fundamental':

> Ein Grundgedanke im deutschen Staatsangehörigkeitsrecht ist es, bei der Einbürgerung das Entstehen von Mehrstaatigkeit nach Möglichkeit zu vermeiden …

> (A fundamental concept in German citizenship law is to avoid the incurrence of multiple citizenship upon naturalisation when possible …)
> (own translation; Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration, 2008, p.29 and Beauftragte für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration, 2013)

Here lies a conceptual framework that remains based essentially on *ius sanguinis*, the conventional 'principle of descent' or 'blood principle' anchored in German law for more than a hundred years, articulated in the *Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz* (Reichsministerium der Justiz, 1913, p.583). This concept still casts citizenship as being derived from an essential, blood-borne quality of belonging to a 'folk', and so maintains the idea of naturalisation as the field of a potential 'conflict' of blood, best circumvented by the removal or avoidance of other, implicitly 'oppositional', citizenships.

The apparent arbitrariness of land borders may continue to colour such ideas of conflict. In 2006, I drove from Bavaria to Bohemia to assume an art residency in the Czech Republic. It was almost twenty years after publication of *The European Tribe* by the British-born writer of Caribbean descent, Caryl Phillips, where he described his travels between nations of a continental Europe prior to the Schengen Agreement and divided additionally between 'West' and 'East' (Phillips, 1987). In the border area of Egon Schiele's ancestral town of Český Krumlov' or 'Krummau', the line that seemed to cut in two Slavic and Germanic cultural spaces has been raked over innumerable times. What is left is a municipality, with its hill and its lake, floating between two names, seemingly demanding a choice of which ground it may finally settle on.

I held at the time a Jamaican passport, a Schengen-area residence permit and a thick set of certificates identifying me as a cultural representative of the German federal state in which I still live. However, to the border guard at what had once been a section of the 'East'-'West' political frontier (but now more vaguely represented a differentiation of national status within the European Union), my travel documents were incongruent and my status unclear. Bound to let me cross, he remained hesitant nonetheless and chose

to speak to me in English, switching awkwardly from German. His command was for me to report to the police station in Český Krumlov. There, my practical identity either as a Jamaican or a German would be administratively determined and then would be used to plan my stay. As a Jamaican, I would be required to report to that station once a day, despite a residence permit that – in the theory of the Schengen signatories – entitled me to enter the country, work, and leave and return to the Czech Republic as I pleased. Of course, after driving on, I avoided the Krumlov police station for the next five weeks. This was my attempt to be Czech.

My painterly response to this episode was a series of small, light works about seeing and choosing. These works were among the last 'pure' paintings I have made to date. In 2001, I moved to live in a small town in central Germany that is arranged around a central triangle, which accommodates its marketplace, town hall and state museum. Initially, I felt this to be a place saturated with paintings whose purpose was well established, and there seemed to be little room for change, even less for an artist-newcomer. All the good spots were already taken.

I had come to Germany with my wife, Ritula Fränkel, the first Jewish girl born in Darmstadt after the Holocaust and who had spent twenty years in Jamaica for reasons all of her own. The work *X-ODUS*, a joint installation in the local Jewish community centre (later shown at the Jewish Museum in Berlin), was intended as a sort of beginning and an exercise in arrival and orientation. Both Ritula and I wanted to find images to describe the complex histories, whether general or specific, and the present-day perspectives of this community.

A series of site-specific installations followed and culminated, in 2008, with the completion of the largest collaborative project that Ritula and I had undertaken
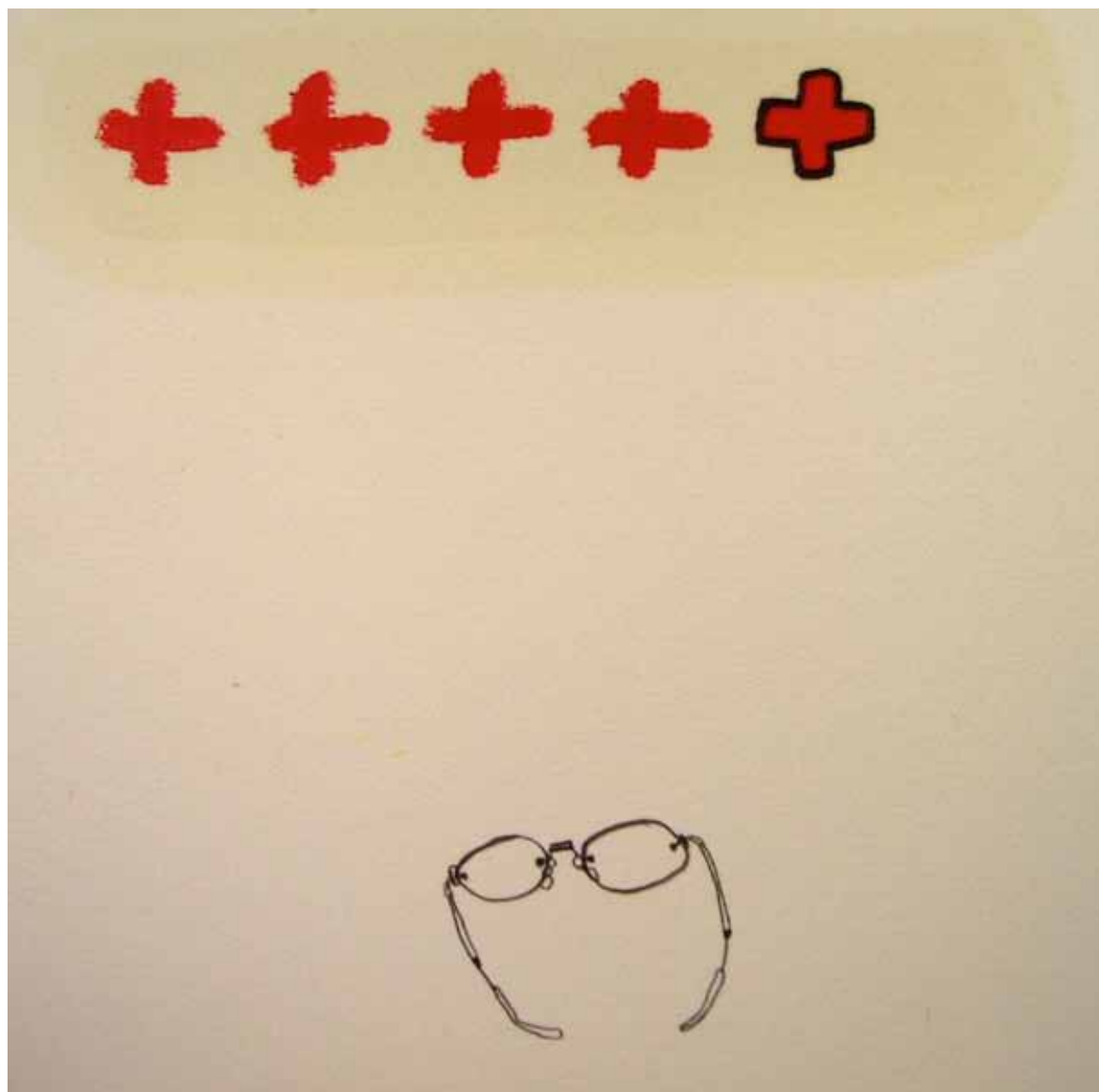

Figure 7.17: Nicholas Morris, *Die Brille (The glasses)*, 2006. Mixed media on paper, 20 x 20cm. Collection of the artist, Darmstadt, Germany. (Photo: Nicholas Morris)

Figure 7.18: Nicholas Morris and Ritula Fränkel, *X-ODUS*, 2004. Found objects and mixed media, variable size. Installation view in the Jewish Museum Berlin, Germany. (Photo: Ritula Fränkel)

to date. This was an intervention in the foundations of a synagogue. The building was destroyed by local representatives of the National Socialist government in the Reichpogromnacht of 1938 and unexpectedly found during the construction of a hospital in 2001. In an architecturally complex process, the ruins have been incorporated into a simple concrete bubble attached at ground level to the body of the clinic. The inner walls of this new structure have been lit with a series of changing projections showing the differing contexts for the synagogue since its dedication in 1875, covering its changing presence, destruction and absence over the years. In a series of short films at an interactive terminal, Holocaust survivors recounted memories of the building and of their childhood in Darmstadt.

In short, in the course of my career as an artist, I have exchanged an apparently European approach to painting in the Caribbean for an apparently Caribbean strategy of installation in Europe. I close my discussion by noting that I have now spent more uninterrupted time in Germany than anywhere else in my life. I am still unsure of what that may mean.

Finally, I wish to re-tell the second conversation promised at the beginning of this text. Fourteen years ago, I stood in the classroom before a group of newly arrived Darmstädter pupils beginning the eleventh grade. I attempted perception exercises, as I always had done with students at the art school in Jamaica: 'You've just come,' I said, 'you're walking in new corridors and have to find rooms and labs. You need to get around. Somewhere in all of this general newness you need to find something newly new – something to help you orientate, to stay around or move away from, some particular feature of the place that you can rely on as a signpost. What do you see?' The group was still for a long time and I was relieved when a girl in the back row raised her hand. Edna spoke very slowly, perhaps because it was so obvious: 'Well, Mr Morris,' she said, 'it's you.'

Figure 7.19: Nicholas Morris and Ritula Fränkel, *Erinnerungsort (Place of remembrance)*, completed 2008. Installation with found objects, electronic mixed media and photography, Public memorial, Städtisches Klinikum Darmstadt. (Photo: Andrea Stahl)
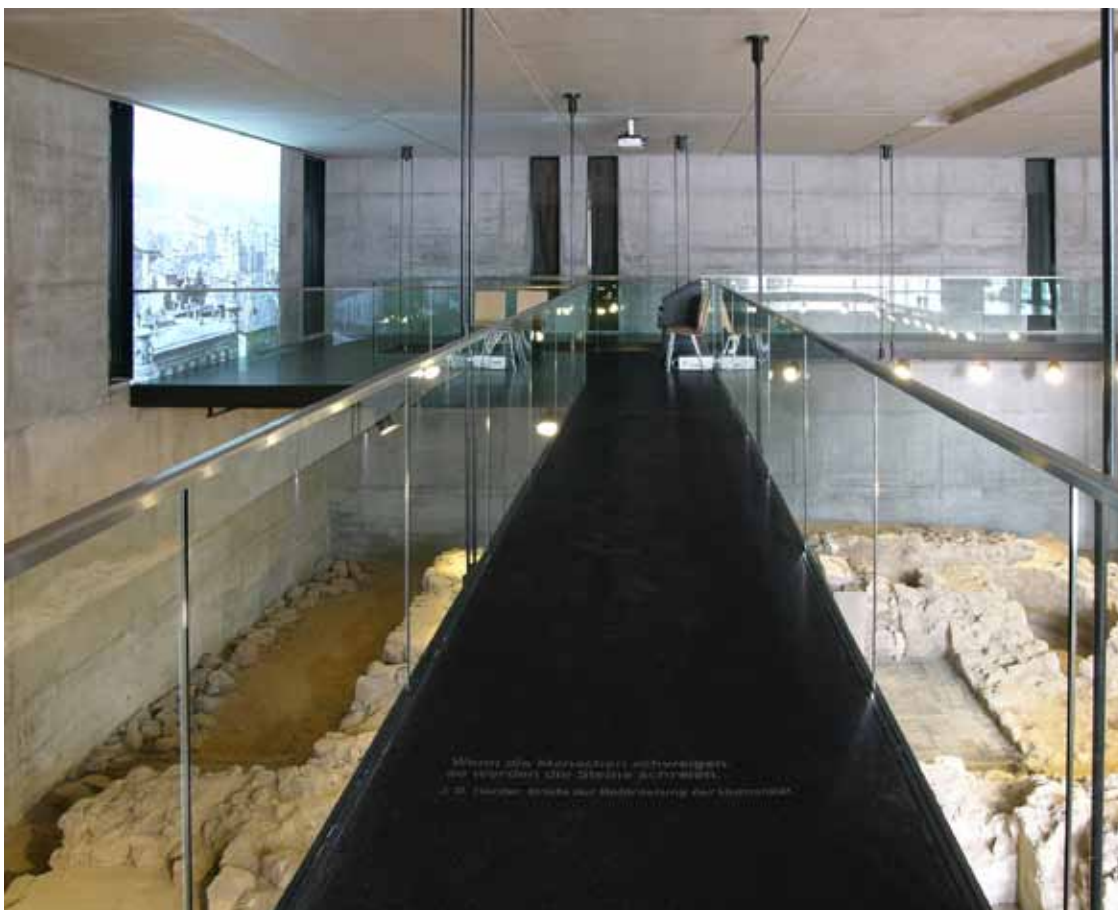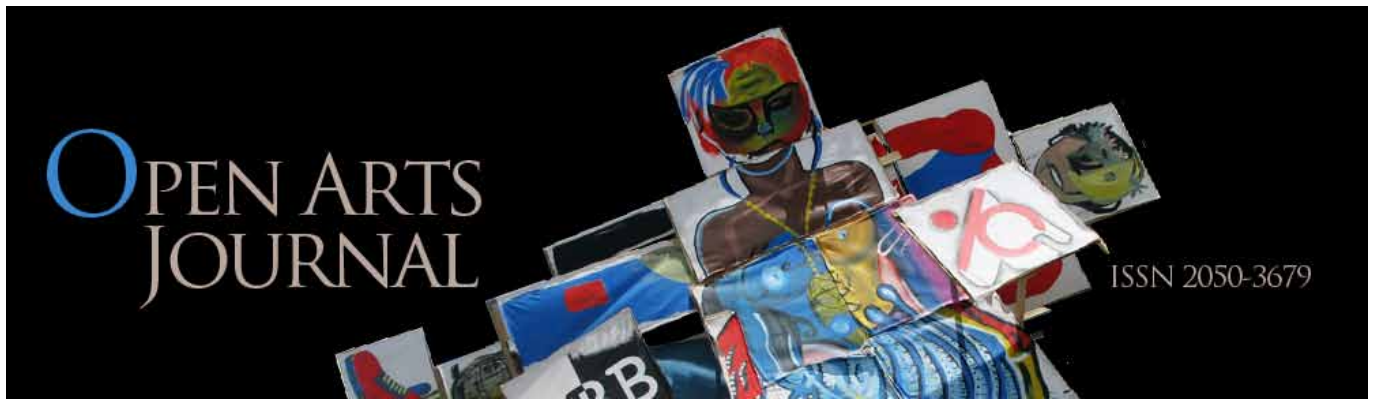
Figure 7.20: Nicholas Morris and Ritula Fränkel, *Erinnerungsort*, installation detail. (Photo: Andrea Stahl)

