THE CARIBBEAN

I wrote this book in 2019-2021, a period of confusion, polarization, and change. COVID-19, #metoo, climate change, decolonization, plurality of sexual diversity, Black Lives Matter (BLM), and the USA's elections were impactful for everybody worldwide. I had planned to write this book in four writing residencies. Writing residencies offer a workplace and accommodation where you can focus on writing, and sometimes coaching is provided. Residencies are for a set period. In my case, three months. I was in my second residency in Rio de Janeiro when the COVID pandemic broke out. With my European passport and no official status in Brazil, I was forced to immediately return to the Netherlands. The wave of worldwide Black Lives Matter demonstrations that followed the death of George Floyd at the hands of police began not long after my return to Europe. The mainstream media was flooded with films, and documentaries to watch; articles and books to read for white people who aspire to be allies to the black community, accompanied with the hashtag #dothework.

Preceding my research in the Caribbean, I spent twenty years working and living between Amsterdam and New York City. Over the past decades, my community of friends and colleagues has been diverse in every way, actively involved in #metoo, climate change, decolonization, BLM, the plurality of sexual diversity, and in electoral politics and the political arena. Working and living amongst them gave me insight beyond my eurocentric perspective. When the BLM protests became a global phenomenon, many of my white European friends were triggered by the events happening around them.

After I posted a pile of books on Instagram with the hashtag #dothework, they asked me how they could educate themselves. They sincerely wondered what was happening, what did they miss? Their children questioned their lack of awareness of colonial history and the absence of friends and colleagues with different cultural backgrounds in their lives. Is race really an issue here in Europe too? They asked if I could suggest the top-three books they could read over the summer holiday, and wanted to know what the best documentary to watch would be. I am happy about the worldwide awakening to current global problems. Still, I had no conclusive answer to those questions or nor did I know the top-three books that do. The issues we deal with in the twenty-first century are complex, explosive, and entangled. Governments ignore the zeitgeist cues and busy themselves with putting out symptomatic fires instead of actively instigating, and participating in the challenging and time-consuming worldwide discourse on ethics.

In his book, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*, Adom Getachew writes,

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> Just 80 years ago, colonial rule appeared to be a stable and permanent feature of international politics. In just three decades, between 1945 and 1975, anti-colonial nationalists in the Caribbean, South America, Africa, and Asia, many countries regained their independence had transformed the world's map. In this period, United Nations membership grew from 51 to 144 countries. If colonialism made the modern world, decolonization could not be complete until the world—including Europe—is remade.

After five centuries, decolonizing is put on the agenda in international politics. The World – including Europe – has started the remaking Getachew writes is needed to complete decolonization. In this book, the influence of the decolonization discourse in international politics is reflected in the encounters and conversations I had with art professionals and in the Caribbean institutions I write about.

It is impossible to describe the Caribbean in one chapter, let alone give a voice to its many differing perspectives. My work relationship with the region started 25 years ago. In my encounters and conversations with friends and colleagues over the past decades, countless books, articles, documentaries, films, and exhibitions of art were recommended to me. #dothework cannot be done over the summer holiday. This publication, at best, facilitates an ongoing dialogue and continues to ask questions that need to be researched and written about continuously, by countless others, from various perspectives, now and in the future.

WHERE IS THE CARIBBEAN?

The Caribbean is a region that consists of the Caribbean Sea, many islands, and the surrounding coasts. We will find it southeast of the Gulf of Mexico and North America, east of Central America, and north of South America on a map. There are two terms frequently used when talking about the area.

The Insular Caribbean consists of 7,000 islands (world atlas) located in the Caribbean Sea. Many islands have no inhabitants. The populated ones consist of thirty territories: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, The Bahamas, Barbados, Bonaire, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Curacao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Montserrat, Puerto Rico, Saba, Saint Barth's, Saint Eustatius, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Maarten, Saint Martin, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad, and Tobago, Turks and Caicos, and US Virgin Islands. The definition of the Insular Caribbean can be inconsistent as The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos are usually included, but are actually in the Atlantic Ocean, not in the Caribbean Sea.

El Gran Caribe is used when the coastal parts of South and Central America meet the Caribbean Sea: Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and Venezuela. Some also include French Guyana, as well as Guyana, Suriname, and the southwest side of North America which don't have shores in the Caribbean Sea.

This publication is limited to the places I visited during my research: Anguilla, Aruba, The Bahamas, Barbados, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Curacao, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Saint Maarten, Saint Martin, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, and US Virgin Islands.

COLUMBUS LIED...

Columbus was a mighty sailor.
He sailed the open seas.
He went on to the Caribbean.
And he called it the West Indies.

(Mighty Shadow, Columbus Lied, calypso song lyrics, 1991)

The Caribbean is part of a broader region documented as having been 'discovered' by Spanish conquerors Christopher Columbus and (lesser known) Alonso de Ojeda, the first Europeans to reach the region, in 1492. Merchant and navigator Amerigo Vespucci (Italy), in a letter to Lorenzo Pietro di Medici, the ruler of Florence (Italy) reporting on his voyage, defined the region as the *Mundus Noves* (New World) in 1504. The Spanish and Portuguese Crowns, in a fight to monopolize the spice trade at the end of the fifteenth century, were forced to look for new travel routes from Europe to India. Columbus, representing the Spanish Crown, made a navigational mistake and arrived in the Caribbean at the end of the fifteenth century. Hence, the continued use of 'West Indies' (not the India Columbus was aiming for, but the place where he actually arrived) and 'Indians for the 90-112 million people who lived in the Caribbean and in what we now call the 'Americas' (Charles C. Mann), which, at the moment of first contact, had a larger population than that of Europe. They welcomed the arrivals generously with food and gave aid to the sick – a civilized act perceived as weak by Columbus – as we can read in his letter addressed to Luis de Santangel, treasurer of the Kingdom of Aragon, first published in Barcelona 1493.

Today, the worldwide educational curriculum includes little to no Caribbean history. If anything, it is a side paragraph about the financial benefits of European discovery travel that celebrates Europeans' heroism and capitalism. All documented history, as is the nature of colonialism, has been dominated by Europe, creating a very one-sided perspective. Since the mid-twentieth century, written documentation is being added by scholars and writers from and in the Caribbean; completing historical archives with different perspectives.
I am fascinated by the complexity of the Caribbean. Still, I am no scholar, historian, economist, political scientist, or any other type of expert. This chapter will be limited to selecting points that caught my attention while traveling. My experience and knowledge, shared with me by people from the Caribbean through conversations, recommended publications (shared in this book), films, and art, shaped my frame of reference for this book.

THERE IS NO ONE CARIBBEAN

As I have already said, the Caribbean is a region, consisting of thousands of islands divided into 30 states with different political, economic, legal, and social systems and cultures. Haiti is as similar and different from the Cayman Islands as Moldova from Luxembourg, Wyoming from Hawaii, Macau from Afghanistan, or The Seychelles is from Burundi.

The Caribbean is mainly viewed by Europeans and Americans as one big vacation paradise, with turquoise blue seas, white beaches, palm trees, cocktails,

Annalee Davis

Barbados

Hatchlings — A Requiem, installation with audio, velvet, shredded Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, fifteen nests, acrylic on fifteen chicken eggs, 13" x 144" x 35" inches, Composer and arranger: Jomo Slusher. Vocals: Stephanie Davis, 2009

Christopher Cozier

Trinidad & Tobago

Turbulence, 2019-2021.

Installation view at Lush Building, Liverpool Biennial, 2021.

© Photo by: Rob Battersby/Stuart Whipps/courtesy of artist

and cheerful bright colors for the mainstream visitors passing through. Americans see and talk about 'the Caribbean' the way they do about Hawaii (a country consisting of 137 islands) or the way Europeans do about Greece (a country consisting of 6000 islands). The Caribbean, however, is not one country, not one people, not one culture. It is a territory of thirty States with different cultures, politics, and economies. It is divided by borders. When talking about the Caribbean, it is crucial to take this into account.

SOVEREIGNTY AND THE INFLUENCE OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND THE USA STILL PLAY AN ESSENTIAL ROLE

The systems implemented in the Caribbean countries by the different colonizing European states are still in place, even if those nations are independent republics now. Some islands are still formally part of the USA or European countries – as Overseas Territories (OST), a country or smaller territory which, politically, is either an integral part of, or in some cases, has a dependent (e.g., colonial) relationship with another State, but is geographically separated by the sea, without bordering it or its coastal waters – or, in the case of Cuba, the Dominican Republic, or Haiti, under the USA imperialism's constant threat. There is a difference in language and political, legal, and sociological systems, each the result of centuries of colonialism that has had a significant impact on the isolation in the area that is still felt today.

With the Europeans came the missionaries from the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church's influence was instrumental in maintaining control over the Caribbean in the past and that control continues in the present (Margo Groenenwoud). Coming from the Netherlands, where most of the population is secular, I am baffled by the numerous churches, all well attended, on the islands I visit, no matter how small the island. After the USA began to move into the region at the end of the nineteenth century, evangelists followed. In Haiti, I witnessed numerous protests by groups of evangelicals demanding that the spiritual practice of Vodou be forbidden and all its temples closed. This, despite the fact that Vodou is a spiritual practice recognized by the government.

POST-INDEPENDENCE ISSUES AND UNIFICATION

The relatively recent (50+ years) post-colonial era has resulted in a region-wide struggle with complicated post-independence issues. Currently, states deal with the trauma and consequences of imperialism, enslavement, revolts, and revolutions during colonialism and the struggles that led to independence. At the moment, most countries in the Caribbean are politically stable. They develop

their own vision, mission, and goals for the future. The area has begun to unify with the formation of The Caribbean Community (CARICOM), a grouping of twenty countries in El Gran Caribe. CARICOM rests on four main pillars: economic integration, foreign policy coordination; human and social development; and security. Countries within CARICOM share experience and knowledge and aim to claim a position of power in the international arena. Europe and the USA continue to play an influential role in how individual states in the Caribbean are developing. This influence affects the region's capacity to unify. As I traveled through the region, everyone I spoke with mentioned this external influence as it impacts the contemporary arts.

Contemporary art is part of the creative industry, most recently denominated as the Orange Economy, in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Orange Economy also includes performing arts, media (film, TV, and radio), music, crafts, advertising and publishing, architecture and design, software development, and digital media design.

CARICOM countries organize a roving multidisciplinary folklore festival, the Caribbean Festival of Arts (CARIFESTA), founded in 1972. Its first edition took place in Guyana. CARIFESTA is organized periodically whenever a member country offers to CARICOM to invest in producing an edition in their country. CARIFESTA presents music, dance, theater, literature, and visual arts and design by all cultures and countries in the Caribbean. It showcases national identities and the traditions of the various cultures populating the participating countries.

Thus far, CARICOM has not addressed or created policy and structural support for the contemporary art community. Individually, CARICOM member countries support long-established activities such as the region's most significant contemporary art mega manifestation: The Havana Biennial. Another place where the region's art community comes together is Tilting Axis, a roving conference for contemporary art professionals from across the Caribbean. Tilting Axis was first organized in 2014 by Fresh Milk Director Annalee Davis in collaboration with Holly Bynoe, then editor-in-chief of ARC Magazine and curator of the National Gallery of the Bahamas. Davis explains:

> 'Twenty art professionals, curators, art historians, writers, academics, and people working in museums, art spaces, galleries, residences, breeding grounds, and artist collectives came together for its first edition. They formulated its vision: To build support systems that sustain contemporary art practitioners in the region and serve as a catalyst for creative projects and collaborations. It is a call to action to rethink the position and conditions of contemporary art practices in the region. Its perspective, informed by artist-led initiatives within the archipelago, recognizes this space as central rather than peripheral and is fed by multi-generational voices.'

Why the name Tilting Axis? Davis continues,

> 'What does it mean to tilt the Axis? As a verb, tilt is a call to action. The meeting was created to do something. Axis refers to a central part in a structure to which other components are connected – such as a hinge, the pivot around which it pivots. The Caribbean is a historical crossroads associated with many parts of the world and the alliance that one is entering into with each other at the moment. During the first meeting, it was decided to try to make this an annual event with a changing host location every year, which is then added to the core organization for the following meetings. In this way, the next host location can take along the lessons learned during previous sessions, both organizational and substantive.'

After its first meeting in Barbados, Tilting Axis took place in The Perez Art Museum Miami (2016), The National Gallery of Cayman Islands (2017), in collaboration with Cuando Caribe in Centro Leon in Santiago and Cultural Center de España in Santo Domingo (2018), in Mémorial ACTe, in Guadeloupe (2019), its 2020 planned edition in the National Gallery of the Bahamas was postponed due to Hurricane Dorian and again in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

CULTURAL IDENTITY, CREOLIZATION, OR MULTICULTURALISM

The racial and ethnic composition of the current population of approximately 43 million in the Insular Caribbean is *Creole*, a mash-up that expresses the history of the region. Originally a Caribbean concept, creolization describes the mixing together of different people and cultures to become one. Existing cultural traditions and systems of knowledge were denigrated as backward and uncivilized by the colonizing Europeans. The colonized were treated as though they were peoples without a history. Throughout the centuries, people from various places came to the region and settled.

The first inhabitants in the Caribbean arrived from what is now known as North, Central, and South America (Samual A. Wilson). They were followed by Europeans, Africans, Asians (P.C. Emmer), Middle Eastern immigrants (Josette Goldish), and lately, immigrants from all over. The result is a rich, diverse, and complex area with various cultures, social and political systems, spiritual practices, rituals, traditions, languages, and lifestyles. All have to continually merge and coexist with each other to be able to live together in relative harmony in these small territories surrounded by the sea. In his lecture about the Caribbean's creative diversity, at the University in Guyana (March 2003), Professor Rex Nettleford (Jamaica) pointed out that the region has extensive expertise to offer to the current rapidly changing societies in Europe and the USA.

Within the art community, some contemporary artists in the region reflect, refer, and comment on this process, provoking dialogue and involving their communities to instigate change. Christopher Cozier (Trinidad & Tobago, artist, art critic, curator, and co-founder Alice Yard) explains:

> 'I am very wary of the term multicultural in the context of the Caribbean. Multiculturalism, as it manifested itself as a term in the late '80s in the USA, for example, was a divisional enterprise of carefully delineated territories. They were designations, as they were useful to the individuals who claimed them. I was born in a world of differences. The norm is the difference, not as something for an alleged mainstream to swallow or have prescribed like a medication. There was never enough space physically and economically to build thorough enclosures. Every other person was a complicated, diverse part of a whole that we called our community. I do not know what I am. I only have my sensibility and my perception to guide me along. In fact, the breakdown of contemporary Caribbean society has to do with politicians using those differences negatively. I measure development ideas not by scale or infrastructure but by how they function ethically in their human resources. There is an ongoing slow-motion genocide happening. Every day to millions of people around the

world, apart from the quicker, more sensational ones that disturb us or that we see in the news.' (interview with Annie Paul, *Bomb Magazine*, 2003).

Trinidad & Tobago is a mid-sized country with a population of one and a half million people, 600,000 of whom live in Port of Spain, the capital and its western and eastern conurbations. The capital is located a mere 11 kilometers from Venezuela's coast. Trinidad has a stable economy because of its natural gas and oil. It is considered a high-income country by the World Bank. It became independent from Britain in 1962, and remains a member of the Commonwealth. Internationally Trinidad & Tobago is generally known for its carnival, and the steel pan percussion instrument, invented in Trinidad. With migration, Trinidad's carnival has spread worldwide. Notably, Nottingham Carnival in London and the West Indian Day Parade in New York both attract millions of visitors. In more literary intellectual circles, Trinidad is known for V.S. Naipaul, a writer who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2001.

Talking about the influence of multiculturalism as well as sovereignty in Trinidad & Tobago, Cozier, in a conversation with Claire Tancons (*Fillip 16*, 2012), says:

> 'I am a bit horrified to see the same language of multiculturalism, which was constructed by the Euro-American mainstream, arrive here in Trinidad about twenty years later under the government of Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, who, when elected in 2010, established the Ministry of Culture and Multiculturalism. But the world is funny in the way in which it retools old notions as new. I recall being in Canada on a panel in 2004 where people talked about creolization as if it could be new and improved multiculturalism. My earlier work dealt with how nationhood constructions require an ideal, an approved subject, or citizen.
>
> To me, the concept of nation in the Anglophone Caribbean context is the smallest moment of our more extensive history since the alleged discovery by Columbus in 1493. Trinidad, for example, became independent from the UK in 1962. The island state is one of the smallest locations on the Caribbean map, physically and mentally – perhaps an immature and very aggressive guarded territory that belongs to politicians and their funders. Our populations continue to travel between these bordered territories, be they other Caribbean islands, share a similar history, former metropolitan colonial powers in Europe, or other migrations like the USA and Canada. What we do at Alice Yard is very much a response to these questions of sovereignty through the dialogues we instigate between artists about what they do both regionally and internationally.'

ISOLATION

What strikes me most is the isolation of the islands. There is a lack of infrastructure, communication, and mobility between the various islands. During colonization, empires established their power on each island with the intention that only Europeans would have mobility. Not implementing infrastructure or communication between islands that were administered by different colonial powers was a deliberate choice. The choice served to avoid invasion by rival European empires, and spoke to the constant fear the enslaved populations on the various islands would become a coordinated mass force, fighting as one against the European colonial powers. These decisions still have a considerable effect in the region, on the mindset of its populations, and how they make decisions (Grada Kilomba). It also affects the possibilities for trade and mobility. The inherited, established barriers – borders and passports – from colonial times still complicate mobility.

European countries have been developing, executing, and evolving their infrastructures for centuries resulting in the connected infrastructure we see today. Infrastructure in Europe was first created to get to the front during the many wars dating to the Roman Empire. Infrastructure developed and expanded for trading and as alliances were formed over the centuries.

Building an infrastructure between different countries where there was none for centuries seems an impossible task to achieve in only fifty years of independence. This is further complicated by the problem of financing it from scratch. The international community finds this to be the sole responsibility of these small singular economies, an inevitable consequence of their independence.

I set myself the challenge to travel in the region without flying outside the Caribbean. I had first-hand experience of the ways the history translates to a lack of mobility in the area. In principle, it is easy to fly from any European country to the (former) colonies and back, but extremely hard to pass from one island to another. Flying to and from Europe or the USA is often cheaper and takes less time than flying to and from a neighboring island, which on a clear day you can see from afar. For example, a flight from Martinique to France costs 400 euros, and a flight from Martinique to Trinidad is at least 1000 euros. There are hardly any direct flights. Sometimes it takes multiple days, and you hop from island to island with flights that don't connect well and are not operated daily. The flight from Martinique to France is direct. Martinique's most affordable flight to Trinidad has one transit per week flying to Trinidad and three to Martinique.

My worst experience was flying from Curacao to Surinam, transferring to Trinidad with Surinam Airways. The airline decided to depart at 10 AM instead of 3 PM, as my ticket said. The airline did not contact me to inform me about

the change. When I arrived at HATO airport in Curacao at 1 PM, there was no check-in desk for Surinam Airways or any airline personnel. It took me over an hour to find a man who told me he thought they left in the morning. Most airport personnel just shook their heads and said, 'I don't work for Surinam Airways.'

Finally, a man who worked for another airline took the time to confirm that the flight had indeed left and gave me the office address, suggesting I go there on Monday to speak to a representative. It was Saturday. On Monday, when I went to the office, the representative said in an accusing tone, 'You booked online, not at this office. We have no way of contacting you.' The flight is two times a week, and she rebooks me on a plane four days later.

'No', she says, 'I don't need any information. I have it all.' The printout of my old and new itinerary clearly shows my phone number and my email. No apologies are made.

I have another problem with a ticket I booked in advance to get a reasonable price. By the time I was to fly, the airline had gone out of business, which happens all the time. Granted, there are airlines this happens to back home in Europe. However, in the European market of millions of travelers with easy, fast, and affordable access by car, bus, or train to airports in Amsterdam, Frankfurt, or Paris, airlines compete with ticket prices. Tickets in Europe can be as cheap as 50 euros. I lost 500 euros on a ticket considered a 'good price' to an island I arguably can swim to, were it not for the suitcase and hand luggage I need to bring with me. At that moment, I decide to book my tickets as close to departure as possible.

By booking at the last moment, I also ran into another problem. For the research, I flew from island to island, so I bought one-way tickets. I have done that before, but since 9/11, immigration rules have gotten tighter everywhere. I learn the hard way there are an increasing number of islands you can only enter by showing your round-trip ticket. In Kingston, Jamaica, an immigration officer guided me to the detaining area after arrival without a departure ticket.

Question: Why are you here?
Answer: I am researching contemporary art.
[Facial expression: disbelief]

Q: Why and for who?
A: I work for myself. I want to deepen my practice.
[Mouth drops]

Q: What will you do?
A: I will be interviewing artists and arts institutions like Edna Manley College and

the National Gallery of Jamaica in Kingston.
[Face blank]

Q: Where will you stay?
A: I will stay with a friend and colleague on the campus of the University in Kingston.
[Approving head nod (thank god this is where my host lives!)]

Q: How much money do you have, and who is paying for this?
A: The government in Holland via Mondriaanfonds, the public fund for the visual arts.
[She looks up at me and thinks out loud: Only in Europe.]

I apologize and explain to the officer why I buy last-minute tickets. She understands. I give her the websites of Mondriaanfund and myself and show my credit card, suggesting I'll buy a ticket right then and there. I'm guided out and ordered to wait. After some time in the waiting room, she calls me back in and says, 'Booking is not necessary, I believe you. I will give you a six-week entrance, and I trust you will be done with your research and leave the island then?'

'Yes, of course, officer!' After arriving in Kingston, my host Annie Paul shakes her head. She confirms that without my European passport, combined with my white ass/blue eyes privilege, they would have deported me.

COLUMBUS LIED...

Nowadays, you enter a strange land.
They call you an alien
You have to explain to immigration.
What is your intention?

The isolation of the populations in the Caribbean is created by the visa requirements to enter other countries. If passports, regardless of where they were issued, gave equal rights and obligations to all, the movement of Caribbean citizens would be free and unlimited, which is not the case. Having a European or USA passport comes with the privilege of being able to enter 186 of the world's 195 countries without a visa. Passport holders from countries in the Caribbean cannot enter those 186 countries without a visa (*Henley Passport Index*, 10 July 2018). Even in the twenty-first century, the Caribbean continues to suffer from systems left over from the region's colonial history. Some countries in the region remain overseas territories (OST), while others, though independent, have never had the wealth to create an infrastructure that supports more than tourism. Tourism

privileges tourists, so implicitly, if not explicitly, Europeans and Americans can navigate the region with more ease than the citizens of any other Caribbean nation can.

My travel and research made me aware of a fundamental problem for contemporary artists and art professionals in the region, who want a sustainable art practice while being based in the area. Flying in the region is costly, and connections, bluntly said, suck. There are only a handful of affordable ferries, like the ones between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic; and from St. Martin to various neighboring islands. I took the 45-minute ferry from St. Martin to Anguilla. It costs US$20 one way. You would think for US$20, people can make a flash decision to travel. However, suppose you are a passport holder of Dominican Republic with a work permit for St. Martin (OST of France), and you want to take the ferry to Anguilla (OST of the UK). In that case, you need to go through an expensive and time-consuming visa application process. Without it, you are not allowed on the ferry.

The influence of Europe and the USA extends across the borders of some countries. The Dominican Republic (DR) is a large country with a population of eleven million people, three million of who live in Santo Domingo, the capital. DR, Haiti and Cuba are the three largest countries in the region. DR shares an island with Haiti which became independent from France in 1804. Haiti fought Spain after which this part of the island became independent from Spain in 1821. The former Spanish part separated from Haiti in 1844 and became Dominican Republic a political and military battlefield between Haiti, France, Spain, and the USA until 1922. It was under the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo from 1930 until 1961, when it became a democracy after Trujillo was assassinated. It is considered a middle-income country by the World Bank. It is the most popular tourist destination in the Caribbean and is home to the second-largest number of Major League Baseball players, second only to the United States.

Altos de Chavón School of Design and Art in Altos de Chavón, La Romana, in the Dominican Republic is a private school. It offers a two-year associate degree in arts and it has a 2+2 affiliation program with the Parsons School of Design in New York. Students from Altos de Chavón School of Design and Art can get a BFA degree if they continue their studies in the USA for two years. The top students are awarded a scholarship for Parsons School of Design/The New School, in New York. I know about Altos de Chavón School of Design and Art because it collaborates with the Davidoff Art Initiative (DAI), funded by Davidoff, one of the world's best cigar-makers. The famous Davidoff cigar factory is located in Santiago, DRs second largest city. The Altos de Chavón School of Design and Art receives six international art professionals for three months every year through

the DAI exchange program. I make an appointment by phone with Raul Miyar, the dean of the fine arts department at the school.

We set a day and time two weeks later, he says, 'My assistant will send you some paperwork that you need to fill out.'

The next day I received the email and opened the attachment. I found a form similar to a visa application. I had to answer a list of questions and send it back with a copy of my passport. On the form, it says it will take at least a week for them to review my application. It feels like I have made a request to visit a high-security prison. A week later, I receive the paperwork that allows me to enter the area for one day. The assistant tells me I have to print it out and bring it with my passport and hand this all over upon my arrival on the confirmed date. I can enter the DR without any paperwork. Still, for this specific area in DR I need 'a visa.'

Now, I am even more curious to visit this place than I was before. The town Altos de Chavón, La Romana, where the school is located, is in a remote rural part of the Dominican Republic. However, it feels like I am in Las Vegas. It has Swiss-looking houses and a Greek amphitheater; it makes no sense at all. 'What is this place?' I ask Miyar.

He explains,

> 'The area was bought by the American Charles Bluhdorn, former CEO of Paramount/Gulf Western. Gulf Western made part of its fortune on sugar. Dominican people and contract workers from Haiti worked on the sugar fields in this province, up until the '70s for US$2.50 a day. Bluhdorn loved the area. When the company decided to abandon the sugar plantations, he kept some of the lands and built a home.'

Now some of his property has been sold, and there are more mansions. I look around and see green as far as my eyes can see. The mansions are hidden somewhere; I see nothing. We walk over to the school buildings. There are wood and ceramics workshops, a film department, classrooms to draw and paint. There is an outside space with a traditional palm leaf roof where sculptors work. We arrive at a building with six high ceilinged studios divided by walls that can be removed and turned into bigger studios for artists in residence. We sit on rocking chairs on the porch in front of the studios. Miyar explains:

> 'Dominique, the daughter of Bluhdorn, founded the school. It was set up as a school for talented youth from a background with little to no financial means. They don't pay tuition. A few years ago, we opened another campus in Santo Domingo.'

The school and its facilities look great. A gated terrain for wealthy, influential foreigners and a school with students from working-class backgrounds are an odd pair. I ask how the school and its students are perceived by the owners of the new mansions.

> Myar says,
> 'There is a heavy push back. The new owners are against the school. They are not comfortable with the students, who live here amongst them, during their years of study.'

We stroll over to the theater. It seats 5,000 people, and the late Frank Sinatra, Julio Iglesias, Santana, and many others have performed there. I sit in the semi-circular amphitheater a fake ancient Greek replica in the middle of DR. I wonder who is allowed to enjoy the music here. Since my visit, The Altos de Chavón School of Design and Art in Altos de Chavón, La Romana has been closed down. Its department, teachers, and students have been transferred to the campus in the capital, Santo Domingo.

For art professionals in the Caribbean to obtain a visa, each is required to prove a steady income that meets the standard of the country they want to visit, have permanent employment, a saving account, and preferably a family that stays behind in their home country when they travel. They are also asked for a sponsor/guarantor in the visiting country to take full financial responsibility during the time abroad. Being a European passport holder, I was never asked to meet any of these requirements. This system limits, and often disqualifies, artists and art professionals from the Caribbean from accepting last-minute invitations to art fairs, from collectors, to conferences, to give University lectures, and other possibilities. This failure to create equality – or even equality of opportunity – benefits artists and art professionals with 'preferred' passports, who are often not even aware of their privilege.

My case in point: I was not asked for any of the requirements asked of people in the region if they want to travel to the Netherlands, my home country. If the countries I visited applied the exact requirements for entry to me, I would not be, and have never been, able to meet those standards at any point in my life. I would not have been able to do the research, and this book would not have been written. European passport in hand, I hardly ever had to explain my intentions. When they asked in Jamaica, and I didn't meet the regulations, I gained entrance nonetheless.

Akuzuru

Trinidad & Tobago

Top: Scrolls between S p a c e s, Performance and Installation - text instructions, artist body, fabrics, birds' nests, bamboo, forest vines, various fruits, natural environment , other mixed media, 2018. As presented at Green Market, Santa Cruz Vallley, Trinidad.
© photo by Arnaldo James / courtesy of artist
Bottom: *TransFormations: Doucement.....de L'Eau Por L'ORI*- Body Aphorisms, performance-in-stallation- artist body and co performers, mixed media, 2014. Presented at Perez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), the USA
© Photo by Oriol Tarridas/courtesy of artist

Humberto Díaz

Cuba

GUATACONES (from the series Small Connections), Sculpture, 2015

© Photo by the artist/courtesy of Estudio Manufacturas H

Averia Wright

The Bahamas

Your Country Name II (series 1 of 3), digital photography, 2021

© Photo by Jodi Minnis/courtesy of artist

Ivelisse Jiménez

Puerto Rico

Detour #21, mixed media, paint on canvas, dried colored powder (gulal), glass, Plexiglas, vinyl, 2013-2021

© Photo courtesy of artist

#2

HIGHER ART EDUCATION

Ai Wei Wei, the well-known Chinese contemporary artist, was asked in an interview what the best advice he could give to college students is. He said, 'Quit school and use that money to travel. That is all I can tell you.'

I am a self-taught art professional. Who I am and what I know stems from my wonder, travel, and lingering. My education is intuitive and ongoing, trial and error. I try to observe with an open mind, listen, read, converse, question, do, fail, self-reflect, adjust. And repeat. Again and again. When I arrived in Jamaica for my research in April 2018, I realized I had come full circle. It was in Jamaica that I fully started my career in the arts full-time, two decades ago.

People have often asked me, how did you start working in the arts and why? I was born and raised in the Netherlands. The Netherlands is a small country in Europe with a population of seventeen million people, 800,000 living in Amsterdam, its best known city (not it's Capital). It became independent from Spain in 1648. It is considered a high-income country by the World Bank. Internationally, the Netherlands is generally known for its liberal drugs and prostitution laws, and in more literary and intellectual circles, Piet Mondriaan, a modernist visual artist.

I grew up in the countryside, on a farm in Zeeuwsch Vlaanderen, on the south of the Netherlands. As a little girl, I loved reading books. I was fascinated by the fact that while reading, I found a vast world out there beyond who I was, where I was, and what I knew. More than flat land, ditches and dikes; black and white cows, brown chickens, and colossal workhorses; more than tall poplars, crying willows, and apple trees; more than gray skies and changing seasons. Books made me wonder and gave me the urgency to experience, rather than just gather information. I longed to travel. To linger, rather than pass by, and I started thinking about how I could do that.

Easier said than done. I started thinking about what was important to me and who I am. I did not want a fixed permanent job that would tie me to one place. I wanted to wake up every day with a smile on my face, embracing the day. I am not interested in money or status. I wanted freedom and to be challenged, both in work and as a person. I am a doer with a talent for organizing, connecting, and contributing to a greater and transcending vision. I am shy and like to facilitate others in the background rather than be in the spotlight, but I wanted to feel part of a community where I could contribute to making others shine. I wanted to work with people rather than for people, make my own decisions, and control my life. I was drawn to the arts and wanted to work on projects I felt passionate about, building meaningful relationships. And I only wanted to work with people I like.

Starting a career in the arts was not easy, and sustaining myself was an even more significant challenge. When I started living by myself, I did not have any assets or savings. I started working in the hospitality industry and for freelance agencies in temporary jobs. At first, I had to work full-time (in the Netherlands, 40 hours a week is considered full-time) all year in jobs to support myself. The goal was to minimize my monthly costs, so I could be assured I would always be able to cover my expenses. I calculated what I needed per month to pay rent and utilities for a small room, food, and the legally obligated costs, such as insurance and taxes, and made sure they never exceeded the amount the Dutch Social Security system guarantees for each citizen, if I was unable to earn enough (In the 90s: 1260 guilders, now equal to 550 euros). I only spent the money I had. If needed more, I saved, bartered or had to live without.

I worked on art projects on the side, in the evening and on weekends. My friends made music, wrote, made art, and danced, and I learned where to find what my friends needed. I made and maintained connections, built a community, learned how to deal with money, and how to stretch the little funds I had. I invested my savings in projects, and found alternative ways to make things happen by asking for help from others. Slowly, things started happening. In the first five to ten years, I, and the artists I facilitated, made little to no money. But we were passionate about our projects and we did them anyway. We started to build our resumes. We developed talent, skills, and knowledge. Our community grew, and slowly we began to gain the attention of the mainstream art professionals and institutions. Gradually, I started making more money in my day jobs and earned the target amount I needed to support myself annually in eight months, which allowed me to work on my art projects for the next four months without earning money from those projects. After some more time, I started making money within the arts, and gradually I managed to earn enough to pay for my living costs with income coming from my work in the arts.

The art community is fertile ground that gives me a sense of place and belonging. Being a facilitator to artists (initially music, later theater, literature, film, and the visual arts) is how I can contribute to a discourse that reflects my beliefs and urgency. Now, I keep my cost of living (food, shelter, and the obliged insurance and taxes) to the Dutch poverty line, which is currently 1,035 euros a month in the Netherlands. I still live in the tiny social housing rental apartment of 30m2 I moved to in 1998.

I don't own a car, so I bike and walk or use public transport. I make my food, wear hand-me-down clothes, stay with friends rather than in hotels when I travel and have friends or friends of friends stay with me. I have a credit card currently, as I am often obliged to make sudden payments, but I choose to use a secure credit card that only allows me to pay if I have the money in my account.

I also decided not to have children I would be financially responsible for, and I have no assets apart from the financial buffer of a year of personal living costs, which keeps me from having to worry about how to pay for next month's living costs.

When I became more successful in my career and earned more than the target I needed to live on, I started to invest in my work practice, travel, research, books, capacity building, expanding my international community, and creating international projects. I also started making donations – 10% of my gross income of the past year – to artists or organizations in my international art community. Knowing, if needed, I can sustain myself on very little, gives me the psychological freedom to say no to projects I don't believe in or with people I don't feel comfortable with. I can say yes, to projects I feel passionate about because of my beliefs and urgency, regardless of whether they will give me money or not. This also gives me the freedom to invest in myself and to challenge myself to do new things I am not experienced in but want to explore.

However, when I started traveling, I came to realize that even minimizing the costs of my life in the Netherlands, I still live a life of privilege. The Dutch government guarantees a level of support, and that is important, but equally important are the protections embedded in living in an economically and politically stable country. According to the most recent estimates by the United Nations, in 2015, 10% of the world's population or 734 million people lived on less than US$1.90 a day. For various reasons beyond the scope of this book, it only means their governments are not able to guarantee the protection of minimal living costs to their population. World Bank data in 2011, showed that the populations living on less than US$1.90 a day include people in the Dominican Republic (0.4%), Haiti (25%), Jamaica (1.7%), Suriname (23.4%), and Trinidad & Tobago (3.4%), countries I visited in my research.

Having a higher education through a scholarship or because your parents can (partly) pay for it can give you a head start to a career in an art institution. You can teach art to earn an income alongside creating an independent art practice. The Netherlands offers a variety of educational possibilities. During my travels, I realized that access to an abundance of higher education, is far from the norm. I believe everybody has choices. However, over the years, I realized that what you can choose depends on where you are, your position, and your context. Having the choice to pursue higher education or to decide against it is still a privilege.

However, higher art education is only one possibility. There are other ways to become an artist or art professional if you have no access to higher education. Not all art students become artists, and there are self-taught artists able to sustain themselves with their art practice. To give some statistics, *Artist Report*

Back, A National Study on the Lives of Arts Graduates and Working Artists (the US, 2014) reports there are 1.4 million working artists in the USA (in 2014, the total population of the USA, according to the Census, was 317 million). Out of two million arts graduates nationally, only 10%, or 200,000 people, make their primary income as working artists.

