

***International
Cultural
Exchange***

BELIZE 2019



***Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator
International Cultural Exchange 2019 Belize***



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All dimensions are in inches or otherwise noted.

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The mission of Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator, inc. is to promote, nurture and cultivate the vision and diverse talent of emerging artists from the Caribbean and Latin Diaspora through our exhibition programs, artist-in-residence programs, international exchange programs and educational and outreach activities that celebrate Miami-Dade's rich cultural and social fabric.



Under the shade|Without a shadow

This year, our first International Cultural Exchange to Belize took its inspiration from the country’s motto “Sub Umbra Florero” meaning “under the shade we/ flourish.” According to the Encyclopedia Britannicus, “the Latin motto is a reference to the area’s forest and its establishment as colony under British protection.” While we visited the Image Factory Art Foundation gallery space in the heart of Belize City, its co-founder Yasser Musa stated in his introductory remarks, “Belize has 9,000 years of art practice.” It was a reminder that Belize was the center of Maya civilization. The Maya developed astronomy, calendrical systems and hieroglyphic writing. They were also known for elaborate and highly decorated ceremonial architecture, including temples, palaces and observatories. The Maya were equally skilled as weavers and potters and cleared routes through the jungles and swamps to establish trade networks with distant people.

During our seven-day International Cultural Exchange, we navigated the contemporary art scene and verified the pertinence of Musa’s statement. From Belize City to San Ignacio to Santa Elena to Dangriga, we traveled an art route designed by Adrienne Chadwick, our expert collaborator on the ground, and Rosie-Gordon Wallace, DVCAI’s founding president. The itinerary highlighted the diversity and vibrancy of the art landscape.

Musa captured the essence of the 2019 project with his further observations. He declared that as a trans-shipment space, Belize is situated at the intersection of Guatemala and Senegal, referencing the forced migration of Africans to Central America during the slave trade and the encounter with the Amerindians. By traveling to Central America DVCAI purposely problematized some more of the conversation on Diasporan artistic and cultural identity.

Culturalist Paul Gilroy’s view that the African Diaspora’s dispersal and relocation across bodies of water was modern and transformed the West as well as Africa served as a backdrop to the trip. In a review of the exhibit Afro-Modern -Journey’s Through the Black Atlantic (2010) art historian and curator Petrine Archer states, “The Diaspora’s restless migratory patterns since their removal from Africa, has left its communities in constant motion, a people of the sea, forever looking back to points of entanglement rather than their origins” (1).

A coalescence is in play in the former known British Honduras colony bordered by the Caribbean Sea to the east, Guatemala to the south, Mexico to the north and Honduras to the west. The Maya, Mestizo, Creole, Garifuna, East Indian, Mennonite, Arab and Chinese cultures bring to bear on the arts. The contemporary Belizean art scene took shape in the 2000s when, capitalizing on the strategic positioning of Belize as the crossroads of the Caribbean and

Central America, young local artists chose to collectively exhibit their work beyond the national borders. Starting locally with exhibitions in Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Cuba, the movement reverberated transnationally and traveled to the USA, Spain, Portugal and Taiwan.

Currently, the dissemination of and management of art is left to state-sponsored entities on the one hand and artist-ran organizations on the other hand. Armed with two years of training in Taiwan, artist and curator Ilona Smiling provides leadership at the Museum of Belize. Additionally, houses of culture (HOCs), found throughout the country, and the St John’s College offer a substantive art curriculum at the elementary and post-secondary education level. Under the umbrella of the National Institute of Culture and History, the HOCs like the one we visited in San Ignacio, are meeting points where neighbors, residents and students come together and are provide each other inspiration and uplift through cultural activities.

Parallel to the state-sponsored bodies there are several artist-operated organizations. We networked with members of Belize Soul Project, Wildfire Artzmosphere and the Image Factory Art Foundation. Located also in San Ignacio, Belize Soul Project comprises a bar, an art gallery and hotel. The owner, local artist, film maker and conservationist, Daniel Velazquez shows edgy art. During our visit Velazquez was joined by an American anthropologist he had just collaborated with on a Garifuna culture documentary. The founder of the Cayo Film Festival, Velazquez has directed several films. Stephanie Willis and Virginia Hampton, founders of the theatre company Vampire, manage Wildfire Artzmosphere, a collaborative space for theatre, performance and visual arts. We caught an intergenerational aerobic dance class the day we called on.