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POLICY ENTREPRENEURSHIP: EXPANDING MULTIMODALITY AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH *CARIBBEAN INTRANSIT*

Marielle Barrow

Abstract

This essay explores the concept of multimodality as a creative, structured way of experimenting with how cultural institutions are configured, and with a view to promoting sustainability and social development using the arts. Caribbean InTransit is an experimental platform that explores how diverse modalities of knowledge production may inflect the construction of human subjectivity differently. How do choices about modes of knowledge come to position and interpolate firstly, arts and cultural expression, and secondly, peoples of the Caribbean? And how is the potential for engagement with communities a matter of modality? Caribbean InTransit is a non-profit platform that encourages policy entrepreneurship between locations by ensuring that policy objectives are always under review or 'in transit'. It aims to be a bridge that connects spaces and institutions within certain local or national settings, while creating networked communities that connect across geographical space. It emphasises the need for the 'consociating' of people of various professions to create, what Caribbean InTransit has termed, communities of value (a grouping together of stakeholders) rather than simply communities of interest (groups of individuals with a similar vocational background). The sharing of values is made possible by multimodality: encapsulated in the role that Caribbean InTransit has played in education and social outreach, engaging simultaneously with the modes of collaborative research, cultural creativity through the visual arts and tourism. The four key aspects of multimodality – materiality, framing, design and production – which have emerged in theoretical work on the term (Kress & Jewitt, 2003), are emphasised in the discussion of art communities of the Caribbean.

Biographical note

Trinidad-born Marielle Barrow is a Fulbright scholar, visual artist and social entrepreneur. After completing a degree in Hospitality Management in 2002, Barrow became a full-time artist and researcher, earning a postgraduate Diploma in Arts and Cultural Enterprise Management and an MPhil in Cultural Studies at the University of the West Indies, before completing her doctorate at George Mason University in 2016. Her research focuses on the policy implications of counter-memory and cultural capital within Caribbean arts practice, especially in Haiti, The Bahamas, and Trinidad and Tobago. Barrow is the founder of *Caribbean InTransit,* a project involving thirty-three scholars and artists across the Caribbean, US and Europe, which produces a biannually published journal, symposia and festivals, as well as workshops for at-risk groups.

Related material to this article was presented at the two project conferences for 'Sustainable Art Communities: Creativity and Policy in the Transnational Caribbean', held on 5–6 February 2013 (Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam; KIT, the Netherlands Royal Tropical Institute), and 3–4 December 2013 (Institute for International Visual Arts, Iniva, London, UK). Visit the project webpages here.

To view the film footage on the Open Arts Archive, www.openartsarchive.org, follow this link: http://www.openartsarchive.org/archive/1st-conference-sustainable-art-communities-creativity-and-policy-transnational-caribbean-12

POLICY ENTREPRENEURSHIP: EXPANDING MULTIMODALITY AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH *CARIBBEAN INTRANSIT*

Marielle Barrow, Caribbean InTransit

Multimodality

Multimodality has come to be understood as an important aspect of cultural literacy in the twenty-first century. It is a hot topic in the field of research on learning and communication where it is making a particular contribution to understanding the construction of identity, and serves not simply as a way of describing a technological approach within the arts but as the basis for a more general ethos of existing and interacting with the world (Albers & Sanders, 2010, p.7). Moreover, it is part and parcel of artistic practice in a contemporary moment when collaboration and collectives are coming to present new ways of working creatively. Practising multimodality, at its simplest level, can carry arts practitioners and organisers beyond the existing singular or linear approaches, into a broader de-compartmentalising of knowledge within and across categories of cultural practice: linking subject areas within the curriculum of schools and universities, linking departments or ministries within governments and so on. A step and a leap further can lead to imagining new linkages across continents and seas, spanning various types of institutions that may hinge together public, private and artistic interests. Multimodality describes how to cross-pollinate otherwise distinct domains of intellectual work: geographical studies and art; art and medicine; environmental studies and art; art and engineering.

Currently, on small scales and through isolated programming or in one-off events, multimodality is already being practised. Pushing this to operate at a higher level, the discussion here will frame and define such practices of multimodality within arts institutions and among artists, while emphasising their future potential. As I will show, this requires special consideration of economies of scale given the current conjuncture of circumstances presented by the Caribbean.

Multi suggests multiplicity – multiple ways of being and doing – while modality refers to modes of representation, whether visual, aural, gestural or three-dimensional. The selection and orchestration of these modes is culturally contingent, following established conventions for 'making meaning' according to a given community and its shared sense of values. Multimodality describes the multiple means of social interaction or interface using signs and resources that interact to produce meaning. It also exists as a methodology, a framework for the collection and analysis of data of various kinds, from embodied, spatial experiences of interaction in social environments, to visual and aural data, as well as the interrelationships between each of these (Jewitt, 2009; Kress, 2009).

I have lifted multimodality from its familiar usage in the domains of literacy and communication research in order to apply it as a framework for the development of sustainable art communities. In doing so, I choose to explore multimodality as a structured process of experimenting with the configuration of institutions – essentially shaping new institutional relations – in order to promote socio-economic development through the arts. As the founder and president of the non-profit organisation *Caribbean InTransit*, I continually test the possibilities for alternative institutional arrangements at the ground level. With thirty-three volunteers across thirteen countries, our platform is one in which to experiment with different means of self-organisation in order to identify new modalities of knowledge and subject formation. We have asked: how do considerations about modality help to clarify an understanding of arts and cultural representation, and communities of the Caribbean? In particular, how does a concern with such modality affect the potential for *engagement* with such communities?

In beginning this investigation it has been useful to explore some of the various conceptualisations of the cultural industries, as well as points of disagreement in a moral economy of interest in contemporary arts practice, in which there is often considerable opposition to the very concept of culture as a site of industry. On that basis, *Caribbean InTransit* has developed itself as a contribution to 'policy entrepreneurship'. Illuminating the diversity among modes of activity within the visual arts in the following discussion, I set out the historical background to policy entrepreneurship as a critical practice, followed by an account of multimodality as it is emerging both within the Caribbean and further afield.

Cultural industries and development goals

Caribbean InTransit's central long-term goal of shifting the economies of the Caribbean may only be achievable through collaborative arrangements within the arts.

The strength of such a micro-enterprise is its mobility and responsiveness to changing circumstances, while its partners lend specialised institutional expertise, on-the-ground access and contextual know-how ('situated knowledge'), as well as providing direct finance and in-kind sponsorship. Through collaborative projects largely initiated by *Caribbean InTransit*, we are able to reach a community of scholars, cultural producers, students, activists and policy makers, and bring them together with businesses to enable an articulation of entrepreneurship and artistic creativity. This extended community is both an internal and external clientele, and is envisioned as a mechanism for change in the arts.

Caribbean InTransit curates cultural events and creates opportunities for its members, developing individuals who are seeking to bring about change. Our various strands of doing so are complementary: regular workshops; interventions in the field of cultural heritage and its conservation; networking among Caribbean artists and policy makers on the shared issue of how to engineer sustainable communities in and through the arts, arts education and cultural tourism. We have encountered significant gaps not simply between stakeholders in the cultural field, but also a longstanding disconnect between the arts and the benefits and interests of a wider industrial base in the Caribbean, including tourism. Broaching them has involved direct recognition of the following six concerns and sets of constraints, while many more lie beyond these, in what is by all accounts a challenging social and economic context for the development of the cultural industries.

Firstly, it is widely acknowledged in the art, policy and academic communities that the Caribbean infrastructure for the arts, including its human resources (its practitioners and industry specialists), is inadequate and needs urgent development. There is limited available training in the arts, and less than ample conditions for incubating the arts through financing (loans), support services and legal frameworks including tax incentives. Grant-writing or entrepreneurship workshops for the creative industries appear only sporadically, and with poor and uneven access across the region.

Secondly, marketplace opportunities for the showcasing and sale of arts goods and services (such as art festivals and public events) are generally unsatisfactory across the Caribbean region, and unknown altogether in some Caribbean countries. Consequently, it is a great challenge for artists and arts organisations to sustain themselves and the livelihoods of dedicated individuals. Even when such opportunities do arise, their scale is limited, events are too brief, and

there is little support in the way of promotion to the public or facilitation of commercial exchanges such as with potential art buyers. The lack of such a hub of services, and the commonly short lead times toward the staging of art events, has meant that artists are frequently not made aware of the extent of the state-sponsored provision. They are barely consulted at the planning stages and find themselves consequently unable to fully benefit.

Thirdly, although change is afoot when the Caribbean is taken as a whole, in many Caribbean countries, there is a lack of critical interrogation of artistic practices and products, such as in the adjacent field of scholarly or journalistic debate. While critique does arise, participation in the critical reception and interpretation of art practices is limited if not closed off altogether from the general public in particular settings of the Caribbean. Thus a wider audience for art and a strong public stake in the arts has not emerged. By implication, there are also significant weaknesses in arts policy. The research undertaken in the preparation of policy has tended to be conducted on a shallow pool of cases and their results integrated haphazardly. It remains unclear what conceptualisations of the arts are held among policy makers, and how these have been arrived at, as well as whether qualitative in addition to quantitative methods are being employed in the analysis of data.

Fourthly, the challenges of maintaining continuity in the growth and development of the arts are pressing. There is a pervasive culture of short-termism, with sporadic interventions designed to improve the arts. There is a tendency to channel benefits to the same key individuals (the readily identified 'stars' who comprise an unchanging, narrow grouping). This reflects favouritism, if not bald clientialism, in the public support for arts channelled to private individuals. Within a small but relatively diverse cultural environment, such practices have resulted in token gestures toward the arts rather than its articulation with the larger goals of Caribbean economic and socio-cultural development. Even so, it is clear that marketing and publicity for the arts is insufficient for maximising upon the model of 'individual achievement', which in turn suggests that the existing policy objectives, however misdirected, are not effectively applied. What lies at the heart of this attention to the promotion of a star system, moreover, is a bracketing of cultural practices – images, objects, performances etc. – and their separation from the cultural field at large.

As a fifth concern, while the state and state-sponsored organisations have often convened to stage, in somewhat episodic fashion, the region's various art events, experts in the cultural industries are largely left

out of the picture. This has hampered their ability to understand the extent to which event operators draw benefits from the privilege of enjoying exclusive access (Tull, 2009).