While researching, I wondered why people in the Caribbean started to make art and decided to become artists. I asked this question of every artist I met. Most artists begin as children. They are the shy girls and boys who carry pen and paper around and draw, always and everywhere. Art is the language they use to express themselves. I have met and worked with many artists and art professions who live and work in the Caribbean over the past two decades. I have found they each have a unique story when it comes to education. It has given me insight into the difficulties artists face when pursuing higher art education in the region. Artists I meet with degrees in the arts who work and live on islands that offer no higher education in the arts, primarily studied abroad, in Europe or the USA. Access to higher arts education varies per island. Students who come from an OST have more access than those who come from sovereign countries. Students who come from more prosperous countries have more access than those from poorer countries. In my travels, I met numerous artists, who had no access to study fine art and instead studied architecture because it was offered in their country.

Students in countries partly still under foreign rule, such as Aruba, Curacao, Puerto Rico, and US Virgin Islands, have access to complete or partially funded education in Europe or the USA. Governments of independent countries like Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago have only limited scholarships which are given to their top students. There are traditional international scholarships, such as the Fulbright and EACEA. And recently, China has begun offering scholarships, as well. These scholarships are accessible to everyone. For example, the Fulbright Foreign Student Program operates in more than 160 countries worldwide. Approximately 4,000 international students receive Fulbright scholarships each year. Of the countries I researched, only Barbados, The Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Trinidad & Tobago are eligible.

PREPARATORY EDUCTION

The transition from secondary education in the Caribbean to higher arts education abroad is challenging as students must move to another country and learn another culture and way of life. All islands offer some forms of preparatory education in the arts, which prepares students for higher education and includes preparation for difficulties students might encounter when they move abroad.

An example of preparatory education is InPulse in Kingston, Jamaica. Jamaica is a mid-sized country with a population of three million people and 600,000 living in Kingston, the capital. It became independent from Britain in 1962, and remains a member of the Commonwealth. It is considered a low-income country. Internationally, Jamaica is generally known for its music, Bob Marley, reggae, and dancehall, and in more literary intellectual circles, for Marcus Garvey, a political activist and entrepreneur.

InPulse launched in 2015, and is funded by the French company Rubis Mécénat in partnership with Rubis Energy Jamaica. The program is run by Camille Chedda, the project manager, since 2016. Chedda, an emerging visual artist herself, utilizes drawing, painting, collage, and installation to explore race and ideas of post-colonial identity. InPulse introduces participants to the art community and art professionals by inviting artists from the region to give workshops and present their work.

I visited a public presentation and improvisational performance organized by InPulse and presented in Studio 174, in downtown Kingston. I saw firsthand how this public presentation allowed the students to meet artists from the region and meet the 'who's who' of the art community in Jamaica. Many art professionals from the community attended the presentation, which allowed me to make appointments with some people I had failed to connect with until then. Amongst the guests were numerous well-known artists, curators and critical art writers, and a few art dealers. Many of the participants were associated with the Edna Manley College of the Arts or the University of the West Indies (Mona Campus, Jamaica). Each year InPulse awards scholarships to the most promising students to pursue tertiary education at the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts in Kingston.

Within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, I am familiar with similar initiatives in OSTs Aruba and Curacao. Aruba and Curacao are both small constituent countries with populations of 100,000 and 150,000, respectively. Both are considered a high-income country by the World Bank. Internationally, each is generally known as a popular tourist destination. Ateliers'89 is an active non-profit organization that introduces youth in Aruba to contemporary art. They organize educational workshops taught by highly qualified international

mentors. Ateliers'89 also co-founded Caribbean Linked, a summer residency program for emerging artists in the region.

In Curacao, Instituto Bueno Bista (IBB) provides a two-year preparatory course for students who want to obtain higher education abroad. Their program includes residencies for artists from the Netherlands, selected through Mondriaanfonds, the public art fund for the Kingdom of the Netherlands. As part of the residency, the artists-in-residence teach the IBB students.

The Mondriaanfund is the public visual arts fund that offers grants to individual artists and arts organizations, exclusively in the Kingdom of the Netherlands: Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao, the Netherlands, Saba, St. Eustatius, and St. Maarten. Over the past 15 years, institutions such as Ateliers'89 in Aruba and IBB in Curacao, that offer preparatory arts education to prepare students for higher education abroad, have received annual grants. For many years, Mayke Jongsma, a senior grant advisor, oversaw OST applications. She has since retired. Talking about preparatory education, Jongsma explained:

> 'Art is a way to improve human well-being. Art can provoke students to think. Even students that have no desire to do something in the arts push boundaries and think outside the box. They learn how to observe from multiple perspectives and widen their frame of reference. All are good qualities to have while studying or later in life, working in any field of choice.'

Ivy League research universities Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard support this theory (*At M.I.T., Science Embraces a New Chaos Theory: Art, by Hilarie M. Sheets, March 6, 2016, New York Times*). They both have their science students, as well as their faculty, interact with contemporary artists. The combination of out-of-the-box thinking in the arts as it influences the rigid way of thinking in science has been proven to offer better and faster results in ongoing research. Jongsma explains,

> 'In April 2018, BKNL, an informal discussion platform for organizations representing visual artists, museums, contemporary art platforms and commercial art galleries in the Netherlands published the report *De Collectieve Selfie 3: Nog beter zicht op Beeldende Kunst (An even better view on Visual Arts)*. The report, based on statistics from *Armoede en sociale uitsluiting (Poverty and Social Exclusion)* by the Dutch Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS) of 17 January 2018, shows only 5% of the visual artists in the Netherlands live above the poverty line (1,035 euros per month for a single household). The definition of Visual Artists used by CBS is: 'People aged 15 to 65 who indicate in the Labor Force Survey (EBB) that they work as autonomous visual artists for at least one hour a

week during the research period.'

There are 15,500 visual artists identified. Jongsma continues,

> 'Suppose only a few Ateliers'89 or IBB alumni can sustain a professional art practice after returning to the island. In that case, it is worth supporting preparatory education in the OST islands part of the Netherlands. Graduates that work in other fields will use their education constructively in those fields. They are likely to support the art field in other ways as board members, sponsors, and collectors.'

HIGHER ART EDUCATION

Most of the artists I met who went abroad for bachelor and master degrees left their island for at least a decade. As an illustration, Sharelly Emanuelson is an emerging research-based artist working in media photography and film in Curacao. She arrived in the Netherlands in 2006 to study for a Bachelor's on a scholarship, worked a few years to save up money for a Master's program that she then, started in 2014 and graduated from in 2016.

I asked her about her experience coming from the Caribbean to study in Europe. Emanuelson shakes her head and sighs, explaining,

> 'It is not easy, and it is hard to prepare for a different culture. Most Caribbean students have tremendous trouble adjusting to their professors' gaze and perspectives when studying in the USA or Europe. The teachers often lack knowledge about the region's history, culture, art, and context. They don't understand how to perceive and discuss the research and works from students outside their context. It is difficult for students to comply and assimilate into the European canon to graduate and go home with a degree.'

These are issues essential for students, art academies, and art teachers to consider. International students arrive with a world view that expresses their context, and suddenly find themselves in the eurocentric visual language and context. What does that do to you as an artist? Does it distort or enrich your practice? Do you need to become fluent in the eurocentric visual language? Are you allowed to do your work in your visual language? What is expected from teachers? Should a teacher teach people what they know, or teach them what they feel their students need to develop in their work and language? If a teacher doesn't know their students' context or their aesthetic frame, are they equipped to help them to develop their own voice?

My travels outside of Europe have made me aware of the difference in

the hierarchies used to structure education. In Europe, education is based on 'equality,' with students and teachers seeking together, instead of the teacher being assumed to be all-knowing and leading the communication. I wonder how this was perceived by Emanuelson? She explained,

> 'If you come from a hierarchical system where the teacher is 'omniscient,' and where there is high contextual communication, then the transition to a less instructional and more conceptual, philosophical conversation is quite tough. It is a cultural challenge in addition to an artistic challenge.'

Communication across the different perspectives and contexts of artists from the region and institutions and funders outside the region continues to be challenging. Emanuelson explains,

> 'The disconnection and confusion I felt after my arrival in the Netherlands is the reason I started UniArte in 2010. UniArte is a platform in which aspiring artists from the Caribbean come together with art professionals. In UniArte, we address and discuss artistic and cultural differences to understand what they are. We share tips and discuss what it takes for us students to make our study time optimal. Finding my community and not dealing with these problems alone gave me the drive to continue my studies.'

I wondered how often artists decided to study at an art school in their region, rather than outside the region because of their desire for cultural compatibility so I researched the possibilities for higher arts education in the region. Arts education varies per island; there is art education in elementary, middle, and high schools on all the islands, but I found few islands with higher education in the arts, and even fewer as I focused specifically on BFA/MFA programs. In this book, I have limited myself to three examples, one on a large-, middle-, and a small-size island to give a general understanding of the landscape.

INSTITUTO SUPERIOR DE ARTE, CUBA

Cuba is one of the three largest countries in the Caribbean. It has a population of eleven million people with two million living in Havana, the capital. Gaining independence from Spain in 1898, Cuba was under the military rule of the USA before becoming the Republic of Cuba in 1902. Internationally, Cuba is generally known for the Cuban Revolution and its iconic leaders, Che Guevara and Fidel Castro (1953 - 1958). Castro and Guevara fought against the military dictatorship of Cuban President Fulgencio Batista. With independence, Cuba became the first communist country in the Western Hemisphere. Within the arts, it is known for the Havana Biennale.

My first visit to Cuba was for the Havana Biennale in 2009. I attended the official opening at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, an impressive monumental building, with two artists who were participating in the Biennale: Remy Jungerman (Suriname/The Netherlands) and Tirzo Martha (Curacao). When the opening events ended, we got some drinks and sat on the stairs leading up to the museum's entrance. We were joined by artists Annalee Davis (Barbados) and Inti Hernandez (Cuba), for a warm Caribbean night of chatting. My most vivid memory is a group of colossal iron cockroaches (*Survival*, a work by Roberto Favelo), watching us closely as they climbed the museum's wall. Some years later, in 2014, I learned that Hernandez had moved to the Netherlands and lived around the corner from me in the center of Amsterdam. After we reconnected, I followed his work and included Hernandez in *Unland* (2016), an exhibition I curated in Amsterdam. We arranged regular studio visits and coffee dates – with him, there is no coffee without sweet pastries or chocolates included – in our neighborhood. Hernandez loves to philosophize about how to make this world a better place as much as I do. Cuba and its arts field are always a part of those conversations. For my research, we agree to synchronize my visit to the Havana Biennale in April 2019 with his.

Cuba has developed an excellent arts education method that is the pinnacle of a comprehensive education system—beginning with elementary school and ending with an MFA degree. Cuba has one national school for associates, bachelor, and master degrees in the visual arts: The Higher Institute of the Arts/ Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA) in Havana. The university has an international reputation for excellence. In the Caribbean, this is a unique model. It is even more impressive, given that all education in Cuba is free for all its citizens. The arts are considered crucial by the post-revolution government in Cuba. Education was a priority and started with a literacy campaign, and new schools opened up all over the country. 1961 was the Year of Education. Art education followed as the crown on the country's new educational system.

Hernandez was educated in this school system and explained:

> 'The Cuban government promoted art education to have artists as leaders of communities and intellectuals with open minds. At the first level, I got the general education with other children plus four hours of art classes per day, for three years until the age of 14. A similar education is in place for performing arts and sports. The classes were playful experiments with materials, it was fun, and I loved it. Every year there was a test of knowledge, quality, and discipline to decide if you could continue the education.'

Hernandez continued his education at the secondary education level. There were four regional schools in Cuba for specialized visual arts education, with fewer classes in the other general education curricula. He continues:

> 'At this level, we were separated and grouped per discipline. Next to experimental art practice, sophisticated classes in various techniques and media was added; conceptual thinking; art criticism, theory, and history, including art from Cuba within international art history. Students might drop out in the first year but they hardly ever drop out after that.'

The secondary level study gives the graduates a diploma to teach art in primary and secondary art education. Students who want to further develop as practicing artists continue on to the university level. About his university studies, Hernandez says,

> 'On the first day, we got a basic set of materials, tools, oils, etc. When a tube of paint is empty, it gets replaced with a full one. My class had 15 students. Before the Soviet Union collapsed, we had excellent and expensive materials to work with, no different from the USA or Europe. By the end of my studies, things were different.'

The Cuban Revolution (1953 - 1958) happened simultaneous to the emergence of contemporary art as a formal movement. The success, impact, and influence of artists from Cuba in the international art market fascinate me. Cubans are often not allowed to leave and are not allowed to enter other countries. The EU only lifted its sanctions on Cuba in 2008. The USA embargo was briefly stopped during the Obama presidency, but it continues to this day.

Many of the artists I met in Cuba, graduated from the University of the Arts, Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA). Galleries in the USA and Europe represent them. Hernandez explains:

> 'When I got the BFA degree, I had twelve years of art education paid for by the system and exhibited in Cuba's regional and national salons. The

international art market heavily courts students in Cuba for fellowships and representation abroad.'

In 2006 Hernandez was selected for the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam. He nowadays works between Cuba and the Netherlands and is represented by Ron Mandos Gallery.

The interest for Cuban students by outside entities makes me curious about what Cuba, in turn, has to offer to foreign artists and students. La Vaughn Belle is a multi-disciplinary artist in St. Croix (US Virgin Islands). St. Croix is a small-size island with a population of 50,000. It is an OST of the USA and is considered a high-income country by the World Bank. She turns out to be an example of a foreign artist that felt there is something to gain by continuing her studies in Cuba. She is a graduate of ISA in Cuba. Belle explains:

'After I graduated with a master's in a different field, I still aspired to get an MFA degree. I wanted excellence but also needed a financially accessible program, and I choose ISA. In the first months of study, I learned Spanish, which helped me fully understand the Cuban experience.'

Belle said ISA is an excellent option for aspiring artists in the region. She continues,

'Studying and living in Cuba has the important advantage of cultural compatibility. I experienced my education as being both of the highest quality, and I was part of a discourse I understood. It inspired me to develop and express my artistic urgency as an artist rooted and informed by the region while becoming knowledgeable about the European canon and language around art. The school also connected me to internationally renowned artists that teach at the school. Tania Bruguera taught me a lot about performance art and how she uses this medium to start important conversations.'

Bruguera is the founding director of Catédra Arte de Conducta (Behavior Art School). It is the first performance study program in the Caribbean and Latin America, and is hosted by ISA. ISA opened to international students after the Soviet Union's collapse and following the economic crisis. The international students pay approximately US$3,000 in tuition. This is extra income for the school. As Hernandez noted,

'Schools have had to cut their spending on art supplies. Students in the painting department no longer use the Winsor and Newton basic set but work with more affordable generic brands. While the resources are less expensive, the quality of the teaching is undiminished.'

LaVaughn Belle

US Virgin Islands

Storm (how to imagine the tropicalia as monumental as in memory), Charcoal, ink and acrylic on paper, 42 × 72 inch/ 106.7 × 182.9 cm, 2021

EDNA MANLEY COLLEGE FOR THE VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS, JAMAICA

When it comes to higher arts education in the region I am most familiar with The Edna Manley College for the Visual and Performing Arts (Manley) in Kingston before I start my research. Manley's most successful internationally recognized alumnus in 2018 is Ebony G. Patterson. I saw her work in *Infinite Islands* curated by Tumelo Mosaka (Brooklyn Museum, 2007) and *Wrestling the Image* by Christopher Cozier and Tatiana Flores (Worldbank, 2011) and started following her. Her paperwork *Untitled, Species I* (2010-11) in the exhibition *The Caribbean: Crossroads of the World,* in 2012, reviewed by Holland Cotter in the *New York Times,* got Patterson the full attention of the art world. I met her for the first time at the opening of the exhibition. At the time, she was investigating gender roles and their contradictions in both dancehall and gang culture.

International audiences became acquainted with the violent anti-homosexual views in Jamaican dancehall when Buju Banton's song *Boom Bye-Bye* hit the record stores in 1992. Cancellation of Banton's European tour due to the music's call for violence against LGBTQ+ communities followed in 2009. In response, Patterson made a series of paper works that included drawing, painting, collage, and the modest use of glittery, sparkling fake jewels to reference bling culture. Her artwork drips with irony as they highlight Jamaican men's dancehall fashion. Bleaching their skin and plucking their eyebrows, all while expressing homophobia and machismo. Patterson studied with renowned sculptor/media artist Petrona Morrison, who worked at Manley from 1988 to 2014. She always speaks highly of Morrison and her education at Manley. Currently, Patterson divides her time between Jamaica and the USA and is represented by Monique Meloche Gallery in Chicago.

Patterson was in Kingston during my research in the region, working on new works for an upcoming solo exhibition in the Perez Art Museum in Miami (PAMM). She picked me up at the Norman Manley airport in Kingston and brought me to my host Annie Paul at the university campus. According to Patterson, 'There is only one way to welcome somebody to the island, and that is to eat my favorite, famous Jamaican patty.'

She has talked up 'dem patties' every time she has visited me in New York since we met in 2012. My expectations are high, and I am not disappointed. While we are eating, we talk about Jamaica's art world, where she prefers to live and work, and about the Manley school. Over the years, I have witnessed her giving back to the art community and to Manley's students. She admires what Christopher Cozier has done for the art community in Trinidad & Tobago through Alice Yard. She values the connections he makes both in and outside the

Oneika Russell

Jamaica

Antilles for the Antilleans: Saltwater clears/clouds the eyes, 2017. Presented at Dak'Art, the Dakar Biennial 2018, Senegal

Caribbean, that benefit artists in the Caribbean. Patterson financially supported emerging artists Camille Chedda (InPulse) and Kelly Ann Lindo's Alice Yard residency. When I told her, over patties, I wanted to visit Manley to speak to the dean, she said,

> 'I am in conversation with the new Dean of Manley to launch a thirteen-week residency for an emerging artist under 40 at Manley. I want to do something in honor of my former teacher and longtime mentor Cecil Cooper, Head of the Painting Department at Manley.'

I remember how devastated she was when she heard of his passing in 2016. I take Patterson's offer to introduce me to Miriam Hindts Smith, the current dean.

I smile when I look up the school's address on the day of my appointment and notice it seems to be at the foot of an area called Beverly Hills. The cab drives to one of the gates, where I show my ID and sign in before being allowed to enter. It is a large campus with several two-story buildings surrounded by open green spaces. Students walk hastily with bags on their shoulders and sit on benches or on the grass. They talk, read, write, and smoke cigarettes. I have no idea how to find the building I'm going to. The cab driver asks for directions several times before we find the visual arts department. When the cab drives off, I try to figure out where the reception area is. I get lost in a two-story building with multiple staircases and can't find it. A group of students I run into explains where I need to go. I walk through long hallways while I peek into classrooms and studios with students at work on drawings, paintings, and sculptures. Some are reading. Finally I find the dean's office.

Miriam Hindts Smith, the dean, sits behind her desk in casual clothing and is reading with a concentrated look on her face, her long dreads tied with a hairband. She peeks over her glasses and smiles warm while she greets me.

'How is New York? Did you arrive just now? Have you been meeting people already?'

At the same time, she frees a chair from a pile of paperwork and an oversized handbag for me to sit on. I explain that I have been traveling in the Caribbean for a couple of months and flew in from Curacao.

She laughs and says, 'Ah, that is a very different thing. Have you gone to Suriname as well and found our Manley graduates there?'

I did. I told her I just recently spoke with mixed media artist and Manley alumnus Kurt Nahar (Suriname). He talked about how he envisioned going to school to paint and draw. Nahar had not expected the amount of reading, research, and critical writing they were asked to do.

Hindts Smith laughs and says,

'We pride ourselves on merging the philosophy of thinking, theory, and

critique with practice and exhibition to ensure academic excellence. Students have a hard time with that at first, but it brings value as it teaches them a language around their practice. It also makes them aware that you can't just use something you come across in your work without knowing its significance and origins.'

Hindts Smith is relatively new in her function as dean, and I wonder what her ambitions are for the school. She sits up straight and passionately explains,

'I want to develop an MFA program during my term. I want to make sure the school has the faculty to guide and manage students along that path and enough qualified students to go through the program successfully. Add a program in artistic research both for students that want to use artistic research in their practice as well as a program on art practices for art historians.'

Hindts Smith is a woman with a vision and seems to know what to do and realize this vision. The school puts a lot of energy into collaborations with other art institutions, such as preparatory schools, museums and galleries. Manley also collaborates with public institutions, such as hospitals where they do art interventions, where the students interact with the patients. Many students, who left Jamaica to get MFA degrees, have come back home and have their art practice on the island. They have international art practices and some have also joined the faculty and lecture part time at the school.

Oneika Russel, has a BFA from Manley, an MFA degree from Goldschmidt (UK) and a doctorate from the University of Kyoto (Japan). She was a full-time lecturer in digital and fine arts at Manley and explained,

'Presently some departments are all persons trained abroad because this expertise isn't offered at Edna or is a newly offered area, so there hasn't been time for a generation to train overseas and return. The Art History Department is one such example and The School of Art Administration and Animation are other examples of this. The Jewelry Department also might have been an example. But areas such as Painting, Drawing, Sculpture, Visual Communication and Printmaking might have had 80-90% alumni teaching in courses.'

In my interview with O'Neil Lawrence, chief curator of the National Gallery of Jamaica, he mentioned teaching a course about using the museum space and bringing work to an audience. He combines theory with practice by taking the students to the museum to show them what he means.

When I visited Cuba, much later in my research, I thought back to my

conversation with Hindts Smith. I wondered if the MFA students at Manley will be able to build a network international enough to sustain them while staying in Jamaica. Can they create a network – both abroad and at home – that is similar to what Cuba has to offer? Will the international art professionals come out to Jamaica to spot and scoop up talented artists?

Oneika Russell, is a multimedia artist. For years I read about her work in ARC Magazine, a publication on contemporary art in the Caribbean published by Holly Bynoe and Nadia Huggins from St. Vincent and the Grenadines. ARC Magazine has since been discontinued, but during its years of existence (2011-2017), it gave exposure to many artists who work in the Caribbean. I was excited to meet Russell in person. I was intrigued by her work in which she researches tourism and the Caribbean as a notion of Paradise. She juxtaposes the similarities and conflicts between her perspective and experience and that of the visitor, the Caribbean's 'consumer.' She is the Tide Rising Art Projects founder, where she creates and publishes online videos about contemporary artists and art professionals in the Caribbean.

Russell explains:

> 'When I started Tide Rising, it was more about art critique, something I feel the region needs. The backlash I got from those critical reviews was intense. Jamaica has a small population, and you work with your colleagues and fellow artists and encounter them all the time. I still feel we need critical writing, but I have to live and work here too and I prefer to do so in relative harmony. I decided to change my content in a way I can still contribute to the art field without the harsh skepticism and negative commentary I endured with the critical writing.'

How does she combine a full-time lecturer job and Tide Rising's work with her autonomous art practice? She says:

> 'It has been difficult to work on my work, the platform, and get by. There are few grants I can apply for here. I need a job. I like to teach and be amongst the students and my colleagues, but I crave more time for my work. It is hard to juggle everything.'

I tell her about the Davidoff Art Initiative (DAI) and the fully-funded residencies they offer to artists working in the Caribbean, and suggest she apply. She looks up in surprise and says:

> 'I didn't know I could apply from Jamaica. I used to apply to more residencies. Rejection is hard. It makes you doubt if your work is good enough.'

I encourage her to try.

Rejections are often not about the quality of the work. In my experience as a committee member for various funds in Europe and the USA, most funds receive requests for vastly more than they have to give out. In the committee meetings, applications are judged and scored based on quality of work, curriculum vitae (CV), and embedding within the criteria of the specific fund, relevance of the proposals, and cultural entrepreneurship. After this process, funds are awarded based on the applicants' total score and the financial request. From those with the highest score, money is given out until there is no more. The number of applications that are well-considered and high-scoring always exceeds the available budget. Thus, a percentage of applicants that did meet all criteria will still not get funding.

Applying for fully-funded residencies could help Russell afford to work fewer hours at school and have more time for her work. I can see her reflecting on her feeling, 'I need more time for my work to push my practice forward, and that is what I want.'

Sometimes it takes a conversation with a new person, even if nothing further is said.

When you work isolated on an island, the number of peers you can talk to about your work is negligible. You lack multiple views, perspectives, and the energy and enthusiasm of a bigger community. I was still in the Caribbean, researching, when I received an email from Russell in the summer of 2018.

'Hi Sasha, I did apply for the DAI residency, and I just heard I got selected. I'm going to New York from September until November. Thank you for giving me the push!'

Davidoff has since dismantled the initiative and redirected their marketing budget elsewhere, away from the arts. Russell was their last artist in residency in New York.

BARBADOS COMMUNITY COLLEGE, BARBADOS

Barbados is a small country with a population of less than 300,000. It gained its independence from Britain in 1966 and remained in the Commonwealth. It became a Republic in 2021. It is a middle-income country, its economy primarily coming from tourism and finance. Within arts & culture Barbados is known for singer Rihanna in the mainstream and scholar poet Kamau Brathwaite (1930-2020) in more literary intellectual circles.

Barbados Community College (BCC), offering a four-year BFA program is the only small island in the Caribbean with higher education in the arts. Fully funded by the government, it offers a BFA program in Studio Art. I had visited the school in the past, as part of a Projects & Space residency in 2012 on Sheena Rose's invitation. I had met Ewan Atkinson, an artist and inspiring teacher at that time.

'I am in deadline hell to finish work for an exhibition. I don't have a lot of time, why don't you come to BCC. You can sit in a class, and we can talk after,' Atkinson said when I called to make an appointment.

When I arrived on the campus, I did not see anyone in the workplace for sculpture and installation I passed through as I entered the art department building, strange. I looked for Atkinson in several classrooms, and they were empty too. The school seemed abandoned. This is not how I remembered it. In 2012, BCC was a busy place full of students at work and in conversations with several teachers. Finally, I heard a voice and followed it, finding Atkinson in one of the rooms with a small group of students in a circle. They were talking about Caribbean Nationalism.

'Guys, this is Sasha. She is a curator from New York. She will sit in on the class with us,' he hugs me and pulls a chair for me to the circle. 'For this art theory class today, we are discussing an essay by Therese Hadchity.'

Hadchity is an art historian living in Barbados. I have joined a discussion of various artists, including Atkinson, and how Hadchity perceives the artist's work.

Atkinson asks, 'Are there more ways to read art works?' and all but one student says yes or nods their heads in agreement.

One tall clear-eyed student, Matthew Squires, responds with, 'How the Caribbean is being imagined and imaged depends on your context, how you see and interpret art.'

It was his voice I followed to this classroom. In the small circle, he continues to be the vocal one. Other students have read the material. He studied it. At one point, Atkinson pauses. He wants to refer to something in the essay. Squires immediately jumps in and reads out the paragraph Atkinson was looking for. In

Ewan Atkinson

Barbados

Only in Our Imagination, 12 digital prints, 61 x 91.5 cm each, 2015. Presented at MAMMON, Gallerija Umjetnina, Split, Croatia

© Photo by Sasha Dees/courtesy of artist

the Caribbean, people often look to the USA as their inspiration. Atkinson is adamant about including Bajan history in his classes from a Bajan perspective. He provokes his students to think about their sense of place as people and as artists. What is our vision for the island and its identity? What is your role as future artists to make that happen? For the next class, the assignment given is to read *The Sugar Barons* by Matthew Parker.

After the class, we walk to Atkinson's car, and I ask him about Squires.

'He is the most promising student in our program now. If you have time, come back for a studio visit with him. He works with light and sound,' Atkinson says as he drives me back home, and we stop for a coffee on the way. I tell him how surprised I was by the art department being so quiet now.

He explains, 'Our government might cancel our BFA program. Barbados was one of the wealthier islands in the region. In the last decade, there has been a lot of government mismanagement.'

Other artists in Barbados have mentioned this too. Statistics I found online showed a 10% unemployment rate, low economic activities, and rising debt in the public sector. In June 2018, the new government began negotiations with the IMF for a loan and a recovery plan monitored by the IMF. They got the approval that October and other large loans to the already highly indebted country followed.

Atkinson continues, 'BCC was fully funded by the government. Last year they laid off our part-time staff (adjuncts) because of budget cuts. Our team was reduced to Allison Thompson and me'.

Thompson was the head of the division when I first visited but has stepped down and is only teaching now. I'm shocked to hear it might not be possible to sustain the studio art program.

Atkinson explains, 'We tried to come up with alternative ways of income and financial support. Because we are part of the government, there are rules and regulations for sponsorship. When we found a possible sponsor, we didn't get the approval to sign the agreement'.

In 2013 Atkinson and Thompson founded the art collective Punch Creative Arena. They produce and curate exhibitions and other activities in the art gallery at BCC during volunteer hours. Since the decline of the visual arts program, Atkinson and Thompson, both advocates for studio art practice, are increasing their work on the Punch initiative.

He tells me, 'We have put in a lot of our time and energy to secure a platform for development, research, critical feedback, discourse, and presentation. The platform supports the sustainability and growth of studio art practices on the island.'

Atkinson looks frustrated and worried. 'I don't know what will happen or

if we will able to make our initiative sustainable.'

Barbados invested in education to build the Orange Economy. The Caribbean, in general, desperately seeks income and diversity of income. Encouraged by UNESCO and the International Development Bank (IDB), investment in capacity building and the Orange Economy is high on all governments' agenda in the Caribbean now. Barbados, ahead of its time, has fully funded a studio art program at the College ever since 1994.

Atkinson clarified:

> 'In September 2018, BCC told us the eight students we accepted into our first year were too few. They wanted us to take 15, which is more than we ever had, and we didn't have room for that many. We didn't understand this, as we assumed the government would be subsidizing the costs. We fought, but BCC canceled our intake that year anyway. Art education is still considered unimportant or frivolous by many. Few students in the region dare to choose the arts over fields such as medicine, business, or the law. Here they do. In the case of the studio arts BFA, we have had four to 10 graduates per year. A handful continue as practicing artists. The number fluctuates, and many become teachers. I wouldn't be surprised if there is a graduate of our program in every secondary school on the island teaching art. In our graphic design program, most of them work as designers in the workplace. Based on future employment possibilities, it is unrealistic to enroll more students on an island of our size.'

The arts community was outraged after BCC canceled the 2018/2019 school year for studio arts. The outrage drew the prime minister's attention and her response made it clear that she had not been aware of the situation and was concerned. She was the Minister of Education in 1994 and had been responsible for introducing the BFA programs. Unfortunately, nothing came of this. I wonder what the end of investment in the Orange Economy means for Barbados. And how will this influence the Orange Economy visions in the Caribbean?

OVERVIEW BFA/MFA POSSIBILITIES

All schools in the Caribbean accept international students.
You can apply for a student visa.

	BFA	MFA	Tuition per year
US$	.	.	
Aruba	.	.	
The Bahamas	.	.	
Barbados	x	.	3220 BDS
Cayman Islands	.	.	
Cuba	x	x	3,000 euros
Curacao	.	.	
Dominican Republic	.	.	
Haiti	.	.	
Jamaica	x	.	US$ 13,000
Puerto Rico	x	x	US$2,000
St. Maarten	.	.	
St. Martin	.	.	
Suriname	.	.	
Trinidad & Tobago	.	.	
US Virgin Islands	.	.	

Claudio Arnell

St. Maarten

IN FORMATION, unique photo print, 2019

© Photo courtesy of artist

Kharis Kennedy

US Virgin Islands

Goat Foot Woman, Oil and Glue mixed with Pigment on Panel, 80 x 26 inch, 2018. Installation within modern home ravaged by 2017 hurricanes Irma and Maria (2021)

© Photo by Steve Simonson/courtesy of artist

#3

THE ECONOMY OF ART

My first visit to an international art fair was to the Armory Art Fair in New York City, the United States of America (USA) in February 2001. The USA is a large-sized country with a population of four hundred million people, making it the most populated country of the America's. Eight million people live in New York City, its most known city (not its Capital). The USA became independent from Britain in 1776. It is considered a high-income country by the World Bank. Internationally, the USA is generally known as one of the world leading countries (since World War II) and in more literary and intellectual circles, Jean Michel Basquiat, one of the most renowned and best-selling/ most expensive artists of the late twentieth century.

In 2001, the fair had just moved to the West Side Piers from the Armory that gave it its name. I'm excited; the Piers seem an appropriate location for art. It was a shelter for artists in the '70s and '80s, and a well-known gay cruising spot, famously documented by photographer Alvin Baltrop (1948-2004). The closest subway stop is on 34th street and Eighth Avenue. It was too nasty to walk in the drizzly cold weather. I decided to take the crosstown M34 bus to the piers. I pushed myself onto the overcrowded, smelly, damp extended bus. I couldn't see a darn thing through my fogged-up glasses. At the Piers, we all gladly rolled out of the bus and walked to the Armory entrance as quickly as the slippery frosted streets allowed us.

Art fairs offer VIP passes that give free access for the duration of the fair to art professionals, collectors and press before the fair opens to the general public. I did not think of myself an art professional but I was working on a project with art dealer Simon Watson and he told me to apply. Following his suggestion I applied and to my surprise received an email to say the art fair had approved me for a VIP pass.

I got in the line to show my credentials and picked up my pass for the fair. Relatively new to the city and to working in visual arts, I expected the woman at the desk to scream 'fraud!' and call for security.

Instead, she smiled and said, 'Welcome to the fair.'

She handed me a VIP pass and a bag. What do you know; the art fair had deemed me a legitimate art professional in New York City, Open Sesame!

The fair presented an overwhelming amount of artwork, and I walked amongst an overwhelming number of VIPs. The Baltrop Piers vibe dissolves in thin air, this is bigtime and if anyone is cruising, I don't see them. I am on a crash course, learning that the art community is different from the art market. It is the first time I feel lost and disconnected in the presence of art. Twenty years later,

I am regularly at fairs during their preview days, and I still feel lost in a sea of sameness. In huge halls, artwork presented in small booths in a format that does not benefit the art and its meaning personally makes me unsatisfied. I am reminded repeatedly of the work by conceptual artist Jenny Holzer, *Truism: Protect Me from What I Want* (1994). The system is purportedly advantageous to artists who can get representation by exhibiting galleries or art dealers. Still, the capitalist profit motive distorts this benefit, as art is picked up by the financial market and increasingly used for speculation, flipping, and money laundering, ultimately exploiting the creators.

The Art Report 2018 by Art Basel | USB reported annual sales of art worldwide close to US$70 billion. The report is a 175-page summary of statistics and graphics of millions, billions, and trillions circulating in the arts. The art world's economy is surreal to me, and I work in the midst of it. I'm not sure what this tells artists and art professionals who live and work, isolated on a small island away from it all. While there are many artists in the Caribbean, relative to the population size of their countries, few artists and professionals from the Caribbean participate in the art fairs. Participation is dominated by artists from Europe and the USA. It is hard to understand or visualize The International Art Market. The sales of contemporary art alone done by Sotheby's, Christie's, and Philips – the leading three international auction houses – in the first half of 2017 was equal to the annual GDP of Curacao. Important fairs, such as Armory, TEFAF, Art Basel, and Frieze each have around 50-100,000 visitors, roughly the number of people living on a small island in the Caribbean.

THE ANATOMY OF AN INTERNATIONAL ART FAIR

To imagine the scale and life of an art fair, think of a small island being entirely overtaken by the art industry for a week. In the daytime, visitors flow in, around and to every building being made available to artworks, catering, and all the VIP rooms. There is a parade of cross-generational artists whose style of dress ranges from standard to fashionable to outrageous. Art professionals dress in formal wear, looking serious. Maybe they wear funky sneakers if they are at a comfortable stage in their career. Hip, gorgeous, smiling women and men under 30 work the booths. They only know the basics about the art being presented, but they probably know everything there is to know about brands: shoes, watches, handbags to recognize the haves from the have nots.

The gallery owners, in suits and ties, walk around with their phones so they can be reached in case their booths are visited by high-end collectors or prospective buyers. Galleries sell work, and people sip champagne in the stalls. There is sake and sushi; champagne and oysters; smoothies and salad bars, and

burger joints in the halls. There are live painting performances, panels, artist talks and flash mobs. Large site-specific art projects, sculptures, installations, performances, and interventions occurring in public spaces throughout the city are included in the printed program given out to visitors.

Collectors open up their homes to show their collections. Local high-profile artists or gallerists serve free breakfasts, brunches, dinners, or cocktails in their studios or galleries for selected invitation-only guests. In the evenings, there are private parties for art professionals and collectors at every available hot spot. Celebrity collectors, visual art stars, hot prospects, and party crashers, all dressed in the latest fashion, dance to music by the world's best DJs. Half the crowd might be high on drugs or intoxicated from the limitless free beers, bubbles, or vodkas competing to establish their brands.

