



CARIBBEAN
CROSSROADS OF THE WORLD



Educational Resources

CARIBBEAN: CROSSROADS OF THE

WORLD

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June 12, 2012 – January 6, 2013



Dear teachers:

The present series of educational resources are intended to complement and support your curriculum. They are broad enough to cover a wide range of themes and subject matters that you can easily utilize in your classrooms. All of them use the ***Caribbean: Crosswords of the World*** exhibition as its point of departure.

The resources that you will find are of two types. Some materials are intended for your students such as, books, poems, videos, and websites. In addition, we offer resources for you, teachers, to ruminate on and critically analyze some of the deeper issues and themes raised on El Museo's exhibition.

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We have organized the handbook in a thematic way, based on the two main themes covered in the exhibition: ***Counterpoints*** and ***Patriot Acts***. In addition, we have selected some emblematic artworks from the exhibition, and here provide specific information regarding the artist's biography, statement, and analysis of the artwork.

We wish you the best of luck on your journey. Now let's get to work!

Education & Public Programs Department
El Museo del Barrio



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Historical Context

- Introduction to the Caribbean
- [Mantz, Jeffrey W. "Caribbean." Encyclopedia of Food and Culture. Ed. Solomon H. Katz. Vol. 1. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2003. 321-326. Gale U.S. History In Context. Web. 27 June 2012.](#)
- ["Caribbean, The." International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. Ed. William A. Darity, Jr. 2nd ed. Vol. 1. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2008. 447-449. Gale U.S. History In Context. Web. 27 June 2012.](#)
- [Caribbean Map](#)
- [Films related to the Caribbean](#)
- Caribbean Countries' Timelines
 - [Bahamas](#)
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 - [Costa Rica](#)
 - [Cuba](#)
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 - [Martinique](#)
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 - [Venezuela](#)



Exhibition Themes



Counterpoints

Counterpoints reflects on the economic developments of the Caribbean, focusing on the shift from plantation systems and commodities such as sugar, tobacco, and fruit to the oil and tourism industries. These have had tremendous aesthetic and social impact while proving to be a source of wealth and conflict. As Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz demonstrated, two essentially different economic models produced sharp contrasts in the development of Caribbean societies. Sugar was a transnational business which relied on the latifundia (plantation or hacienda) system, new technologies and low-skilled laborers. The tobacco industry was developed locally and employed highly-trained technical workers who were key to the growing middle class. Today, a new counterpoint is unfolding, in which the oil and tourist industries collide. One requires ideal, pristine beaches and waters while the other threatens the same important resources. Both are heavily dependent on scarce natural resources which are threatened by climate change.

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(Caribbean: Crossroads of the World Catalogue)



ARTICLES

- [Adlai Murdoch, H. \(2009\). A Legacy of Trauma: Caribbean slavery, race, class, and contemporary identity in Abeng. *Research in African Literatures*, \(40\)4, 65-88.](#)
- [Caribbean Racial Formations." Encyclopedia of Race and Racism. Ed. John Hartwell Moore. Vol. 1. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2008. 274-278. Gale U.S. History In Context. Web. 27 June 2012.](#)
- [Guerrón Montero, K. \(2011\). Heritage, identity and globalization: The case of the island tourism in the Caribbean. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, \(30\)1, 1-6](#)
- [Náter, Laura. "Caribbean." Tobacco in History and Culture: An Encyclopedia. Ed. Jordan Goodman. Vol. 1. Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2005. 107-111. Gale U.S. History In Context. Web. 27 June 2012.](#)
- [Sawh, R., & Scales, A.M. \(2006\). Middle passage in the triangular slave trade: The West Indies. *The Negro Educational Review*, \(57\)3-4, 155-170.](#)
- [Stinchcome, A.L. \(1994\). Freedom and oppression of slaves in the eighteenth-century Caribbean. *American Sociological Review*, \(59\), 911-929.](#)
- [West-Durán, A. \(2005\). Puerto Rico: The pleasures and traumas of race. *Centro Journal*, \(17\)1, 46-69.](#)



NEWSPAPER/MAGAZINE ARTICLES

- [Archibold, R.C. \(2012, April 7\). China buys inroads in the Caribbean, catching U.S. notice. *The New York Times*.](#)
- [Associated Press. \(2000, March 17\). Montserrat celebrates slave revolt. *The New York Times*.](#)
- [Wilkinson, B. \(2011, November 2\). Race comes to the fore again in Trinidad. *The New York Amsterdam News*, p. 16.](#)



WEBSITES

- The Abolition of the Slave Trade

<http://abolition.nypl.org/home/>

The abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade was a long, arduous, and tortuous process that spanned almost nine decades. Ultimately, a conjunction of economic, political, social, and moral factors contributed to the slow extinction of the legal slave trade and the end of the illegal introductions that, in several countries, had taken its place. Explore this forgotten story with the help of essays, books, articles, maps, and illustrations. (Source: Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library)

- Lest We Forget: The Triumph over slavery

<http://digital.nypl.org/lwf/flash.html>

Though victimized, exploited and oppressed, Africans in the Americas have been active, creative agents of their own history, culture and political future. Their story is about living, surviving, and winning in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. *Lest We Forget* documents and interprets the obstacle-ridden but life-affirming experiences of the Africans who were enslaved in the Western Hemisphere. (Source: Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library)

- African Age: African & African Diasporan Transformations in the 20th Century

<http://exhibitions.nypl.org/africanaage/>

By the end of the 19th century, Africans and peoples of African descent—except the Ethiopians, the Haitians and the Liberians—were living under some form of European colonial domination. The history of Africa and its Diaspora was dismissed as insignificant at best, inexistent at worse. Black cultures were ridiculed, stereotyped, and scorned. But over the course of the last 100 years black peoples the world over launched epic struggles for freedom, civil rights, and independence. *Africana Age* retraces this turbulent history of challenges, tragedies, and triumphs. (Source: Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library)

SELECTED ARTWORKS

Key ideas

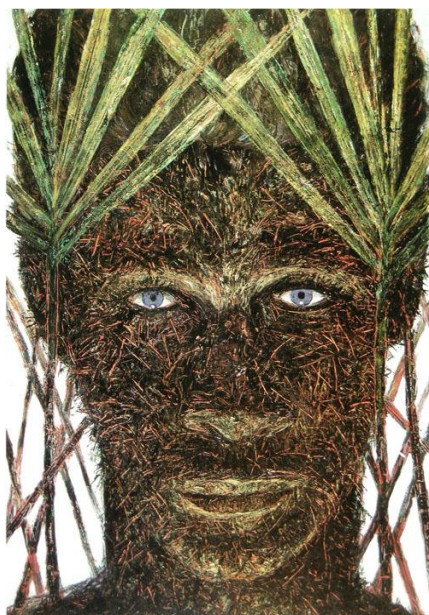
- Caribbean plantation systems and industries: sugar, tobacco, coffee, fruit, oil, and tourism
- Triangular trade, slave trade
- Complex relationships in the Caribbean:
 - Cuba and USA
 - Puerto Rico and USA,
 - Haiti and the Dominican Republic

1. **Arnaldo Roche Rabell** (Puerto Rico 1955)

We have to dream in blue (*Tenemos que soñar en azul*), 1986

Oil on canvas

Collection John T. Belk III & Margarita Serapion





- **About the artwork**

[Cabanillas, F. \(2005\). Arnaldo Roche:Africana a dos voces. *Centro Journal*, 17\(2\), pp 42-71. \(Spanish\)](#)

[Gera, J. \(2010\). The search for identity in the art of Ana Mendieta and Arnaldo Roche-Rabell. *Americana* 6 \(1\)](#)

- **About the artist**

Arnaldo Roche is one of the most important artists to emerge from the Caribbean since Wifredo Lam came to prominence in the 1940's. Like Lam, Roche explores issues of identity rooted in his mixed Spanish and Afro-Caribbean ancestry. Lam's formal lineage can be traced to Cubism and Surrealism, while Roche is a born Expressionist, closer to Van Gogh than to Picasso.

Roche is obsessed with memory, both its burial and retrieval, and this is echoed in his painterly technique; Roche often makes rubbings of his subjects' bodies, while laying them (or wrapping them) directly behind the surface of his canvas. He may also print ferns, lace, and other poetically charged objects onto his painting's surface. What follows is a complex process of covering up and scraping away pigment. Initial impressions are concealed, revealed, transformed, made at once distant and corporal realities.

Although Roche's work is always personal, there is a political subtext to much of his painting. His focus on the instability of self has a correlative in Roche's identity as a Puerto Rican: at once colonial subject and citizen of the world's most powerful country. Roche's paintings do not offer facile political solutions to the complexities of colonial identity. From his dual vantage point, Roche asserts that to be a colonial is to be in perpetual doubt and, in this sense, his is a geo-political form of Post-Modernism.

Arnaldo Roche's paintings can be found in the permanent collection of major institutions worldwide, including: The Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois; Fundación Cultural de México, México D.F.; Hirshorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.; Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas, Venezuela; and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

(Source: Latin American masters website. (n.d.). Arnaldo Roche Rabell. Retrieved from http://www.latinamericanmasters.com/english/artist_roche_about.html

2. **Annalee Davis** (Barbados 1963)

Sweet Island Cookie Cutters - Sweet Fuh So! (Cortadores de galleta isla dulce- ¡Tan dulces!), 2010-2012

Laser engraved Andiroba wooden boxes, acrylic cookie cutters, foam core, carpet

Courtesy of the artist



• **About the artwork**

Cookie Cutters is a response to the developers' vision of Barbados as a perfectly manicured environment, one that offers well-packaged, exclusive, home environments, built around golf courses and polo fields. With the majority of the lucrative west coast, as well as the south coast of the small island being largely over developed, interior spaces are increasingly being shaped into 'community living' centres or clubs, complete with white picket fences, man-made ponds and Miami styled, cookie cutter townhouses/villas/mansions.