A final concern is a corollary to this sense of a division between those who distribute resources for the state in the field of the arts and the ostensible primary beneficiaries: the arts practitioners. The latter are forced to negotiate the deficiencies in policy frameworks and their implementation, especially in the area of sustainability for art communities. Indeed, the common delay between the drafting of policy, business planning and other developmental tools presents an implementation gap or time lag. We have found that arts organisations are often placed in the position of making use of such plans as much as a decade after they were devised. Falling within this domain of outdated policy formulations is the generally inchoate criteria for financing projects, as well as retrograde ethical codes that have tended not to be implemented. Transparency in the making of policy and the actual uses of funds is also a key issue, not to mention the disconnection between them. The fundamental starting point for the improvement of any such policy seems to be missing, namely a conceptualisation of what should comprise and characterise the cultural field, while avoiding narrowness. Much attention in Caribbean cultural policy has gravitated toward carnival as the dominant cultural industry and growth site for heritage tourism and sponsorship, and this has disadvantaged the visual arts in the main, which are left to fend for themselves on a landscape of scale. In certain cases, visual artists have felt that their only path to sustainability is to participate in carnival, constructing new categories that parse the relation between it and the otherwise discrete environment of 'contemporary art'. The unequal attention here to policy making for carnival as compared to visual arts is patent (see also: Tull, 2009).

Caribbean InTransit as policy entrepreneurship

Reviewing some of the background to the concept of policy entrepreneurship may be helpful here. A policy entrepreneur is 'an individual, group, or organisation which leverages resources to generate a favoured policy outcome' (Arnold, 2015, p.308; see also: Oliver & Paul-Shaheen, 1997, p.744; Etzioni 1987; Kingdon, 1984; Mintrom, 1997; Schumpeter, 1942). Arnold (2015) has carried forward this field of study by focusing on key considerations surrounding the processes of re-formulating intellectual, organisational and political resources that disrupt traditional structures. The

work of policy entrepreneurs should be of special interest to academic scholars because it seems to demand attention from the academy in order to be successful. Julius Court and Simon Maxwell (2007) for instance highlight key points that affect the policy entrepreneurship environment that integrate the role of scholarship. They cite the need for a presence of 'research donors', individuals who are willing to invest intellectually in this field and to address its politics directly. Indeed, there is a need for detailed, quality research that crosses geographical boundaries, as well as institutional ones, in order to enter the domain of policy debates with a view to influencing them while resisting over-simplification of the process of doing so. This also leads to considerations about the power of partnerships between researchers and civil groups or even investors. To some extent such partnerships are already in play in the Caribbean, where artists are increasingly involved with the scholarly community. However, they have yet to be joined by those with a shared interest in shaping cultural policy.

Policy entrepreneurs tend to be driven by a desire for social change – effectively they are social entrepreneurs invested in seeing their work written into policy. They value social development over personal economic profit (Reinstaller, 2005, p.1368). Andreas Reinstaller argues that policy entrepreneurs articulate their social solutions with a 'policy vision' and their 'importance lies in their capability to induce a revaluation of existing shared mental models and beliefs on specific issues and related routines by concerned actors and groups' (p.1368). While it is beyond the scope of this article to set out the Caribbean's historical background of resisting the operations of policy entrepreneurialism, it suffices to note that there are considerable present-day factors that inhibit them. What deserves highlighting are some preliminary ways toward the integration of the arts within society, and in particular how the arts may perform more constructively in meeting the social, cultural, economic and even environmental needs of Caribbean societies. I hope that this will serve as a starting point toward re-configuring policy agendas and that multimodality can be an enterprising step into this setting.

Materiality, framing, design and production
Four additional keywords that help to make clear the benefits of the term multimodality (Kress & Jewitt, 2003) and that may be applied to the Caribbean context, are as follows: materiality, framing, design and production. As I am about to show, these terms are to be understood within an overall framework that integrates art and everyday life in crucially productive ways.

Materiality includes resources for art making, whether these be still images, fabric, conceptual vocabularies, or the properties of a raw material whose manipulation comes to be central in the communication of messages and the conveyance of a sensorial experience. At the simplest level, it can be interpreted as physical material alone, yet shifts in thinking around the term have seen it broaden out to encompass the changing social roles of artists, such as interventions in urban planning, waste management, public sector reform and poverty alleviation, to mention but a few. Within contemporary art, time or teaching can be also understood as forms of materiality, as can bodies themselves.

Institutional settings in which such roles materialise have come to be central for the work of artists from outside the Caribbean such as Mierle Ukeles. While not working in or from the Caribbean, the Caribbean may draw example from Ukeles, a feminist with a rooted social practice for her art. Ukeles draws on bodies in the workplace, engaging issues of labour, such as *Touch Sanitation*, a work about garbage collectors in New York City. The labouring body is both private and public, accessing the political in myriad ways. She activates the political potential of labour, by challenging the social constructions that separate aesthetic and cultural values as they shape and indeed conventionally separate the domains of work and art (Krug, 2006). Her practice highlights an aesthetic of work within the labouring body as well as the narratives that workers share. Materiality becomes a preoccupation addressed through various tasks that the worker must perform. Mierles employs a video camera in order to share the aesthetic dimension of such work, connecting to bodies within a more public domain. Art becomes social practice and work becomes art. This exchange of art and work, especially art and the everyday, scrutinises the mundane and shifts perceptions and challenges stereotypes by way of the materiality of bodies.

Ukeles' projects seem to encourage that we ask some farther-reaching questions about the mapping of verbal conversations as a means to innovate aesthetically, and how the appropriation of artistic practice, such as by large institutions, can be understood as a form of materiality that may in turn be critiqued or manipulated by an artist. Indeed, how could such practices be taken up in the Caribbean, to change cultural norms, alter relationships between institutions and their internal or external clientele, and perspectives on art shared by the wider public?

Framing references the way in which various materials exist together, and whether they create dissonance or else continuity, and how shifts in the organisation of such materials can elicit the interpretations of the viewer. Ukeles, in her role as artist-in-residence to the city, signifies how to frame differently organised social and institutional bodies. Collaboration between art and corporations, or government departments/ministries, as a re-framing or shift in the organisation and determination of relationships, may also come to inform viewers' perceptions.

With reference to framing, *The Hemispheric Institute,* housed at the Office of the Provost, New York University, is notable for figuring a transition outwards from the art gallery and museum into the academy. It exists between each site, in an in-between space, attached yet distinct in form and practice from the tertiary education super-structure. Articulating an alternative value system, the *Institute* initiated its project as a consortium where scholars could work 'at the intersections of scholarship, artistic practice and political life in the Americas' (Hemispheric Institute, n.d.). It functions by attaching itself to NYU while existing as a network of more than 45 universities across the US and Latin America. Artists are given temporary fellowships and hosted through residencies and scholars, all within a slew of partner institutions overseen by a board of faculty members and activists who pursue a shared interest. Staging performances and encounters with one another and the public, offering courses and publishing, the *Institute* has begun to develop a truly networked community that spans a considerable international geography. The key to its success is a concern with framing: re-conceptualising the possible interrelationships between educational and artistic organisations, while essentially trying to re-integrate art into social life by attending to a critical purpose.

iLAND – Interdisciplinary Laboratory of Art Nature and Dance is similar to the other initiatives I have mentioned, but for its somewhat unusual structure. This laboratory of sorts characterises itself as 'a dance research organisation that investigates the power of dance, in collaboration with other fields, to illuminate our kinetic understanding of the world' (iLAND, n.d.). In de-compartmentalising disciplines to favour a more fluid staging of the private and public experience of dance, iLAND hosts workshops, symposia and residencies. With titles such as *Watershed*, *IMAP/ Ridgewood Reservoir, Urban Migration* and *Bird Brain: A Navigational Dance Project*, these events create a dissonance from the usual frame of reference for dance, while pressing for greater continuity, dare I say harmony, with the spatial environment. *Urban Migrations* activates the urban landscape through movement, while

Ridge Wood Reservoir uses research and collaboration with natural scientists to find new ways of dissolving nature-culture binaries to the benefit of communities. In sum, the value of framing and re-framing is tri-fold, involving: i) attention to the conceptualisation of cultural forms, de-compartmentalising practices through collaboration; ii) a new focus on the human body, for instance, the dancing body as compared to the labouring body; and iii) resulting shifts in cultural practice itself, revealing original patterns in the collisions and collaborations between social life and the spatial environment. Such a raft of approaches, I would contend, can have considerable yield for the Caribbean. It can show how to bridge our uneven institutional terrain by bringing social relations and bringing them into the purview of theories of community that promote cultural praxis – essentially bridging art activities with academic disciplines and community practices.

Design involves the conceptual aspect of visual creativity and covers the range of ways in which people use the materials available to them to shape the field of representation. There are at least three very fertile examples in the Caribbean. The first two: *Fresh Milk,* centred in Barbados, and *Alice Yard,* Trinidad, are designed spaces intended to straddle both private and public interests in art and cultural production. They are artist-led initiatives, benefitting from named artistic personalities who imbue the two organisations with an atmosphere of informality: whether that be the back yard (rear garden) of a family property, transformed into a centre that the public may visit and attend publicised events, or the outbuildings on a family-run dairy farm. *Projects and Space*, the third example, by contrast presents art as a social practice by virtue of being grounded in the accessibility of an online platform.

In a fourth example, *ARC: Art, Recognition, Culture,* an online and print publication with an accompanying team of events organisers and publicists, the emphasis is more on trying to overcome the challenges of the scattered geography of the Caribbean and its diaspora. The chosen response is to focus on the accessibility of art of the Caribbean and its frequent production through collaboration. *ARC* is less an institution than a space of interaction, typified by online collaborations perhaps, yet channelled to address the need to develop social relationships. A comparison may be drawn with another initiative, *AICA Caraïbe du Sud* – the southern Caribbean chapter of the UNESCO-funded, global, non-governmental organisation the Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art (the International Association of Art Critics), founded in 1950 and

headquartered in Paris – which is most active here through its online presence. One of its lead organisers, Dominique Brebion, has described the co-existence of these and many more Caribbean-focused initiatives in the arts, highlighting their general purpose of publishing material with the potential to have an impact upon policy making, as well as to reach widely across this multilingual region. As she writes:

> *Repeating Islands*, *Arte Sur*, *Gens de la Caraïbe*, *AICA Caraïbe du Sud*, and *Uprising Art*, … publish regularly and exclusively online, sometimes posting material daily… Four among these, *Caribbean InTransit*, *Small Axe*, *Arte por Excelencias* and *Repeating Islands* are initiated from the Diaspora, whereas the others are created within the Caribbean. There are seven reviews from the English-speaking area, three from the Spanish-speaking area, and four from the French-speaking area. However, two of these are trilingual, three bilingual, seven others are written exclusively in English, another in Spanish and the last one in French. (2011, p.7)

This network of online publications might be described as 'ephemera cartographies' (see Rita Valente's work on ephemeral cartographies) for the Caribbean's art communities – through the network evolving relationships and cultural practices that are connected in virtual space can be mapped. Design has a particular importance for such networks, helping to re-spatialise them by breaching borders and cutting short temporal distances (cf. Wilbur, 2000), while holding open the possibility for alternatives to corporate capitalism through a more co-operative or collaborative approach to linking art and profit. At root, the design of Caribbean art communities in the area of their communications requires a suitable response in the field of cultural policy. The appearance of multiple platforms and organisations is evidently filling a policy vacuum. And yet these entities are struggling to sustain themselves as anything more than informal, ephemeral solutions to a much deeper problem of a lack of infrastructure – or of 'design' in the multimodal sense. How may national and regional bodies further their progress? To what extent would the arrival of formal cultural policy not attuned to multimodality come to disrupt or stymie the path and style of these initiatives?

Lastly, *production* describes the act of assembling or creating cultural representations, covering the technical skill needed for their execution. There are several cultural formations throughout modern history that became notable for their alternative techniques of production: from the *Bauhaus* to *Van Guardia*, the

Guerrilla Girls, General Idea, the Laundromat Project and Ant Farm, as well as more contemporary groups such as Yes Men and Floating Lab Collective. These groups – whether engaging comedy, dissonance or social critique – hold in common the result of opening up the arts to wider users and audiences. In the Caribbean, the ambition to produce outcomes on a comparable scale is certainly there: Alice Yard, Fresh Milk and Projects and Space, are to be counted along with Popop Studios in The Bahamas and the Instituto Buena Bista in Curaçao. These initiatives can be mapped for their innovative work in production, and it remains for me to draw comparisons between their development and the practice of Caribbean InTransit.