The Image Factory Art Foundation is the nerve center of the art world in Belize under the leadership of its visionary director Yasser Musa a talented poet, visual artist and art instructor. The Foundation’s mission is the promotion, exhibition and documentation of Belizean art. Situated in Belize City, the gallery space hosts exhibitions, performances and other art-related gatherings. To date, it has released Landings: New Art and Ideas from the Caribbean and Central America 2000-2010 (2010), a two-book set Binomium (2015) and Bembe Vision: Leadership Notes for the Belizean Classroom (2018), a book dedicated to prominent Belizean women. Also, the Factory publishes an art e-magazine BAFFU. The institution is interdisciplinary in its approach: it is open to spoken word artists who shared their work with DVCAI along with visual art members during a talk.

In Dangriga, the Garifuna culture heartland, we visited the Gulisi Garifuna Museum and met with independent artists (photographer Tony Rath, Alice Bowman a scrap artist and Crystal Lopez) for a talk at the Ignacia Cacho library. We visited Pen Cayetano’s studio gallery too.

Challenging the concept of national identity, in a provocative Ted Talk presen-

tation writer and photographer Taiye Selasi suggests, “Don’t ask where I’m from, ask where I’m local.” DVCAI felt quite at home in Belize among art practitioners. Across borders, thematically speaking some of the concerns are similar. Both groups presented environmental-themed work as well as social commentary pieces. Tony Rath, Alicey Bowman and Adrienne Chadwick advance an ecological discourse that addresses the erosion of the organic ecosystem and traditional ways of life for the benefit of real estate and land developers and consumers obsessed with greed. Michael Barber, Kelvin Byzer, Pierre Obando, Izia Lindsay all raise the question of the pertinence of a Caribbean identity. How does one create or use existing symbols to construct marking traits recognizable by all? Ilona Smiling and Deborah Perez break boundaries and subvert.

Briheda Haylock, Gayla Lopez and Carol-Anne McFarlane underscore the emotional, psychological and physical violence visited on women. Additionally, they examine other gender issues such as cat calling, patriarchy, misogyny, homophobia and heterosexism. Rosa Naday Garmendia, Aisha Tandiwe Bell, Kurt Nahar, Michael Elliot and Katie Numi Usher comment on socio political ills disenfranchised constituents are faced with. The artists consider the impact of racism, (neo) colonialism, police brutality, dictatorship and corruption on the black and brown subjects. Most use a feminist, gender or intersectional lens.

These points of connection as well as questions concerning the politics of the visual, of aesthetic, of seeing and visuality in Belize which we started debating predicts richer conversations as we anticipate returning to the country in the future.

Alix Pierre, Ph.D., Spelman College,

Scholar-in-residence

Belize City
Beliz City ia a port city in the Central America of Belize
It is devided into north and south sides the Haulover Creek, which opens into thw Caribbean Sea.



Museum of Belize

The Museum of Belize is an art and history Museum in Belize City, Belize. Built between 1854-1857 as a “Her Majesty’s Prison, while the area was still a British Colony. It was a replacement for a wooden prison nearby, until 1993. In 2002 it was restored and renovated into a national museum