(Source: Annalee Davis website. (n.d.). Work detailed. Retrieved from http://www.annaleedavis.com/workdetailed/cookie_cutters.html)

The Caribbean was the cradle of New World globalization. With the exception of the indigenous population, our people all came from somewhere else, into the belly of the Americas. Characterised by waves of migrant experience, the Caribbean became a place of confluence, transience and hybridity which for years romanticized the struggle to be whole, to become one Caribbean people. In spite of this ideal, we remain as fragmented as ever, locked into nationalist crevices, linguistic divides and exclusivist cultural legitimacy. The repeated production of idyllic images of an eternal playground for tourists on the one hand, and notions of the region as fragmented, failed and chaotic on the other; mask a complex history, leaving Caribbeans ambivalent about a sense of self. We must answer the question, both creatively and critically, what is the Caribbean? What image of ourselves do we wear and to what extent do these images represent who we actually are? What is the truth of our own lived realities and how do we speak to each other of this reality? My work exposes tensions within the larger context of a post-colonial history and the more recent experiences of post-independence. More personal explorations of home/land, longing and belonging, run through the work, interweaving poetic sequences with more direct references to our lived realities

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(Source: Annalee Davis website. (January, 2009). Personal Statement. Retrieved from <http://www.annaleedavis.com/index.html>)

- **About the artist**

Annalee Davis is a Barbadian Visual Artist producing installations, building objects and more recently, working with video. Her work exposes tensions within the larger context of a post-colonial Caribbean history and observes the nature of post-independent (failing?) nation states. She explores notions of home, longing and belonging; questions the parameters that define who belong (and who doesn't), and is concerned with issues surrounding the shifting landscapes of the archipelago. She has exhibited her work throughout the Caribbean and internationally since 1989. Annalee completed a BFA at the Maryland Institute, College of Art and an MFA at the Mason Gross School for the Arts, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. She blogs regularly about Caribbean intraregional migration at <http://www.creolechant.blogspot.com> and works from her studio, The Milking Parlour in St. George, Barbados.

(Source: Annalee Davis website. (n.d.). Resume. Retrieved from <http://www.annaleedavis.com/cv/index.html>)



- **Additional resources**

- Davis, A. (n.d.). Of people and place, the work of Annalee Davis. *Artetc* (2)1 Retrieved from http://www.annaleedavis.com/work/other_texts.html
- Annalee Davis' website: <http://www.annaleedavis.com/>

3. **Abel Barroso** (Pinar del Río, Cuba 1971)
Cigars with Ideology (Puros con ideología), 2001
 Multiple of wood cigar box with woodcut and lithograph, Edition: 60;
 Publisher/Printer: Graphic Studio, University of South Florida, Tampa
 The Museum of Modern Art, Richard A. Epstein Fund, 161.2003



- **About the artwork**

Tabaco con ideologia (Cigars with Ideology) is an authentic cedar cigar box carved by the artist and containing a woodblock print (taken from the carving on the boxtop) and a lithographic scroll inside, hand-cranked by the viewer to reveal a story of Cuba, the United States and cigars. It is "hecho a mano" (handmade) by a Cuban in Tampa – a whimsical and beautifully crafted reminder of the deep historical ties between Tampa and Cuba. The once-thriving cigar industry in Ybor City owed its success to the importation of Cuban cigar workers and Cuban tobacco.

(Source: Institute for Research in Art at the University of South Florida, Tampa website. (n.d.). Abel Barroso. Retrieved from http://ira.usf.edu/GS/artists/barroso_abel/barroso.html)

- **About the artist**

Abel Barroso, born in 1971 in Pinar del Rio, Cuba, is a very interesting young artist who has been rapidly gaining international renown for his art which combines printmaking and sculpture in biting and humorous commentary on contemporary Cuban life. Using meticulous craftsmanship, he creates playful works that often invite the viewer to interact. *The Third World Internet Cafe*, Barroso's memorable installation at the 7th Havana Biennial last November,



featured computers fashioned out of wood and paper and hand-cranked by the viewer. Residents of Tampa Bay had an opportunity to see Barroso's work in the exhibition Contemporary Art in Cuba: Survival and Irony on the Utopian Island, at the USF Contemporary Art Museum in 2001.

(Source: Institute for Research in Art at the University of South Florida, Tampa website. (n.d.). Abel Barroso. Retrieved from http://ira.usf.edu/GS/artists/barroso_abel/barroso.html)

4. **David Perez Karmadavis** (Dominican Republic, b. 1976)

Trata (Try), I & II, 2005

Video, diptych

4:33 min.

Courtesy of artist



- **About the artwork**

Isla Cerrada (artist's statement in Spanish)

La isla Hispaniola es una plataforma cerrada. La República de Haití es un extremo, la República Dominicana es el otro. La isla es un cuerpo dividido en dos naciones, con un suelo que las une, una frontera que los divide, dos gobiernos que la mercantilizan y una larga historia que los retiene. La República de Haití y La República Dominicana tienen un pasado compartido, contado, manipulado, vivido y memorizado. La República de Haití es vista como periferia. Un país golpeado por el racismo y sus trágicas historias de dictaduras. Una región herida, saqueada; con una tremenda necesidad de ayuda que impulse la superación de la miseria en la que vive la mayoría de su población. Compartiendo esta cualidad con el otro extremo de la isla. La República Dominicana funciona como centro, como motor. Con un presente y un futuro prometedor gracias a la inversión extranjera. En el mundo entero se recomienda la visita turística a República Dominicana. Un país con una fuerte adicción a un arraigado nacionalismo que ve a su otro lado con duda, con temor, con rencor. República Dominicana y República de Haití, tan cercanas, tan lejanas. No se puede hablar de uno sin mencionar al otro. Desde Haití se ve a República Dominicana como una solución. Desde la República Dominicana se ve a Haití como un problema...o simplemente, no se ve.

(Source: Perez Karmadavis, D. (2010). Isla Cerrada. E-misferica 7.1. Retrieved from <http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/e-misferica-71/karmadavis>)



- **About the artist**

David Perez Karmadavis is a versatile artist whose work covers a wide range of artistic media, such as drawings, ceramics, video, performance, action, painting and music. He is currently living and working in Guatemala. He graduated with honors in Fine Arts and Illustration in the Design School Altos de Chavón en la Romana, Dominican Republic. He has participated in festivals and exhibitions such as Horror Vacui, Muestra de performance y accionismo in Guatemala (2008); Loop Festival, Barcelona (2008); Seat Mates (coexistence), Videos in public buses (2007); Parallax Festival, Belgrade; Bienal Iberoamericana Inquieta Imagen V, San José (Costa Rica, 2007); Libertad, Edificio de correo, Guatemala City (2007); Artbus ARCO Madrid (2007); El arte por el piso, San Cristóbal, (Dominican Republic 2006); Encuentro Internacional de Arte Corporal, Caracas (2006); Don't call it performance/no lo llames performance (2004). Some of his personal projects are: Camuflaje, San Antonio (Texas), Isla abierta calle conde, Santo Domingo, Trata, Plaza España de Santo Domingo or Jardín delirio hospital psiquiátrico de Santo Domingo.

(Source: Videoarte website (n.d.). Biographies. Retrieved from <http://eng.videoarte.com/muestra/biografias.html>)

5. **Ramón Frade** (Cayey, Puerto Rico 1875-1954)
El pan nuestro (Our bread), 1936
 Oil on wood
 10 1/4 x 8 1/2 in.; Frame: 22 x 18 in.
 Collection of Luis de Corral & Lorraine V. de Corral



• About the artwork

With its victory in the Spanish-American War, the United States invaded Puerto Rico in 1898. A new order was imposed, one that initially sought to eradicate Spanish as the language of the island. While Puerto Rico's economic condition was quite precarious, it is also true that the island had its own beliefs, culture and traditions, all of which were characteristically Hispanic. Due to the social and cultural dislocations triggered by the invasion, the need to define and promote Puerto Ricanness gained greater urgency in the arts. The landscapes, customs and innumerable forms of Puerto Rican reality all served as primary inspirations. The figure of *el jíbaro*, the ennobled rural peasant, would become an icon of cultural affirmation and a rallying point for resistance against cultural incursions. The search for identity, which can be seen in literature, music and theater, would be forever lodged in the national psyche, finding its obvious parallel in the visual arts. The work of four artists in



particular, all born before 1898, serve as a perfect expression of this new direction.

Ramón Frade (1875 -1954), Miguel Pou (1888-1968), Oscar Colón Delgado (1889-1968) and Juan Rosado (1891-1962) all sought to define what it meant to be Puerto Rican through their incisive approach to both subject and setting. A clearer picture of Puerto Rican identity would emerge through the treatment of natural elements, customs, history, folklore and daily life. Frade's art is devoted to uncovering and exalting the traits of Puerto Rican identity. His subjects, men and women full of character and inner strength, such as the *jibaro* in the artist's most emblematic work *El Pan Nuestro*, provide a snapshot of customs and traditional pursuits.

(Source: "Visual Arts in Puerto Rico, The impact of the U.S. Invasion" Encyclopedia of Puerto Rico. Retrieved from <http://www.encyclopediaapr.org>)

- **About the artist**

Ramón Frade de León was a painter, surveyor and architect. His paintings were known for depicting, in a traditional local style, the personalities and landscapes of the era in which he lived. His works fall into the category of realism. Born in the municipality of Cayey in 1875, at the age of two he was adopted by a storekeeper from Andalusia and a woman from the Dominican Republic, after his biological father died. From 1887 to 1885, he lived in Valladolid and from 1885 to 1896 in Santo Domingo. In the Dominican Republic, he first attended the Normal School, under the direction of Puerto Rican exile Eugenio María de Hostos, and later the Santo Domingo Municipal School of Drawing, where he studied the artistic trends of Europe.

He worked as an illustrator and caricaturist for the magazine *El Lápiz*. In 1892, he met the French diplomat and painter Adolphe Laglande, who became his friend and mentor. From Laglande, he received the classical instruction he used to polish his techniques. During this era, he created a large number of works of famous Dominicans and acquired an interest in architecture. His painting, *Vista panorámica de Santo Domingo* (1893), won the gold medal at a contest held by the Dominican Academy. He traveled throughout the Caribbean, visiting Haiti, Cuba, Jamaica and Puerto Rico until he finally settled in Cayey, the town where he was born, in 1907. That same year, the government paid for him to travel to Italy, where he visited the main artistic centers to study classical art. He returned to Puerto Rico in 1909 and completed a correspondence degree in architecture.