The uses of multimodality in Caribbean InTransit

Caribbean InTransit attempts to build on some historical lessons about enterprise in the domain of culture through its multimodal, multicity, networked community of participants. As a site primarily of learning, our programming includes a bi-annually published, open-access, peer-reviewed journal, as well as our newsletter, a Google talk series, a roving arts festival and an arts workshop series that targets at-risk youth, and people with HIV/AIDS. The organisation works with scholars, cultural practitioners, students, activists, policy makers and businesses to cultivate a union between entrepreneurship and artistic practice, conducting conversations that propel forward the development of a Caribbean community, taking in its wide diaspora. Its strategic partnerships to date have been mostly institutions of higher education, museums and galleries (the University of the West Indies at its campus in Trinidad; George Mason University, Virginia; Rutgers University, New Jersey; the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage in Washington DC; Jamaica's National Art Gallery; and the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas). It has also worked with government – the Ministry of Planning and Sustainability in Trinidad and Tobago – and with charitable funders such as the Inter-American Development Bank.

Established in 2011, Caribbean InTransit has sought to create networks beyond these partners, and our modus operandi is in large part shaped by the digital technologies available to us. Our Google talk series Talking Arts serves as a body of knowledge: a space to meet online with a diverse range of participants. We use the Google Hangout platform in addition to live webcasting to field questions from a global audience which are then captured for posterity on the Caribbean InTransit website. This a means to stay up-to-date with the community that has built up through the initiative, and our progress is reported in the newsletter – Arts Menu – which, in addition, shares the details of relevant opportunities, events and book releases, while keeping our readers current on Caribbean InTransit and its partners.

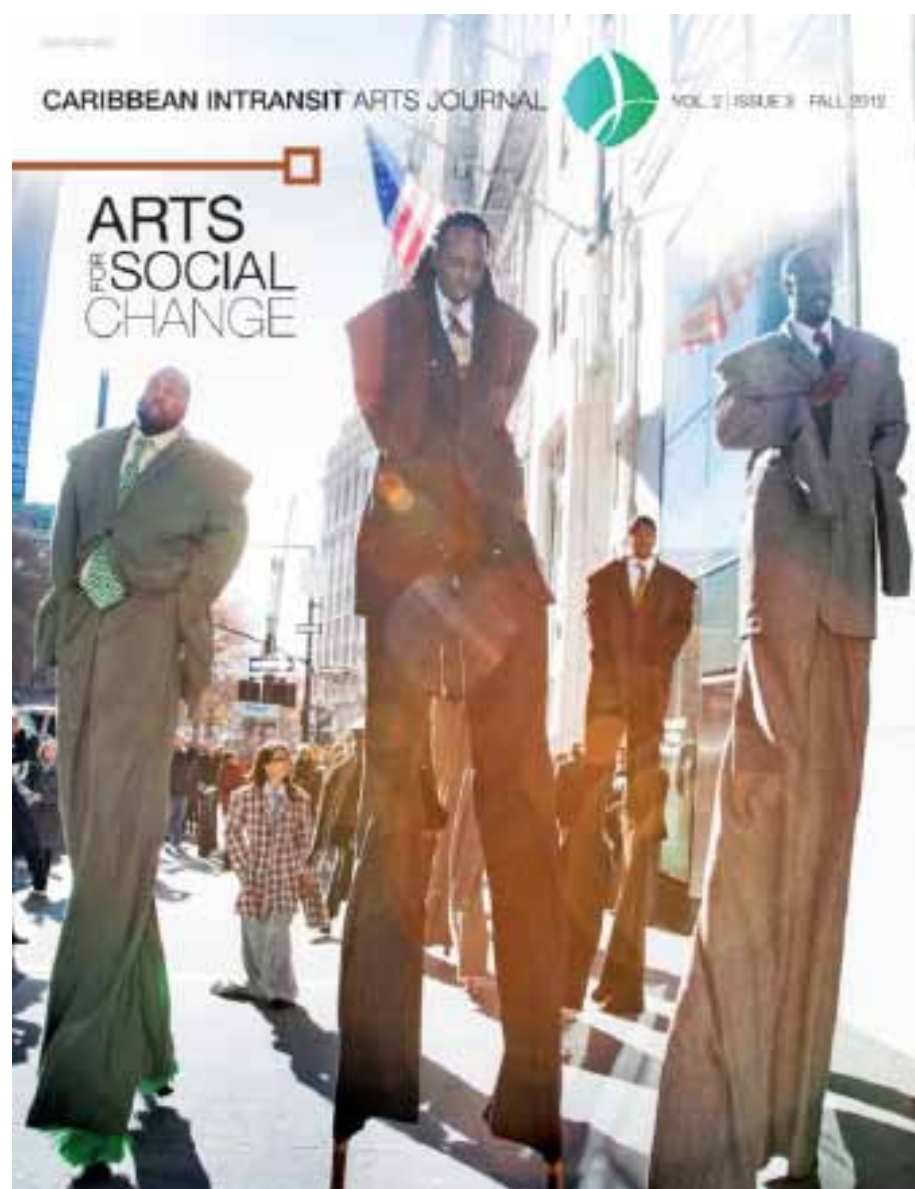These channels are designed to elicit dialogue and to share information, producing teaching

Figure 8.1: Cover image of Caribbean InTransit Arts Journal (Fall 2012, vol.2, no.3) by Laura Anderson Barbata. (Photo: Caribbean InTransit)

and learning materials, as well as material that policy makers, scholars, artists and art audiences can explore and exploit in their own ways. As a shared space of knowledge, these are platforms for *Caribbean Intransit* to operate in its role as an 'interlocutor', facilitating relationships in the arts within a de-hierarchised space that strives for a common language. A challenge that faces us at present is how then to move into a deeper material relationship with our participants, one that would ensure that their communications are more direct and continuous, affecting a perpetual exchange between the cultural field and the life of our Caribbean communities more broadly. One solution may be found in, indeed I would recommend, the application of a framework of multimodality, and it is plain to see that here lies a field of opportunity for us as we come to address each of its various tenets.

In the context of *Caribbean InTransit,* the multimodal emphasis on framing may come to be applied to the materials that we circulate through our publicity channels and through our public events. These extend, of course, beyond the materiality of information, to include the movement of our participants, their bodies and narratives, as they undergo transition

and transformation through involvement with one another. If the newsletter and our Google talk series have served in enabling this activity, then the logical next step is perhaps to turn the organisation of such materials back over to participants themselves, in other words to transcend the role of *Caribbean InTransit* as a medium for their exchange. On that basis, more direct partnerships could emerge between policy makers, students, artists and audiences.

To some extent that step has already been taken: *Caribbean InTransit* worked together with *Floating Lab Collective* as a contribution to the third manifestation of the Haiti *Ghetto Biennale* (2013). This brought together scholars and artists who created paper and ink works comprising *The Book of Latent Promises,* which used materials sourced in Haiti. On this contextualising material, they made imprints of debris from the earthquake onto the paper, and printed narratives of promises that have remained unfulfilled for the Haitian peoples. This was a process of encouraging people to join in, and it opened up a space of mutual empathy and a practice of communication and aesthetic production that was indelibly marked by the new relationships and exchanged that formed. Moreover, here were the

Figure 8.2: Papermaking and printing in Haiti at *Caribbean InTransit*, 2013. (Photo: *Caribbean InTransit*)

seeds for a continuing sort of engagement between stakeholders, who explored the metaphor of how to make an impact – or imprint – upon the paradigms of social, cultural and economic development that characterises ordinary life in Haiti. Collectively penned, the description of the project in my journal entry reflected our thoughts at the time:

> The Book of Latent Promises … is a contextual proposal for a shared practice. We are working with the creative strengths that already exist in Haiti. The work lives on a one-to-one human scale. Relationships are being created through trust and presence. Recognising the artists as members of the universal artistic community, the Haitian artists with whom we are collaborating are introducing the space to us. We have created a mobile printing lab that is an extension of research by collaborating parties. In addition, the objective is to produce this document as simultaneously an art object and a journal.

Collaboration between art and corporations or government ministries has also served to re-frame the importance of the Caribbean as a site of policy entrepreneurship. *Caribbean InTransit*'s position as an academic journal with a university affiliation, while simultaneously interconnected to other partners, draws a lesson from similar models such as *The Hemispheric Institute*. What remains is for these sort of arrangements to inform state policy in the Caribbean, and in a similar pattern to parse relations between the visual arts, dance, music, and so on in order to improve our social, political and economic relations.

Conceptualising an arts festival for the Caribbean and a programme of social development

One such example of this type of innovation could focus interest on the role of arts festivals. There are several similar festivals and biennials in the region – notably *Carifesta*, established in the 1970s, with a periodic and roving programme between members of the Caribbean economic community, CARICOM – but nothing that has drawn quite so heavily on digital technologies (in order to establish and maintain its community of participants), as we have done through *The Meeting Place, Arts InTransit*, and *Creatives of the Caribbean*, our first three festivals, held in Trinidad and Tobago (2013, 2014), and in Washington DC (June 2014). Our festival model has also explored
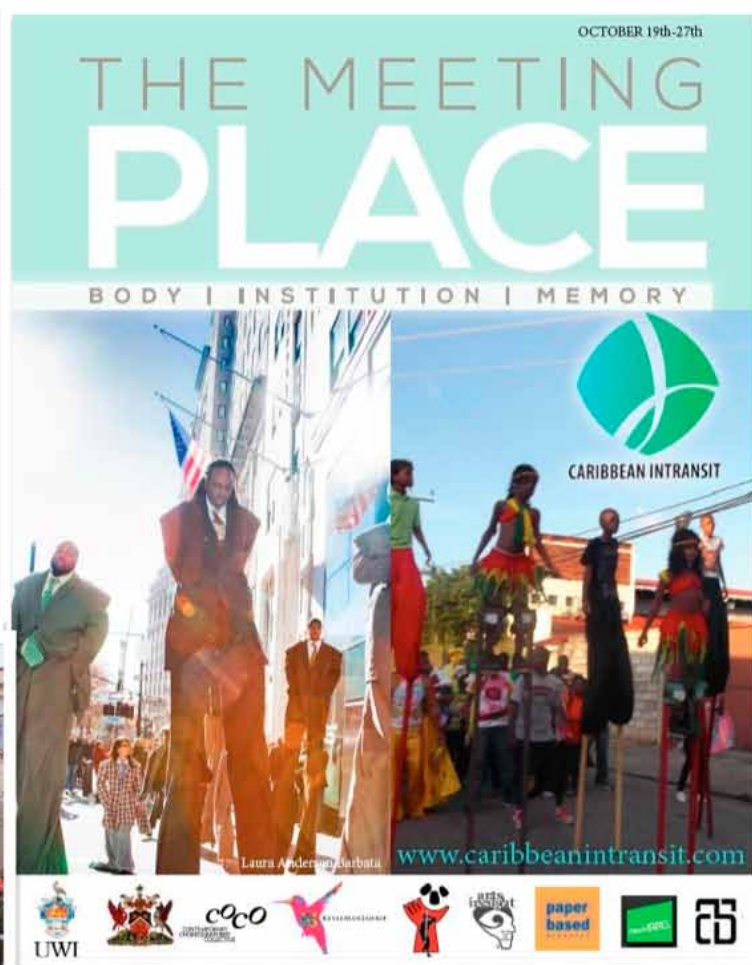

Figure 8.3: Inaugural *Caribbean InTransit* Festival *The Meeting Place*, 2013. (Photo: *Caribbean InTransit*)

the benefits of self-evaluation of its very model by contributing to conferences that took place in the weeks around the festivals in Trinidad and Washington. We also worked to link the festivals with one another, using a multicity presence that could de-stabilise a sense of the borders not only between Caribbean nations, but between the geographic Caribbean and the diaspora.

A second strand of the overall *Caribbean InTransit* initiative is the programme *This is ME*, which is currently in its fifth phase. It offers leadership and entrepreneurship training to at-risk communities as well as women in the Caribbean, targeting the young and those living with HIV/AIDS. Phases one and three took place in Trinidad (2012, 2013), the second in Jamaica (2012) and the fourth in Haiti (July 2014). The series explores *Caribbean InTransit's* emphasis on art as a path for social change, involving the local school system, regional and international social work collectives, and tertiary institutions. It develops sustainable programming that increases employability chances and is a firm example of how art may become part of a wider concern for social outreach and development. Additionally, we believe

Figure 8.4: Flyer for Inaugural Festival *The Meeting Place*, 2013. (Photo: *Caribbean InTransit*)

This is Me, Trinidad. 2013 | Belmont Boys High School

Figure 8.5: *This is ME I*, Trinidad, 2012. (Photo: *Caribbean InTransit*)

that the results show how to catalyse the creation of communities within the Caribbean by enabling students to understand the need for economic cooperatives and to participate in their development. Within the next five years, our aim is to open a satellite operation in the shape of a school of the arts, entrepreneurship and the environment, and to take advantage of a concept of the 'orange economy', promoted by the Inter-American Development Bank among other international funders, thereby consolidating our work on growing the creative industries in the Caribbean in a particular area of social need.