Fairs and the parties around them are a big part of the art market; you love it or hate it. Either way, you might not fly out for them, but if you are around when one is happening, you go. I continue to feel out-of-place and I have never gotten used to the American way of networking, but I am fascinated to observe it all. I have been in the large homes of people who are ranked as amongst the top 100 art collectors in the world and I have eaten, drank and seen their collections with peers from all over the globe during fairs from Sao Paulo to Miami, and from New York to London. It's not surprising to see the usual suspects: Beyonce (whose dad is Bahamian), Jay-Z, Leonardo di Caprio, Diddy, Swizz Beats, and Alicia Keys, all celebrity collectors. They make carefully planned media appearances 'casually' strolling through the fair during VIP days or they show up at parties. Their presence generates media attention. More often than not, they get paid to enter the room, slowly stride through the crowd – smiling left and right with paparazzi in tow – and leave. The truth is that anybody who is genuinely into art can buy art without other people seeing them or showing up at a fair.

In the summer of 2018, artist Christopher Cozier (Trinidad & Tobago) was invited to Art Basel as part of his three-month Davidoff Art Initiative artist-in-residency in Berlin. He was the last artist in residency in Berlin. The DAI program has since been disbanded. Art Basel was certainly not his first big fair, but it was his first time at the European Art Basel.

During the fair, he sends me a message: 'I don't know what art is anymore; this fair makes me feel I do not want to be an artist.'

The art market is not about art or its artists; it is about money and profits – Art Basel its pinnacle.

When I started my research in November 2017, I only knew of national and regional art fairs in the Caribbean. Later, I learned of two attempts at international art fairs, both in Puerto Rico.

CIRCA INTERNATIONAL ART FAIR (2006-2010)

The first international fair for contemporary art in the Caribbean: CIRCA International Art Fair, was founded in 2006. Its founding director was Celina Nogueras Cuevas, an art historian. She is still part of Puerto Rico's creative industry. She co-owns Muuaaa, the first branding studio on the island, and I met with her at its offices. I was early, and Nogueras was still in a meeting.

With a 'Yes, I would like a coffee. Milk, no sugar,' I sat down opposite a nervous-looking woman in the lobby.

I peeked through the door and saw many busy people behind laptops, bright colored walls, modern furniture, and whiteboards full of text, arrows, graphs, design objects, magazines, and books.

Nogueras informed the waiting woman she would meet with me first, and interview the woman for a job interview after. I smiled, apologizing, and followed Nogueras, who had already started telling me about Muuaaa and the work they do. Asked about her CIRCA experience and why they canceled it, Nogueras explains:

> 'We wanted to become an important secondary fair. We found that it was impossible with the available collector base and only a handful of galleries specializing in contemporary art in Puerto Rico. If you are rich here and want a Louis Vuitton bag, you buy it in Paris or New York. If you are not rich and want to buy a bag for your girlfriend, you save up and make this one-time purchase in San Juan. The same happens in contemporary art. The bigger collectors opened up their houses to show their collections, but they didn't buy or just bought a few things. They go to Armory and Art Basel because they can afford to and like to do so. It is fun. A fair doesn't make money with occasional buyers; we needed to invest in flying buyers into the fair, not five or ten, but the top hundred trendsetters in the world. We didn't have that money and could not convince the government or other sponsors to invest. Our tourist board (the Compañia de Turismo de Puerto Rico) offered US$10,000, if that gives you an idea. Usually, governments in other countries invest more than US$100,000.'

Nogueras gave up on her art fair after five years. Still, she continues to work in the creative industry through her company Muuaaa. Continuing her support of artists, she edited and published *Frescos: 50 Puerto Rican Artists Under 35*, in 2010.

MERCADO CARIBENO (MECA) ART FAIR (2017-ongoing)

In April 2017, Daniel Báez (New York) and Tony Rodriguez (Puerto Rico) gave organizing an international art fair another go. They launched the Mercado Caribeño (MECA) Art Fair. Taking a cue from CIRCA, their expectations and aims were more modest. They set up MECA as a low-key fair, the price for a booth is US$3,000, and it has a US$20,000 cap on the sale price for artworks. The fair brings together around 30 galleries and individual art projects from the Americas and the Caribbean in San Juan. It benefits from the support it receives from the art community in Puerto Rico. Báez is the gallery manager for the Gavin Brown Gallery and is well-liked and connected in the USA art community. Gavin Brown invested in the fair and presented a selection of their artists. Báez's connections and the coolness of the idea enabled him to reach out and secure the presence of some important American art professionals.

The second edition, in April 2018 was postponed because of hurricanes Irma and Maria and took place in November 2018. November worked out even better, making the fair a warm-up destination for galleries going to Art Basel Miami Beach in the first week of December. There is a lot of positive energy and support behind it, and MECA has gotten lots of media attention. Visitors to the fair can enjoy the warm weather, beaches and go for a hike in the lush green rainforest. They can stroll through the gorgeous streets of old San Juan to enjoy its museums, hipster stores, restaurants, cafés, and bars.

Puerto Rico has a weak economy, 10% unemployment, a decade of negative growth, and low purchasing power. Galleries barely survive and lack the clout to make long-term investments. Cuevas (Muuaaa/CIRCA) points out that the core of an art fair is to make money and profit. A fair cannot survive as an alternative museum where visitors enjoy the artworks as an experience, rather than buy it. Time will tell, MECA has been postponed due to COVID there have been no announcements about dates for the fourth edition yet.

COVID-19/ART FAIRS GOING ONLINE

In April 2020 the lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic forced all fairs and sales to go online. Visiting an international art fair online offers the possibility of expanding the audience beyond those who can afford to travel to Basel, New York, Dubai or Hong Kong. It is too early to tell all that this might mean. There is not enough data available yet to analyze if and how online art fairs can change the game and level the playing field. However, in the article *When the Pandemic Forced the Art World Online, Some People Began Collecting-Or Returned to It,* in *Art News* (Maximiliano Duron, October 2020) I read:

> 'The cancellation of fairs around the world initially looked like it might spell doom for a lot of lower and mid-tier galleries, but it turned out some collectors were just as comfortable – if not more so – buying from those same fairs online. Detroit-based collector Fernando Castro-Caratini connected in early May with Embajada gallery – which has a location in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and focuses on supporting the work of Puerto Rican and Latinx artists – during the online run of Frieze New York. Embajada's owners, Manuela Paz and Christopher Rivera, were hosting work in their apartment, under the title Embajada Foyer, and gave Castro-Caratini and two other potential clients a tour of the show via Zoom. He eventually purchased two works by Claudia Peña Salinas, a participant in the Whitney Museum's 2018 exhibition *Pacha, Llaqta, Wasichay: Indigenous Space, Modern Architecture, New Art.*
>
> 'The experience of buying from Embajada in these times was a very unique one,' Castro-Caratini said. 'Touring the space and seeing the work with the background noise of Manuela and Christopher's birds, having the opportunity to have a lengthier conversation over Zoom than you'd typically get at a fair was fantastic. By no means do I want it to replace the in-person experience, but it certainly can enhance the viewing and collecting experience moving forward.'

ATLANTIC WORLD ART FAIR

COVID-19 and all Art Fairs being forced to go online sparked galleries in the Caribbean, who had been exploring ways to enter the art market to be bold and to organize the Atlantic World Art Fair. Initiated by the Black Pony Gallery in Bermuda, the fair took place from May 13 until June 21, 2021. It presents eight exhibitors from the Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, Curacao, Jamaica, Haiti and Suriname, all owned by women. Monique Nouh-Chaia, owner of Readytex

Gallery (Suriname) participated in the fair. She explains:

> 'I participated because we need more markets, we need more sales. Suriname alone does not have a large enough collector base to sustain the ambition of its visual artists. Seed money is important in art and grants for research and development, but I believe in sustainability arrived at through sales. I have not yet sold work through the AWAF fair or connected with new collectors yet. There were over 300 unique visitors at our booth, from different countries. But we are new on the fair market, and collectors need to get to know our artists first, study their body of work and their integrity. That takes time. An industry statistic is that it takes 3 participations and I will keep participating. It has been an edifying experience. Also very valuable to me is the contact with colleagues in the Caribbean. It is so special that we understand each other, and the practice of being art entrepreneurs in our Caribbean very small market settings. Participating in art fairs has been on my list for a very long time but the costs have been forbidding all this time. I am now considering participating in other online fairs. That may be more attainable.'

Lusette Verboom, owner of Gallery Alma Blou in Curacao, reiterates the point made by Nou-Chaia and added:

> 'I sold art work through my own network of clients, as I had promoted the fair in my own network. I became a partner with Artsy to keep exploring this platform. We are already planning for next year's fair. It will not be an easy ride, but I don't know of any other ways to expand the number of collectors to whom we can present our artists.'

Susanne Fredericks, owner of Suzy Wong in Jamaica participated in the I-54 Art Fair in London before COVID. When I asked how this online fair differed from her earlier experience she explained:

> 'Of course a live physical fair is different to that of an online fair. The inability to see the work 'in the flesh' is a compromise for the collector, and the lack of real time engagement to initiate new relationships and conversations about the work is a loss for all concerned. That said, an online fair allows for wider reach, and requires more dynamic programming to engage new audiences, and deepen the experience of our current audience. I sold half of the works I had available in the Atlantic World Art Fair, and made more sales from my main Gallery page. Another outcome of great value to me was the relationship building in the teamwork behind the scenes to strategize for our success as an inaugural fair. All the participating galleries worked together on programming and tech, and

Press work. For the first time, I felt a sense of community and being part of a greater mission.'

PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL ART FAIRS OUTSIDE THE CARIBBEAN

To participate in an international fair as a gallery from the Caribbean is difficult. Booths start around US$10,000 and can go as high as US$500,000. The top galleries in the world control the selection of which galleries can participate in the leading, established fairs. Art fairs give a platform to galleries and artists at a time and location when everybody working in the arts is in town. Over the past decades an increasing number of smaller satellite fairs, presenting more artists (and a greater range of galleries and artists), are organized in the same city at the same time as a leading fair, attracting more visitors and new audiences. The gallery owners and art dealers in the Caribbean who want to enter the global market explain that the investment and work to participate in a smaller affordable fair, plus the costs for travel, transport of artworks, and the dramas of visa and importing art, is still challenging.

Tessa Mars

Haiti

Nou la ansanm, We are here, Acrylique sur toile, 4x8 pieds, 2019

VOLTA ART FAIR

In 2005, curator Amanda Coulson (The Bahamas) and gallery owner Ulrich Voges (Germany) started a small art fair, VOLTA, planned in Basel at the same time as heavyweight Art Basel. In 2008, VOLTA New York debuted the same weekend as the leading New York fair, Armory. VOLTA is a pioneer in also showcasing artists from the Caribbean within the international art market. VOLTA highlights the solo projects of emerging and mid-career artists, discoveries, and social engagement projects. When I visited the Bahamas, invited by Coulson, she explained:

> 'Being born and raised in the Bahamas, I wanted to make a point by also presenting artists and art professionals from the Caribbean. We could raise their visibility in the international market with VOLTA by selecting galleries for booths that presented the artworks and we could program special projects, panels, and artist talks.'

I have visited VOLTA every year since its debut in New York and I have seen a slow, but steady, increase in the visibility of artists and art professionals from the region. Coulson said:

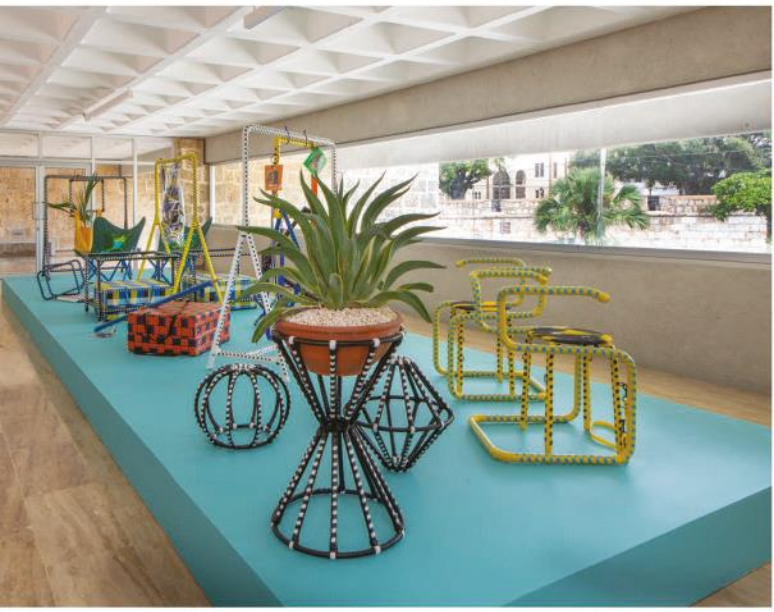
> 'We also brought the artists to the attention of the international art press by highlighting them. The artists were an integral part of the larger fair and a wide range of artists and galleries representing the international art market. The question remains what the quality criteria to be presented in the international market are, could be, and perhaps should be. We wanted to push the larger conversation, to question what makes a legitimate artist and what the art market is. More importantly, what and who is, can, and should be part of it? We organized panels discussing these questions where art professionals from the Caribbean and Europe (during VOLTA in Basel) or the USA (during VOLTA in New York) participated and were in dialogue with each other and the audience. Who defines and decides that is an ongoing tardy conversation amongst a slow but steady growing number of participants who are part of the art community worldwide.'

Talking to Coulson, I realized how discussions on the quality criteria are still, in fact, discussions about aesthetics. Why is the eurocentric aesthetic defining the criteria that determines the quality of artworks?

Coulson stepped down as VOLTA's artistic director in 2019 and is still a board member. Voges left VOLTA ahead of Coulson and currently works as the chief curator of the Central Bank of the Bahamas collection. Coulson, the National Art Gallery of the Bahamas' Executive Director since 2011, stepped

down as such in spring 2021. She continues as the founding director of TERN, a contemporary art gallery and art consultancy business in Nassau, focusing on emerging and mid-career artists from The Bahamas and the Caribbean.

Apart from VOLTA, I wonder if, and how, galleries, art professionals, and artists have access to international art fairs in the Caribbean and find an example in the Dominican Republic.



Quisqueya Henríquez

Dominican Republic

Installation views of *Infinitely Malleable*, from the series Formal/Informal, Found objects, recycled plastic, metals, leather and plants, 2007/2019. Site specific installation, an exhibition based on utilitarian art.

PRESENT WORK IN A BOOTH AT AN INTERNATIONAL ART FAIR

Quisqueya Henríquez is a mid-career artist born in Cuba, living and working in Santo Domingo. She has been working in mixed media for over two decades and has built a name for herself internationally. Henríquez has an apartment, turned studio space, around the corner from where she lives in a residential area. She uses the living room to present work to visiting curators and other art professionals, as was the case on my visit. In the four-room apartment, she works on projects in various media ranging from small two-dimensional paintings to room-filling installations. Her work is very conceptual and has a lot of humor and irony, as is her character. The visit is a pleasant one with lots of laughter. One room has a built-in closet filled with different fabrics. She experiments with how the material behaves, uses the cloth in unusual ways, and when I visit she is using denim in a collaboration with a tailor.

The same room has a wall installation of cheap sunglasses in different shapes, frames, and reflective colors, so typical for the Caribbean. For years, she collected them to complete her work *Pattern of Consumption (Sun Glasses)*, for her solo exhibition *Maleza*, in 2015. A second room has other objects like weights used in the gym and simple, elegant abstract rectangular sculptural forms she wraps using the plastic wire of retro chairs with the weaving technique for wire bags and baskets in bright yellows, greens, and black and white. For this series titled *Formal/Informal*, she has been collaborating since 2007 with Federico Gómez Polonia (Fico), an urban weaver who earns his living embellishing public buses by covering its steering wheels.

We talk about isolation, an issue that keeps returning in conversations I have with artists and art professionals all over the Caribbean. I ask how she deals with it. Henriquez said:

> 'Living and working on an island is a constant reality check in terms of cultural isolation. It makes it harder for an artist to build an international career. It's less easy to find someone from the international art community to follow and support your career. The same happens with press and reviews, but more deeply sad is the lack of publications and monographs about artists in the Caribbean. As an artist living in the Caribbean, you have to work and invest in the process of internationalization. This means traveling to visit art fairs and biennials. Sometimes it requires you to leave your home for months to attend an Artist-in-Residence Program. You have to find a way to see and be seen. Traveling helps meet people from the art world, but it is costly and not all artists can afford it. With the internet, social media, and other technologies, it has become easier to connect without investing all the resources in traveling worldwide. However, it still

> feels challenging to operate beyond your own scene. Social media can break insularity, but not geopolitics. The internet can reshape isolation, but it isn't a real tool of independence. We need to develop a strong art community and build powerful bonds with other art communities within the Caribbean. How do you get the work to the exhibition space with the high costs of transport, import, export, and insurance?'

Again, Henríquez addresses the problems that all art professionals in the Caribbean share. I ask if she has found ways to resolve these problems, and she explains,

> 'In my case, for several years I have managed to travel with my work. To do that, I customize specific and unique bags to transport my art to be able to make it. To get into a plane with my work as checked luggage, I have to consider a lot of factors like weight, dimensions, and most of the time, how fragile they are. Next month a gallerist from Spain is visiting to organize an exhibition in Barcelona. Her visit is also an opportunity to send some of my work back with her, to avoid logistical problems and transportation costs.'

This is one way to be able to present works from artists in the Caribbean. In 2018 I co-curated *Mammon*, an exhibition in the Museum of Fine Arts in Split in Croatia, partly based on my research in the Caribbean. Next to seven artists from Croatia, we presented seven artists from the Caribbean. We had no funding to transport the works I wanted to present. I selected video works and artwork we could make at the Museum of Fine Arts in Split, Croatia without the artist present, using written directions, prints sent as an email attachment, and printed on location in Split. This is one way to respond to a lack of funding. We also presented small works that did not weigh much, and I carried them, myself, in a suitcase, so the only costs were to send the art back after the exhibition closed.

I tell the Split story to Henríquez and she agrees,

> 'This applies to any artist who wants to exhibit on a different continent. However, with Europe and the USA being large continents, there is a more extensive range of platforms and possibilities to present work than there is for artists living on islands. The only available transport for artists on an island to go elsewhere, outside the Caribbean, is by air. There are no affordable alternatives over land. It is even more difficult given that few islands have galleries, fairs, or even museums dedicated to contemporary art.'

With artists Laura Castro and Engel Leonardo (who has since left the partnership), Henriquez co-founded Sindicato, an artist's platform based in Santo Domingo in 2015. Sindicato aims to increase the visibility of artists in the DR. Sindicato curates exhibitions, produces projects, and represents its artists at international art fairs. How an artist-run platform manages, financially, to go to art fairs, I wondered. Henriquez explained,

> 'When we sell our work and the work of other artists from the platform, we invest 40% of the profits in traveling and accommodation expenses. The 40% also supports the fees required for the curated sections of some art fairs, especially those in Latin America. Occasionally, we also help the artists produce the works that will be part of our project. The split is 60% for the artist and 40% to run our program.'

PRICING OF ARTWORKS

A simple banal formula is used internationally to set the price for artwork: multiply the painting's width by its length to arrive at the total size, in square centimeters or inches. Then multiply this sum with a number appropriate for your reputation, starting with two if you are a beginner or student, and work your way up. You can double the price if the work is on canvas and possibly add the cost of the frame. Once you start selling works in the market, the price will be set and will change based on the demand for your work.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY MARKETS

The market consists of the primary market and the secondary market. This is also true in the Caribbean. The primary market is where works are sold for the first time (first sale). The calculation of prices in the primary market is done by:

- Size
- Medium
- Career level: student, emerging, mid-career, established.
- Exhibition history: local/international, solo/group, the stature of the presenting location.
- Provenance (sales history), if any.
- The position of the gallery representing the artist, if any.
- Whether the artist's work is included in any influential private or public collections.

An artist benefits 100% when they sell their work out of their own studio, but only retains 50% of the price if the sale is made by a gallery or art dealer. Many buyers are in direct contact with artists they follow. After this first sale, the work becomes part of the secondary market (resale).

Calculation of prices in the secondary market is done by:

- All of the above
- Plus, the significance of the artwork within a body of work
- Condition of the work

Secondary market sales are often private or through auctions. They can happen everywhere, by anyone from the aforementioned international auction house Christie's to art dealers, to online outlets, for example, on eBay. Buyers in the secondary market are rarely in direct contact with the artists. In the secondary market, art has become an object of trade. A work transfers from one owner

to another through a middle man. Artists, the creators of the art work, do not participate in, and often don't benefit from, the secondary market. With profits increasing, artists are fighting to get their fair share of that profit.

However, artists can benefit from *Droit de Suite* or *Artist Resale Right* (ARR) royalties in 70 of the 195 countries worldwide. In 2001, the European Union implemented the *Directive on the Resale Rights for the Benefit of the Author of an Original Work of Art* (Directive 2001/84/EC). All EU countries have ARR regulations. On sales in the secondary market of the Caribbean, UK, USA, or China, artists benefit 0%. However, some galleries have taken it on themselves to pay their artists royalties even though they don't have to. The last conference to implement ARR regulation worldwide took place in 2017 in Geneva, but the effort has failed repeatedly. There is considerable pushback from galleries and auction houses who say they cannot share the profits with the artists as they would not make enough money.

Talking with various organizations in the Caribbean and Europe, it is unclear how the directive translates to art and sales in and from the Caribbean or for those islands that are legally a part of Europe. Another complication is that the EU only deals with these issues when artists officially bring a case to their attention. Artists in the Caribbean that could benefit from the directive do not, because fighting with a bureaucratic organization overseas takes time, work, and money that most don't have or find worth their while.

MERCHANDISE AND COPYRIGHT

Copyright is another legal issue that has been difficult to tackle for those living in the Caribbean. Contemporary artworks can also be suitable for merchandise such as print editions, postcards, t-shirts, and coffee cups. The merchandising of their art could benefit an artist's sustainability. Often they are bypassed by business-savvy entrepreneurs who instead merchandise stolen works because the entrepreneurs know there is little recourse for the artists. International copyright does not exist, but there are treaties and conventions. If copyright is part of the law at all in the Caribbean, the main problem is the lack of any organizations to uphold it. This places the burden entirely on the artists to chase down those who profit from their work without having asked permission, let alone offering a contract with royalties.

A case in point is entrepreneur John Bijkerk who recently emigrated from Rotterdam, the Netherlands, to Curacao. Confronted with an abundance of street art, he started a webshop where he sold prints of the art and merchandise with the art on it. He 'forgot' to ask permission from the artists, and too bad for him, they found out. The artists confronted him and called him out.

Artists need to know their rights or work with somebody who does. Thanks to social media and the internet, entrepreneurs who illegally exploit artists can be more easily found. It is a common practice for entrepreneurs to claim their way out of it, explaining that they give artists exposure and make no profit. They say they do all the work out of their love for the artwork and the goodness of their hearts. By law, once the entrepreneur has been caught, he has to pay compensation to the artist and stop the illegal activities. Knowing their rights, the artists managed to force Bijkerk to take down the webshop. In this case, the artists refrained from suing Bijkerk for financial damages as this is a long slow process. They decided they did not want to invest time and money.

Artists can choose to become a member of copyright organizations in the USA or Europe. Examples are ADAGP in France, and Pictoright in the Netherlands. These organizations make sure that images of your work are not being used by others without you knowing it and being paid for the use. They have tracking structures around copyrighted artworks, offer legal advice, keep up to date with changes in the law, give information, and support artists with workshops. The organizations employ lawyers who provide free consultations in-person at the organization's offices in Europe or the USA. For artists on the islands, this can be done online or by phone.

CRYPTO ART, NONFUNGIBLE TOKENS (NFT's), AND BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY

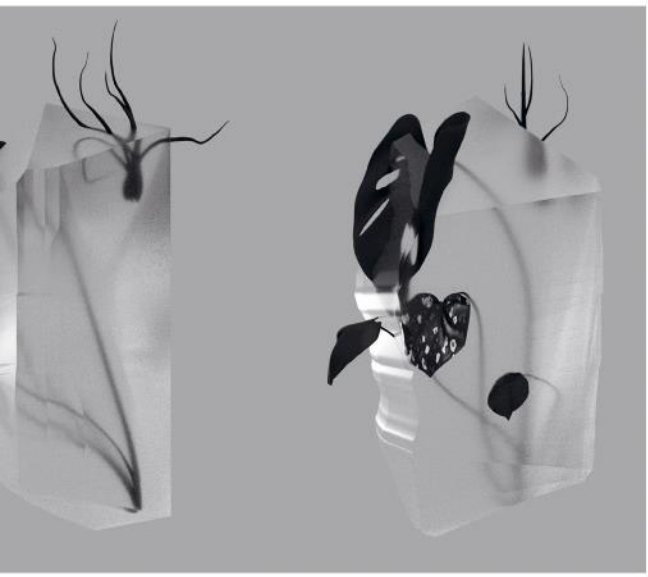
Nonfungible tokens (NFT's) and blockchain technology could benefit artists in the Caribbean in the future. I meet a handful of artists in the Caribbean like Rodell Warner in Trinidad and Tobago and Di-Andre Caprice Davis in Jamaica, whose practices are in digital art, virtual and augmented reality (VR/AR), and NFT's. It is a fascinating new medium I personally don't know much about but seems worth exploring. The technology for NFT's in the mainstream has been around for less than a decade. NFT's make digital artworks unique and sellable, verified using blockchain technology. A blockchain is a database of records of all transactions and gives buyers proof of authenticity and ownership. Information can never be erased after it is entered. The blockchain contains a specific and verifiable record of every single transaction ever made. Bitcoin is the most known digital currency that uses blockchain technology. In March 2021, artist Mike Winkelmann (Beeple) sold the first purely digital work through an auction house (Christie). The work sold for US$ 69.3 million (*What is an NFT?*, New York Times, March, 2021).

ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO ECONOMISE

Haiti's contemporary art and craft scenes are an inspiring example of how those two fields can work together to mutually support each other. Haiti is a large-sized country with a population of eleven million people and three million living in Port-au-Prince, the capital. It became independent from France in 1804. It is considered a low-income country by the World Bank. Internationally, Haiti is generally known for the Haitian Revolution, a successful insurrection by its enslaved population, led by Toussaint L'Ouverture. The revolution was a defining moment in the history of the Caribbean. It is the only uprising by an enslaved population that led to the founding of a country ruled by the formerly enslaved population who at the same time abolished slavery.

I admire the resilience, passion, and artistic urgency I notice among artists and artisans in Haiti, despite the country's sociopolitical situation and economy. Haiti has expanded beyond traditional art and has a small but active contemporary art community and a growing crafts/artisan field. Contemporary artists have emerged from the artisan field. They have been inspired and informed by traditions, symbols, history, and techniques used by artisans. The craft districts that have the most attention, in Haiti and internationally, are in Noailles in the city Kwadèdoukè (Croix-des-Bouquets) and the district Grand Rue in Port-au-Prince.

Tessa Mars is an emerging contemporary artist in Haiti I met at the end



Rodell Warner

Trinidad & Tobago

Terrarium 08 & 011, Stills from animation, From the series TERRARIA , 2021

of summer in 2017. She was in residency at Residency Unlimited in New York (funded by the earlier mentioned Davidoff Art Initiative). I am part of its visiting curator program. In Haiti, she offered to drive me to Noailles and introduce me to a friend of hers, artist Jean Remy Eddy. Mars lives just a few blocks away from where I was staying and picked me up in a small orange KIA Picanto. It is cute; it suits her. She laughs at my surprise and explains,

> 'Everybody drives those huge SUVs sold for a handful of cash by aid workers and expats that bought them with aid money. They are what people here can afford to buy but are super expensive to maintain and fill up with gas. Middle-class people end up with a car in front of their door that has broken down and they have no money to fix it, or because there is no money for gas as it drives two kilometers for every liter of gas. I love my little car. It is cheap in gas, it drives 20 kilometers per one liter of gas and I can maneuver in our horrific traffic because it is small.'

Longevity over status, Mars is a smart, savvy woman. Never mind the potholes on the way to Noailles. She manages to avoid all.

The Noailles neighborhood is known for the technique 'Fer Decoupé,' which was developed in the twentieth century by modern artist Georges Liautaud (1899-1991). He taught his method of hammering metal barrels to artisans to make affordable, easy-to-sell craft products. Liautaud's work is part of the prestigious Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) collection in New York. However, it was the craft products he and artisans worked on at his forge that gave him a steady income. If you pay attention, you spot the decorative metal works in and outside homes worldwide.

The influence of artists on the craft community and on contemporary artist Jean Remy Eddy, who chairs the artisans' association, is apparent today. His property is in the center of the artisan area. We enter Eddy's property, a big open terrain. To the left there is an open gallery space with artwork. At the far end of the property there is a big stage with a bar and restrooms. To the right are two small buildings, one for workshops and the other one is a library study space. Most of the walls have murals on them, and there are sculptures dotted throughout the space.

We sit and with some drinks while he talks and points out details. All around us is the sound of hammers on metal, a continuous soundtrack throughout the day. Mars translates,

> 'I always will be an artist first, but I wanted a meeting place where we can have a drink and discuss issues, and also present and sell products. It is growing in phases. Whenever I have some money, I invest. I first bought the land, then the bricks, and then I hired people to build, etcetera.'

Eddy was invited to participate as a contemporary artist in one of the francophone conferences that happen every five years, organized by the French government to connect art professionals in the French OST. It helped the district become more visible beyond Haiti. At the conference, the French government awarded Eddy a cash price for his autonomous contemporary artwork, which he invested in his workshop. Another benefit of his attendance at the conference was meeting a French sales agent. The agent became interested in products made in the Noailles district, specifically, and now sells the products in France.

The Caribbean is small, and if somebody is successful, jealousy and questions about the integrity of the successful person often follows. I asked Eddy how he deals with it.

> 'After the award for my work, people in the community didn't trust me and were expecting me to only make money for myself. When the French sales agent showed up, I made a point of bringing the artisan community of Noailles together here in the workshop. My colleagues met the agent, heard what he had to offer from his mouth, and invited him to their workshops. It didn't take long before they realized how much administrative work there is in making contracts, bookkeeping, maintaining contacts, marketing and communication and the skillset you need to do the work beyond making art and craft works. They came back and asked me to work with them to help them organize themselves. That is how I've ended up being elected president of the association every term.'

The aid given to Haiti after its 2010 devastating earthquake, or rather not given, is the shameful story of the international aid community and their continuous failures in the country (*Haiti and the Failed Promise of US Aid* by Jacob Kushner. *The Guardian*, 11 October 2019) However, the project in Noailles seems to be a success story for Haiti. Initiated by Pascal Theard, an entrepreneur and art collector from Port-au-Prince, the association successfully rebuilt the district into what it is today. Eddy explains:

> 'As an association founded years before the earthquake, we had long formulated a vision for our district, and we spoke in one voice. We were organized as a district and would have rejected help unless we were part of the rebuilding plans. After the earthquake, which affected our district, the association clashed with the European contractors, who were not used to being questioned by anybody. We needed help as much as the next person and it is easy to fall into the trap of saying yes to things you can get for free even when you know it is not useful or will make things worse. You have to fight strategically to stand up for what you need, specifically if that is not the goal or the mission of organizations that came

out to help you. We did that, and being involved and working together brought us this outcome.'

We strolled all over the well-maintained district. There were new concrete ditches, wide stoops, and gracefully crafted metal fences in front of the workshops and homes, garbage cans, and working streetlights. All the different workshops where the artisans make their works and store materials and tools have name signs and storefronts. It is where they show and sell decorative metal objects. I saw crafted angels, candlesticks, photo frames, and wall figures: the sun, moon, stars, symbols, or abstract forms, all in the signature hammered-metal style. Everywhere we went, we were invited in to watch the work while an artisan explained what they are working on and how. The district does well. It has contracts worldwide with stores such as Macy's in the USA.

As we walked through the district, I saw the George Liataud Community Museum. This public space is used to present small exhibitions. The restoration plan for Noailles after the earthquake also included the commission of a handful of significant public metal artworks by contemporary artists to inspire the artisan community. Mars showed me her brightly-colored murals of key deities commissioned for the restored Vodou temple across from the Museum. The priest, a middle-aged man, came out and greeted her warmly in the communal space. While walking around more, I noticed the metal wall sculptures by Barbara Prezeau and a metal installation over a ditch that made darting shadows float on the water by Mario Benjamin.

There was no water at the time of my visit. There hasn't been for a while because of the return of cholera. After more than a century, cholera was brought back into Haiti by a UN military battalion that came to uphold peace (*UN Admits for First Time That Peacekeepers Brought Cholera to Haiti* by Ed Pilkington and Ben Quinn. *The Guardian*, December 2016). I wondered how many disasters and how much failed aid a country or people can take and why they even have to. The government had to fight to make the UN acknowledge what happened and they still have not been compensated. As a world citizen and citizen of one of the wealthiest countries, I question how this is just. What does this say about world ethics?

Ailsa Anastatia

Curacao

I own this piece of land, mixed media, concrete, branches, seeds, 2019

© Photo courtesy of artist

Laurent Bayly

St. Martin

Car Hole Rainbow, Marigot, Saint Martin, digital photograph, 2018

© Photo courtesy of artist

#4

GALLERIES

In the Dominican Republic (DR), I was hosted for a month by artist Jorge Pineda and his partner, film and theater director Henry Mercedes. Pineda is a multidisciplinary artist, born and raised in the Barahona province, a center of sugar production in the Southwest of DR towards its border with Haiti. Pineda is recognized for his activism through his artwork denouncing child abuse, both physical and psychological; environmentalism; gender and sexuality equality; and immigration issues. I had sent Pineda a request to ask if I could have a studio visit and interview with him. In turn, he sent me a message,

> 'Dear Sasha, I would love to. Does your schedule permit you to visit DR after January 6? In that case, we can also offer to host you for a month and facilitate you in your research.'

My mouth dropped after reading his message. I have known Pineda's work for years but I had met him only once when I was introduced to him by Haitian-American artist Jean-Ulrick Désert who lives and works in Berlin. We all met during a panel discussion organized by Small Axe, hosted at Columbia University in New York in April 2015.

Reading his email in 2017, I was startled by he and his husband's generosity and my response was that I would be honored to be hosted by them. Were they sure they could host me for a month? He answered:

> 'Yes, my dear, we would love for you to stay here, we have a room we can offer you in our home, and we can discuss what it is you need and who you would like to meet and will facilitate you with this.'

After arriving in DR, Pineda definitely came through on his promise. Alejandra Pelaez, his studio manager, sets up a schedule for me, she called artists, museum directors, collectors, and other art professionals and they all make time to meet me. I had meetings from morning to night. It was only months later that I heard that Désert had called him before I started my research to recommend that he help me. Désert told him I had been working in the Caribbean and with artists from the area for years and that he knows me as being genuinely interested in the Caribbean within its context. Désert explains he knows me to host artists from the Caribbean in New York and Amsterdam and making connections by organizing salons and set up meetings with art professionals in those cities for decades. Pineda and Mercedes have discussed ways to facilitate contemporary art in DR for some time. One of their ideas is to host art professionals from outside of DR, to enhance the visibility of artists working in DR. After Désert's call, Pineda and Mercedes decided to make me their pilot project.

Living with Pineda and Mercedes was a far cry from my living conditions in Haiti. Overnight I felt like a princess. They live in a two-story penthouse that includes the work studio where Pineda and Marino, his studio assistant, work every day; a library, and the office of Pelaez, the studio manager. Breakfast was served every morning around 8 AM on the roof garden in the shadow of an abundance of flower and fruit trees overlooking the city of Santo Domingo. The day's schedule was discussed over strong, hot espresso, squeezed juice of various fruits, eggs, cheese, and fresh bread. Onelys and Mirelys, two women who work for the couple, brought up the food, spoke to me in Spanish and teased me because, over the weeks, I did not manage to appropriately respond beyond 'gracias,' and, 'Buenos días, cómo estás?' accompanied by my apologetic smile.

I'm hopeless. Language and I are no match made in heaven. After breakfast, Pelaez would give me the schedule for the day. If my first appointment could not pick me up, she would put me in a car and explain to the driver where to take me, explaining that I don't speak a word of Spanish. I love my daily conversations with Pineda and Mercedes over shared meals and glasses of wine after coming home at night or watching the sunset together from the rooftop garden. Pineda and Mercedes referenced books, films, philosophers, and intellectuals I had never heard of (beyond English-translated Marquez, Borges, or Llosa).