Later, in 1928, he became a licensed engineer, architect, and land surveyor, the professions through which he earned his living. Despite living during a



time of new artistic movements, Frade did not identify with them. Like other Puerto Rican artists of the era, he cultivated the local, traditional style that tried to capture the reality of the island in that era, which was seen as threatened by Americanization and development, which is why he preferred to paint personalities and landscapes. His emblematic work, *El pan nuestro* (1905), presents the image of the rural Puerto Rican, the "jíbaro." However, he did incorporate modern trends, such as impressionism and pointillism, into some of his paintings. Among his best known works are *Idilio* (1942), *Mujer en la playa* (1944), *Los alrededores de Cayey* (1947) and *La planchadora* (1948). After his death in 1954, his works remained in the possession of his widow Reparada Ortiz, who donated them to the University of Puerto Rico.

(Source: "Frade Leon, Ramon" Encyclopedia of Puerto Rico. Retrieved from <http://www.encyclopediaapr.org>)

- **Additional resources**

- [Forastieri Braschi, E. \(Spring 2011\). El pan nuestro, la mascarada jibara y los jibaros de Ramon Frade y de Miguel Melendez Munoz. *Confluencia* \(26\)2, pp. 85-94](#)
- Figueroa, I., & Figueroa, J. (n.d.). El jibaro puertorriqueno. *El Boricua*. Retrieved from: <http://www.elboricua.com/jibaro.html>

6. **Pétion Savain** (Port-au-Prince, Haiti 1906-1973)

Market on the hill (Mercado en la colina), 1938

Oil on canvas

Organization of American States, Gift of IBM



- **About the artwork**

"If we look back in time, over nearly two centuries of independence of the Republic of Haiti, we will see that the development of its visual arts, if compared with literature, poetry, dance, music, and architecture, has been very seriously impaired. This was the case up to the 1940s, mostly because of a lack of continuing institutional support and the total absence of infrastructures such as museums and art galleries. The potential art buyers, whose tastes were mainly fashioned by traditional European academic trends, were all this time totally uncaring for the local talents. This situation curiously prevailed in the first half of the twentieth century, in spite of a growing national awareness stimulated by the American occupation of Haiti from 1915 to 1934. This nationalist spirit was strongest among Haitian writers and poets at first.

Painters referred to as the "Indigenists" soon joined in the search for these values that, while compensating for hurt pride, were to become the essence of a Haitian identity.



Whereas the literature of the time got world recognition, the Indigenist painters remained fairly unnoticed in Haiti and abroad, although Market on the Hill by the painter and novelist Petion Savain won first prize in the IBM Corporation 1938 Contest and was shown that same year in the "Contemporary Art of the Western Hemisphere" exhibition at the San Francisco World's Fair.

In their quest for identity and their reevaluation of the indigenous elements of their culture, these artists and the writers and poets as well, looked to the peasant and poorer classes for inspiration. Since they were all from the upper middle class and the aristocracy, their vision of the lower classes, over the enormous gap that separated them, was often too superficial, as was their pictorial representations of these social strata. Their works at that time were unattractive, on the one hand, to the poorer classes who could not find themselves in these idealized genre scenes and, on the other hand, to the potential buyers among the elites who, refusing to deal with such realities, found these works of art totally unacceptable".

[Source: Alexis, G. (1993). Haitian art in the twentieth century. In B. Robinson (Ed.) *Artistic representation of Latin American diversity: sources and collections: papers of the Thirty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, May 31-Jun 5, 1989*. Albuquerque, NM: SALALM Secretariat, General Library, University of New Mexico.]

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- **About the artist**

Petion Savain

Born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on February 15, 1906.

Considered one of the fathers of Haitian painting, he was the first Haitian painter to receive recognition when he was awarded medals at the Gallery of Science and Art in 1939-five years before the opening of the Centre d'Art. He started painting in 1927 while teaching cabinet making, tin smithing and wrought iron at the same school. Savain studied at the Haitian School of Agronomy and earned a law degree. He decided to learn painting in 1931, and in 1939 published his first book, *La Case de Damballah*. He studied at the Art Student's League in New York in 1941, where his second book, *Les Oeuvres Nouvelles*, was published a year later. His quest for knowledge was insatiable. A lawyer, painter, author and teacher of the arts, Savain was also a student of mural and fresco techniques, tempera, wood sculpture. He even found time to become a newspaper columnist from 1950 to 1956 during which time he appeared in over six art books.



Savain's very personal style has been copied by many Haitian artists, but his pinks and purples are instantly recognizable, as is his use of semicircles and triangles in which painted figures crouch or sit. His work is on exhibition in the US, including the Corcoran Gallery and Grand Central and Riverside Museum. The opportunity to buy Savain's work is rare, but an aesthetic joy as well as an invaluable investment.

Petion Savain died in 1975.

(Source: Haitian Art Company. (n.d.). Petion Savain. Retrieved from <http://www.haitian-art-co.com/artists/psavain.html>)

7. **Felipe Jesus Consalvos** (Cuba 1891-Philadelphia c. 1960)
Uncle Sam Wants your Surplus Fat (Tío Sam quiere su exceso de grasa), c. 1920-50
 Mixed media collage
 Courtesy of Doodletown Farm, LLC and Fleisher Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia



• About the artwork

A Cuban immigrant and professional cigar roller, Felipe Jesus Consalvos' entire oeuvre was discovered at a garage sale in West Philadelphia in the early 1980s. Consisting of approximately 825 collaged artworks both sculptural and two-dimensional - on paper, found photographs, musical instruments - his compositions are covered with cigar bands, cut out images of political figures, gorillas, elephants, American classic cars, high society women, beer cans and postage stamps.

Consalvos elevated the vernacular tradition of cigar band collage to a highly systemized and obsessive practice. The cigar bands serve as prosceniums, or stage sets, containing his imaginary worlds of collaged action within. Scholar Brendan Greaves has called Consalvos' collages "ribald" and "mischievous". His work reveals a wry viewpoint on American culture - consumerism and excess, power and hegemony - frequently explored through playful compositions of sourced American (political) icons; US Presidents are often portrayed in drag and dunce caps. "Staccato headlines and stagy compositions at once celebrate and eviscerate the icons of American history,



betraying a deep skepticism of American milk-and- honey mythology, particularly presidents," writes Greaves.

(Source: Andrew Edlin Gallery website (n.d.). Artist: Felipe Jesus Consalvos. Retrieved from http://www.edlingallery.com/dynamic/new_exhibit_artist.asp?ExhibitID=272)

- **About the artist**

Felipe Jesus Consalvos was born in Cuba in 1891 and emigrated to the United States in the early 1920s with his young wife and son, settling first in Miami, then Brooklyn and ultimately in Philadelphia. Consalvos' biography has been pieced together from translated family letters, photographs and statements, and is informed by clues and physical materials used in his artwork (newspaper clippings, postage stamps, magazine advertisements, refuse, American currency and cigar bands).

There is no evidence that Consalvos created his art while living in Cuba. Subsequently, all surviving work has been attributed circa 1920s-1950s. Felipe Jesus Consalvos' works are in many private and public collections including the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the High Museum of Art and the American Folk Art Museum. All works in the exhibition are presented courtesy of Doodletown Farms LLC and Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia.

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(Source: Andrew Edlin Gallery website (n.d.). Artist: Felipe Jesus Consalvos. Retrieved from: http://www.edlingallery.com/dynamic/new_exhibit_artist.asp?ExhibitID=272)

- **Additional resources**

- [Greaves, B. \(2008\). "Dream the Rest": On the mystery and vernacular modernism of Felipe Jesus Consalvos, Cubanamerican "Cigarmaker, creator, healer, & man." \(Master's thesis\). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. \(Accession Order No. AAT 1452951\)](#)



Patriot Acts

Patriot Acts studies the central role that creole culture and notions of hybridity, supported by newly empowered local economic forces, play in the configuration of national and regional discourses of identity. Artists and intellectuals often pitted traditional, academic aesthetics against the “authentic,” indigenous and African heritages of the Caribbean. With newly-independent countries developing throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, national identity and culture were areas of constant inquiry. In the wake of the crisis of Western civilization, non-mainstream or non-Western traditions develop throughout the region. Among the subthemes explored here are the tensions between nationalism and compolitanism, the roles of indigenismo, costumbrismo and the intuitives, the complex notion of the self, and the concept of a Caribbean style.

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(Caribbean: Crossroads of the World Catalogue)



ARTICLES

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- [Mohammed, P. \(1998\). Towards indigenous feminist theorizing in the Caribbean. *Feminist Review*, 59, 6-33.](#)
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- [Robinson-Walcott, K. \(2009\) Deconstructing Jamaican whiteness: a diasporic voice. *Small Axe*, 29, 107-117.](#)
- [Sutton, C.R. \(2004\). Celebrating ourselves: the family reunion rituals of African-Caribbean transnational families. *Global Networks*, \(4\)3, 243-257.](#)



NEWSPAPER/ MAGAZINE ARTICLES

- [Murphy-Larronde, Suzanne. "St. Lucia's Creole core: language and culture play a key role in this Caribbean nation's struggle for a new path to economic development." Americas \[English Edition\] July-Aug. 2006: 12+. Gale U.S. History In Context. Web. 27 June 2012.](#)
- [Poole, R.M. \(2011, October\). What became of the taino? *Smithsonian*, 58-70.](#)
- [Thorne, E.T. \(2004, September-October\). Land rights and Garifuna identity. *NACLA Report on the Americas, Report on Race part 1*, 21-25.](#)



VIDEOS

- Haiti & the Dominican Republic: An Island Divided
video.pbs.org/video/1877436791

In the Dominican Republic, Professor Gates explores how race has been socially constructed, and how the country's troubled history with Haiti informs notions about racial classification. In Haiti, Professor Gates tells the story of the birth of the first-ever black republic, and finds out how the slaves hard fight for liberation became a double edged sword.