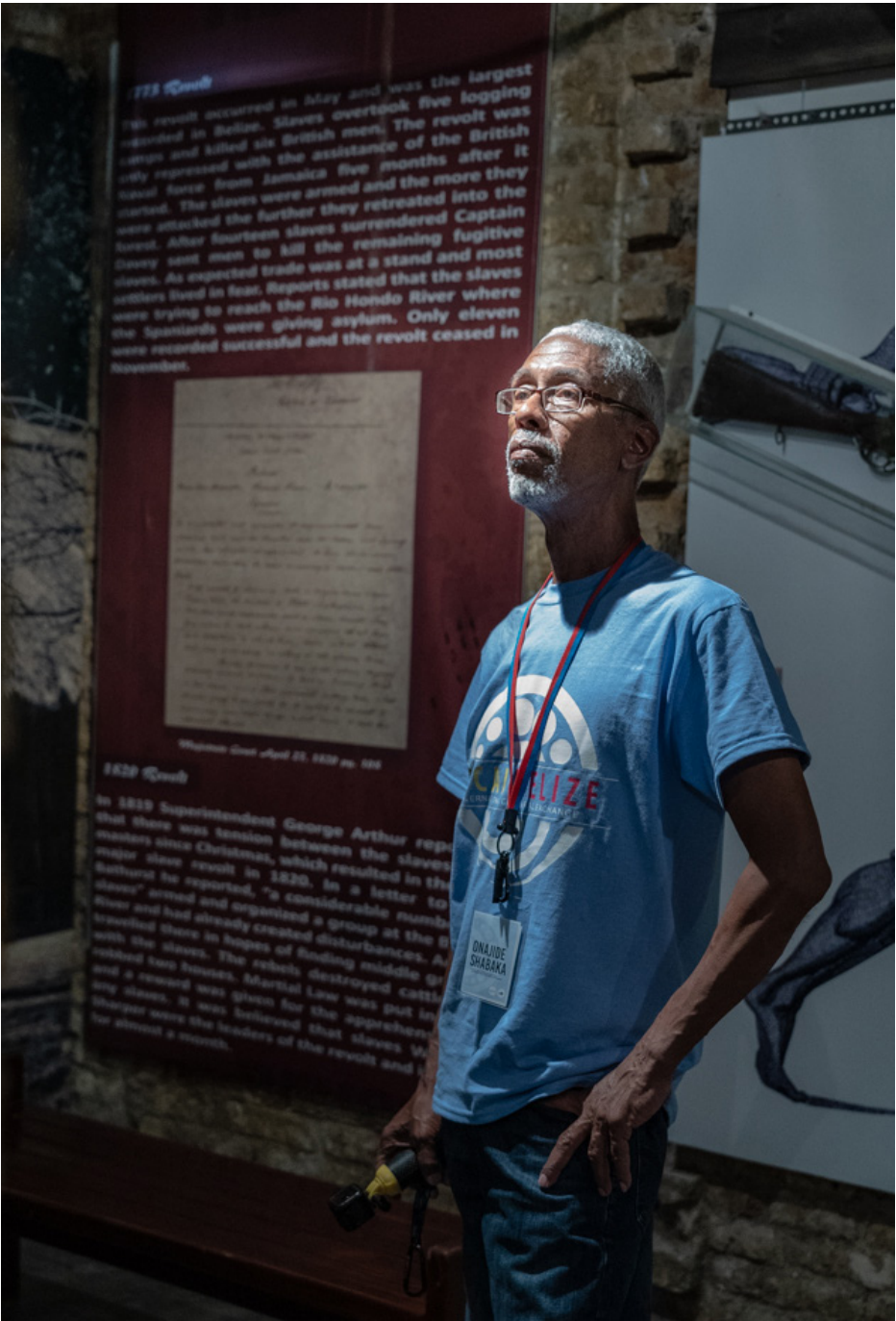








Image Factory-Art Foundation

10 N Front Street
Belize City, Belize.
Yasser Musa-Professor/Founder/Curator



San Ignacio Town
Mayan Ruins





Capello Art Gallery
San Ignacio, Belize



Gulisi Garifuna Museum
Dangriga, Belize.



Dangriga-Belize
Formerly known as Stan Creek Town, is a town in southern Belize on the Caribbean coast.