After I arrived at their home, Pineda had gone to his library and selected a stack of books for me to read and, over time, mentions films and plays to familiarize myself with, as well. Being exposed to more, I realized how visual language, symbols, and metaphors differ depending on your context. Religion seems to play a part in that as well. Most of the Caribbean is Catholic. Most people in the USA, UK, and the Netherlands are protestant. I am spiritual. There are things I don't understand and I believe there are powers and connections beyond myself. However, I do not follow any specific religion. I know as little of the Bible as I do of the Quran or any other religious writings. None of those scriptures are helpful to me as a tool to understand art. If anything, art is a tool to learn about some scriptures.

I remember a conversation with film director Felix de Rooy (born in Curacao, but he lives and works in Amsterdam) years ago. He told me he was so energized by the Q&As after showing his movie, *Ava & Gabriel*, a story set in Curacao, to film festival audiences in South America. He felt understood, and felt his film was finally judged correctly and within its context. In Europe and the USA, the conversations never go beyond him explaining his references to Catholicism. He had to answer questions people in South America did not have because they spoke and understood these references and his visual language. The audiences who recognized what he was saying asked questions that were far more challenging and exciting.

It is so easy to be set into our ways and think them to be the truth. I like to be challenged to contemplate and change. My trip to the Caribbean becomes just the challenge I was looking for. I was excited and thankful to Pineda and Mercedes for creating a moment to learn and to expand my gaze. Not being gifted at languages and not speaking Spanish, much of what I would have liked to understand about the people and culture of DR, as well as the wealth of knowledge documented in books, films, and conversations was lost on me. I realized I will never be able to really know this other world. But, the conversations I had with Pineda and Mercedes made me look at everything I thought I knew differently, aware of the holes in my knowledge and experience. I just love it when that happens.

In the rest of this chapter, I highlight conversations I had with gallery owners.

Pineda introduced me to Lucy Garcia, the owner of the gallery that represents him. Lucy Garcia Arte Contemporáneo in Santo Domingo opened in 2014. Garcia's father is an art dealer, and as a little girl, she loved spending all her free time with him as he made his art deals. Garcia learned the ropes of the art of art dealing, by spending time with him. Her father gave her the space to start working with contemporary artists from his gallery space and allowed her to use his network until she took the step to create her own gallery. Garcia, a petite woman with spiky white hair, could be a lead singer in a punk band. Her outfit is uniquely funky, not the boring, formal gallery director look. We have our conversation in her gallery.

'Finally,' I said out loud when I walked into the white cube. There were none of the cramped artworks positioned from floor to ceiling, left to right, with the addition of a few more packed mobile walls. A common experience of the galleries I had seen in Haiti, before arriving in DR.

There are just a few works on the wall, and the art has space to breathe. This is how it should be done, I think. I pause, becoming aware that I have fallen into the trap of judging art and how art is presented based on eurocentric aesthetics and the social imperatives I have absorbed. Am I just being lazy? Investing in the idea that presentation in the ways I am familiar with equals value? Thirty years of travel, work, and interest in the cultures of the Caribbean, and I still experience culture shock. How sensitive am I, really, to other cultures and aesthetics? At best, I might be aware of my eurocentric gaze and the fact that it is my default method to judge and determine quality and value.

Garcia only speaks Spanish, and her assistant translates for me:

'My dad showed me you can sell anything you believe in and are passionate about. My passion is to represent Dominican and international contemporary artists. I am still trying different ways to sustain the

gallery and grow. I work with collectors to evolve their collections to a more international one. It will put the artists and their collection in a wider art-historical context and conversation. Researching the top collections, I understood that in doing so, the value of all artworks in those collections increase. I like to help build collections with works the collectors just love and want to be around. The increasing value of works will help sustain and grow artists' careers and my gallery.'

How involved is Garcia with her artists and their practices I ask? She nods and continues,

'I work with my artists to develop a long-term career strategy that will benefit them and the gallery. I do regular studio visits to understand their thinking process and practice and to develop my language around the work. I ask what artists need. Where do they see themselves in ten years, give constructive criticism, and explain to my collectors what the work is about and why it is important for their collections. There is a limit to what I can do. My priority is to grow my collector base at home and build a network in Spanish-speaking countries. Basel, Frieze, Armory are so dominated by the Anglophone its aesthetics and culture it feels distant, different. I prefer to go to Bogota and Madrid, a natural fit for my artists and their work. The collectors at those fairs speak the same language, both literally and figuratively.'

This is so true, I think, coming from not speaking Spanish at all. I didn't know the writers, philosophers, and filmmakers Pineda and Mercedes have referenced. I never visited the art fairs Garcia mentioned.

During my research I learned that most islands have galleries. Most galleries started by investing in becoming acquainted with the artists and market in their country, but this often leads new owners to the traditional way that galleries are run. As Garcia proves, if your heart is in contemporary art, you could start researching new artists and new markets.

Some galleries give limited space to contemporary art and artists. Most focus on commercial (decorative) or applied art and represent painters and sculptors. Given my scope on contemporary art, I continue with some case studies to show the range and variety of galleries representing the contemporary artists I came across as I traveled.

Myrlande Constant

Haiti

Ceremonie Ghede, flag tableaux, beadwork, 65 x 95 inch, year unknown. Presented at Pòtoprens exhibition in Pioneer Works, Brooklyn, New York, 2020

HYBRID GALLERIES

Most galleries and art dealers on the islands I visited present a mash-up of traditional artisans and commercial (decorative) artists. Alongside framing paintings, prints and photographs as an extra income, galleries might have a gift or souvenir annex. As Garcia already said, gallery owners do focus on what their own tastes and passions lead them to.

Landhuis Bloemhof, a gallery run by Nicole Henriquez in Curacao, is an example of this. In my interview with Henriquez, she tells me,

> 'I do occasionally give space to curators to propose and present exhibitions in the gallery. However, this is my gallery, and I prefer to present art that I like myself. I like figurative work.'

Gallery owners who present traditional art sometimes engage in contemporary art, testing the waters and figuring out ways how to gain an income from dealing in contemporary art. Gallery Alma Blou in Curacao, owned by Lusette Verboom, and Ready Tex in Suriname, owned by Monique Nouh-Chaia, are examples. I visited the homes of both the owners and saw their personal collections, each reflecting their passion for contemporary art. Both Verboom and Nouh-Chaia tell me they have tried different strategies to interest their base of collectors in contemporary art over the years. They also consistently try to reach out to international collectors. Both expressed their frustration with how difficult it is to monetize contemporary art, being located in the Caribbean.

The Republic of Suriname is a large-size country with a small population of 600,000; 250,000 live in Paramaribo, its Capital. It is considered a low-economy country by the World Bank. It became independent from the Netherlands in 1975, and is the smallest independent country in South America. Internationally it is generally known for being almost entirely covered with tropical rain forest, part of the vast Amazon region.

I know Nouh-Chaia personally invests in the contemporary art community in Suriname. She has financially up-fronted the BFA studies and practices of several artists like Marcel Pinas, George Struikelblok, and Kurt Nahar. She invested in, built, and maintains the art blog *Sranan Art Xposed*. She has invited writers like artist and curator Christopher Cozier, and writers Marieke Visser and Rob Peree to publish critical writing on artists in Suriname and their practice. Both Nouh-Chaia and Verboom have invited and participated in programs in which international curators select and present artists' works in exhibitions in Nouh-Chaia's and Verboom's galleries.

There is an increasing interest in contemporary art, but this increase is moving at the pace of a turtle. Is a passion for contemporary art enough to

sustain a gallery focused on contemporary art alone? Curacao and Suriname both have a population that is under a million people. The size of a contemporary art collector's base, therefore, will always be relatively small. I can see the logic in focusing first on learning how to run a gallery in order to make a profit within the possibilities of their context and their respective countries' culture.

A promising gallery for contemporary artists to watch in the Caribbean is the Y-Art Gallery in Port of Spain, Trinidad, founded by another courageous woman Yasmin Hadeed. Hadeed has built a white cube space in a new modern building. She represents a small roster of established artists, from painter Edward Bowen to conceptual artist Christopher Cozier. She also presents more commercial photography, sculpture, and I even visited a jewelry show. However, she is not mixing it up. Whatever type of work she is showcasing, is framed within its own context when exhibited. The artists she shows, and the type of work they do, define how the work is presented. She targets specific collectors for specific exhibitions. It is hard work to entice collectors into the new media and new narratives an artist such as Cozier has brought to the table in Trinidad. In Trinidad, all but one collector I spoke with – Ian Benjamin, who collects and supports contemporary and conceptual work – buy figurative work. They support artists and visuals they connect with, such as a landscape painting of an area they grew up in or a place they go for vacation. An abstract modern painting or sculpture, they tell me, is as out of the box as they are prepared to buy. Hadeed slow but steadily pushes forward. She expands her existing collector base with young professionals who have returned to the island after their studies, familiar with the contemporary art community in Beijing, London, or New York, where they studied.

Miguel E. Keerveld

Suriname

A Never Ending Story?, installation, 2020. Presented at NET 'ALENG: You Are NOT Invited!, De Hal, Paramaribo, Suriname

CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERIES

Looking at the Caribbean as a whole, I find galleries that solely focus on contemporary art in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico. These galleries include conceptual, photography, virtual, audio/visual, installation, performance, new media technology, and research-based practices. I am specifically interested in the traditional gallery location structure vs. the current up-and-coming online galleries.

I know of only one international gallery with a space in the Caribbean. Galleria Continua was first established in Italy in 1990. It has expanded over the years opening galleries in China, France, Cuba and Brazil. The Cuban gallery is in an old theater in Chinatown, Havana, and was founded in 2015. It's the first gallery of its kind to open in Cuba after the country reopened to foreigners in 1993. Continua's roster ranges from established artist Carlos Garaicoa, who works between the photography and installation media, and emerging artists Susana Pilar Delahante Matienza, whose work is across photography, video, and performance. Garaicoa and Matienza are based in Cuba, although they regularly work outside of Cuba, and the gallery's representation includes internationally renowned established artist Ai Wei Wei (China) and sculptor Sir Anish Kapoor (UK). A work by the latter was on view during the Havana Biennale in 2019. A list of galleries and other presenting art spaces, a selection of contemporary artists in Cuba, and how to buy and export art in Cuba are written up in *Cutting Edge Art in Havana: 100 Cuban Artists*. This guide, created by Artempo Cuba was updated and launched during the Havana Biennale in 2019.

I visited two galleries in the Caribbean that did the same process, but in reverse – first establishing a gallery in their country, then establishing a second location elsewhere. Lyle O. Reitzel gallery was started in 1995 in Santo Domingo (DR) by Lyle Reitzel. In 2016, Reitzel opened a second gallery in the Lower East Side of New York City. Unfortunately, Reitzel was traveling when I visited Santo Domingo, and the gallery was closed.

Embajada Gallery was founded in 2015 by artist Christopher Rivera and his partner Manuela Paz in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico is a mid-size island that has a population of four million. Half a million people live in San Juan, its Capital. It is an OST of the USA. The couple returned to the island from New York after Rivera graduated with an MFA from Hunter College in 2009. They opened Embajada in the shopping center his family owns in the Hato Rey neighborhood of San Juan. Rivera explained,

> 'We want to promote Puerto Rican artists within an international dialogue. Introduce audiences outside of Puerto Rico to the impactful way artists like Jorge Gonzales and Chemi Rosado-Seijo are working within

their communities. The art community in San Juan remains vibrant, even after the devastating hurricanes Irma and Maria. There are still many galleries and project spaces for contemporary artists. The art community here is highly supportive of each other at various openings and public artwork activities. Being a true genuine community is the foundation of these artists' drive and gives them their strength.'

Embajada presents artist from Puerto Rico and international artists in their space in San Juan and successfully utilizes their old network in New York. Before coming to Puerto Rico, Paz was the membership director at the New Art Dealers Alliance (NADA) and worked at the Armory Art Fair. Embajada works with renowned museums like The Whitney Museum and galleries like Hauser Wirth in New York, to present the artists on their San Juan roster, internationally. Recently Paz and Rivera opened the Embajada Forever Space in Flatbush, Brooklyn. Embajada actively participates in various international art fairs.

ART DEALERS/ONLINE GALLERIES

Susanne Fredricks is an art dealer and consultant in Kingston, Jamaica. She picks me up to go to Hi-Qo Art & Framing Gallery, one of the commercial galleries for representational artwork. Frederick's mom started the gallery 40 years ago. Her brother Simon, then started working alongside his mom 20 years ago as the gallery manager. Fredericks' art career also started in the gallery, learning the ropes alongside her brother after she finished her higher education in London. She has worked as an independent dealer and consultant for the past ten years. Her brother refers buyers interested in contemporary art to her. She can use the facilities if needed. Fredricks is a mid-career art professional, comfortable steering her SUV through Kingston's streets as we talk about the art market in Jamaica,

> 'On my way to meet you, I was thinking back to how Jamaica used to be an autonomous art market. Artists could make a living, sometimes an excellent living. It was more exciting, and there was more corporate and private collector engagement. People were getting scholarships, and when they came back, there was a community of sorts. Then the recession hit in 2008. A combination of factors have changed the landscape. There was economics, and our exchange rate plummeted. We have a huge amount of debt, the kind of wealth that used to exist has changed, and people's priorities have shifted.
>
> Globalization had an impact on small economies like Jamaica. Before, small economies had their markets, and now those markets have been taken over by the Global North. The speed with which entrepreneurs have had to react to shifts in this new global market increased, making it hard for small businesses.'

Fredricks explains,

> 'In Jamaica, the 'gallery only' model couldn't sustain itself. It was too much work for buyers, isolated on an island, to keep up with new genres like conceptual art, media, and technology that were hip and happening in the global art market. Before social media, there was little to no access to the global art market unless you could afford to travel. Locally and regionally, we need to invest in people to develop visual literacy in contemporary work and a more sophisticated understanding of the art world. The audience often does not understand what they are looking at. You need to be taught about the materiality and the conceptual nature of the artwork. More conversation about contemporary art is necessary for people to engage with, and understand, what it is. We desperately need critical writing in the region, and we need multiple voices.'

I met Fredricks for a second time in her home. With us was Leasho Johnson, an emerging artist, considered a hot prospect on the verge of taking off internationally. I had met Johnson in 2016 on a studio visit with him in New York at Residency Unlimited. Fredricks, a collector herself, supports Jamaican artists. I spot his work, which comments ironically on dancehall culture: a macho, highly sexualized reaction to slavery, colonialism, and imperialism. Like many artists everywhere, Johnson earns extra income as a web- and graphic designer. He is designing and building *Suzie Wong Presents*, an online platform by Fredricks. Johnson says,

> 'I'm excited about this project; it is why I came onboard. Artists need more visibility outside of the region. When you lack funding, working online is a good alternative certainly for the collectors of the future.'
> Fredricks nods and says, 'The future is regional; we have to be seen as a region. This is why I am going online. Essentially, I want to give a platform to what is happening in the regional art community. Engage people from outside the region; I want the diaspora to look in. The Caribbean has a kind of mystique about it. We have a cultural kind of swing. We are very diverse. We have different stories, narratives, and politics on different islands. Yet, I feel a cultural commonality that holds it all together. I want to present that!'

Since her family closed down the gallery, Fredricks continues to explore new avenues within the arts. She has participated in the I-54 art fair in London and PRIZM in Miami.

Johnson was awarded a full scholarship for the MFA program 2018-2020 at the Art Institute in Chicago. Fredericks supported him to position and sell a body of original works in 2017, which fullfilled his post-graduate studies' financial requirements. He has now graduated, had his first solo exhibition in Chicago with Flxst Contemporary, and is fielding offers for gallery representation.

ACCOUNTABILITY

I meet with Reynald Lally, an art dealer for outsider and contemporary art in Haiti. His gallery was destroyed in the earthquake of 2010. He lives in Petion Ville (a middle and upper class city by 2017 attached to its largest city Port-au-Prince) in a three-story house on a quiet street, hidden behind a giant anonymous steel gate. I never got used to those gates and the walled-off homes. I never got used to the angry-looking security guards, welcoming me with their automatic guns, pointed straight at me, as a gate slowly opens up. I never got used to the gunshots that woke me up at night. Behind Lally's gate, there were no security guards with guns, but there was a lovely garden with a big table under a tree festooned by Christmas lights, and a hammock. All over the garden were fascinating, dark, almost sinister-looking sculptures and assemblages often representing figures. They were made from recycled materials: metal, cloth, buttons, skulls, wood, rubber tires, and bones. Lally is a tall, lean man in his seventies, a bon vivant born and raised in England. In his adulthood, he enjoys travel, women, and art. During a stay in Algeria, Lally bought a book about Haitian art, saw its potential, and traveled to Haiti. He has been there, on and off, for thirty years. I asked him about the art market in Haiti before and after the earthquake.

> 'Haiti is said to be famous for its artwork. In reality, it is famous for its naïf works. Until twenty years ago, Haitian artists did well at auction in Sotheby's and Christie's within the Latin American market. Then the forgeries started, instead of developing the artists that were doing well, galleries were asking for more copies of the work that was doing well.'

Forgeries are huge in Haiti's official art community, where it is hard to tell one artist from another. Lally explains,

> 'The galleries have never had a gallery mentality. They always think about tourism, and tourism is something else. Thirty years ago, I was the first gallery for contemporary art in Haiti, showing international artists. I had a small gallery in New Jersey to present the artist from Haiti in the American market. I participated in the outsider art fairs there for years. Then the earthquake happened, and it is all gone. I keep thinking of reopening a space, but prices are so high now, it wouldn't pay itself back.'

I ask to use the bathroom, and I understand the reluctant look on his face when I see that the house inside is also his office and storage space. Lally lives on the second floor. On the first floor, I have to climb over boxed art pieces, piled up to cover the floor. I slide past a desk with a computer that is almost buried by paper and dusty unpacked sculptures, and I find the bathroom door. It only opens part

of the way. Even in the small bathroom, there are boxes. When I return, Lally's live-in help comes out with coffee and sweets and puts them on the table. I have no clue where, but on that packed first floor, there is a kitchen and space for her to sleep and live. Lally continues,

> 'I have presented and sold artworks from Haiti for years working on creating a market and consistent prices. Life in Haiti is hand to mouth for most people. I have an apartment in the South of France and want to spend longer periods there, it is cheap, and I'll have excellent free healthcare. I've been trying to sell my inventory here; it is hard to make a profit. With all the foreigners coming into Haiti, artists rather sell out of their studio without a dealer or gallery. They undercut the value of their work by not working with professionals. After the devastating earthquake in 2010, Haiti has more problems than ever. It has always been unorganized, and now post-earthquake, it is unruly, which reflects on its art community.'

In October 2017, Le Centre d'Art, an educational center, gallery and reference institution for the promotion of Haitian art established in 1994 in Port-au-Prince, organized an auction of works through auction house Piasa, in Paris. Half the profits of each piece went to the Centre d'Art for more renovations on their building, destroyed by the earthquake in 2010, the other half to the artist whose work was sold. A great catalog was made that included the artists' bios, pictures of their works, measurements, and prices. This was the perfect opportunity for artists, galleries, art dealers, and collectors to use the auction prices as the new benchmarked price Europeans and Americans would think of as the standard. It made sense within the international market and seemed beneficial for Haiti's artists and art professionals. But as I watched it unfold, it did not happen.

To European or American eyes, the art community in Haiti might indeed seem unorganized and unruly, as Lally explained, and as it seemed to me at first glance. Life in Haiti is hard. There are no social systems in place. The majority of Haitian citizens do not have a home in Europe to return to when the going gets tough or when they reach old age. Both Lally and I have access to excellent social security and healthcare systems. Few Haitians are so lucky. Haiti is not unruly or unorganized within its own context. Artists in Haiti are forced to be responsive to the market in ways other artists might not be. To earn a living as an artist, there is an effort to create a supply that matches demand. I have seen artists from Haiti be picked up by the international market and have to rapidly adapt to that playing field. You don't survive in Haiti as an artist without being savvy, invested, and working your ass off. Artists in Haiti have to live and work within the context of Haiti. Artists in Haiti have a hard time getting a visa anywhere and certainly cannot easily enter the countries that play a big role in the art market.

COLLECTORS

Last but not least, collectors are an essential link in the art market. Artist's careers often begin with collectors seeing the meaning of their art works and believing in the artist's vision. I interview collectors on the islands I visit and find that most collections are built with works from Caribbean artists. Most islands have but a handful of collectors. Very few collectors have artworks from outside the Caribbean in their collection, both in contemporary art and/or otherwise. Apart from needing to feel attracted to the creation and wanting to live with it, they all tell me that supporting artists at home is why they keep buying. Collectors buy directly from artists or use an art dealer or consultant to discuss which artists and works to buy, and why. Most collectors stick with supporting several artists, giving them a way to sustain themselves with sales over the years. Few collectors add emerging artists or new media to their collections.

They tell me, 'I leave the emerging artists for my children to collect if they want to.'

Many collectors agree to loan works to exhibitions and often donate artworks to museums. They contribute to preserving and documenting art history and making it available to international scholars to research, write, and include in the more extensive international discourse. Relatively few collectors have a collection of contemporary artists' works with works in media beyond painting and sculpture, specifically on the smaller islands.

I interview Mrs. Jones, a collector who wants to stay anonymous for personal and safety reasons. Jones' story is an inspirational one that might encourage aspiring collectors with little means to collect. While we sit and have a coffee, she points out a small drawing to me and says,

> 'I started buying art when I was abroad to study. I was the first in my family to get a scholarship and higher education. I didn't really have the financial means, but a friend from school took me to an opening, and I just fell in love with this small drawing. It didn't represent anything. As you can see, it was just this abstract form made by small pencil lines. Somehow, although I did not understand why, it did mean something to me, and it stayed with me, and I kept going back to see it. I ended up buying it after I dared to ask if I could pay in installments, and the gallery and artist agreed to that'.

She walks me through sound-based and video installation works, media I had only seen visiting collectors in Puerto Rico. We passed research-based work, papers, and small objects in a vitrine, with the documentation about the work next to it, for those who want to know more. I wondered what made her continue to buy art.

'I kept going to museums, galleries, befriended emerging artists, and went to their studios. I related to it on an emotional level first. I got drawn in by esthetics, colors, forms, light, lines, material, structure, textures, fragility, or sound.

'I often had no clue what it was or why the artist made it. But, I was still touched by it. I started reading more about art and listened to the conversations of other people in galleries and museums and pretended I was looking at a work.'

She laughs at the memory. As we walk through her home and see more and more work, I wonder how she developed her knowledge about art over the years.

'I returned to my island after my studies and made a career in middle management. I traveled all over the world for work. On the planes, I read magazines and books. I went to art fairs if one happened to be in town and kept going to museums, galleries, and lots of artist studios. I love the conversations in the studios. I learn so much, not only about art, but about all kinds of subjects that artists are interested in and make works about.'

I love the art she has collected: drawings, minimalistic paintings and ceramics, a free-hanging warm, colorful textile. Sculpture, fragile small objects on some of the bookshelves, a neon light work, a piece on the garage wall done by a well-known graffiti writer she is friends with. Designed wallpaper in one of the guestrooms, an interactive sound piece in one of the hallways, and some small bio-artworks. I'm blown away.

She explains,

'I do not have the unlimited resources many think you need to become a collector. As I realized with my bold first acquisition, galleries allow you to do monthly payments to buy works. Traveling and meeting different people and cultures has enriched me. It is important to me to include our artists from the Caribbean in the same global dialogue I have personally enjoyed participating in.'

I feel her love and passion for the art. The few works by art market stars could give her a killer return-on-investment. This could be an incentive for readers with little means to start collecting. She laughs and shakes her head when I point out she will have no financial worries when she retires.

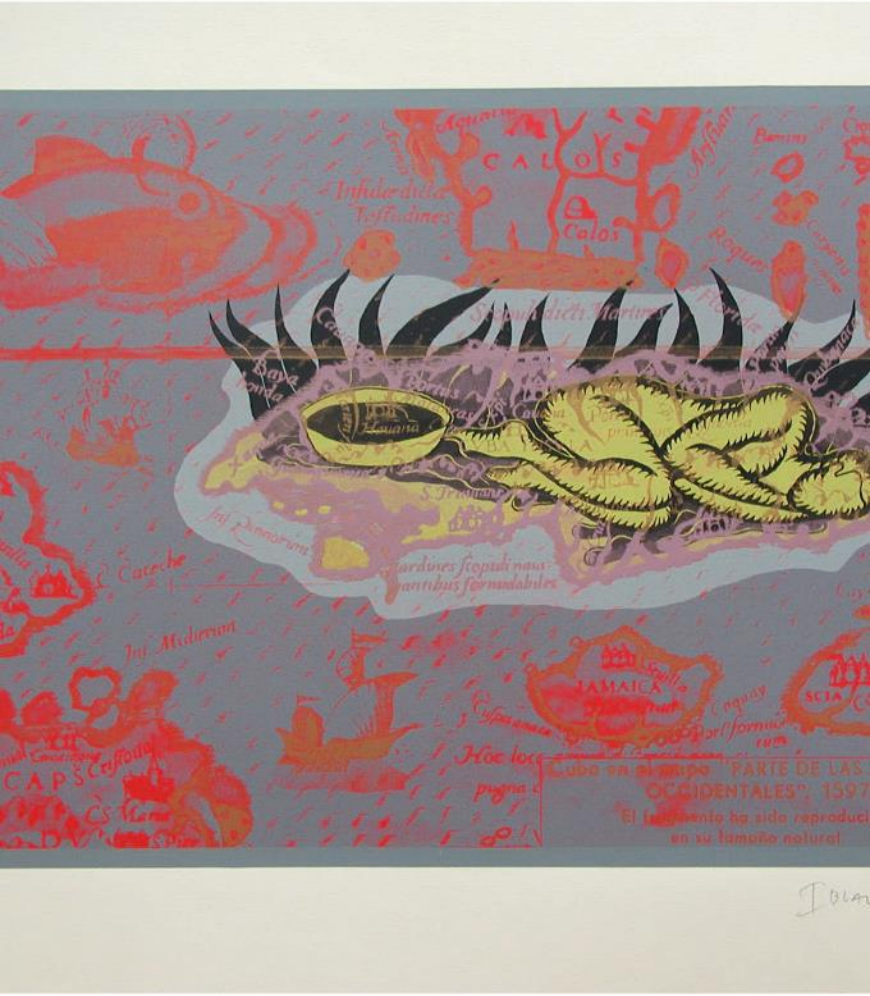
'I love art. I care zero about its financial value,' she says. 'I am sixty now and almost retired. I am, however, fine with my current salary and upcoming retirement. Aside from spending money on art and travel, I live

modestly and will be fine. I will never sell any of it. The fulfillment I get from my collection is all I need.'

I wonder what her opinion is on the state of contemporary art in the Caribbean. Is she at all interested in how the art community develops in the Caribbean, in art education, governmental policies and financial support, etc.? She smiles and says,

'I see more interest in the arts in the region, as well as more interest from international curators in artists from the Caribbean. I am happy to see that my love for art is shared by others. In all honestly, collecting art is a personal activity to me. I don't feel the need to be involved in other ways or actively participate in the discourse on contemporary art.'

I understand how she feels, but it shows me the difficulties the art community faces in finding allies beyond their colleagues. It is already hard for artists to break out of the Caribbean. If not with the help of people like Mrs. Jones, who value art, how can the art community even break out of its isolation?



Ibrahim Miranda

Cuba

La Isla dormida, Serigrafía. 39.5 x 57 cm. No disponible, 2002.

© Photo courtesy of artist

Mike Walsh

US Virgin Islands

Herd, Carbon Steel 25'x20'x4'

John Beadle

The Bahamas

Mobile Housing Scheme, Cardboard, wood aluminum, 2012

Patricia Castillo(Patutus)

Dominican Republic

Noria Soñolienta. Instalatión, thread and wood, 2021

© Photo courtesy Colaboración Española and artist

#5

PROJECT SPACES/RESIDENCIES

'Call me when you land, and I'll come to pick you up,' says Michy Marxuach, a veteran creative producer and curator of avant-garde art projects. She offered to host me in Puerto Rico for a month after hearing about my research from Yona Backer, an art consultant from New York and a mutual friend. We all met at a Tilting Axis conference at Centre de Leon in Santiago, Dominican Republic.

I traveled to Puerto Rico from Curacao and transferred in St. Maarten for a heart-dropping ride in a small plane, in the seat right behind the pilot. He steadily flew us, zig-zagging to avoid dark clouds, and their accompanying thunder and lightning, to San Juan Airport. Puerto Rico is an overseas territory of the USA. Close to the mainland, it is a frequent destination for weekend and midweek getaways to the sun, sea, and beach. With a population of around four million, it is one of the middle-sized islands in the region. Although now part of the USA, Spanish is still its primary language. This is my first visit to the country despite working in the USA for twenty years. Fascinating how and why you end up in some places and never in others.

I communicate with message apps like Signal when I travel, lifesavers for all people on a small budget. However, when I walk into the immigration area and turn on my phone to search for free airport Wi-Fi, no luck. I keep trying in the baggage claim area, customs, the arrival lobby, but no Wi-Fi. Shit! Outside, at the curb, a traveler who lives in Puerto Rico, notices my despair and explains that there are still problems with Wi-Fi, phones, and the internet because of hurricanes Irma and Maria. I decide not to wait for Marxuach to pick me up, it makes more sense to jump in a cab to go to the residency. When I ask the driver how things are one year after the hurricanes, he rapidly starts talking a mix of English with a majority of Spanish, a language I do not speak. Judged by the frustration on his face and irritation in his voice, limited Wi-Fi and phone access is only the tip of the iceberg. I look out of the window at a world of concrete, zinc roofs and blue tar until I spot the ocean to my right and the district of Old San Juan on my left. We drive into its narrow streets with high stoops on both sides. The car stops, and I get out of the vehicle.

I look around and take a deep breath. A new city, a new home. Here I am. The streets are empty with abandoned road work equipment. The only sound is of the wheels of my suitcase on the cobblestones. I wonder if the people behind the closed shutters are as annoyed by that sound as I am by the constant flow of tourists rolling their suitcases underneath my window when I am in Amsterdam. As always, my curiosity gets the better of me, and as I walk, I peek through the iron bars of the gates I pass to see tiled paths and lush green

courtyards leading to the worn-out blue-grey stone steps of the buildings different floors. I'm reminded of Granada in Spain and Havana in Cuba. These few blocks, walking downhill from the seaside, seem to be the homes and the small businesses of residents that have not yet been taken over by gentrification and tourists. I will find out that the walls of these stately buildings with their abundance of balconies and colored facades, are thick enough to not only keep the heat out, but to block most sound, as well.

'Welcome to The Room. I hope you will enjoy your time here,' Marxuach—thin, just over five feet tall and dressed fashionably with cool vintage glasses—says, as she opens the street door to a studio space. The Room is a studio space I will be staying for a month. It is run by Marxuach, her sister Matilsha, an eco-designer who has a shop around the corner, and Jorge González, an artist who draws inspiration from vernacular traditions, modern architecture, and Taíno (the first peoples to settle in Puerto Rico) art and crafts. It was love at first sight. A comfortable bed covered by a quilt Matilsha made, a floor mat of woven palm tree leaves by González in front of it, and a bookcase filled with art books and magazines. A two-burner stove, a small fridge and essential kitchen gear. A table with a vase of edible flowers atop and four chairs around it, and a big comfy chair to relax into. Small, simple, and practical, precisely the way I like to live. There was a toilet, a shower, a dresser, and space to hang my clothes behind a suspension wall and curtains. I rolled my suitcase in, unpacked, and took a shower.

Organization and governance are essential principles for sustainability and longevity. The smaller organizations I visit and know in the region are less formal than museums and larger art institutions. The fear is they will not last beyond the involvement and passion of their founders. In truth, the same is true for small organizations outside the region, too. Often alternative independent organizations open doors for emerging artists to the art professionals and institutions in the international networks of the founding artists. Their reach and influence have grown substantially, especially now, with the availability of the internet and new technologies. Amongst international scholars, interest in the region has increased through artists working in the international art community, inviting scholars to residencies organized by their small organizations back home. As a result, invited scholars and artists spread the word about their experiences and encounters in the rich landscape of Caribbean art, in academic publications and articles appearing in *The Guardian, The New York Times* and e-zines such as *Hyperallergic* and *Trendbeheer*.

Smaller organizations seem to be much more relevant, current and vibrant than the established larger institutions. It is easier to self-reflect, adjust and change within the independence and flexibility of a smaller organization. In this

chapter, I have limited myself to those project spaces, often artist-led initiatives, which also offer residency facilities. All residency programs in the region, as well as project spaces without residencies, are listed in the chapter contact information.

WHAT IS AN ART RESIDENCY?

An art residency invites artists (talent), art professionals (facilitators), and scholars (academics) to their location. Art residency is the transcending term. One can be an artist-in-residency, a curator-in-residency, a writer-in-residency, composer-in-residency, etc., depending on what the residency focus is.

HOW TO APPLY FOR A RESIDENCY?

It is crucial to find the right fit for you and your practice. There are several online databases of residencies worldwide and their criteria are listed in the chapter contact information. Research the residency's vision and what they offer. Also make sure to check the bios and CVs of the residents that have already attended the residency. This will give you insight into what kind of artists (phase of the project, media, genre, career level, age, etc.) this residency is interested in and is likely to select. Secondly, determine what is financially possible for you. Residencies range from fully funded – where all your costs are paid and you receive a stipend – to ones where you have to pay (or find your own funding) for the value of being in a community of artists to network, and have access to relevant facilities and resources. Various options express the range between the two. For instance, you might pay your own travel but have free accommodation and a studio.

Once you have figured out which residencies you are eligible for and can afford, think about your project, and what you need for your project. A checklist might be:

- Environment: rural area, a big city, university town, specific country, or...?
- Language spoken
- Research, available resources: library, archives, etc.
- Network building
- Critical Feedback
- Studio space
- Equipment
- Facilities for the production of your project: for example, work studio (size/height), ceramic oven, woodshop, or print facilities, etc.

- Do you need mentorship or guidance with the facilities?
- Privacy, do you want a residency by yourself or one with others?
- Accommodation: Wi-Fi, kitchen, allowed to bring partner, pets, children, etc.
- Are you okay to share accommodation and facilities or not?
- Partnerships, collaborations
- Does the residency require anything of the residents? For example, some residencies want you to teach, do work in their community, or want you to donate a piece of work (either made during the residency or already made), etc.

Explaining the connection between what you need and what a residency offers, as well as what you want to achieve by going to the specific residency you are applying to, is an essential part of your application proposal. As is explaining why attending is crucial at this particular time in your career or work process. Explain the relevance of this specific residency program or location to your project. A one-fits-all, generic proposal that you send out to various residencies is likely to be tossed out.

If you are rejected, do not be discouraged and keep applying! Similar to applying for funding there is a period where you apply to lots of residencies and do not get in...and then it changes. Residencies and funders alike want you to demonstrate your interest over time and also to see growth in your work and CV, you need to build a track record.

RESIDENCY OPPORTUNITIES IN THE REGION

Artists in the Caribbean feel the urgency for growth and development. This is why they start small art collectives with residency opportunities. Being part of such a collective makes it possible to either invite or go to residencies themselves to meet other artists and art professionals outside their small arts communities. In these settings, the work and practice are investigated. With it, artists are challenged and able to come to new and progressive insights about their practice. Regional residencies are a win-win situation as both the host and the resident experience connection and a decrease in isolation.

In this chapter, I have limited myself to examples of organizations offering residencies addressing the most critical subjects:

- urgency
- sustainability
- the importance of collaboration

Two organizations I write about have been in existence for over a decade. One is an example of a funded organization: Beta-Local (Puerto Rico), the other: Alice Yard (Trinidad & Tobago), has no funding. NLS Kingston (Jamaica) is an example of a next-generation organization. Caribbean Linked, is a summer residency program that was in its fifth edition when I visited in 2018, initiated by Ateliers'89 (Aruba) in collaboration with other organizations in the region. They have extensive websites that explain, in detail, what their programs are and who their past residents and projects have been. I have been particularly interested in the people behind these current initiatives. I want to know why and how the projects began and what drives these founders.