- Cuba: The Next Revolution
video.pbs.org/video/1898347038

In Cuba Professor Gates finds out how the culture, religion, politics and music of this island are inextricably linked to the huge amount of slave labor imported to produce its enormously profitable 19th century sugar industry, and how race and racism have fared since Fidel Castro's Communist revolution in 1959

- The Quake
video.pbs.org/video/1456461314

A powerful report on Haiti's tragedy, with never-before-seen footage. What can be done now - and who will do it?

SELECTED ARTWORK

THEMES:

- National identity
- Place and identity
- Multiculturalism, mulatto identity, creole identity
- Colonialism
- Art in the Caribbean: costumbrismo, intuitives, indigenismo

1. **Reinaldo Sanguino** (Caracas, Venezuela 1973; New York)

American Eagle (Águila Americana), 2012

Ceramic, mixed media

Courtesy the artist and DEAN PROJECT, New York



• About the artwork

Gods & Designers:

These sculpture-crowns are part of my "Gods & Designers" series, which is based primarily on ideas of social class. I was particularly interested in making an object that represents the blurring of social classes in contemporary society.

I use familiar luxury brands, such as Hermes and Tiffany's, and ceramics crowns made of porcelain with a high-gloss black glaze. By combining



imagery of our contemporary society (the luxury brands) with a historical symbol (the crown) I'm interested in displaying a timeline in the development of the visual imagery we associate as social upper class.

Furthermore, I employ the color black as the color that defines pop culture in my view. The crowns are made out of a breakable material atop luxury cardboard boxes accessible to anyone willing to consume the brand; both of these qualities are my way of representing the blurring of social classes and the fragility that the upper social class seemingly faces today.

Reinaldo Sanguino's sculptural works resemble the accoutrements of European royalty - and by visual extension, the abundant Miss Universe crowns garnered by light-skinned Venezuelan contestants - and speak to the narrow contours of national identities in multiracial and class-tired societies. Precious materials and stones that traditionally adorn these objects give way to black ceramic that can allude to the national treasure of Venezuelan oil and marginalized non-white populations (El Museo Del Barrio - 5th Annual S-Files Biennale).

(Source: Dean Project website. (n.d.). Reinaldo Sanguino's statement. Retrieved from http://deanproject.com/reinaldo-sanguino_statement_past.html)

• **About the artist**

Reinaldo Sanguino was born in Caracas, Venezuela (1973). He graduated in 1993 from the School of Visual Arts Cristobal Rojas in Caracas, in the concentration program of ceramics. After graduating he relocated to New York City from where he currently works and lives. He has exhibited in both one-person and group shows throughout the United States and Latin America. Sanguino is the recipient of national and international grants-award and has participated in artist in residency programs throughout the United States. He was the 2007 nominee for the prestigious Louis Comfort Tiffany Biennial Award and was one of the artists participating in the El Museo Del Barrio 5th edition 2007-2008 Biennale "The (S) Files" in New York City. His work is included in numerous major private collections as well as the permanent collections including the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, TX, MINT Museum, Charlotte NC, Museum and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis MN. Sanguino's work is currently included in exhibitions at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston and the MINT Museum Charlotte NC.

(Source: Dean Project website. (n.d.). Reinaldo Sanguino's biography. Retrieved from http://deanproject.com/reinaldo-sanguino_bio.html)



2. Miguel Rodríguez Sepúlveda (Tampico, Tamaulipas, Mexico, 1971; Mexico City) and **Fernanda Mejía Beltrán** (Bogotá, Colombia, 1972; Mexico)

Emergía Caracas, 2007

DVD-Video, sound, 6 channels

Courtesy of the artist



- **About the artwork**

Emergy can be define as “the useful energy (exergy) of one specific kind, that was used directly and indirectly in the build process of one specific god or service” (from Wikipedia in Spanish)

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Emergy is a project in progress composed by a series of actions in which I explore further on the condition of the cultural matters inside the historical, political and social process of Latin America and the efforts necessary aimed for the process, propitiating a series of questions about identity, destinations and relevancies of this changes as well as the costs and results.

These research has led me to the necessity of reflex the effort of a group of persons who are making a continuous physical effort, apparently useless the sweat of these individuals fade an image drawn on their backs, which represents some of the ideals and values of our Latin-American nations. The project will take place all over the Latin-American capital cities, as the main idea is to set a reflection on our identity as well as determine the common ground between our countries, reaching a definition based on differences and similarities in which our aspirations, memories and collective imaginaries had settled down. In each presentation I explore the icons -chosen by the people from the city- which defines the national character and utopias, marked by the historical process of this latitude of America.

(Source: Miguel Rodriguez Sepulveda website. (n.d.). Emergia Statement.

Retrieved from <http://www.miguelrodriguezsepulveda.com/>



- **About the artist**

In the past years my work has been a constant investigation of the social and political context in which I am immersed. I have approached this subject mainly from a scientific or mathematical point of view, constructing parallelisms between physical principles such as Newton's first law or the law of the conservation of the energy, and the violence generated in the asymmetries on life acts. My work methodology tends to go towards a mixture of the scientific method with the practices or/and strategies of the so called conceptual art, looking for an efficient way to present these findings to the viewer, confronting him to his own conditioning as a member of his own society... I am sure that art follows the same manners as some of the basic physiological needs of the human body, aiming to preserve the survival of the species by pondering upon a wider view of our own possibilities

(Source: Miguel Rodriguez Sepulveda website. (n.d.). Artist's Statement. Retrieved from <http://www.miguelrodriguezsepulveda.com/>)

Nace en Tampico Tamps, crece en Cerro Azul, Veracruz. De 1986 a 2003 radica en Monterrey NL donde estudia arquitectura, fotografía y empieza su carrera en las artes. Desde 2003 vive y trabaja en México DF. Desde 2007 trabaja junto a la artista colombiana Fernanda Mejía en el proyecto EMERGÍA (<http://www.proyectoemergia.org/>) realizando un recorrido por los 21 países de Latinoamérica generando un mapeo y una reflexión sobre los paradigmas que apuntalan la construcción de la identidad de cada lugar. Su obra se ha mostrado en 19 muestras individuales en México, Venezuela, Colombia, Argentina, Ecuador y Cuba. De manera colectiva en alrededor de 120 muestras en diferentes países, principalmente en Latinoamérica y Europa. Ha recibido diversos apoyos a la producción en México y el extranjero entre las que destacan en 2009 el Apoyo a la Producción Artística de la Fundación Prince Claus de Holanda y el Programa de Patrocinios y Becas de la Fundación/Colección Jumex.

(Source: Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation website. (n.d.). Miguel Rodriguez Sepulveda Biography. Retrieved from <http://www.cifo.org/component/community/3533amiguel-rodriguez-sepulveda/profile>)

- **Additional resources**

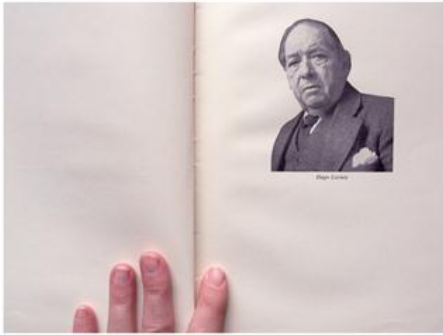
- Proyecto Emergia Caracas' website:
<http://www.proyectoemergia.org/caracas/index.html>
- Miguel Rodriguez Sepulveda's website:
<http://www.miguelrodriguezsepulveda.com>



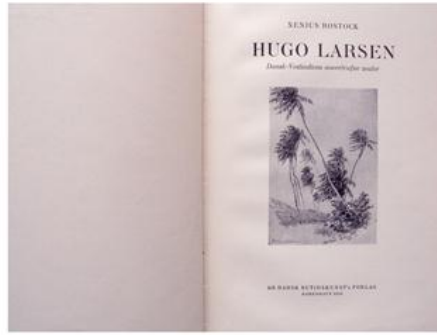
3. “Eyewitness Accounts” (2008)

Nanna Debois Buhl (Denmark 1975)

Installation: Photographs, Gouache, paintings
9 frames, each 16 x 20 inches.



The landscape, the light, the people you met.
How was your first encounter?
It is not necessarily definitive, but certainly suggestive.
Your name is a hurricane.



You were at the islands 100 years before me.
Around the time Picasso painted his first cubist painting.
A Danish princess (Marie) supported your trip.
Your task was to paint life in the colonies.



The sun (burning at noon)
The bypasser (wearing a mint green t-shirt)
The format adopted is one of short case studies.
My task is to paint life in the former colonies.



Being a foreigner, an intruder,
I wonder if you kept a diary,
as I, recording details.
Who was the woman you painted repeatedly?



When you came back, the decision had been made to sell the islands,
although it did not happen until years later.
Between hotel lobby and overgrown ruins
people anxiously tell me not to cross the bridge.



It happens several times that afternoon.
The interest in the islands had vanished.
Your paintings were only shown once,
and the reviews were not great.



While fashion was changing,
the people you painted continued.
There are no people in my pictures.
I feel uncomfortable.



Blood and water mixed in the gutter.
I feel uncomfortable
because of slave markets,
because of stained pasts.



Later you painted portraits of counts.
Quiet landscape after hurricane. I wonder if you grew bitter.
I wonder if we climbed the same hills.
As such, they are selective views.

• About the artwork

The installation *Eyewitness Accounts* is a “letter” to a Danish painter, Hugo Larsen (1875-1950). At the beginning of the 20th century, it was hotly debated whether Denmark should sell the islands to the US. In 1902, Hugo Larsen was sent to the Virgin Islands to paint life in the colonies in order to raise Danish awareness of the islands. When Hugo Larsen returned in 1905, it had been decided to sell the islands, so not only had public interest for the subject of his paintings vanished, Larsen’s painting style was now also considered outdated. By contrasting my research at the US Virgin Islands with the works of Hugo Larsen, the project addresses the artist’s role in the construction of history. The installation “Eyewitness Accounts” combines a series of drawings with documentation of Hugo Larsen’s work. The images are presented side by side with a text written directly on the wall as captions below the images.