Conclusion

Caribbean InTransit has reached a stage of review in its development, which I have chosen to outline in this article from my standpoint as its founder. As a collaborative, networked platform, *Caribbean InTransit* works to build ideas and strategies through partnerships that take advantage of decentralisation of the globe via the Internet, and the implications for the arts through policy entrepreneurship. Moving the Caribbean onto a stronger policy footing in the arts, as we have begun to demonstrate, means using a multimodal approach that draws support from

government and state organisations where relevant, but equally places its balancing point closer to more innovative domains that are already represented by the arts, albeit as they struggle to sustain themselves.

The background of thinking on multimodality becomes productive when pressed into the service of the arts: the concepts of materiality, framing, design and production offer a way forward, as I have suggested. What has distinguished *Caribbean Intransit* is its additional emphasis on access, creative practice, critique and sustainability, and ideally these ought to be considered together with the framework on multimodality that I have been discussing. *Caribbean InTransit essentially* responds to three major questions: What does it take to create a viable creative industry for the Caribbean? What innovative development models already exist? How may these models be sustained in relation to the region's economic constraints? Such questions serve to harness creative imaginations producing innovative solutions through entrepreneurial activities. By de-compartmentalising disciplines and making value-based connections across a variety of sites and institutions, policy innovators can begin to dismantle structures that are leaving the Caribbean behind the curve, while making use of the
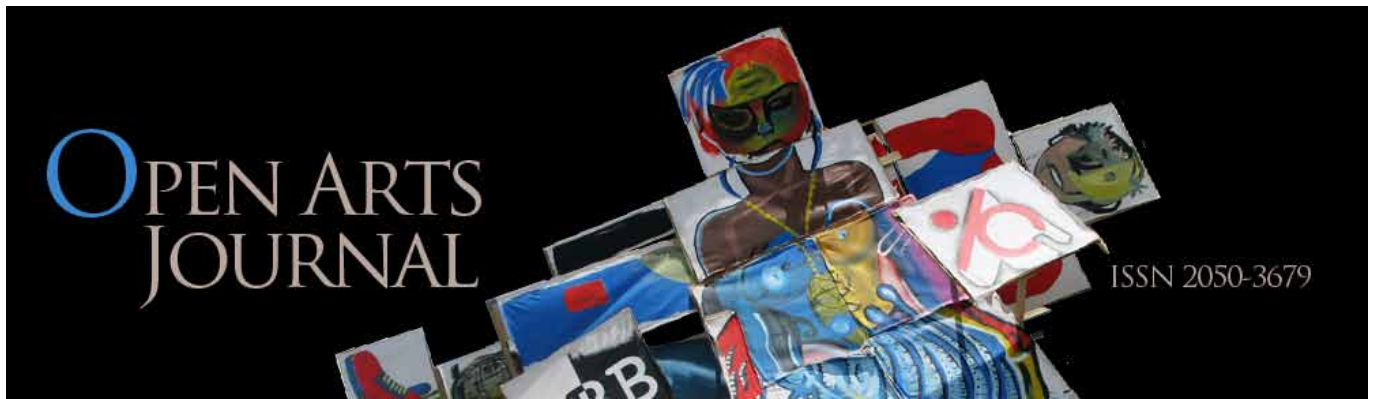
institutional strengths that have carried us to this point. When Caribbean communities choose to put to use their artists as thinkers in a new age of digital flows, human experience itself may be transformed into a shared resource. By effectively raising the use value of the arts, the top-down anxiety of how to 'carry' the arts will be alleviated, while increasing the contribution of the arts to Caribbean society.

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124

CHAMPAGNE TASTES AND MAUBY POCKETS? TOWARDS HEALTHY CULTURAL ECO-SYSTEMS IN BARBADOS

Annalee Davis

Abstract

After more than four and half years of programming, The Fresh Milk Art Platform is at a significant juncture, pondering what sustainability looks like in a region where the needs of visual artists outstrip the capacity of the environments they live and work in. As a social practice art project with a vision exceeding its financial means, Fresh Milk (FM) seeks a model that acknowledges the local and regional context. It is committed to expanding the critical arena, asserting itself in a way that is not driven by the market or by external forces out of sync with its own agenda. In the quest for sustainability, FM questions how a small, artist-led initiative might continue to respond to the needs of local contemporary visual artists. A new model is required to allow spaces like FM to maintain their intellectual and creative independence and become less vulnerable economically. What is a viable model for a social practice, artist-led project like FM that may contribute to strengthening healthy cultural eco-systems locally and in the Caribbean? This articles merely shapes the contours of such a model.

Biographical note

Annalee Davis is a Barbadian visual artist and cultural activist. She received her BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art and MFA from Rutgers, State University of New Jersey. Davis teaches part-time at the Barbados Community College, and is the founding director of The Fresh Milk Art Platform Inc., a socially engaged art platform. She was recently appointed as the Caribbean Arts Manager for the British Council.

Related material to this article was presented at the two project conferences for 'Sustainable Art Communities: Creativity and Policy in the Transnational Caribbean', held on 5–6 February 2013 (Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam; KIT, the Netherlands Royal Tropical Institute), and 3–4 December 2013 (Institute for International Visual Arts, Iniva, London, UK). Visit the project webpages here.

To view the film footage on the Open Arts Archive, www.openartsarchive.org, follow this link: http://www.openartsarchive.org/archive/2nd-conference-sustainable-art-communities-creativity-and-policy-transnational-caribbean-0

CHAMPAGNE TASTES AND MAUBY POCKETS TOWARDS HEALTHY CULTURAL ECO-SYSTEMS IN BARBADOS

Annalee Davis, Independent Visual Artist, Founding Director of Fresh Milk

> We had wanted something more than what the plantation had enabled, and we had wanted to make the road by walking even though we made lots of mistakes along the way.
>
> (Ford-Smith, 2015)

The Fresh Milk Art Platform (FM) is a registered not-for-profit organisation formally launched at an on-site public event at its premises on 13 August 2011. This article presents the organisation as a case study in contribution to a larger conversation on sustainable art communities in the Anglophone Caribbean and the Dutch Antilles. Firstly, it offers background to the birth of the organisation and provides a sense of the activities and arts programming supported over the past four and a half years. Secondly, it describes the challenges, financial and otherwise, of building a contemporary visual-arts organisation in a post-colonial Caribbean island, including balancing the needs of a small contemporary visual arts community while necessarily reaching out to the region, the diaspora and various art-worlds. Lastly, the article addresses the inherent ordeals and possibilities in relation to the organisation's location on the site of a former sugarcane plantation.

The title refers to a well-known Barbadian phrase, often used critically, to speak to people who live beyond their means. In 2008, at CARIFESTA[1] in Guyana, I witnessed an exchange between the writer Derek Walcott and the then-president of Guyana, Bharat Jagdeo, demonstrating the vastly different value systems from the contrasting perspectives of a writer and a politician. President Jagdeo suggested that, given the choice, his electorate would vote for the government of Guyana to maintain the capital city's roads and the

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1   CARIFESTA is a regional festival of arts and culture that takes place, on average, every two years in a different Caribbean country. CARIFESTA is organised by the government of the country hosting the festival.

Figure 9.1: The Fresh Milk Studio, 2013. (Photo: Mark King)

coastal sea wall rather than make poetry available to the masses. Walcott replied, somewhat angrily, that Caribbean people should not have to choose and that there is a vital need for both bread and poetry to be made available to all. While many may only afford to drink mauby, the story of the Caribbean is that its people often aim for much more than what their current economic realities can provide. The title also suggests that the vision of FM goes beyond its current financial means. The radical goal then, is to design a sustainable model for an organisation that believes we should not have to choose between having a sea wall or pothole-free public roads, and poetry or visual art.

The beginnings

Fresh Milk's mission is to be an artist-led, interdisciplinary organisation that supports artists and promotes wise social, economic and environmental stewardship of the visual arts through creative engagement with society and by cultivating excellence in the arts. Its genesis was in response to the almost 100% attrition rate of students who graduate with a BFA degree from Barbados Community College, and who within a year of graduation stop working as visual

artists because of the lack of a developed infrastructure to support their practice. FM was set up to nurture these young Barbadian artists. Moreover, years of teaching at Barbados Community College have enabled me to develop long-term relationships with emerging local artists. Whiteness and inherent privilege are problematic markers in postcolonial societies but the classroom context, which brings races, ages, genders and classes together over an extended period, helps to break down ossified expectations and permeate boundaries.

The concept for the organisation developed over many years of conversations with other visual artists in response to a lack of opportunities for contemporary artists living and working in Barbados, as well as the desire to mitigate isolation by fostering a creative and critical community. Fundamental goals include strengthening links across all linguistic areas of the region and its diaspora, and the forging of new relationships internationally. This has more recently included developing partnerships with the Global South and North since 2013 and 2014, respectively. For example, in mid-2014, participation in the cultural component of the Commonwealth games hosted in Glasgow provided an opportunity to expand activities beyond the region and its diaspora. Collectively, these activities contribute to the overall aim of shaping an integrated, sustainable and healthy cultural ecosystem in Barbados while engaging with the wider Caribbean and beyond.

The ecological analogy for the visual arts sector attends to the dimensions and parameters of an arts ecology geographically, financially, conceptually and, more particularly, the lack of established formal arts infrastructure on Barbados. This includes the absence of a national art gallery, a contemporary art museum, limited primary and secondary art markets, auction houses, branded curators, art writers, dealers, collectors and the like. An example of how this ecosystem might continue to expand, including developing partnerships with local government entities, the private sector, individual artists and other artists' networks, is FM's consideration of a larger kind of sustainability that leads to such a healthy cultural eco-system. The organisation is set up as a not-for-profit by default because in the Caribbean, like in many other places, there are three established sectors: private, not-for-profit and governmental. In the past fifteen years, there has been discussion about the emergence of a fourth sector:

> While the mission and method of many organizations … are becoming steadily more similar, something more than simple blurring

of the boundaries is occurring. Pioneering organizations in the three sectors are in fact converging toward a fundamentally new organizational sector that integrates social purposes with business methods: a Fourth Sector.

(Fourth Sector, n.d.)

The three pre-existing sectors have morphed somewhat by pulling strategies from one another, for example: the private sector speaks of corporate social responsibility and the informal network is moving towards more structured formats. This fourth sector requires a revision of corporate, not-for-profit, IP, tax and consumer-protection laws. In other words, capital is not seen exclusively in financial terms, rather this emerging model speaks to generating transparency, accountability, efficiency, effectiveness and social investing – values that inspire the work at FM. However, while there is value in considering some aspects of the fourth sector model, the legal framework of inter-operability between all stakeholders does not exist in Barbados at this time. The organisation is legally set up as not-for-profit and is considering developing a second status to register as a charity in order to access tax benefits for philanthropic donors.

The spatial and the historical ramifications of location

FM is located on the premises of Walkers Dairy, a former sugarcane plantation, operational since the 1660s. Historically, the plantation was an exclusive venue, hospitable only to the elite (usually white) planter class, who oversaw the inhumane treatment of the enslaved and indentured, and the exploitation of natural resources all in the pursuit of profit. Indeed, before the close of the seventeenth century, the entire island operated as a plantation. In 1920, my paternal great-grandmother, Edith Gertrude Davis, acquired Walkers plantation. After she retired it was managed by my grandfather and since the mid-1980s, my brother succeeded him and transitioned it from a sugarcane plantation to a dairy farm. Due to the island's traumatic historical legacy the appropriateness of the physical location of Fresh Milk on a former plantation is inevitably raised. Furthermore, it is managed by myself, a white Barbadian woman from a privileged background, raised on a sugarcane plantation and educated at art schools in the USA to graduate level, and this too prompts questions about who has the right to participate in this cultural space, and to what extent race and class facilitate or alienate involvement.

FM operates out of my studio on family property, deliberately flagging an alternative employment of the plantation for using the arts to imagine non-hierarchical

possibilities for human engagement and understanding. While inherited legacies present the island and the region as perpetually fractured, divided and broken, our goal is to shape new strategies that challenge by re-imagining and re-visioning this difficult heritage. As a Barbadian, I am acutely sensitive to the inequities of the island's colonial past and very aware of my inherent privilege; my commitment is to address these difficult issues head-on and find ways to shift ground, nurture culture and shape fresh possibilities.