BETA-LOCAL, PUERTO RICO

In San Juan, my host Marxuach is one of the founding directors of Beta-Local. In the book, *Art Cities of the Future: 21st Century Avant-Gardes*, the writer Pablo Leon de la Barra, a curator at the Guggenheim in New York and Niteroi Museum in Rio de Janeiro, points out that,

> 'It's impossible to write about Puerto Rico's contemporary art scene without recognizing the immense contribution of Michy Marxuach, who has been the driving force behind the island's avant-garde, especially in rethinking real possibilities for art's impact.'

Marxuach started M&M Proyectos in 1998. As part of M&M Proyectos, she developed the Puerto Rico 2000, 2002, and 2004 biennials which sought new ways for artists to engage within the context of Puerto Rico. As *Art Cities* points out,

> 'By establishing a network among participating artists, the PR biennials helped to break down artistic isolation in Puerto Rico, not only through international exposure but also by making the younger generation aware of its potential to develop projects despite infrastructural limitations.'

I asked Marxuach to show me the biennials' publications. I agree with La Barra. I can see the intensity, urgency, and quality of the work. I ask her why she stopped after three editions, and she explains:

> 'We managed to get the conversation beyond our own conversation, but by 2004 it felt like nobody cared. After five years of pushing forward, trying to change things, and get more support, politically, for this kind of work and artists, we became frustrated. It was said that I only support some kinds of artists and not others. There is still a colonial mentality in small spaces and places. There are all these ghosts of colonial history. I came to the point where I felt I could not do it anymore.'

Marxuach withdrew from working in the art community in 2004 and started working with her husband, Fernando Lloveras. He is the executive director of the Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico, a not-for-profit that preserves the natural resources, ecologically important areas, and the treasured historical locations of Puerto Rico. It is an organization that fights the influx of foreign investors scooping up significant real estate, especially since hurricanes Irma and Maria hit the island in September, 2017. However, the blood creeps where it can't go. Five years after leaving the art world, Marxuach returned.

In 2009, Marxuach launched the non-profit organization Beta-Local with

video artist Beatrice Santiago Muñoz, whose work combines aspects of ethnography and theater, and touch on subjects such as anarchist communities, the relationship between artwork and work; and conceptual artist Tony Cruz Pabon, known for his drawings and installations. Beta-Local is a non-profit organization in old San Juan dedicated to supporting and promoting aesthetic thought and practices. It offers various programs that intertwine and constantly feed off each other. La Práctica, a nine-month program for artists and other cultural agents, is an interdisciplinary program of research and cultural production committed to imagining new conditions, relationships and positions from which to produce and share knowledge.

The Harbor, a residency program through which artists, curators, thinkers, and other makers live onsite, work with the participants of Beta-Local programs, develop projects or workshops, and offer lectures. And a third program La Ivan Illich, an experimental pedagogical platform through which anyone can propose a class, workshop, conference, encounter, study group, or any other knowledge exchange.

In all of my conversations with artists in Puerto Rico, each mentioned Beta-Local as instrumental in supporting the development of the island's next generation of artists. I was curious about how the Beta-Local group started and their ideas on organization and governing. In one of our conversations, Marxuach explains,

> 'Beta-Local leadership is done by three people. We made that choice through discussing how an organization starts with the vision of the founders and identifies with the founders. We wanted to avoid this as in our view it makes it really hard for the organization if the founder cannot do without the organization and vice versa'.

Founder Syndrome, in which founders are not able to pass on their leadership to a next person, is problematic. I find it everywhere I visit during my research. I wonder how Beta-Local tackles this. Marxuach explained,

> 'To avoid the founders syndrome trap, we decided we each have to leave the organization within five to ten years but not at the same time. We each left two years apart from each other and each person was replaced by a new person who could bring in new ideas while being supported by the experience of two colleagues. We have to see if it works or not. An experimental raw space has to navigate different waves.'

She gives me an apologetic look, picking up her phone to answer a call from her daughter. Thinking about our conversation, I am reminded of other organizations I have visited in the region. More often than not, they are driven by the specific,

temporary urgency of one person. Once the urgency or the person disappears, so does the organization.

I wonder if Beta-Local has a plan for the future and how they got this far, and ask Marxuach after she hangs up the phone. She explains,

> 'As individuals, we have experience, I with M&M Projects and the others as international artists, but we were new as an organization. There are different types of organizations and methodologies. The one we created was organic for personal and economic reasons. We got paid from the start. We didn't want to create an organization that was based on the exploitation of its workers. A healthy organization needs funds and we started to apply for funding in Puerto Rico and in the USA. To obtain funding for an experimental space is very hard. Even with experience, it is hard to stay true to your mission and methodology because of funding criteria or demands in the market. We kept applying for funding and regardless of if and how much we got, we executed projects building a resume over the years. We believed that you will somehow get funding if you have a good project and work hard. Obviously, the more you do, the more you have to show for your work. That makes a difference. Now foundations have more trust in what we do and how we do it. Over the past ten years we slowly but steadily were awarded more funding to the point that now the current directors all have a base salary.'

It looks like the founders of Beta-Local found a way to defy the founder syndrome. I ask Marxuach if the change of leadership is working out in the way they envisioned. She says,

> 'Time will tell whether it works out or not, we now have three new directors. Beta-Local has relocated to another building that is not attached to me and is going through a change. It was able to host artists after the hurricane. Beta-Local as an organization now has a ten-year history of running programs rigorously and has fundraised and demonstrated all the aspects of organizational responsibility. It is known and trusted by foundations and could organize funding for the art community after the hurricane coming in.'

I met with the three new directors, in the new location, and participated in public events in San Juan. Beta-Local has a small devoted group of supporters and funders, is very active in the community and the community is very present in its support of Beta-Local. In my conversations with the three new directors, they addressed the change the organization is going through. They are evaluating the structures put in place by its founders and what the current needs of the

Jorge González Santos

Puerto Rico

A Few In Many Places, curated by Mari Spirito and Abhijan Toto, is a multi-city group exhibition which addresses on-going collapses and cycles of violence, through various forms of collectivity. Taking place in Seoul, Bangkok, Istanbul, New York, Santurce, and Guatemala City, all of these interventions use sustainable exhibition-making models of reducing exploitation (of natural resources, labor and knowledge) and consumption (no shipping or flying). Each chapter is site-responsive while speaking across the regions and produced in a format that allows for forms of engagement under various conditions of lockdowns or other contingent situations. In Santurce (Puerto Rico), González built a site-specific installation in his studio entitled *Bateyes del Chibal* that merges various aspects of his practice. Walls of locally harvested and woven plant fibers act as backdrop to a wooden altar in the shape of a pyramid that is a central aspect of the Rosario Cantao tradition and ceremony.

Bateyes del Chibal, site specific installation, 2021

organization are. I continued, following Beta-Local's activities from afar. It is encouraging to see that even as a worldwide pandemic raged, Beta-Local is still very much alive and kicking.

ALICE YARD, TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

After arriving at the Piarco airport at a god-forsaken early hour in the morning, it was a 45-minute drive over a highway through the island's countryside to Port of Spain. After arriving in the city, we drove into the Woodbrook neighborhood, a former sugar estate. We pass the Savanah, a vast 110-hectare public open space. It is where the Grand Stand is, the main carnival and steel pan competition location. I see lots of people, young and old, by themselves or in groups, walking, jogging, and stretching at this early morning hour. I see colonial houses with shuttered windows, big verandas, and ornaments on their overhanging roofs and around the windows, doors, and porches. The British influence is evident in the colonial architecture that is exactly like that I have seen visiting other countries in the Caribbean, as well as Australia, Kenya, Singapore, and parts of the USA. Passing a park, we turn into a small street. We park in front of an iron gate with a small green sign that says Alice Yard next to it.

Alice Yard is a project space that has residency facilities. My first ever residency was in Alice Yard in 2011. I am happy to be invited back during my research in the Caribbean. Alice Yard was founded by architect Sean Leonard, artist/curator/writer Christopher Cozier, and writer/editor Nicholas Laughlin in 2008. Alice Yard is housed on Leonard's family property. Rolling my suitcase in past the main house, there is the Yard with a small stage with a white wall behind it, three modern cube-like spaces, and the fourth space with a rooftop. Apart from the residency studio—with a bed, a desk, a small kitchen, and a bathroom—there are two gallery spaces and a music rehearsal space.

Artists and art professionals frequently pass by and use the Yard as a meeting space or just pop by and hang out with me, as I understand they do with other residents. My evenings in the residency space at Alice Yard are given a soundtrack by various bands, from hard rock to reggae, and everything in between, practicing in the music space in the Yard. The music stops at 10PM. I have drinks with local musicians and their friends or sit, drink rum, and smoke a cigarette with the music room coordinator until he locks up and goes home.

Alice Yard is a contemporary art project space, network, and residency program hosting artists, curators, and other art professionals. Over the past 10+ years, Alice Yard has hosted emerging and established, local and international artists, critical writers, scholars, and curators who have come from small, obscure spaces to renowned institutions such as the MOMA and Tate. Alice Yard's vision is very similar to Beta-Local's, but its organization is different. Alice Yard does not apply for funding. The people who run it do not get paid. There is no formal structure, and there is no application process to work or be in residency there. Everyone comes by invitation (and conversation) only.

Both Alice Yard and Beta Local have received high acclaim from the international art community and have managed to exist for over ten years. They both have increased visibility and global access that has benefited their local and regional art community. Alice Yard is one of the international art collectives selected to participate in Documenta 15 (2022). Earlier in this chapter, Pablo Leon de la Barra said, 'It is impossible to write about Puerto Rico's contemporary art scene without recognizing the immense contribution of Michy Marxuach.'

To me, it is equally impossible to write about the contemporary art scene in Trinidad without recognizing Christopher Cozier and Alice Yard's equal contribution and driving force.

Architect Sean Leonard initiated Alice Yard by deciding to utilize the physical space available to him. His own architecture office is within walking distance from Alice Yard. In my first residency, I often walked to this workplace at the end of the day, and we had dinner together. Leonard is a quiet, private person, operating behind the scenes more than in the foreground. Still, going around town with him, I did notice that everybody knows him. A short tiny man with glasses, his long dreads always in a ponytail, Leonard transforms over dinner when he talks about Alice Yard. His face lights up, and his body visibly changes as if his passion for the space radiates from the pores of his skin. I can see why Alice Yard exists.

I ask him why he, as a full-time practicing architect, wanted to connect with the contemporary and avant-garde art community in Trinidad. Everybody in the art community seems to know him. Sean laughs and says,

> 'It was vicinity and use, I had the Yard as an available space that I wanted to be used by people. The Yard is around the corner from my office. I had different kinds of relationships with different kinds of people. Artists, musicians, writers. I had this idea of the space actually operating as a kind of a Mas Camp without being one per se.'

Mas is short for masquerade. Masqueraders, dress up in costumes and parade through the streets on Carnival Day. Traditionally, a Mas Camp is the home base of a Mas band – the collective of people creating what will be presented during the carnival: costumes, floats, music, choreography, etc. Alice was Sean's great-grandmother, and while she lived on the property, the Yard was operated as a Mas Camp. On the passing of the previous generations of family members, the main house in the front of the Yard was rented out, and the rental income was used to make sure it did not fall apart. But the Yard was not being used. Leonard continues,

> 'Mas Camp is not only about building costumes for the street parade. What is nice about a Mas Camp is its tightness. You really come together

as a family for two or three months, and after Carnival, you go your separate ways. But when you come together, everybody knows exactly what they are doing, why they are doing it, how they should do it, and how to negotiate each other's productive space in that moment. That's the rhythm of the Mas Camp. I began to imagine Alice Yard as a conceptual Mas Camp that continued for twelve months out of the year, instead of for two/three months. I was interested in connecting with other creative parties that were not involved in Mas production. As an architect, I wanted to work more in three dimensions. I wanted to collaborate with other people to experiment with what I do in architecture and invite other creative people. I thought this would be the space where I could do that. A space with the energy of a Mas Camp but linked to my own practice.'

When our plates of food arrive, I ask him how he envisioned this would influence his own practice. He explained,

'I hoped it would help me have conversations about what was happening in architecture. Use this as a way to get together with different artists and starting to work together. Lots of Mas Camps extend to, or emerge from, yards. I realized that was really interesting. The notion of the main house spatially is not an important thing. It was always about the Yard and the close relationship between those two kinds of environments. As an architect, I was interested in the proximity to domesticity. A yard is a space where people live, but it is also a space where people create and work. Exploring what an urban Caribbean space was, is, and could be. It was essential to have an element of domesticity linked to the Yard – that somebody should be living in the space, and that there would be that constant juxtaposition. You have to negotiate the space with the people who are living there. I thought that was very important, that hasn't really happened in the Yard as we ended up having an organic café in the main house. But that is another level I find very interesting.'

Alice Yard now is that year-round space for creative experiment, collaboration, and improvisation. It hosts artists' projects, performances, film screenings, readings, discussions, residencies, and other activities of the arts community. It brings together professionals from different disciplines – visual artists, musicians, writers, dancers – and audiences together for informal interaction. Leonard's dream has worked out, but how did it start, and how did he meet Cozier and Laughlin?

Leonard continues,

'I had supported a band, lead by local musician Sheldon Holder, over the years. I invited him to work in the space. That was the musical

component. At the same time, I had a conversation with Christopher Cozier on the visual arts component. I was first introduced in the 80s to Christopher Cozier through his publication on Francisco Cabral and the exhibition, *The Same Plane of Existence*, at the Barbican in London. I studied architecture there and went to see the exhibition. I saw Christopher Cozier's name and was blown away by this fellow Trini. I thought, wow, we do this kind of work of critical writing? Some years later, after my return to Port of Spain, I met him in person through lawyer Ian Benjamin, a childhood acquaintance who is a collector of Chris' work. We interacted through CCA7, an art space founded and run by Charlotte Elias. Through her, I got more connected with Chris as he was involved in that space.'

CCA7 was dissolved in 2007. I only know of it from the stories of others. CCA7 produced Galvanize, an avant-garde art event in 2006 similar to the art events in Puerto Rico by Marxuach. Both Cozier and Laughlin were part of the organizing team, as was painter Peter Doig. Doig had just moved to Trinidad from England. Galvanize was CCA7's final event. Elias had run out of funding and dissolved the organization. The physical space that had housed CCA7 became Doig's atelier. Leonard explains,

'With CCA7 gone, there was all the more reason to have a new physical space. Chris and Nicholas agreed to donate their time and energy to creating this space. My friend, the lawyer Ian Benjamin, who I mentioned before, continues to be a big supporter of contemporary arts. He was also the person who wrote the first check, in support of Alice Yard for purchasing equipment and materials.'

I wondered what kept Leonard fully invested in Alice Yard as a shared space rather than as a source of income for him or his family. He says:

'With Alice Yard, I feel like a kid with a toy. It is not so much about the toy, but about sharing the toy. It's the sharing that brings joy to me and to others. It's a fulfilling way to participate in my community.'

I ask Leonard what he feels was the crucial moment when he knew that what he had set out to do with Alice Yard was really working. He says,

'It was the first invitation for Trinidadian artists to go to a residency in Europe after a curator met with our artists here during a 2011 residency at Alice Yard. I was so happy when this happened because this type of exchange is what it is about. I would not have thought that was possible. Traveling in that direction is always harder.'

I think of the visa and funding problems artists in the region have when they want to travel to Europe or the USA. He continues,

> 'It is about more than offering a space for people to have a free room. An exchange like that happens because through Alice Yard we are simply attending to our circumstance. Otherwise, this wouldn't have happened. Reflecting on all the different parts, this is so lovely. I had not imagined this is what would happen. I thought something would happen, but I didn't know what it would be.'

I ask him what he thought Alice Yard would become when it started? He thinks for a moment and says,

> 'As I said earlier, as an architect, I was supposed to make things in Alice Yard. Still, I haven't made a single thing', and he laughs out loud, 'I'm not even upset about it. Clearly, Alice Yard is supposed to be something else. I believe in my work there are things you can do, but to me, it is more about what you don't know. You can learn, which means you can grow. I'm at a point in my life now where I am more comfortable recognizing that I don't always know what I am doing. Creating means entering a space of not knowing, and this is where I want to be.'

I wonder if he has more dreams for Alice Yard and how the trio works together and continues to be friends. He says,

> 'We've been fortunate from the beginning. Chris is really good at bringing people together and inviting people that do stuff, and he enjoys that. I enjoy it, but I don't know how to do that. He has a solid curatorial trajectory. We have had an incredible roster of visitors.
>
> 'Nicholas is the more organized one. He is really good at logistics, structuring the organization, and communications. He documents all our visitors and events by writing on the website blog. He is also the one that makes sure there are minutes of meetings.
>
> 'I try my best to accommodate both of them. If not physically and with the building, sometimes more creatively or technically. As for funding, we decided to stick to giving space and facilitating those who wanted to participate. If visiting artists or art professionals need more, they need to fundraise themselves. I think us having our own lives and projects apart from Alice Yard helps us to sustain our relationship. We do not depend on each other or on Alice Yard. If anything, Alice Yard adds and enhances what we do for a living.'

Not depending entirely on one thing is essential anywhere. Especially in fragile communities. Personally, I feel that encouraging the artists and art professionals to learn how to find their own funding is also a path to independence. Alice Yard offers different things than what Beta-Local offers. However, one doesn't seem better than the other. They are simply two different ways of creating tools and possibility for the art community that wouldn't be available if they hadn't been created for this purpose.

Since my visit, Alice Yard has moved to another building called Granderson Lab. The Lab has actually been an adjunct space of Alice Yard since 2012. After using his great-grandparents' space for over ten years, its premises have returned to occupation by family members. Granderson Lab occupies an old two-story printshop Leonard bought a few years ago. Alice Yard first used it as a workspace for local artists with the idea that it could potentially provide multiple interactive studio spaces. The Granderson building's ground floor is used as workspace for local artists in different disciplines (like Robert Young, a fashion designer, and Kriston Chen, a young designer and publisher active in the Yard community for years). Chen installed a printing press and began *Toofprints*, a side project exploring contemporary graphic design in a public space. He prints small art publications. He is the founder of Sticks in the Yard, where he educates youth in stilt walking. Both Young and Chen are active in the annual carnival. The first floor was renovated during the 2020 Covid year. As of 2021, the Granderson Lab is the base for all Alice Yard activities, including the residency. Chen is now officially part of the core team of Alice Yard.

NLS KINGSTON, JAMAICA

Both, the founders of Beta-Local and Alice Yard are established art professionals with long careers under their belts. Younger art professionals have followed their lead by starting their own organizations. In Jamaica, artist Deborah Anzinger started New Local Space in Kingston (NLS Kingston), a project space and residency, after her return to Jamaica from the USA where she studied. When she invited me over to see the space, I asked her how it was for her to come back to Jamaica after all these years abroad and why she started the NLS project space and residency? She explained,

> 'When I came back to Jamaica from the USA, I realized my art practice also had to move and shift. I had already been exhibiting in Jamaica but as somebody who was in the USA, primarily for school, I was back in Jamaica all the time, so I was pretty familiar with what was happening here. Not everything, but I had an idea of what was going on. While in the USA, I worked at a nonprofit art space, the District of Columbia Art Center (DCAC), and was part of an art collective. I had an understanding of the role of a nonprofit art space as compared to a commercial art gallery.'

Though I spent most of my time in New York, when I lived in the USA, I went to Washington D.C. occasionally. Talking, Anzinger and I discovered we knew some people and D.C. organizations, in common. She continued,

> 'I could have just set up my studio practice here in Kingston and worked in that way, having informal engagements with other artists. But I was also curious about how my art practice could link with, or think about, ways that art practices hook into a larger community and relate to each other. That was something I had gotten a sense of in D.C. before I came back. After the move, I realized that at that specific time there was really no infrastructural path where artists could be connected outside, or after, art school.'

I am aware that under the leadership of Dr. Veerle Poupeye, author of the book *Caribbean Art, the World of Art* (Thames & Hudson, 1998), the National Biennial in the National Gallery of Jamaica started to include contemporary art and artists. How has this, in her view, contributed to the community in Kingston? Anzinger says,

> 'It has changed the view on contemporary art in Jamaica. However, from experience as an artist participating in these exhibitions, they are really not the moments you have discourse with one another. So I had the idea

Deborah Anzinger

Jamaica

Eye, living plants, acryl, ceramics, 2018

© Photo courtesy of artist

that maybe I could do some of the ins and outs of working on that I had learned in D.C..'

We pull into the driveway of a building on Mountain View Avenue that houses a recording studio her parents started and purchased in the early 80s. Her father stands in front and waves hello to us. From her open window, Anzinger tells him we will be right in, and he walks back inside. When we park and walk toward the building, she continues,

'I grew up working there from age of nine. It is very much part of my family, but all of the building was already in use. I had an idea of what I wanted to do. Funding wasn't really available, but I started thinking of resources, and the thing that came to mind was I can make a website. I went through thinking could I build in the yard then looked at the space closer. I saw a lot of the space being used as storage for stuff that was probably never going to be used again. I also figured I could probably build storage space in the yard which would be less expensive than building an actual exhibition space. Then I could use the garage that was being used as a storage space as New Local Space. That's what I did. I used personal income from work to convert the garage into a small white box, and then I made a website myself.'

We enter the building, and I am introduced to her father, who shows me the recording studio, points to album covers, summarizing what they have done there in the past few decades. He then tells us, with a smile, he has work to do and leaves. While gazing around the studio, Anzinger continues,

'The necessity I felt for discourse translated into doing podcasts and I hosted the podcast episodes on the website. The podcast was doable for me as I could actually record it in the studio. I can pay for post-production and editing and have those done here. NLS programs were very much designed around my available resources, to make things doable and affordable. I get to feed my interests through the guests on the podcast. I do not want to be the interviewer necessarily for the podcast. Having the conversation is what is important, but for now, this works. If you have done any kind of research on the Arts ecosystem, you know there is no funding, there is no granting system here, and there are no private or public grants you can apply to as emerging or mid-career artists. There is the Chase Fund (which provides scholarships to one or two artists per year seeking MFAs abroad), and the Tourism Enhancement Fund.'

We continue to the actual NLS space and enter a small white cube and I ask her what she has been able to do within her own means. While showing me a stack of journals, artists have written during their residencies, she continued,

> 'Exhibitions, podcast, journals of previous residents, that is also a gap I saw when I arrived. I had the opportunity to facilitate discourse and informal kinds of archives. An institution controls the narrative of what is happening, whereas normally, an institution has a narrow, centrally focused scope? Institutions, museums, catch on to discourse after it is already established in a particular way, even contemporary art museums. How can you give space to archive that kind of activity before that point, while it is happening? One of our expectations, though not mandatory, when artists are in residency is to keep a notebook to archive your process. We have no limits on how you will use that. It could be lists, daily notes, transactions, purchases. Other people are more literary, traditional journal, scrapbooking, sketching. The notebooks are as diverse as the artists themselves.'

The notebooks are indeed a mash-up, and I laugh at some of the funny drawings by one of the artists showing observations he made. I wonder if NLS is used continuously and how many residents she receives per year. She explains,

> 'NLS has two international residents per year for nine weeks, and it is used for local artists and projects for the rest of the year. International residents work at NLS, where they have 24-hour access for a residency fee of US$100 a week. Residents can find their own accommodation, or NLS recommends one at walking-distance, a yoga center, which has two guest rooms for rent at an affordable price.'

Since my visit, NLS Kingston was awarded the Next Generation Partner grant (closed for new opportunities) of the Prince Claus Fund for 2019-2021. As part of the NextGen Partnership, NLS has expanded and consolidated its work and now focuses on providing Jamaican artists with work opportunities. NLS introduced a curatorial and art writing fellowship and an international internship rotation program. NLS also added a separate residency space to their existing premises, which allows two to four artists between the ages of 20 and 35 to live and work, simultaneously, in a safe space.

ATELIERS'89/CARIBBEAN LINKED, ARUBA

Ateliers'89 was founded by visual artist Elvis Lopez in Aruba, in 2006. Aruba is a small island with a population of approximately 100,000 people. Aruba is an OST part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and considered a high-income country by the World Bank. At night, standing at the sea near San Nicolas, a town on the southeast of the island, I can actually see the moving lights of cars driving on Venezuela's coastal road across the sea. I've seen Aruba on small square black and white pictures in photo albums. It is an island of gorgeous empty endless white beaches with beautiful, twisted trees leaning to one side. This is not my first time in Aruba. However, I visit the beaches for the first time.

The beaches are located on what is now known as the Gold Coast on the west side of the island. I hop out of the passenger seat of the car and walk up to the beach. After I remove my shoes and I step onto the sand, I gaze at the sea in front of me. I look left and right. As far as my eyes can see, the sand is cluttered with stretchers, parasols, sunbathing people sipping cocktails, volleyball nets, and children running around. I learn the tree I know from the pictures is the native Fofoti tree. They have made way for imported palm trees and hotel chain buildings, leaving no space between them. I see souvenir shops, designer stores, and bars with loud pumping music and karaoke. I take a deep breath. I dislike it so much not even the turquoise sea can seduce this Pisces woman. I return to the car.

Ateliers'89 is located in an old school building in Oranjestad, the Capital, situated between the Gold Cast on the west and San Nicolas on the East. It is within walking distance of the Caribbean Sea. Surrounded by an ample outdoor space with trees, the school has numerous classrooms for workshops, studios, a black box for screenings and presentations, and an office. Next to the main building, there are apartments for international visitors and a gallery space.

Lopez is a performance artist. He also makes installations and sculptures in different media like glass and neon. Alongside his own practice, his passion and urgency are to build a network and platform to serve and grow the contemporary art field in Aruba. He explains,

> 'I no longer see myself as a full-time artist. I want to create a venue that benefits both individuals and the community. My happiness is reaching out and inspiring kids through art. This makes the heart softer and prevents them from getting into trouble. We try to open up a new world to them through visual and performing arts. We give workshops in different disciplines, such as painting, installations, video art, photography, drawing, fashion, theatrical design, ceramics, animation, graphic design, and the history of art.'

Elvis López

Aruba

Cultura Cultura Cultura, performance, mix media, 2008

© Photo by Ryan Oduber/courtesy of artist

Lopez is a significant force in the Aruban art community. His contribution to the contemporary Aruban art community's growth and international visibility, in the past three decades, cannot be denied. Ateliers'89, successfully gives a wide range of young artists the chance to develop themselves in various media and disciplines. We talk about how Ateliers'89 plays a role in linking artists from Aruba to the region and increasing sustainability for the artists. Lopez explains,

> 'In 2012, we organized the exhibition, Aruba Linked, presenting recent work from emerging artists from Aruba and the region. The show not only introduced young talent but also raised the issue of their collective future. In a three-day symposium, various art professionals from the Caribbean, curators, founders of art collectives, and writers were invited to discuss the sustainability of art practices in the region. Another subject was how the art communities in the area could connect more often and more productively with each other. Seeing the need for a regional network for emerging artists, Caribbean Linked was initiated.' I knew of Caribbean Linked and I was curious about it. Lopez said, 'Caribbean Linked is in a few months you should come back. That way, you can experience, first-hand, what bringing together young artists from the different islands does for their art practice. We can put you up. It would be great for all of them to meet you as well and discuss their projects.'

I did go back to Aruba, and to Ateliers'89 that summer to learn more about this project, specifically. Ateliers'89 fundraises for the project. It is a massive fund-raising effort to bring together around 10 emerging artists, a curator, a critical writer, and a temporary staff of five-plus volunteers. Apart from Lopez, who has a permanent fulltime position as Ateliers'89's executive director, everybody involved in Caribbean Linked gets paid for this specific project. The selection of the artists, curator, and writer/critic was made with Annalee Davis visual artist and Fresh Milk founder (Barbados) and Holly Bynoe, chief curator at the National Gallery of the Bahamas and *ARC Magazine* founder/editor in chief. Both Davis and Bynoe were invited to the initial symposium. They are born and raised in the region and have a vast network and knowledge about emerging regional artists. Funding for some of the artists comes from within the Caribbean. For example, Simon Tatum, an emerging artist from the Cayman Islands, was funded by the National Gallery of Cayman Island to participate in Caribbean Linked's Edition IV.

I participated in the last days of Caribbean Linked V, in time to view the exhibition in which artists presented the work they made during the Caribbean Linked V residency. The final projects were at Ateliers'89, and the public art-works were mounted on Caya Grandi (the Main Street). Everyone was on edge,

running around to finish their projects. I went to check out the public installation by Frans Caba (DR), and he explained,

> 'Before this residency I exclusively made drawing's but being exposed to the critical conversations we have here, I made changes in my work in terms of materiality and use of media other than drawing; something I was interested in but never had the courage, time, or space to explore. The dialogue with peers has been priceless, especially the discussions around (often conceptual) work and issues in developing a contemporary art practice while being isolated on an island. It is mind-blowing to be given a chance to fully dedicate yourself to your art. To be free to experiment with media, techniques, material, style, subject, and everything else you have dreamed of.'

This sharing of work and critical conversations has inspired all of them to take risks, work in media that has been outside of their comfort zone, and grow within their practice.

The Caribbean Linked residency has a separate website where all participants blog about their experience during their residency in Aruba, accompanied by pictures. I interviewed alumni of the Caribbean Linked residency during my travels. I asked them how the residency has continued to affect them after they returned home. Simon Tatum (Cayman Islands) explained,

> 'Just going is a huge support to, and recognition of, your work and practice. We are all craving the experience of being able to leave our (often small) island to work within a group of like-minded artists from our own generation. But the spin-off—having a network of peers available to connect with after the residency—I now find is equally supportive. The network built by Caribbean Linked creates a community beyond your island. We continue to dialog through phone, messenger apps, social media, and emails. We support and encourage each other, give feedback on new works, exchange opportunities, and, when possible, visit each other in person. A discourse might not happen around your practice on your own island due to your generation and genre's lack of peers. Critical feedback from other artists in the region has the advantage of being understood within your island context. That is a given for all of us. We don't have to waste time trying to explain our context. We can dive right into the work and know that the person we are talking with will come up with ideas and solutions that fit the context.'

Other alumni of the summer residency all tell me they have had the same experience. I can see that this stay in Aruba has removed some of the obstacles to

accessing resources and receiving critical feedback from peers. For me, hearing of all the Caribbean Linked alumni's experiences underlined the power of artist-led initiatives. Who knows the needs of artists better than artists themselves?

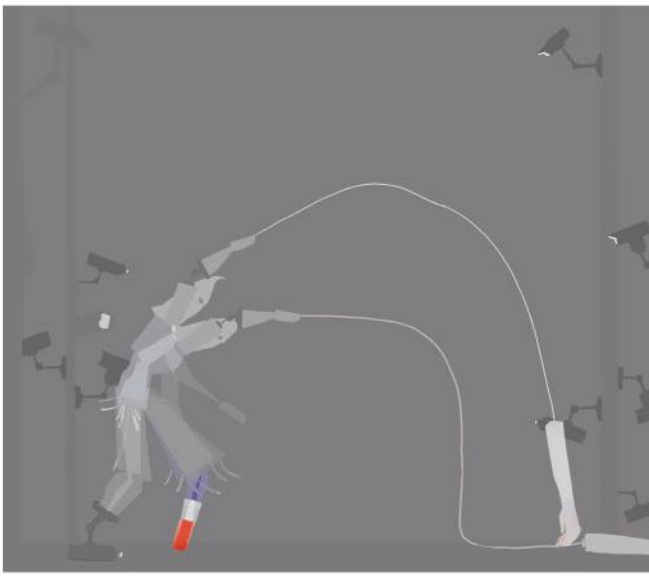
The alternative spaces, often artist-led organizations, and their residencies are crucial to art communities. They offer a safe space to connect, have critical discussions, give space to exhibit work and invite artists and art professionals from other countries to connect with their community. This, in turn, gives those artists who don't have the budget to travel, access to a wider network.

Kaitlyn Elphinstone

Cayman Islands

Braids have been made for thousands of years and for a variety of uses. By the same token, plastic bags can take hundreds of years to decompose. While several commentaries are narrated in the work –time, functionality, conservation and local practices from fishing to hairstyling – it is from its ethereal and ironic quality that the image draws its essential power: the artist magically turns an impurity into pure delicateness and light.

White Plaits, Blue Braids, Digital, 2015



Ruben Cabenda

Suriname

Past to Present, resolution 3656 x2664, animation, 2017

Sibi Busi, resolution 3656 x 2664, animation, 2018

© Photo courtesy of artist

#6

MUSEUMS

Growing up, modern and contemporary art was questioned, rather than explained. It was disregarded, rather than introduced. Back then, I had no arguments to explain why I liked it and kept quiet when people remarked, 'My kid could make this.' I was intrigued by these works. They made me wonder what I was looking at and why was it made?

I finally found my language to speak about art when I went to the retrospective by Kazimir Malevich (1879-1935), a Russian avant-garde artist at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam in 1989. Walking through Malevich's works – his drawings, figurative works and his turn to abstraction – it all fell into place. One drawing or painting leads to another. His, was a process of decades of experimentation and innovation. I saw, and even more, I felt, his fascination, frustration, passion, determination, discipline, and the suffering and the pleasure it brought. I saw his research, experimentation, and the different techniques he learned and worked through. Materialism, styles, light, color, tints, texture, movement, and form. It made complete sense to me that this artist would end with a white painting. How could he not?

Yes, a kid can paint a canvas white. But I would argue that a child's white painting will not make you wonder. It wouldn't represent the research and the process of thought in Malevich's work. It would not impart insight.

I came to love the monochrome 'white artworks' by minimalist abstract artists like Agnes Martin (the USA, 1912-2004), Jo Baer (lives and works in Amsterdam), and Robert Ryman (the USA, 1930-2009). The experience of seeing more than multiple white paintings together held my attention. I enjoyed the differences in structure, brushstroke, texture, and the way the light bounced off the works. It made me wonder whether white is an absence or presence of color. I find both aesthetic pleasure and a peaceful feeling of serenity in the minimalism of all these works.

Where I grew up in the countryside, I had access to books but they often only had black and white pictures, which limited my experience to a world of shades of gray. You cannot sense (smell, touch or taste) anything in a world shown by photography. Photos, even when they show color are flat. They don't give you the experience of texture, materiality, size, or depth. I am reminded of that talking to artists in the Caribbean. Almost all refer to their lack of exposure and access to a wide range of actual artworks as an obstacle. No matter how well or faithful the images are reproduced, in my view, they will never do justice to the artwork and its meaning. I would have never have 'gotten' Malevich's practice, if I hadn't had the experience of seeing the actual artworks, within a

contextualized retrospective of his practice.

As I travel, I learn that all of the islands I visit do have museums, regardless of the size of the island or its available budget. The museums share similar problems: content, audience, organization, funding, aesthetics, vision, and the lack of enough art professionals to employ, that I will address. They all work to overcome different circumstances.

CONTENT

Museum content is often national or regional at most. Audiences have minimal exposure to artists creating beyond their borders. Most museums I visited, did not meet the regulations and criteria for security, insurance, and climate (temperature and humidity in the building) required to exhibit internationally renowned artworks.

AUDIENCE

According to the International Museum Association,

> 'A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.'

Historically museums served their communities. With tourism increasing in the Caribbean, the museum audience has expanded beyond the local community. Museums on small islands – especially those with fragile economies – have increased their marketing to tourists over the last few decades, recognizing the financial imperative to make money. In order to grow these new audiences, museums survey visitors, the result revealing a large interest in folklore and crafts.

While museums are increasingly targeting tourists in order to be economically self-sustaining, contemporary artists are stepping into the gap to serve their communities. They are opening up their individual studios to the public and organizing small artist-led initiatives and project spaces. Visitors and tourists looking for this specific aesthetic are increasingly finding their way to these smaller spaces.

AESTHETICS

The foundations of the majority of the museums in the Caribbean are historical, colonial, ethnographical, anthropological, or archival. Contemporary art is presented as an afterthought. As I mentioned earlier, this is problematic in terms of aesthetics. Contemporary Art needs to be curated by someone who is knowledgeable about the genre and who selects artists and artworks that can be brought together to create a narrative. Contemporary Art also has to be contextualized differently from historical or archival objects to rise to its full potential. Another problem is the lack of modern installation tools and techniques, experienced installation experts, and equipment specifically for new media and digital artworks.

ORGANIZATION AND FUNDING

Public museum organization structures continue to express their hierarchic and bureaucratic inheritance from colonial times. Too often, most museum board members and management are Caribbean white people, completely or predominantly, of European descent. Michiru Ito, a scholar in the fields of Decolonized History, and Caribbean and Racial Studies, is producing valuable insights in her ongoing research (see, recommended publications) into what it means to be white in black majority populations in the Caribbean. Most importantly, her work reveals that a sense of colonial superiority endures, rooted in the minds of some white people, even though younger generations try to deny the existence of their white privilege.