(Source: Nanna Debois Buhl's website. (n.d.). Eyewitness accounts statement. Retrieved from http://www.nannadeboisbuhl.net/projects/eyewitness_accounts/index.html)

Eyewitness Accounts

Sparsely poetic, the work of Nanna Debois Buhl explores the inherent power and politics of visual pleasure. Her most recent project began in the Virgin Islands, an innately beautiful and historically complex site. The architectural landscape of the islands is a pastiche of its unlikely histories: as a past colony of Denmark, a former port for the slave trade, and a current U.S. territory. Interweaving stories of this layered past, Nanna Debois Buhl focuses on the gaps between identities. In the process she reveals cultural interstices that are often overlooked.

The artist, a native of Denmark, addresses the colonizing role of imagery in 'Eyewitness Accounts.' The body of work, consisting of photographs and monochromatic gouache paintings, reads as an open letter to Hugo Larsen, a fellow artist whose work predates Nanna Debois Buhl's by over a hundred years. Sent as a visual emissary to the region in 1902, Larsen's traditional paintings and prints depicted his country's outpost with ardour meant to inspire a sense of nationalistic desire - to sell the idea of these Danish colonies to the Danish public. What Larsen didn't realize was during the years he spent painting on site, the Danish had instead decided to sell the islands. Upon returning to his homeland, Hugo Larsen found his imagery stylistically outdated and culturally irrelevant.

By resurrecting this historically real counterpart as a part of her fictional exchange, Nanna Debois Buhl gives Hugo Larsen an opportunity to participate in a critical dialog, albeit posthumously. In the first image we are obliquely introduced to this otherwise forgotten character in the form of an open book. He is a photograph of a photograph, of no more substance than a ghost. A cautionary muse to Nanna Debois Buhl's journey, Larsen serves as a reminder of the changing currency of visual power.

Nanna Debois Buhl's work also speaks to another type of economy. From the rich, verdant landscape, she distils somberly beautiful silhouettes of horizons, where opaque gray landscape meets paper white sky. The intricately painted shapes conceal as much as they reveal, leaving the viewer to piece together the idea of a place from sparsely given clues. Minimal yet seductive, these images attest to their own limitations.

A sense of visual restraint runs through Nanna Debois Buhl's Virgin Island project regardless of media. In the eight minute film loop 'There is This House' she punctuates scenes of saturated film with blank frames of white, letting subtitles stand alone. There is no sound. Her photography project



'From the Guidebook' repeats the same image in every frame: a non-descript hotel pool in which only the caption changes.

Withholding and silence are time-tested tools in the process of concealing history; here we see those same devices used to unearth. Nanna Debois Buhl will return to the US Virgin Islands this summer as a resident artist to continue this on-going body of work. Over the course of the project, the islands have become a different kind of destination; here a critical traveller can weave together narrative while she simultaneously unravels her roles as artist, tourist, and cultural navigator.

(Source: Stockton More, C. (Summer, 2008). Eyewitness Accounts. *Ducts.org* 21. Retrieved from http://www.nannadeboisbuhl.net/texts/index_stockton.html)

• About the artist

Nanna Debois Buhl is a Danish visual artist residing in New York. She participated in The Whitney Museum Independent Study Program, New York (2008-09) and recieved her MFA from The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen, Denmark (2006).

Her work has been exhibited internationally, recent exhibitions include: "Whitney ISP studio Exhibition", Art in General, NY; "Picture History", Museet for Fotokunst, Denmark; "Muted", Studio Museum, NY; "Socle du Monde Biennial", Herning Art Museum, Denmark; "L'art en Europe", Domaine Pommery, France; "Possibility of Change", Åland Art Museum, Finland; "Between the Images", Rumänska Kulturinstitutet, Sweden; "The Biennial of Young Artists", Estonia; "Subtle Whispering", Total Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea; "BAC 41st International Film & Video Festival", Brooklyn Museum, NY; "House Warming", Swiss Institute, NY; "Overdragelse", Overgaden - Institute of Contemporary Art, Denmark; "Tourist's Tale", Aarhus Kunstbygning, Denmark. Collections: The National Museum of Photography, Denmark.

Nanna Debois Buhl was Artist in Residence at The Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Work Space Program (2007-08), New York and The Caribbean Museum Center for the Arts, US Virgin Islands (2008). In collaboration with the artist group Women Down the Pub she was co-editor of the book "VIEW - Feminist Strategies in Danish Visual Art" (2004).

(Source: The drawing center website. (n.d.). Artist Portfolio. Retrieved from http://www.drawingcenter.org/viewingprogram/share_portfolio.cfm?pf=5610)



Artist Statement

I work conceptually with film, video, drawing, photography and sound. My practice is research based with references to literature, documentary and experimental film. Using theoretical tools and models of analysis combined with artistic experimentation in different media, I see my practice relating to what Catherine Russell defines as "experimental ethnography": "a methodological incursion of aesthetics on cultural representation, a collision of social theory and formal experimentation."

My recent work has focused on relations between history, collective memory, and identity formation. Using a given site as a starting point for my investigations, I am interested in how our understandings of space are formed by diverse parameters; physical, historical, political, economical, and emotional. By exploring a Danish 19th century amusement park, a Brooklyn neighborhood on the edge of gentrification or an abandoned house on a Caribbean island, my work investigates how narratives and ideologies are inscribed in architecture and urban structures as well as how such sites are used in the formation of ideologies and writings of history.

By presenting multiple, sometimes contradictory, perspectives, the projects oscillate between telling a story, reflecting on storytelling and studying aspects of the language(s) being used. Visually, I combine my own 16 mm film footage and drawings with archival material or historical photographs. I thereby juxtapose personal history and history at large and set contemporary issues in a historical perspective.

My drawing projects combine text and image to create a story, often with references to film (the pan of the camera, the sequence, the progression of a story unfolding in a series of images). I work with drawing on a range of scales, with the considerations about scale and format being a crucial part of the work: While some drawings are small works on paper, others are elements in a slideshow, and yet others are wall drawings relating to the architecture of the exhibition space or site specific installations in public space.

(Source: The drawing center website. (n.d.). Artist Portfolio. Retrieved from http://www.drawingcenter.org/viewingprogram/share_portfolio.cfm?pf=5610)

- **Additional resources**

- Nanna Debois Buhl website:
<http://www.nannadeboisbuhl.net/index.html>

4. Jeanette Ehlers (Denmark 1973)

Three Steps of Story (Tres pasos del cuento), 2009

HD video, looped, 03:35 min

Courtesy of the artist



- **About the artwork**

In the video *Three Steps of Story* we see Jeannette Ehlers waltzing in a big mirrored hall, where the colorful and rebellious governor Peter von Scholten scandalized the white citizenship by inviting the then “free Negroes” to the ball. It was also von Scholten, who proclaimed emancipation of slaves on St. Croix in 1848.

Jeannette Ehlers, with ATLANTIC, brings focus on a dark chapter in Danish history: its intensive participation in the slave trade and colonialism. Through digitally manipulated photographs and video installations, she puts under the microscope the Danish triangular trade across the Atlantic between Denmark, the Caribbean and the Gold Coast. ATLANTIC offers no answers, but is a poetic presentation using photography, both documentary and manipulative possibilities to create reflections on the Danish slave trade.

(Source: Jeannette Ehlers’ website. (n.d.). Artist portofolio. Retrieved from <http://www.jeannetteehlers.dk/text/portfolie2010.pdf>)



- About the artist

Jeannette Ehlers is based in Copenhagen, Denmark and studied at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. Ehlers has exhibited her work at Nikolaj Copenhagen Contemporary Art Center, Copenhagen, Denmark; Institute of Contemporary Art, Overgaden, Copenhagen; Aarhus Art Building, Aarhus, Denmark, Total Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, South Korea; Public Screens, Stavanger, Norway; BRAENNEN, Berlin, Germany; Kunst:raum Sylt Quelle, Sylt, Germany, SCHUNK- Glaspaleis, Herleen, The Netherlands and Image 10, Vevey, Switzerland.

(Source: International studio and curatorial website. (n.d.). Jeannette Ehlers' profile. Retrieved from <http://www.iscp-nyc.org/artists/alumni-profiles/2011/jeannette-ehlers.html>)

- **Additional resources**

- Dowrich-Phillips, L. (2006 March 19,). Inspired by her roots. *The Trinidad Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://legacy.guardian.co.tt/archives/2006-03-25/Womanwise/wwise8.html>
- Jeannette Ehlers' website. (n.d.). Artist catalogue. Retrieved from <http://www.jeannetteehlers.dk/text/portfolie2010.pdf>
- Jeannette Ehlers' website: <http://www.jeannetteehlers.dk/index.html>

5. Enrique Grau Araújo (Panamá 1920 – Bogotá, Colombia 2004)

La mulata cartagenera, 1940

Oil on canvas

Colección del Museo Nacional de Colombia



• About the artwork (Spanish)

Presentado en el Primer Salón Nacional de Pintura de 1940 en Bogotá, tuvo una cálida recepción en los fríos círculos artísticos capitalinos, y tan buen éxito que la presidencia de la República le otorgó una beca para estudiar en Nueva York por dos años. En tan pocos años el pintor había podido almacenar una sólida formación en su incesante búsqueda del dibujo y la línea, estudios hechos con modelos vivos y copias de reproducciones de libros de arte. Ya desde ese momento su "Mulata" responde cabalmente a lo afirmado por el crítico colombiano Germán Rubiano Caballero décadas más tarde, cuando firmara: "El 'mundo' de Grau es completamente personal y se caracteriza, ante todo, por su interés en sus valores táctiles que le dan un especial verismo a sus representaciones. En este sentido el artista se apoya en una tradición que se remonta a los orígenes del Renacimiento."