This model of artists transforming family properties into artist-led initiatives is not uncommon in the Caribbean. Informal art networks have proliferated in the past ten to fifteen years and emerged from very specific and often intimate spaces.[2] Often, the lack of formal visual-arts infrastructure has initiated this repurposing of privately owned spaces or institutions in the Caribbean, transforming them into centres of critical thinking and creative output. It is in these spaces that artists are given permission to experiment and innovate, investigating the Caribbean not as exotic paradise but revealing more diverse lived realities, thereby becoming the subject rather than the object of representation. Ideally, these artist-led initiatives would be one of a range of sites working alongside ministries of culture, national art galleries, contemporary art museums and cultural foundations, each playing complementary roles in advancing the visual arts while supporting each other's mandates. Depending on location, this has happened in the Caribbean to greater or, far more commonly, lesser degrees.

Phytoremediation and rhizomatic thinking

The scientific process 'phytoremediation' offers a philosophical metaphor for FM's mission. It refers to the ability of some plants' root structures to absorb toxins from a toxic field and restore harmony. Similarly, FM, out of the toxic memories associated with a former plantation space, consciously designs local, regional and international programming to create other possibilities for alternate futures. Located on a site that was closed but is now striving to be open, it is a custodian of a library with some 2,500 books. This may also be seen as informed by Éduoard Glissant's rhizomatic thinking (1989), which provides an additional conceptual framework for re-visioning the island's

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2   Popop Studios in Nassau, Bahamas, was originally a bed-and-breakfast owned by John Cox's aunt while Alice Yard in Woodbrook, Trinidad, was the home and backyard of architect Sean Leonard's grandmother. Others have institutional histories, including: Ateliers '89, operating out of a former school in Oranjestad, Aruba, and the Instituto Buena Bista in Curaçao, which is located on a functioning psychiatric clinic.

poisoned history, largely by creating conditions that facilitate new growth. The model denies the existence of a single root, presenting instead the rhizome and its rhizosphere – the zone surrounding the roots of the plants – as a model for human interaction. In the context of FM, the rhizosphere includes its physical location on the plantation and its broader collective historical context both of which inform and determine contemporary relations in terms of race and class.

Through creative interventions and the development of critical, inclusive programming, the necessary reconciliation with the land and our collective history is attempted via using a socially engaged art practice to trouble old (colonial) paradigms that no longer serve contemporary society. In this contemporary moment, FM can also be seen as a place for resistance, actively working to shape a creative vision of the future and shedding colonial stigma by reclaiming this territory through one of the most powerful vehicles for social change: the arts.

George Lamming, in his 1985 essay 'In defense of cultural sovereignty', states that

> [t]he original meaning of the word, culture, had to do with the tending of plants and the care of animals. In other words, this work and the process it describes, has its roots in the practice of agriculture, and it has never lost this sense of nurturing; of feeding, of cultivating, whether it be a body or a mind that is under consideration.
>
> (Lamming, 2011, p. 142)

FM's physical location on a working dairy farm is a daily reminder of the original meaning of culture.

Fostering local talent

> We need to do the work to nurture a space at home so folks like him – the countless others who have left and the countless others who remain – can find community and safety there.
>
> (Ford-Smith, 2015)[3]

In a number of ways, the organisation offers both a place to study and opportunities for young artists. Fresh Milk Books (FMB) launched in April 2014. It is an initiative of the Colleen Lewis Reading Room (CLRR) at FM, housing approximately 2,500 books available for consultation by anyone interested in contemporary Caribbean visual practice and visual art. The goal is to continually develop the CLRR into a comprehensive, on-site arts library and intellectual literary resource,

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3   By 'him' Ford-Smith is referring to Jamaican novelist Marlon James and his recent publication *A Brief History of Seven Killings*.

specializing in texts which critically engage with Caribbean and diasporic life and thought. The FMB team comprises a small group of Barbadian artists and writers writing for the FMB online platform, and participating in workshops on long-form journalism, the art of essay writing and the history of curating. These workshops are led by international artists in residence and thus contribute to the professional development of the FMB group.

Another example would be the facilitation of opportunities for young Barbadian artists to present and speak about their work to other students, as well as to visiting university professors, professionals from the visual arts sector and both local and international artists who are in residence at FM, thus allowing young artists to expand their networks. In these ways, FM also demonstrates its commitment to local audiences as valid networks. Conceptualised as a zone of becoming, FM is at times a testing ground for creative experimentation, allowing practitioners a protected space in which to think, make and innovate. It therefore functions as a springboard for process-oriented and research-based creative practice and reasoning, in part through its residency programme. This provides artists with intellectual and artistic freedom to unpack

conceptual issues and experiment with aesthetic decisions. Furthermore, identifying specific skill sets among the FM team allows for growth and increased efficiency of the organisation. Developing skills in communication and social media, and community-based approaches for educational programming means that personal aspirations of team members can be supported through their involvement with the organisation.

At the moment, the core of the organisation includes three people who manage the daily administrative tasks and who are supported by several volunteers. The organisation has hosted eighteen local events in the past four and a half years including lectures, screenings, theatrical readings, workshops, book launches and exhibitions, all free and open to the public. In support of these investigations, the organisation expands visibility for and engagement with these ideas through public events, informal gatherings and collaborative regional and international projects, all archived on an active online domain. Continually fostering interaction, exchange and education happens through linking the development of emerging artists, writers, critics and cultural practitioners through residency programmes, workshops, exhibition opportunities and events.

Figure 9.2: Anna Christina Lorenzen and Alberta Whittle, *Blue*, 2012. Performance still.
(© Anna Christina Lorenzen and Alberta Whittle)

Figure 9.3: Matthew Murrell performing a theatrical reading at FRESH MILK X, 2013. (Photo: Dondré Trotman)

Regional and global relations – Being invited out | inviting in

In order for FM, as an inclusive initiative functioning out of a very small island, to be sustainable and healthy, its mission cannot be confined only to Barbados. Since November 2012, FM has hosted twenty-two international artist residencies, allowing local and international artists to broaden their scope of engagement and exchange. One pattern emerging via the international residency programme is that artists of colour located in Caribbean diasporic art communities see the artist residencies as opportunities to learn more about their relationship with the Caribbean. First- and second-generation Caribbean people feel connected to this region through family, culture and race. For some, having been culturally dislocated or marginalised as people of colour in the Global North reaffirms their sense of belonging to the Caribbean. On arrival to the island however, this romantic feeling is complicated, and the struggle to locate the self in the diasporic as well as ancestral home is often a large part of the learning process in the residency experience. A recent Afro-Canadian resident artist wrote in her blog: 'sometimes i feel like an ethnographer, because

even though i am bajan, i am not from here' (Robinson 2015). Thus, research-based international residencies allow for other kinds of engagements between the local and international art arena.

Working with informal arts organisations regionally and internationally facilitates the production of works, the movement of artists, the transfer of knowledge and the on-going development of professional skills of creative people. These activities aim to sensitise local, regional and international audiences to the contemporary arts coming out of the Caribbean and its cultural value. They also demonstrate an interest on the part of regionally based, artist-led initiatives to participate in broader dialogues, connecting artists beyond the confines of the insular Caribbean.

Mapping the Caribbean | Growing a diasporic network

FM's virtual online map of Caribbean art spaces, launched in October 2013, seeks to challenge the ways in which colonial powers segmented the region linguistically to produce artificial divisions between Caribbean people (Fresh Milk Barbados, 2013). This interactive map reinforces the possibility of forging links across linguistic divisions, reformulating an interrelated Caribbean region by showcasing arts entities from the nineteenth century until now. The map lends itself to giving greater awareness of what is happening across the region, facilitating research and allowing for collaboration among individuals and entities. The map also supports the establishment of relations with other regional networks in order to see how projects might be developed, possibly linking the Caribbean with the Americas, Asia, Africa, Oceania and Europe, thereby supporting a strategic goal to activate this network intra-regionally and globally through collaborations.

One example of the growing diasporic network is Aruba Linked/Caribbean Linked (2012) and the subsequent Caribbean Linked II and III (2013, 2015) in Aruba. This residency project formed strong bonds to continue after the residency through social-media platforms including Whatsapp.

Simultaneously, connections are being continually nurtured with extra-regional spaces including Videobrasil in São Paulo, the David Dale Gallery and Studios in Glasgow, the Pérez Art Museum Miami in the US and the Amsterdam-based global residency network Res Artis. FM is currently one of two Caribbean residencies registered with both Res Artis and TransArtists, both online residency networks with a directory of over four hundred global artist-residency programmes in more than seventy countries. The benefit of a Res Artis membership is increased visibility

Figure 9.4: Screening of Iara Lee's documentary *Cultures of Resistance* (2010) at FRESH MILK VIII, 2012.
(Photo: Dondré Trotman)

for our international residency programme, leading to artists from all over the world submitting applications. Another benefit included a 2014 Res Support Fellowship programme being awarded to a member of the FM team, Katherine Kennedy. She spent three months as a fellow at the Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, Germany, where she worked as a resident correspondent, interacted with personnel and fellows, conducted interviews and generally learned how to run an effective residency programme. This knowledge was then applied to FM allowing best practices to develop. In these ways, expanding networks serves to initiate constructive and innovative methods of working with collaborators to create visibility for and understanding of contemporary practice in Barbados and the wider region.

Collaborating digitally

FM maintains an active online platform with a website documenting the organisation's activities contributing to an archive of contemporary art practice in the region. Social-media platforms include a Facebook page for FM and FMB, and Twitter and Instagram accounts providing increased access to information about programming and activities. These tools facilitate FM's capacity to extend relationships being shaped with individual artists as well as institutions nationally, regionally and internationally, allowing important projects to develop.

The International Artist Initiated (IAI) project is a concrete example of how digital interconnectivity allowed FM to expand its network to include artist-led initiatives from around the Commonwealth. The David Dale Gallery and Studio based in Scotland conducted online research for their IAI project and selected FM from the Caribbean to participate in the cultural component of the Commonwealth Games hosted in Glasgow in the summer of 2014. The works of three Barbadian artists (Mark King, Alberta Whittle and Ronald Williams) were taken to David Dale Gallery. In addition, FM coordinated a discursive project, 'Common-Wealth/Single-Wealth' (Davis, 2014), and invited the other participating artist-led Commonwealth-based organisations from Cyprus, India, New Zealand, Nigeria and Scotland, to contribute to this dialogical component. The aim of the conversation was in part to unpack ideas related to the Commonwealth of Nations, the association under which countries gather every four years to celebrate sport.

However, while the gaze of the contemporary art world is increasingly shifting by degrees to the Global

Figure 9.5: The audience at FRESH MILK X, 2013. (Photo: Dondré Trotman)

South, including the Caribbean, and awareness about FM grows exponentially because of its active web presence, there is some frustration about capacity. Greater visibility in a wider global pool means that opportunities are increasingly available, but the downside is that engaging with more networks or accepting many of the invitations are difficult due to a lack of human and financial resources. For example, while being invited to participate in the Stockholm Independent Art Fair in Sweden in 2016 or the THAT Art Fair in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2017, is promising, it will more than likely stretch the limits of the administrative and financial capacity of the organisation beyond its capacities.

Finding the right model and the right resources

At her keynote lecture for the Former West conference in Berlin (March 2013) visual culture studies scholar Irit Rogoff expressed the need to reoccupy infrastructure and to reframe questions, arguing for casting the dynamics in a different way. The suggestion was to understand the link between collectivity and infrastructure and to rethink the interdependence between resources and power that would be manifest among various strata of stakeholders (Rogoff, 2013). In

contrast with the 'Former West' that Rogoff has in view, the Caribbean is a context largely without a formal arts infrastructure, or at least with very limited provisions for the arts. That aspect of Rogoff's argument about opportunities to be had, not despite but *because* of such an absence of infrastructure, is a compelling one for the Caribbean. It may help to generate new models in the region rather than have the Caribbean mimic first-world infrastructures, ill-suited to Caribbean needs, goals and circumstances.

Such is FM's attempt. It operates in a local context with a very limited formal arts infrastructure. Like other Caribbean artist-led initiatives, keen to support the art-making process rather than marketing market-ready products, models of sustainability need to be envisioned and structured in ways that will allow them to fulfil their mandates and maintain intellectual independence. This is in a local context where there is immense pressure from the Ministry responsible for culture to encourage artists to become entrepreneurs. In a 2015 *The Barbados Advocate* Business Monday newspaper article on the creative industries development workshop entitled 'Towards a Sustainable Creative Sector at the Cave Hill School of Business', Lisa Cummins, Executive Director of the Barbados Coalition of Service Industries (BCSI),

said that the 'Cultural and Creative Industries is [sic] one of the development pillars in the economic trajectory.' Following on, Ruth Blackman, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth commented: 'Cultural practitioners must also position themselves for investment. While Barbados is the primary market, it is through the exportation of products that economic gains are maximised' (Cummins & Blackman, 2015).