In the Caribbean, museums are subject to politics. Only private museums, established and endowed by wealthy citizens to house (part of) their collection are immune. At national museums, the appointments of directors are often linked to political parties, changing after each election. Existing institutions may be defunded, and their budget redirected elsewhere. In this case, the museum tries to survive by presenting any artworks it owns (its permanent collection). They continue with no staff to speak of, except the person selling the tickets who opens and closes the museum. In Europe and the USA, there is a longstanding core infrastructure for the arts and culture funded by its governments. Arts institutions are considered to be part of the national patrimony, not subject to politics. They are civil society institutions the way schools are, so their positioning protects them. Even when changes happen in national policy for the arts, the impact is usually only felt by small non-profits that do not have a place in the public imagination.

NATIONAL VISION

In recently independent small countries, there is no existing core infrastructure for the arts. Like the lack of transport infrastructure on and between islands, colonizing countries did not develop the islands' arts and culture infrastructure because colonizers were only interested in free labor and resources and disregarded any notion of culture in their colonized communities. Transcendant long-term visions and follow-up master plans are created by governments but often don't get realized. There is a lack of building an art community, and a lack of effort to cultivate an invested audience. After elections, ideas change, and the work starts all over again. Even professionals with permanent jobs who began with great enthusiasm and determination end up demotivated.

EDUCATED AND EXPERIENCED ART PROFESSIONALS

Another problem, particularly on small islands with populations of less than 250,000, is the dearth of art professionals. There are not enough art spaces and institutions, public or private, which differ in size and importance to develop experience and build a meaningful career and CV. Without this infrastructure, how can anyone start a career after studying museology, art history, or curatorial practice and specialize in contemporary art? How can anyone become an experienced installation expert and keep up to date with modern installing methods if there is no opportunity to use them?

And yet, I did find museums on all the islands I visited. It would be too much to describe them all and their different problems. I have selected a few museums that present contemporary art and either defy or confirm the issues mentioned above.

FUNDACION MUSEO ARUBANO, ARUBA

Fundacion Museo Arubano (FMA) was established in 1993 to preserve and promote Aruba's natural and cultural heritage. It intends to present that heritage in five museums. The exhibitions in Fort Zoutman (the Historical Museum), in Oranjestad, cover early twentieth century history. I was invited to the weekly (every Tuesday) Bon Bini Festival by FMA chief curator Renwick Heronimo. The festival features folkloric dance, music, and songs and includes an audience participation element for visiting tourists. The festival makes visible the contradictions in celebrating colonial times performed by present-day people in primary-colored Spanish dresses, dancing the Waltz. Worldwide, audiences are demanding space to talk about, and present, heritage in different ways.

In the past decade, there have been ongoing conversations in Europe and the USA to address issues of white supremacy, privilege and the eurocentric gaze that have made these topics unavoidable in the society at large. These concerns have been part of the fabric of the Caribbean for centuries. While current conversations on the islands consider these issues in relation to the Caribbean's white population, tourists and visitors from Europe and the USA, the Bon Bini festival makes me wonder about the spaces available to tell new and current stories, as well as existing stories from other perspectives. Also, how can contemporary artists play a role in this?

Heronimo picks me up the next day to show me the Museum of Industry, in San Nicolas, also part of the FMA. The museum is located in a gorgeous renovated Art Deco water tower dating from 1939. He explains,

> 'Change is a slow process. I try to shake things up a little, but I have to go step by step. I wanted to present contemporary exhibition design and the use of modern technology. The multimedia installation includes stories from elders on the island of different ethnicities, and from different social classes: industry owners vs. employees vs. union vs. government – each placed in their context. Where did they or their ancestors migrate to Aruba from, and what was their living environment in Aruba? They each talk about their experiences and their views of their lives and of society at large as it changes, and how the changes in the society influenced different segments of the community. They give insight into Aruba's history and heritage within its industrial sector.'

The aesthetics of the exhibition come as a pleasant surprise after seeing Fort Zoutman. The installation in the tower is current and impressive and fits the space perfectly.

I ask Heronimo why he uses contemporary presentation models, when the

content is still historical, rather than contemporary. He explains,

> 'FMA is a public organization. Aruba has a population of 110K, and tourism is the main income for Aruba. We have around one million visitors annually. Governmental financial support has tourism in mind rather than their community. It is believed tourists want to get to know something about the history and they like folklore. Commissioning a contemporary artist to make work that reflects our history is a way to use the museum as a platform to bring forth the Aruban perspective and narratives. I believe this is still interesting for tourists, but at the same time, it allows us to continue building our audience on the island. Five contemporary artists from Aruba were commissioned to do work for our Community Museum.'

One of the artists is Alydia Wever, who combines art, movement, performance, and poetics. Wever made a permanent installation with objects from, or that made reference to, her family, which she performed at the museum's opening.

Community Museum

Aruba

'As I was sitting on my grandmother's chair, combing out my hair, got up and started moving on a piece of old music composed by Frans Croes, called "Caballito di Shon Alfredo" who brought in 1909 for the first time Carousel horses to the island. He dedicated this to my great grandfather and impresario "Papa Pellicer.'

Alydia Wever, *Peña Saca*, installation, 2018

CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM OF MOENGO (CAMM), SURINAME

The Kibbi Foundation and its Contemporary Art Museum of Moengo (CAMM), in Suriname, are examples of a new museum in the Caribbean that focuses on serving its citizens. It was founded in 2011 by contemporary artist Marcel Pinas. Moengo, located in the Marowijne district of Suriname, is home to half the Maroon population, enslaved people who escaped to the forest and kept their autonomy. The current Maroon population of Suriname is 55,000, 10% of the country's population. Pinas was born and raised in Marowijne and is of Maroon descent.

In a 2013 article for Caribbean Beat magazine, Christopher Cozier (Trinidad & Tobago) wrote:

> 'Pinas's earliest work included a series of large hung or suspended wall assemblages which undermined traditional boundaries between painting and sculpture. These works referenced his Maroon heritage. Their surfaces consisted of large collaged fragments of pangi, the traditional cloth associated with Maroon identity, and inscriptions in Afaka script – named after its inventor, Afaka Atumisi, who in 1910 devised a syllabary of fifty-six characters to write the Ndjuka language. Like Afaka, Pinas is Ndjuka – one of the six Maroon peoples of Suriname – and comes from the Marowijne district in the eastern part of the country. But Pinas's work does not represent Maroon culture in any reductive way. Instead, he is in the process of reconstructing its presence and meaning. It is a very personal concern that takes on broader political commitments. As a contemporary artist, Pinas does not see himself in conflict with tradition. His work is not iconoclastic in any way. His idea of tradition is perpetually in the present tense, already adapting, always anticipating the next step. Within Pinas' practice, a gesture such as opening a locally owned restaurant, or building a small stage for musicians to perform, has to be understood as part of his creative process, artistic vision, and a sense of purpose. His leadership and participation in the rebuilding of Moengo is itself a site-specific artwork. And his installation works, using traditional elements and artifacts of Maroon culture, whether placed in Paramaribo or galleries in Europe, become guided tours – not for cultural display or difference as entertainment, but as sense-based reconstructions of presence and memory. You could say Pinas is blurring the traditional boundary between artist and curator. Each new configuration – each new life given to these altered objects – tells a story of survival, which we all carry or internalize through engaging the work. We become collaborators through what we produce by experiencing the artwork.'

Pinas started the Kibbi Foundation and CAMM, which includes an artist-in-residency program and a sculpture park, to rejuvenate Marowijne's culture and economy. It has a focus on inviting international artists, specifically from Africa and its diaspora. The American industrial company ALCOA (bauxite mining) built Moengo to house their staff. The mines have since closed. The abandoned houses in Moengo are now populated by a Maroon population of 7,000, who relocated from elsewhere in the Marowijne district.

Moengo is a four-hour drive from Paramaribo, Suriname's capital city where half of its people live. Paramaribo is next to the Suriname River. You first have to cross the East-West bridge that connects the city to two districts, Commewijne and Marowijne. I hate bridges, and this bridge is scary as hell. The small two-lane bridge is 55 meters high and has no shoulder. It is so steep that trucks are only allowed to cross it at night when there is no traffic, or accompanied by police. I'm sure the view is incredible. I wouldn't know as my eyes are fixed on the middle of the road whenever I cross the bridge.

The Commewijne district is home to most of Suriname's population of Javanese, Indonesian and Indian descent. These communities came to Suriname as contract workers to work on sugar, cacao, and coffee plantations. The Marowijne district had very few plantations, but there were some, located on the Cotica River. When the colonial archives opened to the public, I found one of my ancestors mentioned as the director of three plantations in Marowijne with a collective total of around three hundred enslaved people. The fertile forest took back the areas where those plantations were once located and they disappeared. And with it, its history in my family. If not for the archives, my documented paternal family tree, and Charl Haarnack, a friend who studies Suriname's colonial archives, I would not have known about it. The archives have only recently been opened to the public, and Haarnack sent me the pages that mentioned my family name.

The main road leads from the bridge, straight to the Marowijne River, the natural border between Suriname and French Guyana. As you drive in Commewijne, the straight road features a string of homes, stores, and tiny restaurants selling saoto soup, bami, nasi, golong golong, roti, bara, phulauri, and masala chicken. The food is a mandatory stop on the way to the Marowijne district for everybody that drives out there. It is yummy! Moving towards Marowijne, the homes and stores disappear. In the last two hours, the scenery becomes a lush sea of greens, to the left and right of the road, as far as the eye can see. The paved road I drive on turns into a dirt road, orange-red because of the bauxite.

In the rainy season, the road becomes mud with potholes filled with water that prevent you from knowing how deep they are. It is why people do not want to make the journey unless they have a big, sturdy four-wheel-drive SUV.

CAMM

Suriname

Installation view works by Marcel Pinas
© Photo by Sasha Dees

On my last visits, it was different. The road had been paved, courtesy of China. But the memory of the journey has not been forgotten by most people living in Paramaribo. They still don't want to go. After two hours of impenetrable green on both sides of the road, there is a sign to go left. The green opens up, and giant art sculptures pop up next to the road. Then, there is a colorful billboard-sized drawing by Sheena Rose from Barbados and a massive wooden Micky Mouse by Wouter Klein Velderman from the Netherlands. Next, there are open fields and a group of large, white painted wooden homes on stilts, and next to the homes, paths with smaller wooden houses on blocks. You have arrived in the world of Marcel Pinas.

Pinas bought the old visitors building used by ALCOA, he uses to accommodate visiting artists and art professionals and another huge building that became CAMM. Pinas is a Ministry of Education employee with the task of developing art education in Marowijne. Visiting artists-in-residence are required to teach two days a week as part of their residency. The Ministry of Education and Culture grants Pinas the use of the old Hospital at no cost. Artists-in-residence use the building as studio space and present their work in dedicated gallery rooms. As ALCOA left Suriname, the company donated 50,000 SRD (Surinamese dollars) to Pinas to equip a music studio. The Dutch Embassy and Prince Claus Fund support the operational costs, and Mondriaanfonds supports the artist-in-residency program.

In *The Visual Life of Social Affliction*, curator writer Nicole Smythe-Johnson (Jamaica) writes,

> 'The Maroon culture's foundation is literal and figurative opacity. They refused admission to existence. They withdrew into the impenetrable forest, creating their languages, customs, and systems of knowledge. The Kibii Foundation is in an agonistic position, then, attempting to establish legitimacy for a way of life that is founded on resistance to the very bases to the modern state (Surinamese and every other): possession and conquest.'

Pinas started with the intent to grow Moengo into the central Creative district in the Caribbean. He succeeded in organizing music activities for his local community. The music festival that takes place every three years pulls over 10,000 visitors from Maroon communities from both his district and neighboring French Guyana. The visual art community in Suriname initially embraced his arts initiative and gives Pinas a lot of support. Over the past ten years, the support has steadily declined, in part because of political changes. Although some of his peers will still attend the opening of the Moengo Visual Art Festival, between festivals they use their time and energy for projects and work in Paramaribo where

the majority of the art community is based. CAMM is entering the danger zone of turning into a ghost museum. The projected regional and international visitors and his goal of having his visual art project spearhead the potential national Orange Economy failed to materialize.

Suriname is one of the world's most impoverished countries and is hardly known. Whenever I mention that I have been to Suriname over the years, people ask me, 'where'? Or, 'Wow, are you traveling to Africa?'

The country is five times the size of the Netherlands but has a small population of only 550,000 people. With the exception of its diaspora, the country has hardly any tourism. Half of the population (250,000) lives in Paramaribo, its majority East Indian and Creole. Although the country praises itself for all its ethnicities living harmoniously together, there is persistent prejudice towards the Maroon community, without a doubt inherited from Dutch colonizers. The Ministry of Education and Culture could help by allocating budget for educational trips for its schools to visit Moengo but hasn't done so. A year after my last visit in 2018, Pinas lost the right to use the hospital building free of charge. The government announced it is planning to reinstate its initial function as a hospital to serve the district. However, in the intervening time, elections have taken place and after two terms, the political leadership has changed again. Pinas is known to be a stubborn, determined man with a relentless urgency. He will fight.

CENTRO LEON & MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Securing support, financial and otherwise, is part of maintaining and developing a museum. Almost all artists and art professionals mention both the Dominican Republic's size as a problem, as well as the fragile economies of most Caribbean countries. The largest three countries in the Caribbean, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti, all have a population of over 10 million, which logically results in each having a more significant art community and a larger audience in the country. Families who have made their fortunes during colonial times and want to give back to their communities through their interest in art are stepping up. I visit the best example of this, the Centro León, in Santiago. Santiago has a population of over a million and is the second largest city in the DR.
Curator Joel Butler Fernández guided me through the Centre. Butler says,

> 'The León Jimenes Family earned their fortune in the tobacco, beverages, and banking industries. They have been art collectors, supporting the arts for decades. They started the Eduardo León Jimenes Art Contest in 1964. Its mission was to promote and develop the visual art community and it has been doing that since its inception. Every year, three winners get a money award and the museum acquires the award-winning works for its collection. There are smaller awards in which winners are given artistic residencies; other awards include a website built for the artist or a publication with essays and critical writing about the artist's work and their practice. At the opening of the first edition of the contest, Eduardo León Asensio, president of Grupo León Jimenes, announced that he envisioned an institution that would exhibit the Group's growing visual arts collection. In 1995, the Eduardo León Jimenes Foundation was founded, presided over by José A. León Asensio. The initial planning of Centro León started in 1999. Centro León is a hybrid museum that includes anthropology, ethnology, history, contemporary art, performing arts and education. The new building stands in the middle of the city. It has been built with up-to-date regulations and the criteria to exhibit artifacts and contemporary art in mind. There is a large exhibition hall with all necessary equipment, a large auditorium, an extensive library, cafeteria, outside areas for sculptures and events, and sufficient parking space.'

I'm amazed by what I see. Centro León is by far the best equipped museum I have seen in the DR, or on any island, for that matter. Despite the DR being a growing economy, being a contemporary artist in the DR is still financially challenging. Most artists and art professionals work and live in Santo Domingo. The city has a population of three million and various platforms presenting

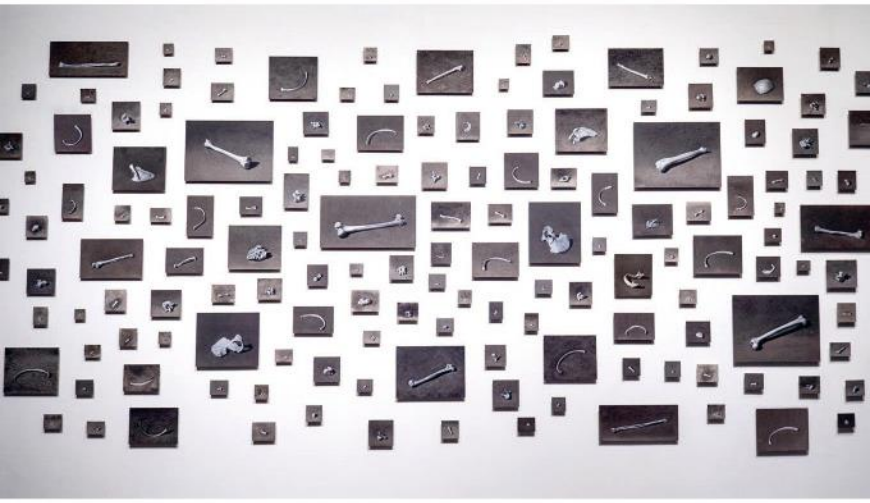
contemporary art. It takes a three or four-hour bus trip to get to Santiago. This makes the Centre challenging to reach for the majority of the professional art community. For artists to take full advantage of structures and systems like a museum, accessibility is the key. However, given the size of the country and of Santiago, I understand the family's choice to put the Centre in their town.

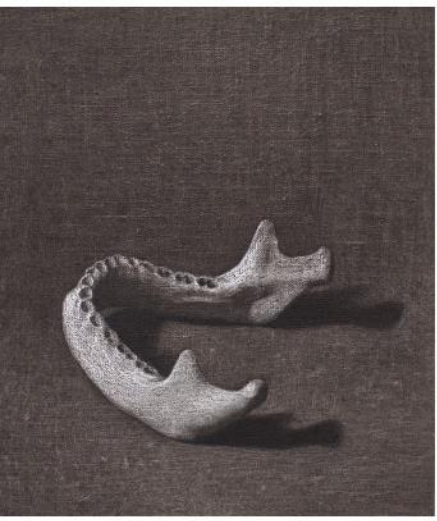
Centro León, in Santiago, serves over a million citizens. Santo Domingo has a municipal infrastructure for the arts and, an audience. Trujillo, the dictator who ruled the Dominican Republic from its independence on February 1930 until his assassination in May 1961, built the art infrastructure. The Palacio de Bellas Artes (Palace of Fine Arts) and the Museum of Modern Art (MAM), presenting contemporary art, are as grand as any temple to art, everywhere in the world. Visiting the museums in Santo Domingo feels like visiting the monumental Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam or any Smithsonian museum in Washington, D.C.

When I visited the Palacio de Bellas Artes, it was raining cats and dogs. Director, Marianne de Tolentino pointed out many places in the museum where water did not just drip, but streamed down the walls. She explained,

> 'It is disheartening. I keep alerting the government, but they tell me to close the parts of the building that are falling apart, as they do not have the budget to allocate for repairs. It is one thing to build, but without financial support for maintenance, programming and, human resources, and equipment and tools to present content, what is the use of a building?'

However, the renovation of the Museum of Modern Art (MAM) shows the country's comprehension of what it needs to grow its Orange Economy. Taking into account the limited budget available, the government had to prioritize and has allocated money to MAM rather than to the Palacio de Bellas Artes. The current pandemic and its economic damage challenge the government and the art communities, putting even more pressure on the country's available national budget.





Fermín Ceballos

Dominican Republic

Remains, acrylic on linen, 300 x 600 cm (variable), 2018

© Photo courtesy of artist

THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF CAYMAN ISLANDS, CAYMAN ISLANDS

I find an example of a well-functioning museum, dedicated to contemporary art on the Cayman Islands. The Cayman Islands has a population of 60,000. It is considered a high-income economy according to the World Bank. Its primary revenue comes from tourism and finance. It is an OST of Britain.

I received an email from Natalie Urquhart, director of The National Gallery of the Cayman Islands (NGCI), founded in 1996. She read an article on my research and wrote to ask me, if I planned to come to Cayman? I did not, but I was happy to change my travel plans after her invitation. Born and raised in Cayman, Urquhart was educated in the UK and worked at the TATE Museum in London before returning to her island.

In my conversations with her, she tells me,

> 'It is easy and attractive to stay in Europe or the USA where you have career opportunities. I wanted to contribute to the arts in my own country. I started as a curator for the NGCI when it was still in a storefront in Georgetown, Grand Cayman. I continued as its director from 2009 and started developing a plan for a purpose-built gallery. After a donation of land to our organization, it became a viable opportunity, and we started fundraising. The Big Art Auction (BAA) initially started in 2011 to help raise funds for the National Gallery Capital Campaign and building project. We hold the event every other year. NGCI raises funds for collections and education while ensuring that participating artists also benefit via a 50/50 split of funds raised from the sale of their work. We moved into the new purpose-built gallery in 2012.'

Urquhart gave me a tour of the land and its buildings. NGCI, like Centro Leon, is a new building, but its size is suitable for Cayman. NGCI is in the vicinity of the Cayman National Cultural Foundation, strategically located. When we drive up, the first thing we see is an enormous blue glass sculpture in front of a modern two-story white building in the middle of more than enough ground for expansion. Urquhart explains,

> 'Glass artist Devin Ebanks made the sculpture. Given his glass practice and the artwork's size, it is economically impossible to come back to the island. We don't have the facilities. He frequently returns but is based in the USA. He is Assistant Professor (Head) of the Glass Program at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. The faculty and staff encourage Ebanks to use all the facilities the University has to offer for his autonomous practice.'

We walked into the exhibition space on the ground floor. Exhibitions are curated by the NGCI staff and guest curators. NGCI also presents exhibitions made in other countries, created to travel outside the institution in which it was originally presented. Exhibitions presenting works from the permanent collection and new acquisitions are on the 2nd floor. Urquhart explained,

> 'A well-developed, publicly accessible permanent collection is the raison d'etre of national art museums across the globe, and at NGCI, we are no different. Since moving to our new facility, NGCI has made collections development a strategic priority. We aim to secure nationally important artworks as they become accessible and ensure the collection's long-term stewardship through careful management, scholarship, and conservation. It is a growing collection of contemporary artworks from Cayman artists with around 250 pieces from the '70s on. Knowing how important documentation is, we published a catalog documenting the works and intent to keep doing so. The first artworks we collected were from the intuitive painter Gladwyn Bush (aka Miss Lassy). One of our latest acquisitions is from the emerging artist Kaitlyn Elphinstone, who works in various media often inspired by the island's nature and climate issues.'

We walked outside and entered an annex to the main exhibition space. NGCI has a separate educational room. Education is at the core of the museum's vision with programs for children, seniors, and mentally & physically challenged participants. It hosts school classes in the museum every week. The annex also has a project space for lectures, panels, film screenings, and third-party rentals. Cayman Island artists can submit a proposal for a solo exhibition there. Furthermore, the annex includes a small café with a big outdoor terrace, a museum store, and an office space with small cubicles where the staff, including its director, work, and a library.

To readers outside the Caribbean, I realize this all sounds like business as usual. The things most museums do, everywhere in the world. But it is considered an anomaly in the Caribbean, certainly on an island the size of Cayman Island. Here, contemporary art is not an add-on to a historical museum in a renovated old colonial building, as I often saw elsewhere. NGCI, in contrast with other island museums, is entirely built and equipped to facilitate the contemporary art, its artists, its art community, and its audience, of the Cayman community, first and foremost. NGCI staff is in continuous conversation with the art community about the museum's vision and plans. It always has its community in mind. It is refreshing to see a female director that just turned 40 with a core staff of five and paid interns. A healthy mixture of ages in the board and a passionate young team contribute to the museum's ability to embed itself in the community and be in tune

Nasaria Suckoo

Cayman Islands

Blue Black, installation, 2021. Presented at 2nd Cayman Islands Biennial

with the new 'trends,' for lack of a better word, in the arts. This museum for contemporary art is not stuffy, formal, or elitist. Neither is it arrogant or indifferent. It is current and vibrant. So are the people working there and its vision and mission. You can feel and see intentionality in everything.

In all fairness, Cayman Island has one of the highest GDPs (Gross Domestic Product) in the Caribbean with, US$44,000 per capita annually. Money is a factor in success but certainly not the only, or the main, one. Passion and love for the arts and the community combined with the knowledge, hard work, and flexibility have been the keys to success.

NGCI owns the museum building and the land. Approximately half of its programming is funded by the government. Private foundations, sponsorships, collaborations, donations, and income cover half of NGCI's budget. In comparison, the Museum of Modern Art, the Palacio de Bellas Artes in the Dominican Republic, and the National Gallery in Jamaica are state-owned. The government appoints its boards and management. Cayman staff has no fully guaranteed government income or benefits. They need to raise part of the money for their salaries. It is an incentive to get to work, present exciting exhibitions and programming, and build a wide network.

NGCI benefits from its flexibility and invests in its community in various ways. NGCI became a soup kitchen and safe place for displaced citizens overnight after hurricane Ivan in 2004. This bought them lots of good will and began an ongoing engagement between the community and NGCI.

As the NGCI staff is young, they will continue to rotate. Millennials tend to change jobs more frequently than previous generations. This guarantees a fresh eye and new knowledge every time a new person comes in but it also costs institutional memory and continuity. Experience and careers for this generation are available in many places and institutions outside the Caribbean offer high salaries and reimbursement for the costs of moving and applications for work visas as an incentive. The rotation of a small staff also brings challenges: how do you make sure you always have a healthy balance of experience and new people? Urquhart explains,

> 'One of the biggest challenges art organizations have is finding qualified employees. How can we avoid members of our minimal team leaving for new opportunities in their careers? We started giving out scholarships and having students return, thus creating an ongoing pool of potential employees. The scholarship program is for talented youth to go overseas for a BFA and MFA. After graduation, those students signed on to come back to the island and work as a(n) (paid) intern for a year, sometimes staying longer if there are vacancies.'

NGCI also reaches out internationally. Urquhart is the Chairman of the Museums Association of the Caribbean. NGCI is a core committee member of Tilting Axis, an annual regional conference in its fourth year. In addition to its educational programs, NGCI supports opportunities for its staff to go abroad. It has also started to invite people from abroad to come to Cayman for short visits and is developing a program to invite and sponsor colleagues from abroad, long-term. NGCI also has a Creative Careers program, mentoring students and emerging artists, and a public speaking series to inform and educate the community about creative workforce opportunities. All this effort has substantially increased the pool of interested, available people who have the qualifications to work in the museum. NGCI works because Cayman Island has a strong economy and its millennial generation can afford to refuse to allow borders to get in the way of their dreams and ambitions. The millennial generation is more fluid than the generations before them – they go and come back, go again, come back again, and don't even think about it. It is not just their island but the Caribbean and the world that is their stomping ground.

INTERNATIONAL MUSEUMS

There is a lack of dedicated contemporary art museums in the Caribbean for all the aforementioned reasons. I wondered where contemporary artists with non-commercial work could go. Are museums outside the Caribbean interested in including artists working in the Caribbean in their exhibitions and collections? I have gone to many museums outside the Caribbean but I have hardly ever seen artwork by artists living and working the Caribbean in general group exhibitions or newly acquired artwork. There are attempts to present work from the Caribbean. Miami Basel Art Fair gives attention to Latin America and the Caribbean. Museum exhibitions such as Infinite Islands curated by Tamelo Mosaka at The Brooklyn Museum; Wrestling with the Image: Caribbean Interventions, curated by Christopher Cozier and Tatiana Flores at the Worldbank in Washington, DC; and Who More Sci-fi Than Us? by curator Nancy Hoffman in KADE Amersfoort, the Netherlands have been trying, with mixed results and reviews to make connections over the past years. The last acclaimed Caribbean show, Relational Undercurrents, (2017 and ongoing) curated by Tatiana Flores for MOLAA in Los Angeles and traveling from NYC to Miami, shows over eighty contemporary artists in an inclusive representation of the Caribbean. That said, none of these museums or galleries are on the level of New York City's Museum of Modern Art (MOMA). More importantly, all these initiatives have a geographical focus. When do we grow out of the need to present artists from the Caribbean in this limited frame?

Polibio Diaz (DR) is a photographer. On his website I read that he is challenging the Greco-Latin aesthetic codes he believes the concept of Dominican beauty is based upon as he documents Dominicans in their day-to-day lives. When I met him at his home studio, he said,

> 'Nobody is interested in artists from the Dominican Republic. No significant economic, natural, or political disasters are happening. My country seems to have the handicap of doing relatively well (it's the most robust economy in the Caribbean and Central America). We have had no devastating earthquakes, and dictator Trujillo was not threatening the liberal capitalist world the way Castro was. The Dominican Republic's art community falls between the cracks and out of our sight.' He looks at me and asks, 'Have you seen Dominican artists in the MOMA or any other significant museums or exhibitions in the past ten years?'

I am silent. Diaz is right. All of a sudden, the world does not seem so global after all, but very segregated. I wonder why we don't see artists from the Caribbean

selected based on their work and themes rather than because of their culture, geographical location or regional issues.

During my studio visit with mid-career artist Fermin Ceballos (DR) he asks me,

> 'Why do curators and critics always expect non-European artists to make statements about culture and identity? Is that asked of Europeans too? After applying for residencies I always get a follow up email asking me to expand and explain how my culture and identity translates in my work. In my practice I investigate concept, form and aesthetics from a general philosophical view. I am interested in how people and objects behave and respond to one another. Did anybody ask the creators of *Rain Room* (a work by Random International a collaborative studio for experimental practice founded in 2005 by Hannes Koch and Florian Ortkrass, exhibited in MOMA in 2013) how culture and identity influences their art work?'

I can only admit to my sincere belief that nobody has ever asked this of the Random International artists. If we are going to ask those types of questions, I think we should either ask them of everyone, or of no one.

In her article for *Bomb Magazine* (January 2003), Robin Greeley, an assistant professor of art history at the University of Connecticut, reviewed Jorge Pineda's work (DR). She wrote,

> 'Jorge Pineda confronts us with an age-old question: How can artworks be made to speak the traumas of the downtrodden and oppressed without falling into cliché? More difficult still, how can they do so without preempting the voices of those they claim to represent? For Pineda, the answer lies in exploring the relevance of such questions in societies as socially, economically, and politically distinct as the United States and the Dominican Republic. Pineda's installations and large-scale drawings focus on the catastrophic social effects in Latin America of the neoliberal economic miracle so heralded by the first world.'

When I visited Pineda in 2017, and he showed me what he was working on, I noticed that all the figurines in his drawings and paintings were faceless and without visible skin. Pineda explained, 'I refuse to make a statement about gender, sexuality, or race.'

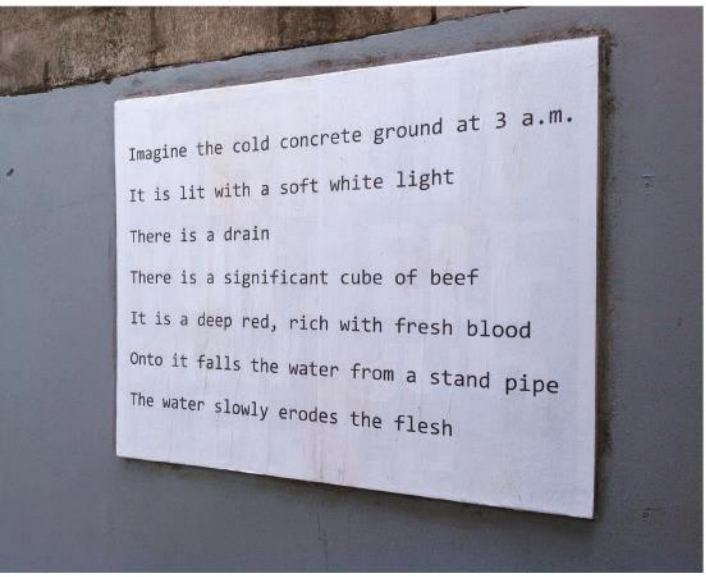
He places his artwork in the universal.

> 'I use it as a strategy to navigate the curator's and critic's attempt to diminish my work as localized instead of from personal and intellectual inquiry.'

Tessa Whitehead

The Bahamas

In The Elephant Palms, Oil on canvas, 39 x 47 inch, 2020 (collection Ulrich Voges & Amanda Coulson)



Kriston Chen

Trinidad & Tobago

Toofprints, bond paper, black toner ink, wheat paste (flour and water mixture)

© Photo courtesy of artist

#7

BIENNIALS

The very first Biennial was in Venice, in 1895. Even now, with many biennials, all over the world, the Venice Biennial remains number one. I have to admit, I never felt compelled to go. It was not until the 2015 edition, curated by curator, art historian, and art critic Okwui Enwezor (1963-2019), born in Nigeria and based in Germany at that time, that I felt the need to make an effort. Venice opens in May and runs for six months. I did not go to its opening, but went in October to avoid the overwhelming crowds and inflated plane ticket and accommodation prices.

In 2015, the Venice Biennial presented 90 international artists in its official program. That program was in two locations, a Palazzo in the Giardini and the Arsenale, an old shipyard. The sites are within walking distance of each other. In addition to the main program were national pavilions that present their artist(s) of choice.

The pavilions are part of the Giardini. The number of national pavilions participating has grown significantly; there were 89 pavilions in 2015. Belgium built the first pavilion in 1907. When there was no more space for any more national pavilions, countries were forced to buy or rent outside the Giardini. Adding to this core of the Biennial, there are numerous official and non-official side exhibitions, performances, interventions, and other activities in different locations and venues all over the city.

I enjoyed the artists' alterity and works, but it was as overwhelming and exhausting as the main Art Fairs are. I could not connect or engage with the art in the intimate way I prefer. It felt impossible to immerse myself in the art when it was presented so aggressively, as a constant, inescapable bombardment.

Venice receives over 500,000 visitors at its Biennial. Those visitors spend on travel, accommodation, local transport, and the catering industry. More often than not, they also buy non-related objects like clothing, shoes, jewelry, perfume, and souvenirs. Other contributions, financial or in-kind, come from private foundations, philanthropists, and multinationals or large local companies hosting branding events.

In *Biennials: Four Fundamentals, Many Variations* (2016), art historian and theorist Terry Smith wrote about the influence of art dealers in biennials,

> 'In 1972, Konrad Fischer was a vital figure within the curation of Documenta 5, but dealer input is a factor now widely perceived as having grown to become a somewhat distorting influence, especially on the 'production values' expected of displays at the leading biennials. It is entirely predictable that key collectors, whose impact on museums has been out there in recent years, will soon have a similar impact on biennials.'

This addresses my discomfort during my first and only visit to the Venice Biennial. The influence of art dealers, collectors, and galleries on which artworks are selected, and what the audience gets to see, is too blatant. The biennial seems to support the art market by acting as a marketing tool in which placing a work by an artist, increases that artist's market value. It is a conversation between collectors and galleries meant to drive up the prices for art, when perhaps the space would be better used by introducing new voices to new audiences. There is a valid conversation to be had about representation. In the Venice Biennial, are we really presented with work that supports and reflects the range of artists who represent the current state of innovation and experimentation in the world of contemporary art? What are the chances for artists living and working in the Caribbean to exhibit their work in Venice?

When I put this question to Maksaens Denis (Haiti) he tells me, 'I appreciated my first experience at the 51st Venice Biennale in 2005 as part of the IILA's Pavillon (Instituto Italo Latino Americano) best. My video installation *Kwa Barwon*, was presented beautifully, in the XVe century Palace: Palazzo Franchetti. Participation was crucial to my career. Meeting people during the Biennial and adding it to my CV opened doors for me. I was invited to the exhibition *Undercurrents* featuring digital artists in Götburg 2006, as a result. My participation in the Haitian Pavilions' first exhibition in Venice 2011 was significant to me, personally. Besides the Venice Biennale's prestige, *Haiti Royaume de ce Monde*, curated by Giscard Bouchotte, was a fantastic selection of the best Haitian contemporary visual artists. I felt proud as an artist and also happy to have been selected in the company of other artists who are all dear friends I love. However, I was very disappointed that there was no travel budget for me to be present. It was only my work that ended up in Venice. It robbed me of the crucial part of what Venice offers: meeting the international arts community and its audience. I was deprived of getting critical feedback and the opportunity to network for future opportunities. In 2012, I was invited to participate again, presenting my video installation: *El Mando (the remote control)*, in the 2013 Biennial. However, this invitation came with no budget at all. I declined. The Biennial claims they are representative, but they don't want to do the work to make sure they actually include (really include) the people whose inclusion makes them look good.'

It makes me wonder what Venice Biennial priorities are in the conversation about representation.

Perhaps Venice can take its cue from the Sharjah Biennial in the United Arab Emirates. Artist Christopher Cozier (Trinidad & Tobago) was given a US$25,000 commission to participate in the 2019 edition of Sharjah. The commission included a travel budget and allowed him to produce a new work made on-site and to be present at the Biennial opening.