La sensualidad a flor de piel de esta criatura es una invitación a delectarse táctilmente en el óvalo finísimo del rostro enmarcado en el mentón suave y fluído, en los labios carnosos cuyo mohín está en perfecta complicidad con su mirada de desdeñosa picardía bajo el triunfo de sus cejas arqueadas. El halagüeño tacto se incrementa en el palpito de esos senos airoso y rotundos,



más provocativos en tanto que la etamina blanca del vestido en vez de ocultarlos los enerva; en su talle audazmente sesgado, sus caderas espléndidas...

Se siente latir el pulso de Cezanne en la sobriedad de hojas y flores -capachos y adelfas- en la patilla pulposa y el cojín balanceados en el ángulo izquierdo por la alcarraza de barro reluciente. A pesar de la aparente quietud de la mulata, hay, sinembargo, un aire de tensión, de morbo contenido, voltaje de mujer fatal, de trópico en calor, escandecido; no está lejos de ser, en buen romance, la Cartagena misma, siempre antigua y reciente, cruce de tantas ennias milenarias, que ya Grau nunca querrá abandonar y que veremos aparecer una y otra vez a lo largo y ancho de su acontecer pictórico.

(Source: Museo Virtual de Estética, Universidad del Norte website. (n.d.). Retrieved from: <http://museo.uninorte.edu.co/pintores/index.asp?Codigo=2>)

• About the artist (Spanish)

Pintor, dibujante y escultor nacido en Ciudad de Panamá de familia cartagenera, en 1920. Básicamente autodidacta, Enrique Grau Araújo estudió en el Art Students League de Nueva York, entre 1940 y 1943, y en la Academia de San Marcos de Florencia, entre 1955 y 1956. Su vasta producción puede dividirse en dos amplios períodos. El primero va desde 1940 hasta comienzos de los años sesenta, y el segundo, desde esos años hasta la actualidad. El primer período resulta lleno de variedad y con varias fases estilísticas; en dos de ellas, por lo menos, el interés naturalista que preside su obra se ve considerablemente debilitado: en los cuarenta, cuando se aproxima al expresionismo, y de 1955 a 1959, cuando se aproxima a la abstracción a través de planteamientos retomados del cubismo. El segundo período es naturalista y en él la figura humana resulta su motivo predominante. Una figura que, en la mayoría de las ocasiones, es una mezcla de raza blanca, negra e indígena, y que se caracteriza por su desenfado y sensualidad. Esta etapa es la más conocida y mucha gente considera que aquí se encuentra el verdadero Grau, es decir, el artista en sus mejores momentos. Sin embargo, para la historia del arte colombiano es especialmente importante su primer período.

Este comienza en 1940, cuando Grau participa con el óleo La mulata cartagenera en el I Salón Nacional. Con esta pintura, que anticipa al Grau tardío de personajes en actitudes teatrales y rodeados de objetos, obtiene la primera mención honorífica. Previamente, de manera autodidacta, Grau ya ha realizado copias de los grandes maestros (El Greco, Rembrandt, Jean-Antoine Watteau), retratos de estrellas de cine y, especialmente, retratos de familiares



y de las domésticas de su casa. La mención recibida le valió una beca para estudiar en el exterior. Grau escogió Nueva York, donde ingresó al Art Students League, en ese entonces con muy buenos profesores refugiados de la segunda Guerra Mundial. Luego de pintar y dibujar bajo la tutela de varios maestros, se consagró al grabado. De estos trabajos nació su interés por imprimirle a las representaciones un dramatismo especial. Desde entonces y hasta 1950, Grau es un auténtico expresionista, que exagera o distorsiona la figura humana, el paisaje natural y el urbano. De esos años son los únicos cuadros en los que Grau toca asuntos sociales, políticos y religiosos. Algunas de estas obras pueden considerarse entre las más modernas de su tiempo en Colombia. Desde 1950 hasta 1955 Grau transita por una fase de naturalismo poético. Sus trabajos se llenan ahora de ponderación y equilibrio. Las leyes de la pintura se imponen a los temas y en muchas obras el reposo domina las imágenes representadas.

Después de un viaje a México, durante el cual comienza a pintar con colores más vivos, Grau empieza a estilizar las figuras y a reelaborarlas con elementos geométricos. Al principio son mujeres de caras ovaladas que juegan con hilos. Poco a poco su apariencia orgánica se va perdiendo; luego, los objetos acompañantes sufren la misma transformación. Radicado en Florencia de 1955 a 1956, a donde fue a estudiar pintura mural en la Academia de San Marcos, Grau concreta lo más característico de la tercera fase de su proceso creativo: la recreación de la realidad a partir del cubismo. Desde entonces y hasta 1959, su obra se vuelve básicamente geométrica y, entre 1958 y 1959, próxima a la abstracción. Como de costumbre, su producción es enorme y en diversos procedimientos de pintura y dibujo. Si entre 1955 y 1957 la figura humana no desaparece del todo, entre 1958 y 1959 predominan las naturalezas muertas y las composiciones en las que las formas más evidentes se relacionan con lunas menguantes, círculos triángulos y diversos cuadrados que íntimamente se acoplan entre sí. Luego de muchas obras de gran calidad en este estilo, Grau regresa lentamente al naturalismo. Las figuras que realiza inicialmente tienen una morfología similar a las de los cuadros de 1955: rostros ovalados, cuellos muy delgados y disposición frontal. Algunas también recuerdan a los personajes del italiano Massimo Campigli y no deja de haber varias que hacen pensar en Pablo Picasso.

En 1961, sin que sus figuras pierdan la referencia a los maniqués, sus personajes se hacen más corpóreos, los cuellos se ensanchan y los valores táctiles comienzan a destacarse. Tras esta fase de transición, puede decirse que Grau llega a su período definitivo. Después de más de veinte años de trabajo, se decide por el estilo que hoy resulta tan conocido. Paralelamente, durante estos años Grau enseña en la Escuela de Bellas Artes de la Universidad Nacional y en la Universidad de los Andes, y realiza escenografías para obras de teatro, llegando a ser, en 1954, Jefe del Departamento de Escenografía de la Televisora Nacional. En 1957 obtiene el primer premio en

Pintura en el X Salón de Artistas Colombianos, con el óleo Elementos bajo un eclipse [ver tomo 6, p. 129]; y al año siguiente gana el primer premio en Dibujo del XI Salón, con Naturaleza muerta lunar. En 1962 comparte con Juan Antonio Roda el segundo premio en Pintura del XIV Salón Nacional, con el óleo Gran Bañista. Desde los primeros años sesenta, la producción de Grau ha seguido un derrotero bastante unitario. En todos estos años resulta fácil comprobar la continuidad de toda su obra, así como el perfeccionamiento de una manera de tratar la figura y de representar la realidad. Grau no es un naturalista a secas. Sus figuras están exageradas desde el punto de vista de su volumen, siempre tienen unas manos desproporcionadas con relación al tamaño del cuerpo y, generalmente, aparecen revestidas de manera inusitada. Grau ama la farándula y el carnaval y por eso sólo excepcionalmente concibe al personaje sin los atavíos y tocados propios del mundo del disfraz. Con base en modas pretéritas, sombreros cursis o desactualizados y vestidos de las abuelas o trajes desacostumbrados, Grau transforma sus figuras y las convierte en modelos de fotografías desconocidos o en protagonistas de piezas teatrales inéditas.

Lo que se ve en un cuadro de Grau es poco corriente, la indumentaria, con todas sus implicaciones culturales y sociales, es algo postizo y artificial que subvierte la apariencia normal de los personajes y les da una presencia diferente, ajena a la vida cotidiana y bastante próxima al ámbito del espectáculo. A esto contribuyen también no sólo los gestos, ademanes y actitudes de las figuras, sino los objetos que las acompañan. A veces, el escenario es sencillo y sólo tiene pocos elementos. En otras ocasiones, aparecen diversas cosas, cuyo inventario resulta tan enorme como variado. No faltan, en muchos casos, las mariposas, los insectos o los pájaros que revolotean en torno de los protagonistas y que, obviamente, contribuyen a aumentar la irrealidad que se está contemplando. Por otra parte, si Grau ha realizado numerosas pinturas al óleo y cientos de dibujos a lápiz, no deja de sorprender que el artista haya trabajado copiosamente en todos los demás medios tradicionales (acuarela, témpera, fresco, carboncillo, crayola, pastel, tinta con plumilla, etc.) hasta el punto que resulta imposible decir que tiene alguno preferido.

Si es necesario afrontar nuevos medios, Grau no lo piensa dos veces; el mural del Centro de Convenciones de Cartagena, por ejemplo, fue realizado en 1982 al fresco "seco" con acrílico. Al lado de su obra bidimensional, en la que hay que incluir sus abundantes grabados en todos los procedimientos, el artista también ha trabajado tridimensionalmente: primero, terracotas (a fines de los cuarenta), luego ensamblajes (desde La virtud y el vicio, de 1972, pero, sobre todo, después de 1981) y, en los últimos años, esculturas en bronce. Si los ensamblajes prolongan su producción de escenógrafo para la televisión, el cine y el teatro, los bronce pintados extienden los temas de sus cuadros. Estos trabajos, modelados íntegramente por el artista, trasladan al espacio



real los cuerpos y los objetos aparentes de sus pinturas, que siempre se distinguen por la exageración y el hedonism de su plasticidad. Radicado desde hace varios años en Nueva York, donde ha realizado sus esculturas, Grau ha seguido ampliando los temas de sus pinturas y dibujos. Ultimamente ha trabajado paisajes de la ciudad, varios animales, incluyendo una serie consagrada a las María-mulatas [pájaros playeros de la Costa Atlántica colombiana] y algunos paisajes y fauna de las islas Galápagos [Ver tomo 6, Arte, p. 129].