This, however, is a more complex issue. In 2012, UK-based Andrew Senior of Andrew Senior Associates was hired by the government of Barbados with funding provided by UNESCO and the European Union to prepare a diagnostic report on Barbados' cultural industries. Two of his key findings were:

> (i) The concept of the creative and cultural industries is not well understood and the absence of robust and coherent economic data makes it impossible both to begin to counter these misapprehensions and undertake evidence-based policy making for the sector and (ii) Networks are underdeveloped, under-utilised and require support and investment.
>
> (Senior, 2012)

But pressuring visual artists to enter the international art world as businesses is deeply problematic and demonstrates little understanding of the sector, especially when the government supports free education for a BFA at Barbados Community College, but gives little thought to how to nurture an environment in which artists might continue making work after graduation. In contrast, government entities tend to engage with culture at an amateur level.

It continues to be difficult for FM to generate adequate funding for programming and to remunerate three members of staff facing increased daily administrative tasks. FM is therefore at a crossroads. Given the growing interest in the organisation and the constantly expanding opportunities, the workload has become very heavy for the team of volunteers. While generating cultural capital and nurturing the local community, the small core group of staff is in danger of becoming financially unsustainable. Internal debate is about designing a more formal structure in order to grow and become more effective in responding to the needs and available opportunities, for instance: visual artists increasingly make structural contributions to the public as they shift from managing projects to growing an organisation. One such model for sustainability combines income from four revenue streams: international residency fees, grants, philanthropic donations, and government subvention.

• *Residency fees*
While the organisation has been able to periodically source funding and three benefactors generously support six local residencies through donations (including a stipend for the artists), international residents are charged a fee of US $1,000 for a one-month residency period. This fee includes accommodation in a flat, access to a studio and the reading room and administrative support for the resident artist. Income from the residency fees has in part supported general overheads and some programming which often include a public event at the end of a residency.

• *Grants and the grant-writing dilemma*
In 2013, FM successfully received and managed four local grants: two from the US Embassy in Barbados and two from the Maria Holder Memorial Trust based in Barbados. In an effort to secure financial support, FM partnered with *ARC Magazine* in late 2012 and early 2013 to submit five major international grants in twelve months. Although unsuccessful, FM and ARC progressed through the first round of judging of the first Compete Caribbean attempt. This may be promising but considering the effort that goes into writing applications, the question is how to sustain this. FM has since been building relationships within the local arena, eager to find a model of financial sustainability at home. At the time of writing this article, a decision about a major grant application FM submitted to a local trust is pending. The request is to cover the expansion of the physical plant allowing the organisation to offer alternative art educational programming, and to cover overheads and programming for a three-year period. An initial decision has been made by the Trust, which states that at the outcome depends on an evaluation of the organisation by an international consultant. This will include the design of a comprehensive sustainability plan, which will permit the granting institution to decide whether or not to fund FM over a three-year period.

• *Philanthropic support*
The Aspire Foundation (Barbados)[4] has selected FM as one of eight local not-for-profit or charitable organisations as part of its pilot phase. Given that the island has a number of high-net-worth individuals who make Barbados a second home (many of whom are keen to invest in the island), Aspire will function as a

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4   The Aspire Foundation (Barbados) is newly formed (2015) not-for-profit entity that is committed to 'helping charities help'. Aspire is working with corporate and individual donors, and other key stakeholders, to strengthen and accredit charities to improve their impact and sustainability and to connect them with potential sponsors.

Figure 9.6: The Fresh Milk Artboard, featuring work by Evan Avery, 2013. (Photo: Annalee Davis)

conduit between these individuals and the selected organisations with a goal to creating relationships with philanthropists who will invest in selected organisations.

- *State subvention*

Since the government of Barbados proclaimed the Cultural Industries Development Act (CIDA) on 1 February 2015, Minister of Culture Stephen Lashley said the bill would provide 'for the establishment of a regulatory framework to facilitate and encourage the sustainable growth and development of cultural industries, (and) funding for cultural projects' (Lashley cited in Deane, 2015). The Ministry of Culture, in its current formation, does not have the capacity to support the kind of programming that FM undertakes and there is no other organisation on the island nurturing contemporary visual artists and their practices. It therefore seems feasible that with the proclamation of the CIDA, supporting FM with a state subvention should be in keeping with the state's goal to grow the cultural sector, including the visual arts, especially since the ministry is not equipped to carry out this work.

Exploring the role of the global diaspora

One way the global diaspora has engaged with the region's visual artists is by hosting exhibitions at museums in the US. Although these survey exhibitions have increased awareness of art from the region, continuing to contextualise the works of artists in geo-political Caribbean frameworks has its limitations, and hopefully this trend is tapering off to allow for participation in less generic ways. Increasing numbers of individual artists are mounting solo exhibitions at galleries and fairs in the Global North. This includes, to give just two examples: Ebony G. Patterson's solo exhibition at New York's Museum of Art and Design (2015) and Jeanette Ehlers *Whip It Good*, commissioned in 2013 by The Art Labour Archives in Berlin and performed at Autograph ABP as part of this Danish-Trinidadian artist's first UK solo exhibition.

Given that Caribbean communities are to be found all over the world, it is only natural that Caribbean artists are forging bonds throughout the diaspora and within the global art-world. They are shaping associations with arts professionals, visual art and cultural studies departments in universities and institutes in the metropolitan cities of the Global North where significant power lies. One such example includes the 'Sustainable Art Communities' research and exchange project out of which this article developed. It was an openly accessible, state-funded project (UK and The Netherlands), which allowed stakeholders to convene at these knowledge-exchange symposia led by higher education institutions in the

two countries. Both symposia were run in partnership with public arts organisation, the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam and the Institute of International Visual Arts (Iniva) in London.

Another example is the Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), which engages proactively with the Caribbean diaspora. One of its first exhibitions was 'Caribbean: Crossroads of the World'. A robust public program provided a platform for artists and scholars in the Caribbean and the diaspora to participate in dialogue about contemporary practice in relation to the exhibition's thematic layout. Under chief curator Tobias Ostrander, who visited the National Art Gallery of the Bahamas, Alice Yard in Trinidad and FM in Barbados, PAMM's programming is actively involving artists from the Caribbean and its diaspora. This includes a commissioned work by London-based Guyanese artist Hew Locke; 'Bloodlines', a solo exhibition by Firelei Báez who is based in New York but from the Dominican Republic; and the exhibition 'Sun Splashed' (Nov. 2015 – Feb. 2016) from the New York–based Jamaican artist Nari Ward.

Lastly, a somewhat different example is 'Tilting Axis', a roving meeting conceptualised by *ARC Magazine* and FM who invited Res Artists and PAMM to become core partners, under the banner 'Tilting Axis: Within and Beyond the Caribbean | Shifting Models of Sustainability'. The two-day invitation-only conference (27–28 Feb. 2015) brought together 32 independent artists, art organisations and museums operating across the Caribbean, US, EU and China. The goal of the meeting was to negotiate strategic regional and international alliances for the further development of infrastructure, production and markets of the Caribbean's visual arts sector. Critically, the meeting took place on Caribbean soil from the perspective of artist-led initiatives driving the agenda from within specificities of the Global South. This is unlike meetings that frequently happen extra-regionally and often concern trade agreements, including for example the Economic Partnership Agreement.[5] 'Tilting Axis' overall goal was to consider a direction for both the immediate and longer-term future of the visual arts sector in the Caribbean and discuss what sorts of interventions might contribute to 'tilt the axis', creating open access to reflect a more inclusive and equitable

art-world. Three focus areas were determined, inviting participants to consider more deeply how to mov forward, including: (i) education (ii) exhibitions and programming and (iii) artists' mobility and residencies.

Following up, and conceived as a mid-point meeting, 'Tilting Axis 1.5' (São Paulo, Brazil, 8 Oct. 2015) acted as a discursive moment to continue circulating the collective's core methodologies. Goals included addressing the Caribbean's peripheral position within larger global art conversations, generating awareness and sensitising cultural practitioners in the Global South. Lastly, 'Tilting Axis 2' was hosted by the Pérez Art Museum from 19 to 21 February 2016 and explored the current state of cultural work in the Caribbean, in order to fortify networks, increase administrative and programming capacities, as well as transfer knowledge and funding opportunities to those working in the region. ARC and FM will continue to work with each host, shaping the agenda from a Caribbean-informed perspective.

These examples demonstrate the role of the diaspora as collaborators and co-facilitators of opportunities for Caribbean-based and Caribbean-diasporic artists to increase visibility and understanding

Figure 9.7: The Colleen Lewis Reading Room at Fresh Milk. (Photo Dondré Trotman)

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5   The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) is an agreement between Europe and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states. Norman Girvan argues that as ACP countries continue to export raw materials, food and consumer services and import manufactured goods and producer services, the same colonial model that Britain used centuries ago, albeit now consolidated with its European partners, continues to be repeated over and over again.

of the region's contemporary visual practice. Global partnerships are becoming more strategic and reciprocal – deepening and adapting over time, encouraging decision makers in the global art world to consider working with Caribbean artists in ways that are mutually beneficial. Reciprocal exchanges might also include research posts for Caribbean-based artists, writers, curators and art historians at metropolitan universities, or sponsorship of distance learning programmes and internships for emerging creative practitioners. Foundations might for example hire experts from the region working in cultural policy, while formal memoranda of understanding may be developed between universities offering practice-based graduate-level courses in Caribbean Studies, Art History and Cultural Studies. Finally, Caribbean-based, informal, artist-led initiatives can become points of contact and sites of local knowledge for regional counterparts and international scholars, students, researchers and curators. Given the region's history and within the context of the region's nascent visual arts economy, these kinds of reciprocal exchanges require that we explore what it means to be located in the Caribbean, our relationship with the Global South and metropolitan cities in the North.

Envisioning the future

FM began with much excitement and was born out of a need to create opportunities for young art graduates from Barbados Community College and fostering community in the local visual arts sector. The pressing needs for longer-term sustainability lead me to believe that the most radical task we might achieve is to secure core funding allowing the organisation to continue to do the work that is necessary and to continue to expand the visual arts sector beyond national borders while nourishing artists working in Barbados to whom we are committed.

Marrying survival and longevity with experimentation and innovation requires an imperative call to action, given that the current national and regional frameworks for the sustainability of the visual arts sector is inadequate. For FM there has been a gradual, organic shift from coordinating temporal art projects to becoming an organisation, involving a different way of operating and regular programming at a local, regional and international level. In order to respond to the needs of the art community and its professional evolution in a region such as ours, FM's structure must either change to accommodate the needs, scale back or close. The current scenario speaks to the paradoxical nature of being self-supporting while supporting an environment to foster continual awareness of contemporary visual art: it is at a stage where it needs to determine how it might become both financially sustainable and intellectually independent without becoming overly bureaucratic.

Figure 9.8: The Fresh Milk Studio, 2011. (Photo: Samantha Davis)

Conclusion

> All of writing is a huge lake. There are great
> rivers that feed the lake, like Tolstoy or
> Dostoyevsky. And then there are mere trickles,
> like Jean Rhys. All that matters is feeding the lake.
> I don't matter. The lake matters. You must keep
> feeding the lake.
>
> Jean Rhys

The benefit of gatherings, such as the 2013 'Sustainable Art Communities' conference in London is to foster a tighter arts community across linguistic divisions in the region, the Global South and both sides of the Atlantic, while bolstering professional relationships and future collaborations. Continuous dialogue with artists and regular evaluation of best practices and developments in the field are important in order to understand the constantly shifting specificities of the numerous centres of art practice throughout the region. The increasingly complex global art landscape is testimony to that fact that there is no longer a single centre to which artists and their audiences must gravitate. Rather, if we pay attention to how Caribbean-based artist-led initiatives are evolving, trying to understand the specific demands of their varied contexts, looking at the art being made and listening to the critical discourse emanating, collectively our observations might reveal the kinds of structures we need to shape and support.

While FM as a socially engaged platform is more interested in the conditions that support the process of thinking critically and the act of making, grappling with the dilemma of financial autonomy while searching for models of sustainability over the long term, consume much of our time. It is thus vital to realise an alternative model that acknowledges the specificity of the local and regional context we inhabit. This has included creating opportunities for local, regional and international audiences to experience Caribbean contemporary visual art and developing platforms for Caribbean artists and curators to reach new audiences. The very idea of our collective survival as contemporary visual artists and the visual arts sector is necessarily connected to the idea of this larger cultural ecosystem. In this way, FM is a trickle that feeds the lake. Valuing a cultural biodiversity, not controlled exclusively by market forces but by an innovative, inter-disciplinary, inter-dependent modus operandi, supports our desire for both mauby and champagne as well as for bread and poetry.