Within the contemporary art field, a biennial has become the mega-event that all self-respecting countries worldwide want to have. The younger biennials began at the end of the twentieth century and were made possible by globalization, growing economies, and travel becoming more accessible. The more famous and well-attended a biennial becomes, the more art professionals and art tourists feel the need to be there. As the brand of the biennial grows, the event contributes more to the tourism industry and the economy of the host city and country. Biennials show us the impact of globalization within the arts. If you, or the institution you work for, have the means to travel, the world is your oyster. Art professionals, collectors, critics, and press visit and participate in panels, lectures and write about the artworks, the artists, the curator(s), and anything else connected to the biennial. In 2020, the biennial foundation website database (which includes triennials, quadrennials, and quinquennials) listed over two hundred and fifty events worldwide, mostly biennials. Iterant art professionals could give up their homes and spend all their time nomading between biennials, if they wanted to.

The biennial hype has not escaped the Caribbean. The oldest biennial is Venice, founded in 1895. Sao Paulo was the second, half a century later in 1951. To my surprise, not one, but two of the oldest biennials were established in the Caribbean, the San Juan Poly/Graphic Triennial: Latin America and the Caribbean began in Puerto Rico in 1970. The Havana Biennial followed in 1984.

SAN JUAN POLY/GRAPHIC TRIENNIAL, PUERTO RICO

While visiting an exhibition with artist Ada Bobonis in San Juan, Puerto Rico, I hear about the first biennial in the Caribbean. Puerto Rico hosted The San Juan Biennial of Latin American and Caribbean Engraving in 1970. Ada explained,

> 'It is the oldest Biennial in the Caribbean. Its focus is on Graphic Arts, a popular media at the time in Puerto Rico with internationally acclaimed Puerto Rican artists. It became defunct for some time, but as of 2004, the biennial is back as the San Juan Poly/Graphic Triennial: Latin America and the Caribbean.'

I know independent curator and art writer Elvis Fuentes, who is the chief curator for the 2018 edition. I congratulated him when he was chosen and had planned to attend as part of my research. Bobonis sighs, 'Right now, it is unclear what is going to happen. The government has made no official announcements.'

While I was writing, I tried to figure out what was happening, but the Triennial website disappeared sometime in 2019. There has been no reply to my repeated emails, asking the governmental department that is responsible for the Triennial about the current status. The Biennial has overcome difficulties to make a comeback before. We will have to see what the future brings. However, nobody in the art world can deny the region its crucial influence in the art world through the Havana Biennial.

HAVANA BIENNIAL, CUBA

I attended performance artist Tania Bruguera's (Cuba) controversial *Tatlin Whisper #6* (Havana version) in the Havana Biennial in 2009. Her performance, now considered by the international art community to be one of the world's best-known performance art pieces, was exclusively for an invited audience. The performance occurred in the old city at the Wilfredo Lam Center for Contemporary Art, the organizing institution for the Havana Biennial. I brought a Cuban friend with me as my '+ one.' We were invited to a square patio with patterned floor tiles, enclosed by thick peach colored walls. The venue was already filled with people. At the far end, I spotted an empty platform with a stand and microphones. Bruguera, guided by two people in military uniforms, walked up to the lectern. One of the uniformed guards placed a living white dove on her shoulder.

Immediately, my friend whispered, 'Sorry,' in my ear and left the venue as fast as her legs could carry her.

Confused, I ran after her and found her on a bench outside. She explained,

> 'You must have seen the photographers in the crowd. They take pictures of the audience. I travel all over the world for my work. As a local, I cannot be in those pictures. You are a foreigner. Our government wants to promote the idea that there is freedom of expression here but I don't want to take any risks. I am not from an influential family, so I might be questioned about why I was there and get in trouble. Please go back in and do see it. I will wait for you here.'

It made me pause. What is freedom? Who has it and why? I went back in and saw the performance. It addressed freedom of speech and censorship.

The dove referred to Fidel Castro's first speech at the end of the Cuban Revolution. On January 8, 1959, Fidel Castro Ruz entered the city of Havana. On that very day, he delivered a lengthy victory speech in which he recounted the years that preceded that occasion and outlined a course of action for the coming year. At a pivotal moment in the speech, a dove landed on his shoulder and two others hovered around the stage. Ever since, this landing has been the subject of speculation, controversy, and worship.

Bruguera's website has a detailed description and a 40-minute video of the performance that evening. Bruguera has performed it multiple times in different locations since, and the Guggenheim acquired the video-work. The speakers that speak freely during the performance arguably come from countries without censorship. Freedom of speech in Cuba, under Castro is being contested. It also

shows the strength and importance – culturally, socially, and politically – that an international Biennial platform can be.

With great ambition, the government in Cuba established the contemporary art biennial in 1984. In opposition to the Venice Biennial's presentation of European artists, it presented artists from Latin America and the Caribbean. Contrary to the apolitical Sao Paulo Biennial, Havana was deliberately political, focusing on (colonial) history, economy (capitalism versus socialism), social issues, and marginalized communities. At the time of the Havana Biennial's founding, the Venice Biennial had NO color...only the aesthetic sensibilities of the Global North were reflected in its selections. The Havana Biennial's intent was not only to present the state of contemporary art, reflecting the changes that have taken place in the intervening period since the last biennial. It wanted to spark change by selecting artists and works that represented perspectives that were different from what was being presented in Venice. According to the Havana Biennial website, the first edition in 1984 presented a whopping 800 artists, exclusively from Latin America and the Caribbean.

At the second edition in 1986, the scope had widened and artists from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East participated. Shaheen Merali is a London-based curator and art critic, born in Tanzania to Indian parents. He successfully campaigned for British diaspora artists living and working in England to be part of the Biennial's third edition. Merali explained,

> 'For the first time, the Arts Council of England offered people the opportunity to travel to Europe and, also, offered the opportunity for research through a partnership with other European organizations. This was not possible in the '80s, only starting in the early 1990s. Thus, the spheres of development broadened for many practitioners. Simultaneously, people of color wanted to make those links even further afield, with the Caribbean, South Asia, and other artist groups in 'the elsewhere' beyond the commonwealth. Thus, the value of the counter-hegemonic spaces and discourse was also something we wanted to try and work out with other spaces. The 1989 Havana Biennale was the first time I worked with a group of people who met us and wanted to develop some working relationship, without just looking at Europe but looking at South-South equations. Although it was seen as transnational, it was really built on kinship. It was also about developing strength through a network that advanced a permeation of the historical past in our present realities (Shwetal Patel in *On Curating*, Issue 35).'

The Wilfredo Lam Center for Contemporary Art, the Havana Biennial organizer, could not maintain a Biennial. It became a Triennial after its fourth edition in 1991. Still, it continues to be called The Havana Biennial. The Havana Biennial

Ernesto Millán

Cuba

A view of Sábanas blancas: transparencia, 2018–2019. Presented at the Palacio de Justicia, A project of the XIII Bienal de La Habana, Ríos intermitentes (Intermittent Rivers)
© Photo by Sharelly Emanuelson/ courtesy of artist

has been instrumental in completing the art history canon as a vital platform for artists from the region to present their work. With a clear identity and having proved its longevity, attendance at the Havana Biennial is considered crucial for international art professionals and collectors, especially since its fourth and fifth editions. They attend the Biennial regardless of travel bans and politics.

All over the Caribbean, mid-career and established artists mention Biennials as instrumental in giving their art practice visibility beyond the local audience. Inclusion in a biennial provides curators and artist's visibility and validation to and from art professionals worldwide. You can argue that art fairs do the same. There is overlap in the participants and visitors, but there is also a distinct difference. Art fairs are commercial markets showing relatively known artists who the organizers believe will guarantee (re)sales. At a fair, the works are grouped by gallery and the art dealers representing the artists.

Worldwide, Biennials are perceived as non-commercial. They present many new (often) commissioned works, and also include unknown and emerging artists. Changing curatorial teams organize the events, presenting and contextualizing artworks within (a) theme(s), the zeitgeist inspires the narrative. Most work at a biennial is experimental, innovative, research-based and challenging to preserve. Biennials are also a forum for work that is controversial and politically or socially engaging. Biennials showcase new ideas, spark discourse, and contribute to critical theory in the arts and adjacent fields such as philosophy, media, science, digital technology, and communication. Biennials are about the state of contemporary art, itself, at that particular moment in time.

During the Biennials in Havana in 2009, and again during my research in 2019, artists explained that they can use Biennial exposure to instigate change politically and socially where other Cubans cannot. However, there is a thin margin where artists can push and pull. In the international art community, we all know of international artists from Cuba who stepped over the thin line and were jailed. Bruguera has a growing international following, partly due to her arrests in Cuba. She makes and exhibits her work inside and outside of Cuba and has done so for a decade. However, I have also learned that she is part of a politically influential white Cuban family. Her protections are a privilege that not all brave artists with the courage to comment on the regime have.

The Havana Biennial's influence and importance in the region come up in every conversation with artists who have participated. In an interview by Sarah Herman for the publication, *After All, Tomorrow is Another Day*, Jorge Pineda (DR) explains,

> 'I remember Llilian Yanes's conference in the MAM (Museum of Modern Art, Santo Domingo) promoting this Biennial. It was a revelation. We began to see that our canons, which were no longer European, had to

be revised. We had to reinvent ourselves and, through that, to value the resulting new aesthetic. We began to do things that didn't necessarily have to do with the patterns to which Europe or the USA had accustomed us. It was a moment of autonomy and awareness of our possibilities. Something that, with time, was strengthened and continues to be strengthened. It was an awakening that began with the Havana Biennial's influence on the artists of the moment. It forced us to revise our parameters: the imposed ones and the inherited ones. It made us reverse our gaze. We began to see ourselves with new eyes. We began to appreciate the wealth we had for expressing our truths from our patterns. At that moment, the installation was tremendously viable for putting these ideas into practice. It is viable because it economically facilitated creative activity. Also, we had very close references for creating those first installations, such as the altars of popular religious devotion, to cite one case. Many stopped doing work in a certain way, lucrative and sellable to dedicate themselves to space and thinking space. There occurs a break with what we call beauty. There occurs a break with the narrative and bi-dimensionality. One curious piece of data is that none of us artists who approached the installation medium was trained in our National Fine Arts School.'

Many artist-friends from the region participate in the Biennial. By talking to them, I get a sense of their problems participating in it. Tirzo Martha (Curacao) explains,

'In communication with the Wilfredo Lam staff, I was consistently told anything is possible. Everything I could need will be available. When I participated for the first time, I believed in the guarantees I had been given. Upon arrival, I experienced the opposite. At first, it was frustrating, but being familiar with this type of situation in the Caribbean, I knew I had to adapt fast to make it happen. Working in the Caribbean is only possible if you're versatile and collaborate with the locals and know-how to improvise. I have been challenged several times before and developed a flexible practice and mindset to make it work. I've learned to make works on-site with whatever materials, assistance, and equipment I find. Not wanting to miss the opportunity offered, I developed an alternative concept that worked within the conditions offered. With my second invitation, I knew where I was going and was a little bit more prepared. I brought the essential tools necessary for the construction of the works. The cooperation with the locals was crucial in this project to make it work. I developed works combining my skills in collaboration with the Cuban people on the streets and what was available in Havana.'

Tirzo Martha

Curacao

Tourism, installation, 2009. Presented at Havana Biennial 2009.

I visited the Havana Biennial again during my research. Due to hurricanes Irma and Maria, it had been postponed to April/ May 2019. Its title, *Constructing the Possible*, is based on the curatorial essay *The multiple constructions of the (im) possible*, by curator Nelson Herrera Ysla. He co-founded Wifredo Lam Center for Contemporary Art and the Havana Biennial. It could not have been more fitting. I joined emerging artists Sharelly Emanuelson (Curacao) and Simon Tatum (Cayman Islands). We visited most of the Biennial sites together. In conversation, Tatum mentioned,

> 'This Biennial is a great opportunity for artists in the region to present their work to visiting international art professionals. Being here, seeing what is and isn't available for the installation of work, and seeing what the locations are like, will be helpful in discussing work I would like to present here.'

Tatum was invited to exhibit in 2021.

Emanuelson is a video artist. Many of the video installations we see do not work because of defunct equipment. Nobody at the venue turns it on or knows how to program the equipment to loop, so it stops. At one of the sites, we become frustrated when we do not see the artwork. There is nobody in the space we can turn to with our questions.

Hence, we decide to check the equipment ourselves. Nobody comes and tells us this is not allowed. We realize we could just as well have walked out of the building, taking the equipment with us. Emanuelson sighs and says,

> 'In my case, presenting my work would only work if I buy and bring all my equipment. I'll have to make sure I am here to install it for the opening and the period when international professionals visit. If I can't do that, the people I want to see my work will not. I wonder if we should be prepared to have equipment stolen and take that financial loss?'

Interestingly enough, as I think back, the latter is something nobody has complained about over the years. I check around and learn that when works have been sent back, there has never been anything missing.

Defying obstacles, the Biennial continues to innovate itself. Traditionally, it has only been located in Havana, but the 2019 Biennial successfully includes, *Ríos Intermitentes*, a program with exhibitions, performances, and talks in Matanzas, a four-hour bus ride from Havana. Artist María Magdalena Campos-Pons (Cuba/the USA) initiated the project. She invited a team of international curators: Octavio Zaya, Salah M. Hassan, Annie Aguettaz, and Selene Wendt. The project liberated the Biennial from Havana and took it to Matanzas (West), Cienfuegos, Sancti Spíritus (the Center), and Camagüey (Central-East) for the

Simon Tatum

Cayman Islands

See Your Travel Agent for More Details, Xerox image scanned and printed as an A0 poster on paper, 84.1 x 118.9 cm, 2018. Produced and presented at Ateliers'89/Caribbean Linked, Aruba.
© Photo courtesy of artist

first time. Artists Emanuelson, Tatum and I decide to arrange a car and drive to the new locations.

I meet with Campos-Pons, who tells me about the project,

'I was born in Matanzas. It is my home. Although I work and live in the USA [Campos is a professor and Chair of Fine Arts at the Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee], I love Matanzas, and I come here all the time. The project coincides with a huge renovation of buildings in Matanzas. I convinced the city to let me use some of the buildings they are working on to present artworks within the Biennial. In turn, the project demonstrates a different way to utilize the buildings and to bring in visitors and international tourists to generate income and economic growth for the area.'

We are talking in the main building. Campos explains,

'This building will house offices for the city conservation department, but part of it will continue to be an exhibition space.' As we walk through the spaces, she points out the lighting. She explains, 'Discussing what we wanted to do in this building with the conservation department, we asked to install lighting that would work for different purposes, including lighting artworks. Having the right equipment and facilities to present art is challenging in Cuba but we are working on this together. You can see we have quality lighting that enhances the artwork and is elegant.

'We take pride in presenting the artworks, including the curatorial statements, and the labels accompanying the works. On this easy-to-read map, you can find the different locations and which artists are presented there both in Spanish and English.'

I admit to her that being able to read in English is a relief to me, as I do not speak Spanish at all. She laughs and says,

'It is important to use different languages in order for Matanzas to become part of the international art world. My dream is to make a 'Kunsthalle' (project space) with international contemporary art and a residency here in Matanzas.'

Campos-Pons selected long-time curators and artist-friends like Carrie Mae Weems and Julie Mehretu to give lectures and present their artwork next to other international artists and emerging Cuban artists.

Campos connects the local and international artists and art professionals over a shared home-cooked meal in her family's home.

She invites us to join and calls out to a passerby, 'Talk to him. He is a

fantastic curator from Boston. He used to be the curator of the New Museum in New York. He is doing wonderful things.'

Turning her head to him, she says, 'Talk to her, and then bring her to lunch.'

The man laughs and introduces himself, 'Hi, I am Trevor Smith.'

After exchanging business cards, I learn Smith is the curator (at the time of this publication, he is the associate director) of the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts (the USA). He has worked at the New Museum in New York and was a curator for the Sidney and Singapore Biennials. We start walking, and I laugh, asking, okay, so, as a visiting foreign curator visiting the Biennial and Matanzas what is your opinion? He says,

> ' I'm quite amazed, as I often am, you know, at this Biennial. Just how much is put together with so little resources. Which, of course, has many challenges attached to it, but I've seen some great artists and works. There are so many intriguing works that show incredible creativity, born out of necessity. You make do with what you have an, you use what you have in creative ways.'

We reunite with artists Emanuelson and Tatum and walk to Campos-Pons' home. Entering, there are artists and art professionals with plates of food in chairs, on stairs, leaning into the walls. Everyone is eating, talking, and laughing. It feels like a homecoming of friends and family, a fertile ground for long-lasting connections.

GHETTO BIENNIAL, HAITI

Aruba and the Dominican Republic have tried to become a recurrent destination for the traveling biennial art community in the past decades but those biennials have ceased to exist. To date, besides the Havana Biennial in Cuba, the Ghetto Biennial in Haiti is the only other Biennial in the Caribbean.

Contemporary sculptors Andre Eugene, Jean Herard Celeur, and Guyodo (Frantz Joseph) founded the art collective Atis Rezistans in 1998 on Grand Rue in Port-au-Prince (Haiti). Grand Rue is the main avenue that runs north-south through downtown Port-au-Prince. Atis Rezistans is located on a yard at the Southern end of Grand Rue in the car repair district. The artists of the collective are internationally known for their assemblage artworks made from bones and recycled materials like demolished cars, rubber, and wood. After the earthquake, Eugene, now the only person running the Atis Rezistans yard, turned it into a production space. Eugene trains young artisans to produce/manufacture Vodou-inspired decorative paintings and sculptures (using the recycled materials) for the tourism market. As in Noailles, this craft now sustains a growing group of young artisans in Grand Rue.

The Ghetto Biennial was founded by Atis Rezistans in collaboration with Eugene's partner, British photographer Leah Gordon in 2009. It takes place in December and runs for two weeks. The original collective disbanded in 2010 after the first Ghetto Biennial. Eugene and Gordon continued as its producers. Its seventh edition is planned for 2021. Eugene has the Grand Rue space and a network in Haiti. Gordon brings an international network and access to international funding. The couple met in Haiti when Gordon was working on a photography book *Karnaval: Vodou, Politics, and Revolution on the Street of Haiti*.

In the past few years, Gordon has been cross-fertilizing. Alongside her autonomous practice and Biennial work, she has built a career as a curator, presenting Haiti's artwork on international platforms. I met with Eugene and Gordon before and during the fifth edition of the Biennial in 2017. I had been curious about this Biennial, who participates, its audience, and how it is organized? As my French is limited to 'Bonjour, ça va?' Gordon does most of the talking,

> 'For the Ghetto Biennial, we invite international artists to make site-specific work for two weeks. If they accept, they are responsible for all their own costs. The media attention generated by the Biennial is helping to generate sales for the artisans and other people living on the grounds who work as assistants, drivers, and translators for the foreign visiting artists. The Biennial is rooted in considerations around contemporary art as a place of class privilege and social exclusion. We bring together artists from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Visiting artists produce socially engaged art.'

The name Ghetto Biennial is meant to be ironic. It makes fun of the western art world. Its website should already give us a clue because it describes itself as a cross-cultural festival rather than a Biennial. The site explains that there is no support and everyone has to arrange and pay for everything themselves. Grand Rue is a working-class neighborhood with high unemployment, few opportunities, and many socio-political problems. Atis Rezistans seems to be the resistance that the artists in Port-Au-Prince give to Europe and the USA. In Europe and the USA, we expect people to be happy and honored with our interest and promises for visibility in our world. The participating international artists can put a Biennial on their CV. They can apply for funding. If artists need assistance in Haiti, they have to pay for it. The website provides interested artists with a price list for car rental, drivers, translators, work creation assistants for prices between US$50 and US$200 per day/per person. The Biennial hotel where the participating foreign artists stay is the ailing Oloffsson. Mick Jagger and Keith Richards were guests in the hotel's heyday. Discounted rooms during the Biennial for its participants are around US$100 per night.

Artists interested in creating site-specific work in an off-the-beaten-path location are in the right place here. The website provides a map of the area, and when you arrive, you can choose a location that suits what you want to do and get started. You can, of course, also do that at a completely different time of the year. Still, because it is a Biennial, more artists come simultaneously. It is a meeting place and artists can also help each other navigate the terrain. The artists arrive a week or two weeks (depending on how much funding they have) before making their work on-site. After the week of presentations, the Biennial is open to the public.

Walking around, I wonder who the target audience for this event is. I ask Mario Benjamin, an artist working and living in Haiti if he has participated or visited the Biennial. He explains,

> 'In the first edition, we all participated, but none of the visiting artists or art professionals were interested in our work. None of them made an effort to do studio visits or engaged with the local contemporary art scene. They came out for a day and then flocked together at expensive hotels talking with each other, eating, and drinking. We felt disrespected. Most of us lost interest and do not come to Grand Rue during the Biennial anymore.'

I ask some of the residents of the area what they think of the artworks made by foreign artists over the past five Biennials. A young artisan who speaks a little English translates from Kreyòl Ayisyen (Creole) tells me,

> 'We don't understand what the visiting artists are making. But, there is money to be made, so we are happy that they are here.'

Maksaens Denis

Haiti

Does resisting make us men? Multi-channel video installation, 2019. Presented in Cotonou, Benin

The country is not a tourist destination. I visit Haiti despite the travel warnings for American and European citizens. We are particularly warned not to go to these parts of Port-au-Prince. I learn that the Biennial has brought a lot of irritation. Foreigners only want to see and, above all document, misery. At the residents' request, Grand Rue has become a strictly lens-free zone during the Biennial. Visitors and participating artists are not allowed to photograph, film, or otherwise document freely.

On Day One, there is a program handout in which the hours and days are not correct. Still, the map is helpful because it enables me to visit the different locations to see the works. The primary site is Eugene's studio and the various ateliers of the young craftsmen, Atis Rezistans. He has taken the art and artisan community in Noailles as a model. Atis Rezistans in Grand Rue has developed into the place where tourists go to buy figurines and small paintings made with recycled material such as tires and other post-use material.

Works by contemporary professional artists from the neighborhood like Guyodo, Celeur, and Eugene himself, who have been exhibiting internationally for years, serve as the inspiration for the young artisans. The artisans' works are for sale. The artisans expect visitors and visiting artists to purchase several pieces and take them to their home countries. While walking around, artisans invite you in to see their work. I notice there are no female artisans at all, strange. After three ateliers, I can no longer see the forest for the trees. Copy, on copy, on copy. The production is high. There seems to be a competition to cram as many artworks as possible into the small dark ateliers. This scene makes visible the intersection between hope and desperation. The artisans are clearly trying to pander to a market they can't imagine beyond the glimpses they get of it during the Biennial. In fact, the artisans are in competition (for time and attention) with the international artists who are ignoring them.

Exceptions always confirm the rule. When on the roof of Eugene's house, I see the installation, Cartography of Port-Au-Prince, by the young local artist Reginald Sénatus (b. 1994). He joined Atis Rezistans in 2010 and has participated in several editions of the Biennial. He wins the award for best work that year and again in 2019. I get the news Sénatus is awarded Catapult, a Caribbean Art Grant established during COVID to help sustain and support contemporary artists in the region during these difficult times. Atiz Rezistans built a community with patience and determination. A substantial number of young artisans makes a modest living in Grand Rue despite its challenges and problems. Sénatus, a young emerging contemporary artist who grew in the space Atiz Rezistans offered, worked, grew and shone. And he was seen and acknowledged beyond his context. You can only reap what you sow.

I do not want to diminish the work Gordon is doing. However, I notice a

pattern in Haiti. Most successful initiatives by Haitian cultural producers have a white European partner. I witness prejudice, discrimination, and racism in various ugly ways in my home country's day-to-day life. Travelling affirmed it to be everywhere. I am an optimistic person and perhaps naively believe in equality and the good in humankind to overcome evil. Haiti shook that belief, kicked it to the curb, and left me gasping for breath. Prejudice and discrimination are constant and blatant. The power of simply being white is shocking.

Haiti made me aware of my privilege as a white European. Whenever I was in the car and stopped by the police or military, all I needed to do was lower my passenger-side window. We were hastily waved through. My blue eyes gazed upon the officer without saying a word, and their eyes lowered. They bowed their heads.

My presence in meetings with foreign NGOs, explaining a project and the need for funding, established trust with just my reassuring smile and a nod of my approval. No words were needed, which was a good thing as I do not speak a word of French. My presence at a meeting in a location such as a Marriott Hotel to organize an event, opened doors that would have been hermetically sealed for my Haitian peers. Without exception, the Haitian art professionals I met were as, and often more, qualified and skilled than I am. It is baffling and unjustifiable to find qualifications and skills that seem to have no value without the presence of whiteness, even when the only thing offered is whiteness.

Natusha Croes
Aruba

Photo collage of performative work, performance research artistic document, 2020
© Photo by Rob Vermeer/courtesy of artist

Nelson González

Aruba

Top: Vestiges of a society (installation)
Digital debris, 80 tons of sand, working tools, video projection.
Variable measures, 2019
Bottom: Caribbean Kingdom Family tree: The King's Bastards, wall installation of 27 Paintings, (made during a residency in Dominican Republic), various sizes, 2019 .Presented at Youn Geun Museum of Contemporary Art, South Korea.

Phillip Thomas

Jamaica

The Other Side of Now Is The Same Side As Then, Oil and mixed media on canvas
84 x 51.5 inch, 2019
© Photo courtesy of RJD Gallery and artist

Tony Cruz Pabón

Puerto Rico

Estudio, digital photo, 2019

#8

FUNDING & CULTURAL GOVERNANCE

When I started my career in 1998, one of the first international projects I tried to get off the ground was bringing the Amsterdam-based theater group Made in da Shade to present their work in New York at the renowned La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club in the East Village. Made in da Shade was founded in 1993 by three friends that met in high school, actress Marjorie Boston who graduated from The School for Performing Arts in Amsterdam; Maarten van Hinte, writer and MC in the Hip Hop band .nuClarity; and Lucien Kembel, a graduate in Law, who started working as a business manager in the arts and also as a composer and guitarist in .nuClarity.

Young, eager, and aspiring to careers in the arts, we met through mutual friends and found common ground in hip hop culture and our urgency to see our generation and perspectives represented in the established art institutions. Made in da Shade wanted to develop a theater-style that would appeal to a young audience that usually avoided theater. Made in da Shade conceived, wrote, and created plays, inspired by everything from Hip Hop to Hollywood, from the hard-knock streets to the classical stage. Inspired by the Wooster Group, a New York City-based experimental theater company founded in 1975, known for creating numerous original dramatic works, Made in da Shade conceived of plays by working collectively in the theater space during two-month-long rehearsals with actors' deejays, artists, musicians, writers, MCs, painters, computer programmers, and interaction designers. Hip Hop is at the cornerstone of Made in da Shade. Presenting work in New York, the cradle of Hip Hop, was part of its mission.

La MaMa is a creative home to artists worldwide and a dynamic hub for risk-taking new performance. It was founded in 1961 by the legendary Ellen Stewart (1919-2011). I met with Stewart to pitch a run of performances by Made in da Shade in her theater. I was nervous about meeting her at first, but convinced by my feeling of urgency that we had to perform in New York. Stewart, a commanding older black woman with a mane of gray hair, listened to me patiently with an encouraging smile as I pitched the project with all the young enthusiasm and conviction I had in me. She was intrigued and liked the work. She showed interest in presenting the group and negotiated the conditions with me. Stewart agreed to facilitate and market the performance, and I was able to get everything else in the budget sponsored. Except airplane tickets.

How could I get everyone to New York? Airlines were not willing to sponsor us. Stewart advised me to apply for funding from the National Fund for the Performing Arts in the Netherlands. I had never applied for funding before. Having NO experience with funders or any of the professional theater establishment, we wrote a letter saying (1) our mission is to make Hip Hop Theater; (2) so

surely it's obvious we need to go to New York; (3) we have everything in place, except for the airplane tickets; (4) please give us the money for our tickets; and (5) here's our bank account information. (Okay, it wasn't that blatant, but it was bad.)

After three months, we were rejected. I called Stewart and explained that the project could not happen without tickets. The rejection letter said the project does not meet the conditions for international exchange. She said,

> 'Interesting, are you aware another group from Holland is getting funding to present their project in our theater. You actually negotiated better conditions than they got.'

I was perplexed. How could that be? Her advice was for me to call the Fund to ask why we were rejected and what was needed to meet the funding conditions. I called Piet Zeeman, the senior grantmaker for the International Exchange Projects (since retired) at the Fund. I was pissed. Angrily, I demanded he explain why we didn't get the funding but the other group did. Was it because we were young? Was it because we were making Hip Hop theater—something they didn't understand and looked down on? I continued on, saying the fund was surely run by old white males who had no clue what was going on in the world outside the walls of their building and their conservative, traditional, blinkered vision.

To his credit and experience with disappointed screaming angry rejected applicants, he let me speak my mind.

After I fell silent long enough for him to start talking, Zeeman, in a calm voice, said, 'Have you expressed all your complaints and are you ready to hear what our points of concern are?'

He explained,

> 'Applying for funding, you have to follow certain procedures. You have to make yourself known. Who are you? Who is Theater Made in Da Shade? Did you ever invite us to your plays? Did you ever introduce yourselves to us? I am here as a grantmaker to help you understand how to apply for funding. If you are willing to listen to me, I am here to explain everything to you. Not right now on the phone, we can make an appointment for you to come to my office. If you have calmed down and want to do that, call me to set a day and time, I have a meeting to attend now.'

And he ended the conversation.

Rejection sucks. My impulse was to give up and try to find other ways to show 'those bastards.' I called Stewart again and told her what Zeeman told me, and she said,

'Try to look at it from the Fund's point of view. Can you really expect a

public fund that gets their money from taxpayers to give it to people they don't know, or who don't have a track record that tells them how you work or how your work is received by audiences? You are a taxpayer. Do you want the money, your money, just be given to the first people ringing the doorbell, no questions asked?'

I respected Stewart and her long experience—of living and creating an international network for theater. I was quiet and I let her words sink in. As a taxpayer, I am investing in myself and the community I work in and with. I had never thought about it that way. You invest in yourself when funding is given to infrastructure and transport, healthcare, agriculture, construction, social housing, education, and yes, also to innovation and experimentation in the Orange Economy (creative industry) that the art community is a part of.

Stewart continued,

'This is good news. You should not give up. Zeeman offered you the opportunity to start a relationship. You have your foot in the door now. It means he is intrigued by you, the group, and their work. Dealing with rejection is part of our work. Never take it personally. Learn how to deal with it. Be angry, calm down and then contact the fund to ask for more details about why you were rejected. Reflect on it and learn from it and continue to build your relationship with grantmakers. Don't give up. And do ask for help. You will see, he will give it to you. His job is to be there for professionals in the performing arts.'

She was right – her advice not to give up and to ask for help has proven essential over the years. I called Zeeman and made an appointment with him. He laughed and told me he was happy I had called.

'I look forward to hearing more about you and about Made in da Shade.'

In the years to come, he became a mentor and was instrumental in my learning the ropes of proposal writing and applying for funding. A career is a learning curve. I have learned it takes a village to make things happen. Ask for help; never take anything for granted; always be appreciative; and share with and help others.

CULTURAL GOVERNANCE (THE GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE)

Cultural governance includes a government's cultural policies and extends to any organization, no matter its size. According to the Cultural Governance Alliance (CGA), Clore Leadership initiative in the UK:

> 'There is no one universal definition of governance. It is a word used to mean managing processes for making, implementing, and reviewing decisions in an organization.'

Worldwide, governments govern culture to varying degrees, success, and dismay of their art communities.

In the Caribbean, I notice the same. If there is little to no money available, a government can still invest by taking an active role in establishing cultural policy and by supporting art communities through, for instance, advocating for the free movement of people between the islands, tax exemptions, lifting duties on the importation of art materials, and of transporting artwork back and forth for exhibitions. According to the CGA, good governance holds the following qualities:

- Accountable – the organization can report, explain and be responsible for the consequences of its decisions.
- Transparent – how the organization operates is easy to identify and understand.
- Compliant – it complies with internal procedures, the organization's constitution (as set out in its governing documents such as Articles of Association or trust deed), and the relevant laws.
- Responsive to the organization's relevant needs over time, making the most of limited resources in a timely and appropriate way.
- Participatory – so that relevant people can be involved in decision-making processes.

Barbados is an example of a small independent island that started investing in higher arts education. But I wonder how the government supports the art community beyond education? Public or private businesses, in general, need funding during their startup phase. Established businesses grow through research and development, buying new equipment, or enlarging their inventory and the market they serve. The art industry is no different.

In a conversation, Annalee Davis who is a part-time teacher at Barbados Community College's art department says,

> 'A lot of our graduates stop doing work within a year of graduating as they have to generate income. The government is investing in a tertiary level program and issuing BFA (Bachelor of Fine Arts) degrees, but

there is no thought into what happens to the graduates afterward. After education, there is no investment through funding or cultural policy in the Orange Economy to facilitate their functioning as art professionals. Unless governments invest in a sustainable chain, rather than only in a few links, state funding goes to waste, and the country ends up with people not functioning within the industry it believes it is investing in.'

The latter applies to all the islands I visit. How can governments be made more aware of the importance of the arts for their islands and their people?

The smaller the available budget, the more people fight amongst each other for the small pool of cash, rather than share what is available, fighting together and lobbying for more. Art communities need to organize and speak with one voice despite individual differences of opinion. A collective voice has more impact and power to create successful outcomes when budgets for the arts, no matter how small, are allocated. This applies to the Caribbean too, where the contemporary art community on each island is small. More can be achieved when you come together and push for one or two issues that will help all artists grow and move forward.

Everybody I speak with complains about the lack of transparency, accessibility, and the need for a systemic commitment to the arts and the art community. It is not clear to contemporary art professionals who and what is eligible for funding and how and why such artists or projects are rewarded. However, travel in the Caribbean only affirms to me we are accountable to our own art community. An art community has a responsibility to participate when it comes to cultural governance and policies. I see art communities in the Caribbean take this responsibility. Still, most of the countries I visited during my research do not have the (more or less) flat hierarchies I participate in, in the Netherlands. The artists and art professionals I meet, all mention the need for patience, compromise, and diplomacy to push forward. It is a skill to not walk away from conflict or opt for an unconstructive collision course.

It is not a skill that was bestowed on me either. I work intuitively and yet I am restricted by rules, regulations, scores, and criteria. I often lack the ability to find the right words for what I feel is urgent. Failing to find the language to successfully express and argue my perspective is a hard, extremely frustrating, and painful process. However, my awareness of the importance of these skills has only grown. The best advice I can offer is what works for me: find people in your community with similar perspectives and views who do have this skill. They can both do the work and mentor you and help you pick 'safe spaces' where you can learn without getting frustrated and giving up on a sustainable art practice and community altogether.

PRIVATE FUNDING

Worldwide, corporate art collections are being built for investment, cultural cachet, and asset diversification (*Corporate Art Collections: A Handbook to Corporate Buying*, 2012). Various corporations in the Caribbean have followed this trend. As art is not their core business or their area of expertise, corporations work with art consultants, employ a part-time or full-time curator, or have a curatorial department. Investing in the local arts community can also contribute to a corporation's image and brand, as it displays the works in its lobbies and offices.

In the Caribbean, PanJam Investment Limited (PanJam), a real estate company in Jamaica, MCB Bank in Curacao, Central Banks of the Bahamas, Suriname, and Trinidad are examples. A core group of artists, specifically on the larger islands of Cuba, Dominican Republic, and Haiti, can partly sustain their practice by commissions (where the artists get an assignment to make a new work) or sales (of existing work) to those corporations and banks. Some of those corporations support the art community beyond buying artworks.

Pascale Theard Creations, a tannery and design company in Haiti, has a collection and hires artists to collaborate on the product design. Theard, the company's owner, financially supports artists and art professionals both personally and through the Theard Creations corporate entity. For example, she paid for the travel of emerging artist Tessa Mars to Amsterdam to interview at the prestigious two-year post-graduate art program at the Rijksakademie. Mars was accepted and is currently part of the program.

Some collections eventually evolve into a museum named after a founder, family, or corporation. If the museum is well planned, it is given a starting endowment for its operational costs and for the preservation of the collections and the capacity to make them available to audiences. Occasionally, the vision of a private museum extends beyond its collection. Centro Leon in Santiago is an example of an institution whose vision includes financial support for the arts community above and beyond their investment in the museum.