(Source: Biblioteca virtual, Biblioteca Luis Angel Arango. (n.d.). Biografias, Enrique Grau. Retrieved from <http://www.banrepcultural.org/blaavirtual/biografias/grauenri.htm>)

- **Additional resources**

- Cartagena de Indias Colombia website:
<http://www.cartagenadeindias.travel/>

6. Hipolito Ocalia (Curaçao 1916-1984)

Panorama Kriojo (Panorama criollo/Creole landscape) 1982

Oil on panel

Private Collection, Curaçao



- **About the artwork**

Ocalia started this panorama for a client, but when the order was withdrawn he used his own imagination to finish it. That is why the beach at Jan Thiel looks a bit odd among all the *kunuku* (countryside) scenes. Ocalia always added new elements to his stories. Here we see a clothes-line with lots of clothes. The windmill, which we often encounter in his paintings, is also standing here, as it should, among the palmtrees.

(Source: Romer-De Vreese, J. (1995). Politu Pintor. In N. Henriquez and J. Romer-De Vreese (Eds.), *Ocalia paints Curacao* (29-57). Zutphen, Netherlands: Walburg Pers.)



- **About the artist**

In his familiar hilly surroundings, Ocalia went on to portray the colourful, lively and sunny world of Curaçao. Ocalia sold hundreds of paintings to tourists and other aficionados of Curaçao. His paintings have gone all over the world, but he has never left his home on the island of Curaçao. While people talk about art and exhibiting, he just wanted to sell his paintings. Art was an unknown concept to him, just like artistry. Ocalia shows that, unlike the apparently uncomplicated cheerfulness of his paintings, Hipólito Ocalia himself had a reserved nature and viewed the world around him with a certain degree of skepticism.

(Source: Memphis film and television website. (n.d.) Ocalia [Review of the movie *Ocalia*]. Retrieved from <http://www.memphisfilmtv.com/en/archives/2772>)

Ocalia was a naïve painter in the sense of the term which has been in use in art history for more than three quarter of a century and which has by now lost its initial pejorative meaning. The concept 'naïve art' is not easily defined. As the interest in this art form grew, art critics increasingly disagreed as to which characteristics must be considered typical of naïve art.

If we want to simplify the issue, we could say that the naïve artist represents his world from his own 'naïve' point of view, which is not influenced by knowledge, as in professional art, nor by tradition as in folk art. An essential element in a naïve work of art is its spiritual simplicity. Due to this simplicity and at times a certain technical clumsiness as well – the naïve artist is usually unschooled – the work reminds one of children's drawings. Both in form and contents Ocalia's work is that of a naïve painter.

We would, however, also like to call Ocalia naïve in the sense of the original Latin word 'nativus', namely inborn. Ocalia's was a natural talent and as such it manifested itself at his first expositions. At the same time he was identified as a quintessentially Curacaoan painter.

Ocalia painted Curacao. He knew better than anyone else how to depict his island in brightly colored, lively, and authentic paintings: from his childhood on, the hills and little houses in his own environment were his first source of inspiration, a source which never ran dry; then there were the pontoon bridge and the houses and buildings in town which he drove around, taking the children from his neighborhood to and from school.



He depicted his observations in a very direct way, and in everything he painted he paid attention to the smallest detail. Uninhibited by any notion of rules concerning painting techniques he blithely went his own way. His paintings reveal a very good intuitive feeling for color and composition, but no ability to deal with perspective and proportions. It is precisely from the joining of the artistic qualities of his gift and the imperfections resulting from his lack of schooling, that his work derives its naïve charm. When he first started to paint, he often compensated for the lack of perspective in his works by adding a little balcony or railing made of real wooden sticks to the buildings. The resulting three-dimensional effect gave the paintings a greater illusion of realism.

(Source: Romer-De Vreese, J. (1995). Politu Pintor. In N. Henriquez and J. Romer-De Vreese (Eds.), *Ocalia paints Curacao* (29-57). Zutphen, Netherlands: Walburg Pers.)

7. Hervé Beuze (Martinique 1970)

Machinique 2, 2009

Metal and synthetic materials

Courtesy of the artist



• About the artist

Hervé Beuze

Born 1970 in Martinique.

Lives and works in Martinique

For nearly six years, the outline of the island has become a recurring form in Hervé Beuze's in situ ephemeral installations.

He turns it into a solid shape, a homogeneous block, a silhouette without topographical details, in a unique material, the residue of crushed sugarcane known as bagasse.

So in 2001, in the exhibition *Lizin Kann, traces mémorielles revisitées*, he showed a floor sculpture, a pile of bagasse surrounded by metal (5 m x 3 m).



Its title *Machinique* is an amalgam of words, Machine, Inique (iniquitous), *Martinique*. According to the artist it stands as a metaphor of the peoples sprung from colonisation, pressed and sucked out like cane pulp (*) Then in 2003, Hervé Beuze exhibited a new map measuring ten metres in length made of dried cane leaves at the Maison de la Canne, a regional museum dedicated to one plant, one people, one culture, during the 37th international congress of the AICA (International Art Critics Association). The work was placed on polystyrene floating in the middle of a pond. Directly inspired by a document in the museum, a map of the Lands of the Island of Martinique conceded by the Compagnie des Iles, the lords proprietors and the West Indies Company dating from 1671 it is a historical model of the properties of that time. The title of Hervé Beuze's work, *Zabitans*, referred at the same time to the name given to the inhabitants of the sugar plantations and to the crayfish of the island's rivers. The young artist wanted the work to show how much this ancient division of the land remains at the root of today's occupation of the island's space. He is no longer part of the nostalgic search for a hinterland like the preceding generation of Dumbardon, Anicet, and Fwomaje but seeks to express the historical and political reality of the island.

In 2007, the map of Martinique shown at the centre of the Habitation Clement gallery carried once more the title *Machinique*. These installations have been exhibited twice in former sugar mill, one of which is now a regional museum, and the other a private interpretation centre.

(Source: Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art website. (n.d.).)

8. Leo Matiz (Aracataca, Colombia, 1917–Bogotá, Colombia, 1998)

Serie Macondo (Macondo Series)

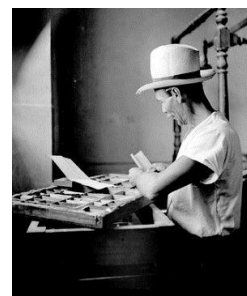
Digital reproduction from original negatives

Fundación Leo Matiz

- a) *El Artero (The Sly One)*, ca. 1940
- b) *El Telegrafista (The Telegrapher)*, ca. 1939
- c) *El Circo de Macondo (The Circus of Macondo)*, ca. 1960
- d) *Las Viudas de Montiel (The Widows of Montiel)*, 1939
- e) *El hombre del reloj (The Watchman)*, ca. 1940
- f) *El Sancocho Trifásico (Three meat stew)*, ca. 1939
- g) *El Rio Aracataca (Aracataca River)*, 1968
- h) *Mujer a la espera (Woman waiting)*, ca. 1940



a)



b)



c)



d)



e)



f)



g)



h)

- **About the artwork (Spanish)**

[Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores. \(2009\). *Macondo visto por Leo Matiz*. Colombia.](#)

- **About the artist (Spanish)**

[Sierra, S. \(2012, May 12\). El ojo surrealista de Leo Matiz. *El Universal*.](#)

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- **Additional resources**

- The modern word, Gabriel Garcia Marquez website:
<http://www.themodernword.com/gabo/>
- Kiely, R. (1970, March 8). March 8, 1970 Memory and prophecy, illusion and reality are mixed and made to look the same [Review of the book *One hundred years of solitude*]. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/06/15/reviews/marquesolitude.html>
- Sickels, A. (2009). Gabriel Garcia Marquez: Cultural and historical contexts. In I. Stavans (Ed.), *Critical Insights Gabriel Garcia Marquez* (pp. 19-35). Retrieved from Salem Press.

9. Antonio Joseph (Dominican Republic 1921; Haiti)
The Iron Market (El Mercado fierro), 1965
 Oil on canvas
 Rodman Collection, Ramapo College of New Jersey



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- **About the artist**

Antonio Joseph

(b Baharona, Dominican Republic, 4 Dec 1921). Haitian painter. Of Haitian parentage, he fled on foot to escape the Dominican Republic during the 1938 massacre of Haitians. He selected tailoring as a means to make a living in Port-au-Prince. He was the first to accept an invitation from the American watercolourist Dewitt Peters (1901-66) to join the Centre d'Art in Port-au-Prince, remaining there as painter and teacher. He studied watercolour with Peters and in 1953 was the first Haitian to win a Guggenheim Fellowship for a year's study in New York; he won a second in 1957. He accompanied Peters to the USA and Europe in 1960 and from 1961 to 1963 lived in the USA, which he continued to visit thereafter. From the first he was considered outstanding among the modernists affiliated to the Centre d'Art.

- **Additional resources**

- Architecture Record TV. (2012, February 2). Haiti's iron market. Podcast retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rel4x8AfpfY>



- Associated Press. (2011, January 11). Haiti's iron market reopens. Podcast retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFkHGZYK5Us>
- Bhatia, P. (2011, January 11). A symbol of hope for Haiti, a landmark again stands tall. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/11/world/americas/11haiti.html?pagewanted=all>

10. **Barrington Watson** (Lucea, Jamaica 1931)

Conversation (Conversación), 1981

Oil on canvas

Collection: The National Gallery of Jamaica



• **About the artwork**

Jamaica Gleaner News - Energy of the SUN - Sunday | March 5, 2006

Energy of the SUN

published: Sunday | March 5, 2006

BARRINGTON WATSON is an artist living and working in Orange Park, St. Thomas. Here he discusses his work with Dr. Jonathan Greenland, executive director of the National Gallery of Jamaica.

Jonathan Greenland: Can you tell us about your two works in the National Gallery, 'Conversation' and 'Mother and Child'?

Barrington Watson: 'Conversation' was the first painting of mine the National Gallery acquired. I think the 'Mother and Child' was on loan from Maurice Facey. All the others of mine in the gallery are donations from people like A.D. Scott and Aaron Matalon. I painted 'Mother and Child' in, I believe, 1969 and 'Conversation' a little later in the 1970s. What I can tell you about those two works is that they represent different periods in my growth as an artist. 'Mother and Child' was painted while I was in England as part of my diploma



at the Royal College of Art in London: it was my 'major task'. And as for 'Conversation', I always painted that kind of subject. I'm interested in the Jamaican female and how she stands and how she gossips and how she does things. At that time, too, there was always this fetching of water in buckets from standpipes and rivers for washing. 'Conversation' represented some interesting aspects from my point of view: I find Jamaican women very sensual and attractive and beautiful, from the country girl right up to high society. The variety of flesh tones and colours was striking after having studied in England.