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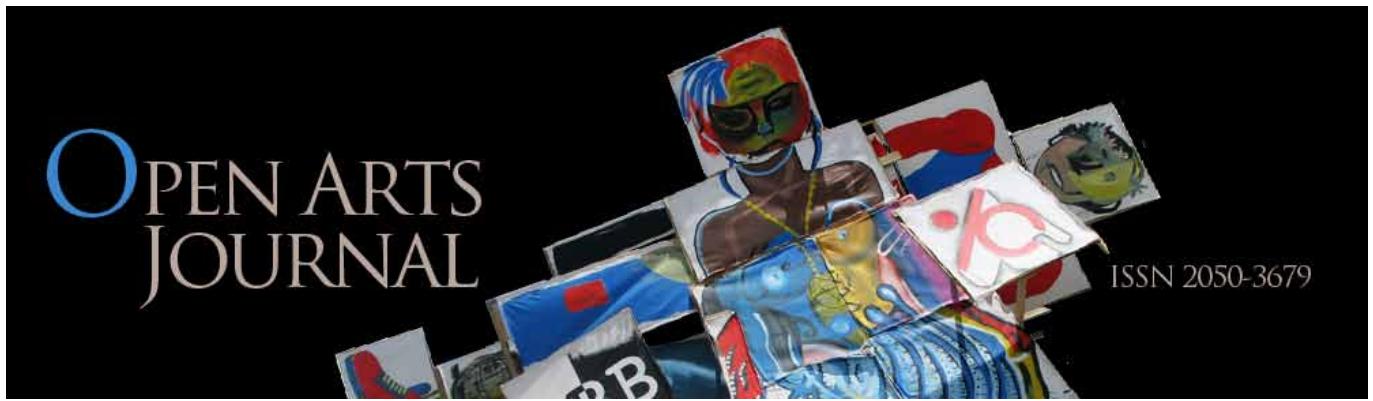
SUSTAINABLE ART COMMUNITIES: AN AFTERWORD
Mimi Sheller

Biography

Mimi Sheller, Ph.D., is Professor of Sociology; founding Director of the Center for Mobilities Research and Policy at Drexel University in Philadelphia; and President of the International Association for the History of Transport, Traffic and Mobility. She is author or co-editor of nine books, including: *Aluminum Dreams: The Making of Light Modernity* (MIT Press, 2014); *Mobility and Locative Media* (2014); *Citizenship from Below* (Duke University Press, 2012); and *Consuming the Caribbean* (Routledge, 2003). She has published extensively in Caribbean Studies and helped to establish the new interdisciplinary field of mobilities research. She was awarded the Doctor Honoris Causa from Roskilde University, Denmark, (2015) and has held Visiting Fellowships at the Davis Center for Historical Studies, Princeton University (2008); Media@McGill, Canada (2009); Center for Mobility and Urban Studies at Aalborg University, Denmark (2009); and Penn Humanities Forum, University of Pennsylvania (2010). She has received research funding from the National Science Foundation, the British Academy, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and the Macarthur Foundation.

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To view the film footage on the Open Arts Archive, www.openartsarchive.org, follow this link: http://www.openartsarchive.org/archive/1st-conference-sustainable-art-communities-creativity-and-policy-transnational-caribbean-12

SUSTAINABLE ART COMMUNITIES: AN AFTERWORD

Mimi Sheller, Drexel University

This provocative collection on sustainable arts communities in the Caribbean teaches us not only about the ways in which knowledge is situated, as many Caribbean theorists have posited, but also attempts to situate artistic practices, institutions, and criticism – that is to say, the arts are seen as always engaged in complex, particular places rather than from an imaginary utopia (or dystopia!) known as the global 'art world'. Thus, the question of the sustainability of Caribbean arts pertains to a multitude of differently located situations, specific places, distinct identities, and varied practices, some of which are in the region, some of which are in the diaspora, and some of which are bridges in between. The essays in this volume raise the problem of how these multi-located arts communities (which are local, regional, national, and global simultaneously) may be sustained over time in all of their rich diversity, as a kind of complex cultural ecosystem full of creative niches.

It should not be surprising therefore that the question of sustainability has several different meanings and programmatic aims that emerge from this collection. I want to briefly reflect on three meanings of sustainability that emerge: first, institutional sustainability and the generational reproduction of arts communities; second, a slightly different facet, focused on how Caribbean artists can *sustain* or bear the weight of outside influence and global forces in relation to locality; and third, the question of the sustainability of a Caribbean identity as a particular social kind. Finally, I will add a fourth dimension of sustainability which is less foregrounded here, the role of the arts in addressing the issue of ecological sustainability of the Caribbean in a future of extreme climate challenges.

First, the collection shows us how the sustainability of local, national, and regional arts communities in the Caribbean (and individual artists and their careers) implies their capacity to be reproduced over time, and ultimately to be transmitted to the next generation. Erica Moiah James offers an incredibly knowledgeable and clear-eyed assessment of the cultivation of arts institutions, practices, and publics in The Bahamas, and their relation to regional and transnational contexts. She shows both the challenges and the possibilities for sustainability based on her own deep experiential engagement with local processes and histories.

Her contribution is sobering, yet also hopeful. Also extremely hopeful is Marielle Barrow's presentation of the journal *Caribbean InTransit* as a bridge connecting spaces and institutions within locations/countries, a platform for creative, networked communities and connections between geographic locations, and a location for creating 'communities of value'. She shows us that so much can be done, despite severe constraints for self-sustaining arts publications. Annalee Davis likewise introduces us to the Barbados artists' collective Fresh Milk and asks probing questions about the sustainability of such informal spaces and creative initiatives in their dynamic response to the absence of infrastructure for the arts.

All three of these contributions lead us to think beyond economic challenges alone – which all arts institutions face – and to interrogate instead the reproduction of arts institutions, their generational turnover, and their changing relation to dynamic contemporary contexts. They ask us to think in terms of nurturing and growing healthy cultural ecosystems. To take this further, we should ask how such hopeful green shoots might be cultivated and transferred to other Caribbean locations – what can we learn from each other and share?

Second, sustainability might be thought of not only in terms of what can be kept going, but also what can we bear. How much weight of 'the global' can be sustained upon the backs of Caribbean artists? What is the burden of outside expectation upon Caribbean arts institutions and artists, and who is helping to support that burden? Therese Hadchity calls for paying closer attention to national contexts when discussing Caribbean arts. Despite the turn to more transnational, diasporic, or post-national perspectives, the celebration of the global in metropolitan art circles is contextually problematic for the sustainability of national arts communities and artists in the Caribbean. Global recognition comes at the price of succumbing to outside interpretations that position the Caribbean as a 'belated' time-space lagging behind leading developments that begin elsewhere. At the same time, metropolitan art critics, art institutions, and arts funding may anoint certain Caribbean artists as voices of the local, while ignoring others.

In either case, this leads to the perennial question of what *sustenance* might one gain as an artist from identification of oneself as Caribbean (or more specifically Bahamian, Bajan, etc.); and what dis-identifications or mis-identifications does it entail? Hadchity's critique of cosmopolitanism also shows how this might be a false dichotomy, for art operates in a dual register, with some successful contemporary

artists in Barbados being able to simultaneously speak to cosmopolitan audiences abroad and national audiences at home, demonstrating their complementarity.

Transcending the national in approaches to art may in fact reinforce internal hierarchies and fundamental inequalities by effectively silencing them. A related argument is advanced in Winston Kellman's call for an aesthetics of place. He too feels that the embrace of the global Caribbean 'runs the risk of over-determining the Caribbean', neglecting concrete events, experiences, and points of view that are locally situated and 'on the ground' in the present. The artist Tirzo Martha also questions the imposed political label of an Afro-Curaçao identity, and describes the emergence of the Instituto Buena Bista (IBB), the Curaçao Centre for Contemporary Art, which opened in 2006 as a locally grounded institution. He develops his own artistic persona through a character he calls Captain Caribbean. In her essay about Martha's social practice work, in which he brings rural and urban children together to collaborate on creative projects, Kitty Zijlmans 'elaborate[s] on the ways in which Martha's art practice can help with understanding how to establish a sustainable (art) community on Curaçao from the ground up.' Here, too, the emphasis is on a locally rooted and creatively sustained project.

Third, then, in view of these challenges to global and diasporic identities, we might consider sustainability in terms of whether a concept of Caribbean-ness can be sustained over time and space, and on whose terms? This pertains to how Caribbean identities are not only grounded in specific place experiences, but also travel into the world along different routes. Charl Landvreugd theorises the specificity of Afro-European identities and a 'problem space', as distinct from African-American or Black British trajectories. Again, this suggests the importance of national locations in navigating allegedly post-colonial, post-black, and post-national worlds. His innovative concept of Afropea suggests alternative routes and ways of rooting black identities in Europe, and more specifically of placing Suriname identities in the Netherlands. The work of Nicholas Morris, undertaken together with his wife Ritula Fränkel, also calls into question the routing of complex identities in Caribbean familial itineraries that in his case include West African, Irish, English, German, Portuguese, and Sephardic Jewish descent, now grounded in central Germany. They both call into question assumptions about what belongs within the kin group (to use an anthropological term) 'Caribbean'. Where might it be found? What children are the Caribbean's kith and kin? What gardens does it till?

Taken together all of the contributors provoke a sharper focus on what we mean when we say something or someone is Caribbean, and what it means to support Caribbean arts communities. Outside curators and critics so often get it wrong, imposing labels and assumptions, lumping together distinct locations without recognising their specificity, and importing indistinct global brands that water down, if not indeed drown out, local knowledge production and self-definition.

One of the most important lessons of sustainable arts communities to come out of this collection is the need to cultivate locally grounded ecosystems of arts training, art institutions, and art criticism, which do not simply catapult individual artists out of the Caribbean into the global circuits of metropolitan arbiters of taste, without some kind of payback. Can we speak of reparations owed to Caribbean arts communities by those circuits of power that have undermined their sustainability? Can we imagine new mechanisms for supporting the arts ecosystem in the Caribbean?

As CARICOM advances the region's call for reparations from European nations that profited immensely from the slave trade and the slave plantation system in the Caribbean, and as institutions such as universities are being pressed to examine their ties to wealth generated from slavery, we might ask that metropolitan arts institutions also examine the origins of their valuable art collections, which continue to generate so much profit today. If major European art collections can be traced back to wealth generated from systems of slavery do they not also have an obligation to make reparations to its Caribbean descendants? And would it not be most appropriate to channel that toward supporting arts institutions and artists in the Caribbean?

Finally, in concluding, let me turn to one more meaning of sustainability, indeed one of the most pressing. The discourse around sustainability is sometimes associated with three pillars. Sustaining arts institutions and art markets in the Caribbean might be associated with the economic pillar. Sustaining artists and arts communities might be associated with the social pillar. But the third pillar of sustainability concerns ecological survival and sustaining the future of the land, air, water, and flora and fauna, as well as people of the Caribbean. This aspect has not been taken up so much in this volume, but I believe it is also crucial.

Artists might be thought of as a kind of indicator species who flourish when their habitat is healthy, and whither and die away when it is stressed. They are also often very sensitive to social and environmental perturbations, sensing the world around them with

greater acuity and responsiveness. The Caribbean region today faces a wide range of ecological challenges, including human-induced climate change that is leading to ocean warming, rising sea levels, salination of aquifers, drought, and growing intensity of hurricanes due to sea-surface warming, all of which pose threats to not only biodiversity but the sheer survival of human communities. The most recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change suggests that these issues are only likely to worsen as climate change continues to affect the entire Caribbean region (IPCC AR5 WG II Report, 2014, Ch. 29). Other human-induced stressors include deforestation, soil loss, dying coral reefs, depleted mangrove forests, road building, and sand mining.

The Caribbean arts community might play a crucial role in drawing attention to these issues of ecological sustainability both at home and internationally. The heavy footprint of tourism in the region, as well as mining and resource extraction, originates from outside and it requires voices in the region and in the diaspora to call attention to its damaging impacts. Artists and arts institutions in the region might also be in a position to support local education and environmental initiatives that pertain to climate adaptation and resilience, including protecting what remains ecologically, as well as supporting recoveries from natural disasters. It may be that the sustainability of the entire Caribbean region (or at least some parts of it) will be put into question in the future, along with the very survival of Caribbean cultures, *tout court*. In that sense, the Caribbean diaspora will play an important part, not only as the seeds that have spread outward, but also as the rhizomatic transplants that will one day propagate the future culture of the Caribbean, wherever it may make landfall.