Museo Fernando Peña Defilló in the old city of Santo Domingo is another example. In addition to exhibiting the works by its founder, painter Fernando Peña Defilló (1926-2016), the museum has an annex where it exclusively commissions local artists and presents those works in month-long solo exhibitions. When I visited, I met artist Natalia Ortega Gamez. Traditional crafts in the Taino culture inspire her work. The exhibition, *Soon I Will be Done*, presented red clay ceramic sculptures that looked like trumpets and funnels, inspired by traditional autochthonous Taino techniques translated to modernity.

In Puerto Rico, collector José Hernández Castrodad, owner of Angora Properties, started *Área Lugar de Proyectos* in Caguas, a half hour drive from San Juan. Área is a platform dedicated to facilitating the art community. It has

a large exhibition space, a residence for local and international artists and he invests in the publication of a catalog about artists he works with in his space. There are talks, film screenings, and panels. When I visited, the space had been temporarily turned into a studio for Ivelisse Jiménez, an artist who lost her studio and part of her stored art works during hurricanes Irma and Maria in September, 2017.

Jiménez had to create new work for an impending exhibition in the USA. She makes installations and assemblies from brightly-colored transparent plastic sheets. The work is reminiscent of veils, which she treats and applies layer upon layer. She says that every time a work is installed, it can be different. Her work is present, and its expressiveness demands your undivided attention. The space is huge and was full of her artwork. There was so much to see, and the pieces were in constant motion, changing as you looked at it from different angles.

Many individual collectors support the arts in various ways as well. One example is collector Tom Tavares Finson, a lawyer in Jamaica. Finson sits on the board of the National Gallery of Jamaica and actively supports and fundraises for its exhibitions in his network. Architect Sean Leonard co-founded Alice Yard in Trinidad. Leonard contributes to the collective by providing a space and facilities to present art and a residency space for artists from other countries to work in Trinidad and connect with its art community. Lawyer Ian Benjamin made the first financial contribution when Alice Yard was founded and donated another space used by Alice Yard to present art performances and projects. Collector and philanthropist Dawn Davies, an early retiree after a finance career has financially supported the Bahamian art community for decades. Davies also supported Tavares Strachan's exhibition in The Bahamian Pavilion in the 2013 Venice Biennial.

The colonial and imperial past is not only reflected in public funding but in private funding as well. During the period when I was traveling and researching, the most visible and influential example of this fact, in the Caribbean, was the Davidoff Art Initiative (DAI). DAI is a corporate arts sponsorship program started in 2012 by the Swiss cigar company Oettinger Davidoff AG, based in Basel, Switzerland. The company is linked to the Caribbean by its ownership of tobacco plantations in the Dominican Republic (DR) which are fundamental to the Davidoff brand.

DAI's goal was to present contemporary artists from DR and the region to the global art market. DAI hosted artist talks at art fairs and large art events and three-month high-profile residencies in Basel, Berlin, New York, Bogota, and Beijing. The residencies were timed to coincide with international art fairs occurring at the same time in those cities. The Initiative was incredibly successful in introducing artists from the region to the international art world and opening

up the region to international art professionals.

Regretfully, it became yet another example of the temporality of funding in the arts. After six years, the company changed its marketing strategy. To the horror of the art community, the program ended at the end of 2018. Funding for residencies, biennales, and art fairs for contemporary artists and art professionals is again, difficult to come by for artists in the region.

After being let go by Davidoff, DAI manager Albertine Kopp made a restart in Basel with The Caribbean Art Initiative (CAI) in 2019. One month after announcing the formation of CAI, her first project was a group exhibition at KBH.G Basel in 2020. Curated by Yina Jiménez Suriel (DR) and Pablo Guardiola (PR), the exhibition presented works by artists from the region. During the Art Basel art fair, the opening supposed to have generated attention for both the artists and the region. Then COVID arrived, and the art fair and exhibition had to be presented online. Kopp has since relocated to Amsterdam. In an email exchange, she wrote,

> 'CAI is holding up. We ended the year with the wonderful exhibition in Basel and have some public programs that will take place in the coming six months. We are readjusting the strategy and format as residency is challenging now – but we will definitely remain a platform for Caribbean culture and inter- and transnational exchange.'

PUBLIC OVERSEAS TERRITORY FUNDING

There is a shift in the ethical discourse on (de)colonialism and the current stance on (former) colonizing countries' responsibility. Reparations, returning stolen artworks and repatriating human remains are high-profile examples. Funders for the arts in (former) colonizing countries are aware of the paradigm shift and are changing their policies to be more inclusive to artists, professionals, and institutions in their former colonies and OST. Nonetheless, the extent of each islands' sovereignty (or connection to the colonial country) plays a large part in the availability of funding. As an example, Beta-Local in Puerto Rico, receives structural funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (in the USA). There are many examples, so I have limited myself to highlighting a selection of funding sources that came up most often in my conversations.

BRITISH ART COUNCIL CARIBBEAN

BARBADOS, CUBA, JAMAICA, AND TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

In the past decade, the discourse about (de)colonization and Trans-Atlantic human trafficking is fighting its way to the front and center. In 2016, Annalee Davis (Barbados) was appointed as the first Caribbean Arts Manager for the British Council. An initiative in which the British Council set out to actively build relationships between the sectors of the visual arts in the UK and the Caribbean. On their website, they say,

> 'There is a renewed interest in the cross-cultural exchange between the two regions; this is in part due to the Commonwealth Games Cultural Program, which took place in Glasgow in 2014 and provided a platform for Scotland to re-examine its links to the Caribbean through its role in the slave trade.'

Between 2016 and 2018, Davis developed arts programming in Cuba, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. In her publication *On Being Committed to a Small Place* (page 158-162), she writes:

> 'Working inside the British Council from the perspective from the Global South means that the process of decolonization can happen both ways. If I can shape an arts program that allows us to speak together differently, to see each other differently, it might allow us to live together differently. This work provides a Caribbean person the opportunity to sit at the British Council table and promote conversations that might not happen otherwise. My observation fifteen months in it is that the process of decolonization is not only necessary in the Caribbean, but for the UK, it is long overdue. Its own inability to be self-reflexive and aware of its central role in the Trans-Atlantic human trafficking and its aftermath is startling, to say at best.'

To my surprise, Anguilla and the Cayman Islands, two of the Britain's OSTs I visited, cannot apply for this new initiative. Natalie Urquhart, executive director of the National Gallery of Cayman Islands, explains,

> 'The British Council seems to fund projects in former colonies (Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago), but we don't have access to this. It is frustrating. And then Cayman's status as an OST prevents us from applying to some US/European Foundations as an independent nation. We have individual philanthropists but no formal system of grants for the arts. There are several foundations, but for other fields.'

I'm intrigued so I approach the Arts Council in England to ask them where artists, professionals, and institutions in their OSTs go to request funding for projects.

After a few emails back and forth, Jonah Richardson, of the Customer Services department at the Arts Council of England, answers,

> 'Because Arts Council funding programs deal with money donated to us by the National Lottery and the UK Government, to be eligible for our funding programs you have to be based within the UK, have a valid UK bank account, and demonstrate within your application that your project proposal will take place in England and will benefit the public within England. Each of the constituent nations of the UK has its own Arts Council. If you are based in the Commonwealth or one of the OST, we recommend approaching the British Council for funding instead. Rather than being funded by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), a domestic arm of the British government, the money that goes into their funds is provided, in part, by the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and partly through a range of other sources, including fundraising and income generated by the teaching of English as a Foreign Language through the British Council in other countries. They have numerous funds for applicants all around the world, and further information about their Caribbean Fund can be found below by following the web link provided.'

I sigh reading this and feel for Urquhart. This makes no sense.

The criteria and regulations for applications at the Art Council and British Council are obviously not well coordinated. Employees of the Councils are not aware of each other's criteria and regulations. As a result, artists and art organizations on Anguilla and the Cayman Islands fall between ship and shore.

The British Council, for reasons unknown, is no longer funding art projects. They did not answer my email asking what their new policy is. On their website, it seems they have consolidated the funding and diverted it to English language education and healthcare, perhaps due to COVID. Barbados has no other structural public or private foundations for the arts. The same is true for the former British colonies, Trinidad & Tobago and Jamaica. Their arts communities have to rely on their government, sponsoring, donations from wealthy people, and irregular project funding that comes and goes (from UK initiatives or development banks).

FRANCE

ST. MARTIN

St. Martin is small-size OST of France. It shares an island with St. Maarten (OST of The Kingdom of the Netherlands). It has a population of 30,000. It is considered a high-income state by the World Bank. Mid-career mixed media artist Florence Poirier Nkpa does receive grants from France but still runs into difficulty navigating the current status of St. Martin. Poirier Nkpa shares her funding experience with me when I do a studio visit. She explained,

> 'As an artist, public funding from the State in St. Martin is difficult to obtain. To be recognized as a professional artist, you have to be accepted by La Maison des Artistes in France. Working on St. Martin, it isn't easy to be recognized as an artist because the country is an Overseas Collectivity (the name France gives to the smaller territories of the French Republic). Somehow you have to create a working connection with France to be recognized. Applying for a grant application can be done if you rigorously collect all the necessary documents. Once the grants are awarded, you must continue to collect receipts and invoices and carry out the project to the end. The financial and qualitative assessment is provided to the various funds that support the projects and all this must be done within specific deadlines. Additionally, each fund has specific and different objectives. The artist must know how to structure her project according to the objectives. Few funders finance pure creation and the costs linked to producing an exhibition, except for Individual State Creation Assistance which each artist can apply for once every three years.'

She continues,

> 'As an artist, I feel I spend more time filling out forms than making actual artwork. At the end of the day, all this work on applications often does not come to fruition. Application forms are all different (content, format, objectives, conditions of realization). It is difficult for an artist to sustain a practice if you take into account how much funding is awarded, balanced against the time spent writing proposals, filling out forms and collecting all the documents requested by each of the different funds to finally ... carry out the project.'

The process Poirier Nkpa describes is no different for artists anywhere else in the world. The reality is that no artist is guaranteed funding. There is a limit to all budgets and only a percentage of applicants are accepted. No artist wakes up in the morning to randomly find money in their bank account. The acquisition

Florence Poirier Nkpa

St. Martin

THE SHOW Caribbean lifestyle #13, Photomontage, 70 x 50 cm, 2019

© Photo courtesy of artist

of funding, not only in arts but in all sectors, is always very competitive. Applications take a lot of work, time, and administration. Applications require skills different than the making of art and they steal time away from making your art. Some artists have the means to hire people to do that work for them. Other artists teach, make commercial work, or find a day job in other sectors to meet their basic income needs, in order to make autonomous art.

> I ask Poirier Nkpa about the criteria are to get those grants. She explains, 'Most of the time, the artist's project must include working with children or giving workshops in schools. Sometimes National Education institutions invite artists to intervene in schools. With this invitation, you then apply, but similarly, the application is complex. In the case of St. Martin, it is often not awarded. The acceptance rate of all applications is approximately one out of twelve'.

Based on my research, I map about thirty-five artists, art professionals and organizations in the commercial and non-commercial art community of St. Martin. When members of this community apply for funding, they are competing with artists from all of France. On the island that may mean about twelve applicants, annually, with perhaps one being awarded (with some luck). I'm not familiar with funding in France, but that is not very encouraging and problematic if you are isolated on an island with no access to the art infrastructure in mainland France. It explains why artists have to resort to also making commercial art, rather than only making art out of artistic urgency, in order to survive.

KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS

ARUBA, BONAIRE, CURACAO, SABA, ST. EUSTATIUS, ST. MAARTEN

Despite the difficulty, funders in Europe and the USA feel the urgency to connect to and include OST funding. Policy and legal structures are being analyzed and adjusted to make the process easier. This is a long and slow process but seems irreversible given the zeitgeist. Because the islands are mostly unknown to the funders' employees and jurors, knowing who, what, and how to fund has to be built into their policies. In the Netherlands, this has translated into KulturA, a temporary (2009-2012) funding option for the islands. Mondriaan Foundation, the Fund for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture, the Netherlands Performing Arts Fund, the Fund for Cultural Participation, the Fund for Letters, and the Netherlands Literary Production and Translation Fund collaborated in the KulturA program. KulturA was an addition to the six funds' regular support options for professionals and institutions in the Netherlands (Evaluation, Thije Adams, 2014).

Mayke Jongsma, the senior grant maker responsible for KuturA within the Mondriaanfonds, explains:

> 'When we opened our funding to the islands, we hardly received any. We noticed a difference in language and wording around work and practice. The work did not always meet the European quality criteria. The international part of the artists' CVs was often aimed at the Caribbean and South America. It revealed the truth that the fund didn't have advisors who could properly weigh those applications on their value and within their context. KulturA was intended as a way to encourage the artists to apply, build an international CV, and learn how to apply for funding. When we initiated KulturA, we visited all the eligible islands to personally meet artists and art institutions. We gave presentations to discuss available funding and to address concerns from the art community. It resulted in more applications, and the special fund was dissolved. All general applications are now open for the islands following the current view that all applicants should be treated equally.'

To make this happen, Mondriaanfonds also looked inward. Dutch is not the common language spoken on the islands. Applications can now be done in English. They also accept alternative applications using storyboards, video, and other media, as a replacement for written proposals. The committees reviewing the applications now include advisors that come from the region or have knowledge or experience working there.

The Fund for Culture Participation also participated in KulturA and made adjustments, and opened up their applications for the art communities on OST's

after KulturA was dissolved. Mohamed Yusuf Boss, juror with the Urban Arts Application at The Fund for Cultural Participation, explains,

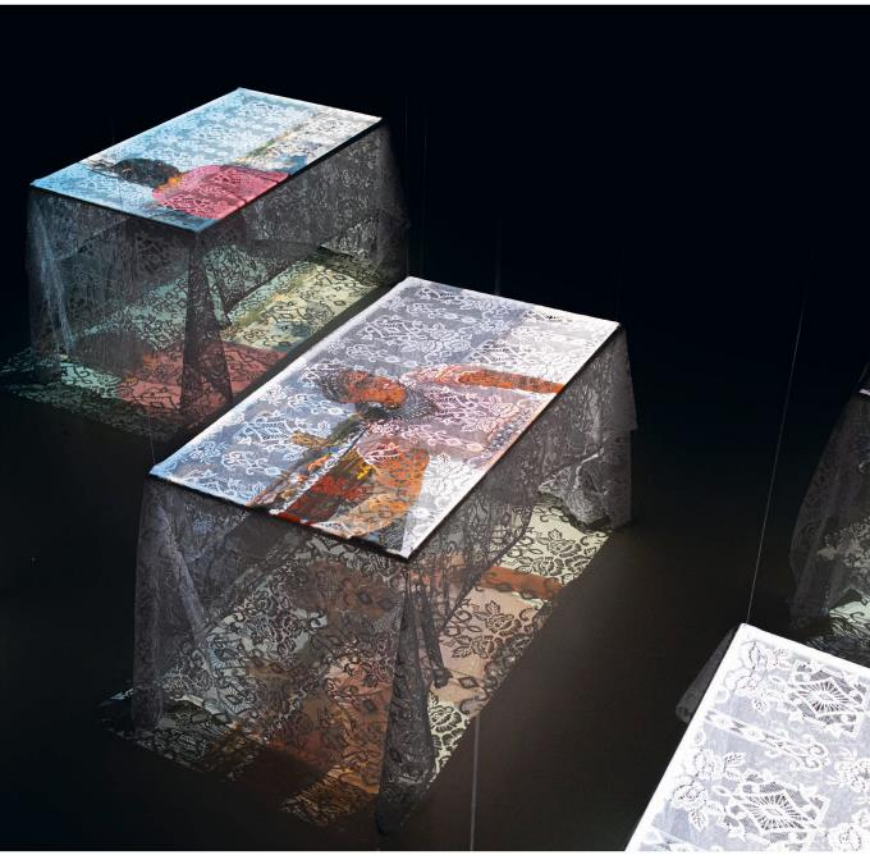
> 'During my time on the committee, several artists from the Caribbean applied. In the past years, the committees, like the one I am on, are carefully selected to reflect the different voices (gender, age, ethnicity, disciplines in the arts, sexuality, and all the territories of the Kingdom). I always go the extra mile for these applications. What strikes me is the degree of modesty we see from artists in the Caribbean. I wondered why? They are so awesome. I was very impressed with video artist and filmmaker Sharelly Emanuelson (Curacao). Her work is so solid, and she is so concerned with her immediate surroundings. Engaging their environment is the next thing that stood out in the applications. Giving something back, sharing, was often part of their project. Their urgency was palpable even though our conversations were via a Skype connection. I was moved to tears by actor and writer Ovier Maduro (Bonaire), hearing his passion and love for his profession. I hope they have all been able to take a step in their creativity. I am inquisitive about their work. But above all, I hope their modesty does not slow them down and that they stand even stronger for what they do.'

In a blog post, Sharelly Emanuelson (Curacao) wrote,

> 'For a long time, I believed that I could create (films) without applying for funding. I have created films with little to no funding. I started UniArte, an artist organization with no funding (another aspect of what I do). However, over time, I have realized that you can only get so far without the proper resources. I need the gear, I need the crew and cast, but most of all, I need time. Time is the most essential. And all these elements that are necessary to create 'good' work, do require some financial resources. A part of me would like to 'avoid' commercial work, but we all need to survive. I am very grateful to have received the opportunity from the Urban Arts Application to pursue my artistic development while having part-time relief from the regular freelance artist hustle.'

Emanuelson finished her project and has since been awarded a grant from Mondriaanfonds for her next project. In her blog, she advises,

> 'Some humble words of advice for artists from the Caribbean, if you doubt about applying for a grant or any funding, do take your time to think about it and prepare well. But definitely consider it fully before letting insecurities or fear get in the way of you trying. Even if it makes you uncomfortable, (the 'best' artists also) ask for help. Don't let anyone discourage you!'



Sharelly Emanuelson

Curacao

En mi Pais, video installation, 2019-2020. Presented at Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, Rotterdam, The Netherlands as part of the Volkskrant Visual Art Awards, 2020

I visited St. Maarten in July 2018, a small-size country with a population of 40,000. It shares an island with St. Martin. It is an OST of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. It is considered a high-income country by the World Bank, with its income coming from tourism. The country was severely damaged by hurricanes Irma and Maria (September, 2017).

Arriving by plane, I went through customs, provisionally installed in a tent as the airport terminal was damaged beyond repair. The artists I met were still shell-shocked after losing their studios, materials, and their legacy of stored artworks, computers, and hard disks with files documenting their artworks and administration around their art practices. All that was left to some artists were their artworks, off-island for exhibitions during the hurricanes. Climate change will cause hurricanes to return, faster and stronger.

I met two emerging artists—mixed media artist Charisa Piper and photographer Claudio Arnell—who had just finished their arts education in Europe and returned to start their art practice before the hurricanes hit. Regardless, they don't want to leave St. Maarten. I admired their conviction. It is not easy to start your career in a location that has just most of its art infrastructure wiped away. Seeing that Emanuelson, had been awarded The Fund for Culture Participation grant, encouraged both artists to apply in the next round. Both were awarded the grant.

Emanuelson (Curacao) shares her experience of applying for funding the first time on her blog. She wrote,

> 'To tell the tale of my funding journey, I must start with Prins Bernhard Fund Caribisch Gebied. I had finished my first feature documentary, Su Solo Y Playanan, as my Bachelor's final project. My father encouraged me to apply to have a proper screening of the film on the island. We sat on the couch in the living room, where he showed me how to write the letter and create a budget that would indicate what I need. Thanks to that, I was able to have a local premiere in what was Teatro Luna Blou. The support and guidance that our parents and the ones around us can provide are essential. Never underestimate what a little encouragement can do.'

Travel has made me aware of the inequity in the world. I cannot disregard or sugarcoat the existing inequality in the funding available to artists in the various Caribbean countries I visited during my research. Inequality is something I believe we all should keep fighting. Still, I want to encourage everybody who wants or need funding to apply and keep applying for whatever little funding is available.

Charisse Piper

St. Maarten

Portal to Re-imagination, Installation, 2020

© photo by Lisandro Suriel/courtesy of artist

HOW TO APPLY FOR FUNDING?

Applying for funding is daunting for everyone at first. I was repeatedly asked by artists where they could find funding and how they should apply. It helps to follow a workshop (often free), read a how-to book, or research and read articles available on the internet that describe, in detail, how to apply for funding and how to write a good proposal. On a few islands, I was invited to speak about funding for artists and art professionals. To avoid trying to rewrite any available how-to books, I'll limit myself to sharing my top 20 tips. These are the same tips I included in conversations with artists and in the presentations where I spoke about funding.

1. Research, research, research to find funding available to you. Check the contact list for this chapter, surf the internet, ask your colleagues. Check the funding/sponsor listings on websites, catalogs, other artists, museums, project spaces, exhibitions. Keep doing this for every new project you do. Funding comes and goes and changes all the time!
2. Check the funder's website and read the guidelines thoroughly. Check your eligibility and keep doing this for every new project you do. Eligibility also changes all the time. Write down your questions as you read and research.
3. Contact the funder. Using the phone rather than email will help to build a relationship. Ask the specific grantmaker you get on the phone all your questions. Part of a grantmaker's job of is to help you write a better proposal.
4. Follow the directions, rules, regulations, and instructions given by the specific funder. One mistake can disqualify your application.
5. Make a checklist of what needs to be submitted to apply. Accidentally failing to submit a requested detail could disqualify your application.
6. Plan ahead, start early to gather supporting materials.
   a. Launch or update your website, make sure you are present on the internet, even a simple free website (WordPress or Blogspot) will show you take your practice seriously;
   b. Make or use professional images of your (recent) work (if you have no money or need guidance, check the YouTube video, *How to Photograph Your Work* by Saatchi Art)
   c. Make or update your CV and bio (approx. 200 words in the third person);
   d. Make or update your artist's statement (maximum: one page).
7. Develop your project idea: What will you do? Where and when will you

make it? Where and when will it be presented, performed, or published? How will you do it? And, why is this project so important for you and your career at this point? Why is it important for other people, and who is the target audience?

8. Begin the proposal with a short, clear pitch. Write a summary describing the artistic need that your project addresses, how, what, when, why, and where, in the first lines, or paragraph.
9. Share your passion and your urgency to create. Express what makes you unique.
10. Answer all questions. Give enough information to show your urgency and to answer all questions readers might have. However, avoid non-essential information. The committee members have to read a lot of proposals. Write to hold their attention. It is important to write clearly, concisely, and consistently. Accessible language allows your artist's proposal to be understood.
11. Ask all people and organizations you mention in your proposal for a letter that confirms the collaboration and the terms that have been agreed upon for the work. If a confirmation is not possible at the time, ask them for a letter of intent. The letter needs to affirm that they have indeed agreed to contribute to the project as you have written in the proposal. Their letter should include the presenting period, contribution (financially or in-kind), marketing, or any other details they have agreed to.
12. Make a realistic budget, don't forget your own labor, and never inflate your budget. Most funders have their own budget forms online and you will only need to fill in the numbers. Make a list of all you need, material costs, airfare, labor, studio space, software, and other expenses. Get official quotes for all costs over 1000 euros (or for all costs according to the grant's regulations).
13. Funders are more inclined to invest in a project if there are multiple funders. Include all funders you intent to apply to in your budget. Also include in-kind contributions. The total amount, including the amount you are requesting at the specific funder) needs to be the same as the total amount of the costs.
14. Get feedback on your proposal. You need an extra pair of eyes to tell you that what seems obvious to you might not be to others. Ask more experienced colleagues or friends that have experience with fundraising, proposal writing, and budgeting to help you. Ask if they are willing to share a successful application from which they received funding as an example.

15. Use editors or proofreaders. If they are not available or you lack the budget to hire people, ask friends you know who are good with writing, grammar, and spelling.
16. Fill out the application forms.
17. Don't miss the deadline (make a timeline to finish two weeks ahead of the deadline). As I can attest from experience, something always happens at the last minute).
18. If you get the grant, make sure to always to acknowledge your funders whenever you can. Know what is expected from you, mention the funder's name, logo, and other requirements. Be diligent about this, because it is very important—send proof of what you did with your evaluation at the end of the project.
19. If you do not get the grant, do not take it personally. Rejection is part of the process. Follow up with the grantmaker and ask for clarification on why you were rejected and what your proposal lacked. Turn your rejection into a learning process that will help you to make a more competitive proposal in the future.

Apply again, again, and again. PERSEVERE!

Versia Harris

Barbados

A Dream Is A Wish Your Heart Makes When You're Awake, Animation Still (4:41 min.), 2012

Ras Mosera

St. Maarten

Colonial Rhapsody, Mix Media on Canvas,101 x 153 cm, 2021

© Photo courtesy of artist

Razia Barsatie

Suriname

A no san fesi e sori, ati e tyari (not all is visible on the face but is carried in the heart), Charcaol, plaster, flour dough, camphor, tapioca, kitchen cleaning towel, marker, thirteen small engines, 8.5 x 5.1 m, 2021. Presented at Open Ateliers Rijksakademie, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
© Photo courtesy of artist

dy Choisy

artin

Cells – Diversity, embroidery divers cotton fabric, canvas and cotton threads, 2017

o courtesy of artist

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UCATION

ART EDUCATION

straat 34, Oranjestad
76/5654613
89.com
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a Bista (IBB)
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605
buenabista.com
abista.com

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ecenat.fr/en/social-cultural-projects/in-
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an Art Academy
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W: www.eap.edu

La Universidad Inter Americana de Puerto Ric
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W: www.inter.edu

RESOURCES FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

(Eligibility changes by year so always check)
Through Ministry of Education (all islands)

Peter Thomson Foundation (The Bahamas, Cay
W: www.peternthomsonfoundation.com

National Gallery Scholarship (Cayman Islands
W: www.nationalgallery.org.ky/learn/learning/i
ships-scholarships/

INTERNATIONAL RESOURCES:

Commonwealth Scholarships
W: cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk/scholarships-filter-search
Check possibilities per country online

arships (Barbados, Dominican Republic, rinidad & Tobago)

nline.org/countries/western-hemisphere

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usprogramme.com/post/scholarships

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rshipsads.com

rshipforum.com/category/scholarships-by-coun-

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Village Artistique de Noailles
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OTHER RESOURCES

ADAGP
W: www.adagp.fr/en

Pictoright
W: pictoright.nl

Auction Houses
W: www.artnet.com/auction-houses/directory/#

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Lyle O. Reitzel Gallery

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Ceramic Tile World Triennial (1999 – 2005)
Igneri Foundation
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W: elit-tile.net/en/index.php/about

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W: caribbean.britishcouncil.org

Caribbean Culture Fund
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Charitable Arts Foundation (Bahama's)
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National Gallery (Cayman Islands)
Artist Away Grant
Funds international residency placements for Caym
W: www.nationalgallery.org.ky

National funding for arts (St. Martin)
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arch I was not able to meet everybody involved
rary art in the region due to both availability of
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ll the artists, art professionals and institutions per
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#11

GLOSSARY

Alterity
Alterity is a philosophical and anthropological term meaning 'otherness', that is, the 'other of two' (Latin *alter*).

Applied Arts
Applied art is the application of design and aesthetics to objects of function and everyday use. Whereas fine arts serve as intellectual stimulation to the viewer or academic sensibilities as well as produced or intended primarily for beauty; the applied arts incorporate design and creative ideals to objects of utility, such as a cup, magazine or decorative park bench. There is considerable overlap between the field and that of the decorative arts; to some extent they are alternative terms. The fields of industrial design, graphic design, fashion design, interior design, decorative art and functional art are altogether considered applied arts. In a creative and/or abstract context, the fields of architecture and photography are considered applied arts. Many applied art objects are collected, for instance ceramics, textiles, jewelry, glass, furniture, children's toys, cars, electric guitars, as well as various forms of images produced in commercial contexts, such as film posters or old advertisements (definitions.com).

Art Fair
Art fairs are commercial markets showing relatively known artists who guarantee (re)sell. We see the works are grouped by galleries and art dealers representing the artists, selling their creations. Art fairs are about the state of the financial value of the artwork and with that, its artists, at that particular moment in time.

Art Intervention
The term art intervention applies to art designed specifically to interact with an existing structure or situation, be it another artwork, the audience, an institution or in the public domain. The popularity for art interventions emerged in the 1960s, when artists attempted to radically transform the role of the artist in society, and thereby society itself. They are most commonly associated with conceptual art and performance art (TATE art terms).

Biennial
Biennials showcase new ideas, spark discourse, and contribute to critical theory in the arts and adjacent fields as philosophy, media, science, digital technology, and communication. The large percentage of works presented is experimental,

innovative, research-based, challenging to preserve, or a hard sell for other reasons, controversial, political, and socially engaged. Biennials are about the state of Contemporary Art itself at that particular moment in time.

Caribbean Insular
The Insular Caribbean consists of 7000 islands (world atlas) located in the Caribbean Sea. Many islands have no inhabitants. The populated ones consist of thirty territories: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, The Bahamas, Barbados, Bonaire, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Curacao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Montserrat, Puerto Rico, Saba, Saint Barth's, Saint Eustatius, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Maarten, Saint Martin, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad, and Tobago, Turks and Caicos, and US Virgin Islands. The definition of the Insular Caribbean can be inconsistent as The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos are usually included, but are actually in the Atlantic Ocean, not in the Caribbean Sea.

Caribbean White
Caribbean White is a term used in the Caribbean for citizens of complete or predominant European descent.

Commercial Art
Commercial art is done primarily for commercial purposes and the willingness to work for someone else's vision. Different skills are required than for work as a contemporary artist. A commercial artist must know about the fine arts, but must have communication skills, the ability to organize information, and a good knowledge of media. It also refers to advertising work, book illustration, work for hire, and many other creative services.

Contemporary Art
Contemporary Art is about the concept behind the work. It expands beyond the traditionally media -painting and sculpture- to adding performance, audio-visuals, installation, new media technology and other art media. It also expands beyond the traditional ways of presentation showing work outside museum and galleries. It entices and provokes the viewers, the artwork is not only what we literally see but only becomes complete as it adds the effects of our personal experience with the work. Contemporary art reflects on the current inclusive, international and innovative world in experimental ways that challenges and pushes existing boundaries. It's dynamic and evolving in its use of presentation, media, material, techniques, concepts, and content. It lacks uniformity and is part

of larger world-wide conversation. Contemporary Art result of an artist's innate, creative talent, and goes beyond traditional concepts, techniques or modes of presentation whereas skills in craft and traditional arts can be acquired with experience and are more about practical thought.

Craftsperson/Artisan
Creates material objects that are functional (eg. furniture, fashion), decorative (eg. ceramics), or in an associated artistic practice (eg. lace-making). A key feature of crafts is that they involve a high degree of "hands-on" craftsmanship (hence the colloquial term "handicrafts) rather than just skill with a machine.

Creolization
The term comes from the word creole, used to describe people born in the New World as opposed to those who were African-born slaves. The idea of creolization gained prominence during the Second World War, when scholars, such as the Martinique poet and politician Aimé Césaire wrote about the ambiguities of Caribbean life and the cultural identity of black Africans in a colonial setting. In this respect, creolization can be related to Négritude. Today the term creolization is sometimes used to describe the cultural complexity of the world we live in and of the many diverse societies that exist within it (TATE art terms).

Cultural Governance
Cultural governance is governance of culture. It includes cultural policy made by governments but extends also to cultural influence exerted by non-state actors and to policies which influence culture indirectly.

El Gran Caribe
El Gran Caribe is used when the coastal parts of South and Central America meet the Caribbean Sea: Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and Venezuela are added to the Caribbean Insular. Some also include French Guyana, as well as Guyana, Suriname, and the southwest side of North America which don't have shores in the Caribbean Sea.

Ethnicity
Ethnicity" refers to the shared social, cultural or historical experiences and practices of a group of people, for example, language, religion or dress, and usually a national or regional background. "Ethnic group" describes the people having these shared features.

Eurocentric
Centered on Europe or the Europeans; especially: reflecting a tendency to interpret the world in terms of European or Anglo-American values and experiences (Merriam-Webster dictionary).

Fine Art
Visual art, such as painting, sculpture, or music, concerned primarily with the creation of beautiful objects —usually used in plural (Merriam-Webster dictionary).

Itinerancy
The act of traveling from place to place; especially, a going about from place to place in the discharge of duty or the prosecution of business: as, the itinerancy of persons, collectively, whose occupation obliges them to travel constantly.

Maroon people
Enslaved people from Africa who escaped. They went to live in areas that are difficult to reach such as the rain forest and kept their autonomy.

Mas
Mas is short for Masquerade and synonymous with Carnival in the English speaking Caribbean and the French colloquial 'en masse', meaning 'in a group' or 'all together'. (Krista Thompson. En Mas, Carnival and Performance Art of the Caribbean, 2015).

Mas Camp
Mas Camp is a location where collaborative artistic community engages in Carnivals aesthetic traditions as producer of costumes (Krista Thompson. En Mas, Carnival and Performance Art of the Caribbean, 2015).

Museum
A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment (International Museum Association).

Ndjuka
Ndjuka is a term of abuse that has its origins in the slave era; a curse word used for Aukan or Okanisi people, one of the six Maroon people in Suriname (Aukan/Okanisi, Aluku, Kwinti, Matawai, Pamaaka, Samaaka). On 10 October 1760, the Aukan/Okanisi people signed a treaty with the Dutch colonizers, who

allowed them territorial autonomy. In the last decades of the 20th century a large number of the Aukan/Okanisi people have moved from their ancestral villages to the coast, especially in and around Paramaribo, the country's capital.

Negritude

Négritude was an anti-colonial cultural and political movement founded by a group of African and Caribbean students in Paris in the 1930s who sought to reclaim the value of blackness and African culture. Négritude was led by the Martinican poet Aimé Césaire, French Guianese poet Léon Damas and the future Senegalese President (who was also a poet) Léopold Sédar Senghor. It was influenced by a range of styles and art movements including surrealism and the Harlem Renaissance. With the outbreak of the Second World War and the dispersal of its artists and intellectuals from Paris, Négritude became a global art movement (TATE art terms).

Orange Economy

John Howkins, author of The Creative Economy: How People Make Money from Ideas, coined the term the Orange Economy replacing Creative Economy in 2011. The Creative Economy is the process from scientific aspects of research and development to a good or serves. He chose the color orange for its ties to youth and happiness and association with culture and. According to the book "La economía naranja. Oportunidad infinita" (The Orange Economy: Infinite Opportunities), written by economic expert in this field, Felipe Buitrago, if the creative economy were a product: it would have the fifth greatest volume of business in the world. If it were a country, it would be the fourth economic power with a GDP of $4.3 billion, 2.5 times the planet's military expenditure, and a total of 144 million workers.

Outsider Art

Outsider art is used to describe art that has a naïve quality, often produced by people who have not trained as artists or worked within the conventional structures of art production/ (TATE art terms)

Overseas Territory (OST)

A country or smaller territory which politically is either an integral part of - or in some dependent (e.g. colonial) relationship with another state, but is geographically separated by the sea, without bordering it or its coastal waters. Dependent areas are territories governed by a sovereign state but they are not part of the mainland and they often have a certain degree of autonomy represented by a local government, but they do not possess full political independence or

sovereignty as a state. OST I visited: Anguilla, Aruba, Bonaire, Cayman Islands, Curacao, Puerto Rico, Saba, St. Eustatius, St. Maarten, St. Martin, and US Virgin Islands.

Preparatory Education
Preparatory education prepares students for entrance to a higher school, primarily designed to prepare students for higher education.

Residency
An art residency invites artists (talent), art professionals (facilitators), and scholars (academics) to their location. Art residency is the transcending term. One can be an artist-in-residency, a curator-in-residency, a writer-in-residency, composer-in-residency, etc., depending on what the residency focus is.

Voudou
Voudou, also spelled Voodoo, Vodou, Vodun, or French Vaudou. Voudou is an official religion such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, etc. In Haiti Vodou was recognized officially as a religion in 2003, with the same status as Catholicism and Protestantism.

White Privilege
White privilege is a concept that highlights the societal advantages that white people have that others do not. The phrase white privilege was first coined by activist and scholar Peggy McIntosh in 1988 in her paper, White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.

Art terms Database TATE:
www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/c/contemporary-art

Words Matter
www.materialculture.nl/en/publications/words-matter
Compiled by the National Museum of World Cultures (Tropenmuseum, Afrika Museum, Museum Volkenkunde, Wereldmuseum) in the Netherlands. FREE download.

#12

IT TOOK A VILLAGE...

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© Photo courtesy of artist

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The book is multi-vocal, making use of quotations taken from transcripts of the interviews I did. All published quotes were sent to the people by email to verify the statements were articulated clearly and complete, and if needed adjustments were made for factual accuracy.

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