J.G.: You say 'Mother and Child' was painted in England, was it from memory?

B.W.: Yes. It was based on what I had experienced in Jamaica before I left for London.

J.G.: What was your time like in London?

B.W.: I had amazing energy: I would party, play cricket, football and then go to art school. I would be getting only four hours sleep. You see, I would catnap on the way to school. I would sleep for ten minutes on the underground train: I could sleep hanging on the strap and wake up at the exact stop. A lot of people look at 'Mother and Child' and they see different stories in the painting. And every story fits.

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J.G.: Are you aware your paintings generate this kind of storytelling?

B.W.: Yes. I know there is not just a straightforward reading and I don't tell people what to think. I know they generate a number of different stories from the one representation. Another similar example at the Gallery, I believe, is 'The Athlete's Nightmare'. The painting won an award in the Spanish biennale. It represents from my point of view the athlete's experience before the big event. He may win the race or he may lose, he doesn't know. It is either his dream or his nightmare. There are other competitors but he is really competing with himself.

J.G.: How did you understand this experience?

B.W.: I was an athlete myself - I played football for Jamaica. I nearly played cricket too but I wasn't interested in having a sports career. The other thing that fascinates people is your treatment of the sheets in 'Mother and Child', and your treatment of drapery generally. Is that something you spent time working on? I can't say I spent a long time working on it. I treat each texture, each surface as a challenge in itself, and so when I try to paint a dress or a sheet or clothing, I treat it as fabric with some aspect of transparency. It is the same with skin tones: the skin tones of black people are so subtle you have to treat it as a particular thing in its own right. I remember doing landscapes with Dennis Williams, my good friend from Guyana who is now dead; he would say



to me: "Barry, how do you get the hills so far away?" And I'd say, "The mistake you're making is you're trying to paint the hills, and I'm painting the air between us and the hills."

J.G.: You are famous for your study of the female body.

B.W.: You know, in the days when I had just come back from England, Jamaican women didn't want to model nude. So I painted the Europeans. People said: "You only paint white people!" I replied, "No I don't. It's because you only want to take your clothes off in the bathroom."

J.G.: Would you say one of the most important things for you is observation of the subject?

B.W.: I'm thinking about the question? Because sometimes your eye does not report as accurately as you would think. However, what I think is the most important thing is the understanding of what you are seeing. With observation, if you can understand what the object is or says or how it feels, then you can see it. Feeling is, incidentally, one of the most important things in art.

J.G.: You say that in the days of the 'Conversation' women were collecting water at stand pipes. Now that's gone, what is your modern equivalent?

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B.W.: Well, it's trailing off. I don't think it's entirely gone. There aren't as many standpipes and the women don't collect around them in the same way in the morning or at night. So we're losing a bit of that. But, you know, there is there is a strong church-going crowd and they collect in groups before and after going to services. I'm working on some of these subjects. According to the Guinness Book of Records there are as many churches as rum bars in Jamaica. But, you know, I did paint a more up-to-date version of the 'Conversation' that belongs to Derick Lateaubidiere.

J.G.: What are your strongest influences?

B.W.: Many different things and artists. I think for all artists the strongest influence is their own environment. Artists like Goya, Velasquez and Rembrandt did open my eyes to a lot of technical things that I may never have discovered except by bungling. In the event they provided me with the only possible 'shortcuts' I could use. Looking back it seems to me I grasp things quickly. Goya influenced me because of his emotional approach- he was the forerunner of Expressionism. That influenced me because I needed to express myself. I can see the link with Velasquez. When you were talking about understanding and feeling it reminded me of his work and I can see a connection with your nudes.



Velasquez certainly influenced me. His draughtmanship was superb. How easy it seemed to him. But it is often that way: Cezanne had trouble drawing, but not Degas. And Velasquez's composition! Take his painting La Meninas. Now there is a very serious consciousness of composition. There is a whole story about the Royal family: the King and Queen of Spain, the ladies in waiting, the dogs, the dwarf and even the prime minister - who was said to be having an affair with the Queen - and also Velasquez himself. It is very well composed.

J.G.: As you get older do you find yourself looking at other artists more?

B.W.: Well, I originally went to England to learn. I didn't go to break any records: I went to look at other artists from other centuries. I wanted to see how far and how little art has travelled. It was fascinating to see how long it took for art to reach from da Vinci and Rembrandt to the German Expressionists, from African masks to Picasso. There were so many steps to be made in art, and so much to be learnt.

J.G.: Would you say that there is an African element in your painting?

B.W.: I think it is undeniable. And I welcome the idea that there is an African element to my work. I gave a speech at Harvard in which I said I was the product of the marriage of Africa and Europe. First of all I went to Europe and then I travelled to Africa - to Nigeria and Ghana - to see what communication there is.

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J.G.: What do you think of the Jamaican art scene?

B.W.: Very vibrant. And it has been vibrant for 30 years or more. But the establishment is not doing enough, they are not directed or directing enough. We have the influence of so many different cultures, and we are unsure of which way to go. We have been looking for 'Jamaican Art' since I was a boy! The most important thing is your environment: let it speak to you. But there is great hope for the Caribbean with the single market: we can get Caribbean people to work together. The multicultural influence and the multiracial situation gives the Caribbean a great advantage. We are right in the middle of the world. Plus, we have the energy of the sun.

J.G.: Do you have any advice for young Jamaican artists?

B.W.: Talent is not the most important ingredient. The most important ingredient is how much you put in. It is your effort and application.

J.G.: What is your favourite place in Jamaica?



B.W.: Right here, where I live Orange Park. It was a coffee plantation many years ago. When I bought it was a ruin. It gives me enough peace and quiet but it is near enough to wherever I want to go.

(Source: Greenland, J. (Interviewer) & Watson, B. (Interviewee). (2006, March 5). *Energy of the Sun* [Interview transcript]. Retrieved from Jamaica Gleaner <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20060305/arts/arts1.html>)

- **About the artist**

“I utilize the light of Turner, the line of Ingres, the range of Rembrandt, the techniques of Velasquez, the emotion of Goya, and my birthright of Benin.” Barrington Watson, a Jamaican master painter, is world renowned for creating beautiful portraits that capture the spirit of the black race. Over the past 50 years, he has become an expert of the human form. He gives his paintings the perfect lighting and texture through the use of compound mediums and captures complex emotion and detail due to years of extensive study.

Watson was born in Lucea, Jamaica in the parish of Hanover, on January 9, 1931. He loved art at a young age and felt called to follow his passion despite his parents desire for him to become a lawyer. The artist started his college career as an athlete at *Kingston College* in Jamaica, but eventually decided to follow his heart to pursue art overseas. Watson traveled to England to study at the *London School of Printing and Graphic Art* and from there he was accepted to the *Royal College of Art*. His diverse art schooling took him to art academies in Amsterdam, Madrid, Rome, and Paris where he studied African, Asian, European and American artwork. He took this newly acquired worldliness and partnered it with his love for the Caribbean, to create paintings that stand out among other island artwork.

In 1961, he returned to Jamaica and was hired as an art appreciation professor at the *University of the West Indies*. Watson then became the first director of studies for the *Jamaica School of Art* in 1962. He grew passionate towards nurtured aspiring young artists, but never let go of his dream of becoming a professional artist. In the late 1960s he began to gain widespread popularity as a painter.

Through his artwork, Watson details the history, culture and story of the black race. Watson has painted portraits of black historical figures such as *Fredrick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, W.E.B. Du Bois, Malcolm X, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King, Jr.* Yet he is most well known for painting the female form. Through his abundant works that feature the female form, it is apparent that he has a high respect and regard for women. It is also clear that this talented



artist wants to capture the heart of Jamaica and its people. He paints figures dressed in traditional Jamaican clothing and fills the backdrops of his paintings with bright tones that encapsulate the vibrant atmosphere of the Caribbean.

His paintings come to life through a variety of mediums including oils, pencil, crayon, pen and watercolor. Watson also uses the careful layering of color to create the beautiful variety of skin tones in his work. He fuses European style and techniques with Caribbean landscapes and figures to form his original style. Renowned Jamaican Lawyer, Businessman, and Public Service Official *Patrick Rousseau* has spoken highly of Watson:

“[Watson is] a brilliant portrait artist, without question the best in the West Indies, he produces with equal skill, landscapes and other subjects. But it is his obsession with the human form that generates his best work: full of life, vitality and movement. Many of his subjects seem ready to walk off the canvas and disappear into the surrounding area,” (seen on orangeparkgallery.com).

Watson has always focused on the importance of the development of the art community in Jamaica and has advocated for building more art institutions on the islands. In 1964, he founded the *Contemporary Jamaican Artists Association*, which promoted art as a social vehicle for change. Watson was one of three artists active in the association; his partners were Jamaican Painters *Eugene Hyde* and *Karl Parboosingh*. Today, Watson is the only surviving founder of the association and still operates the *Contemporary Art Center*, which he established in the early 1980s.

The master painter has also created *Gallery Barrington* in 1974, the *Jamaica Art Foundation* in 1985, the *Orange Park Trust* in 1991 and the *Pan-Africanists Committee* in 1998. Watson has written several books such as “Shades of Grey,” which speaks of life through an artist’s eyes and how to become a successful painter, and “Barrington: 50 Years of drawing 1958-2008,” which depicts more than 200 drawings dating back to 1958, many of which are displayed in private collections and are not normally accessible to the public. Barrington Watson continues to make history as he paints and teaches from his *Orange Park Studios* gallery in St. Thomas.

(Source: King, M. (2011, May 2). Barrington Watson: Capturing the beauty of culture. *Visionary Artistry Magazine*)



Additional Resources

Poems

- Sugar Cane Poem
Grace Nichols
- Checking out Me History
John Agard
- The Song of the Banana Man
Evan Jones
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