Aisha Tandiwe-Bell



Flags in blue

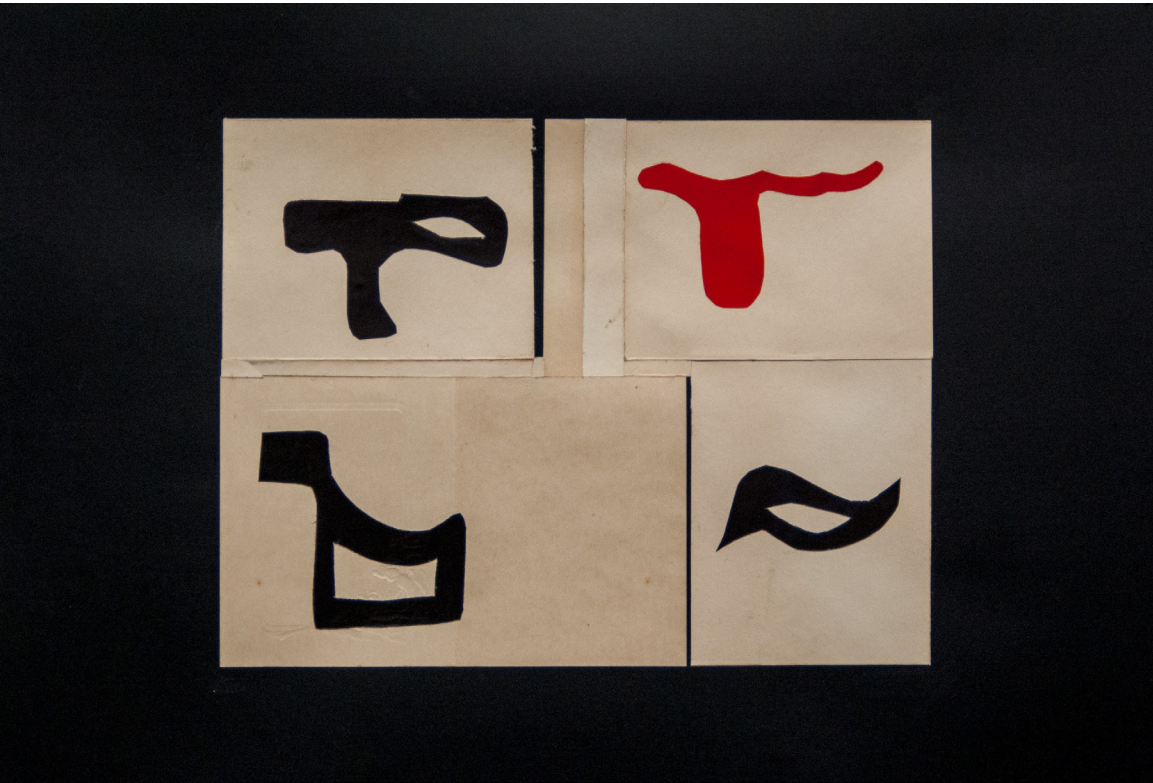


Chasing de Crown

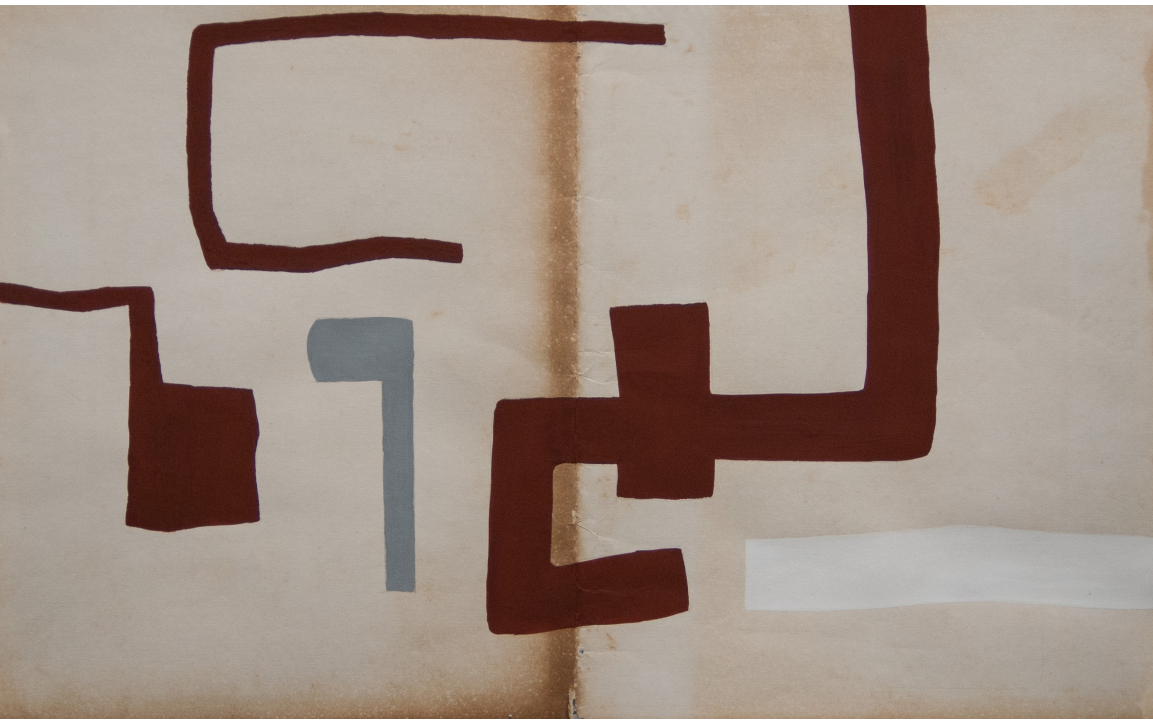


"Perception of the shortest distance"

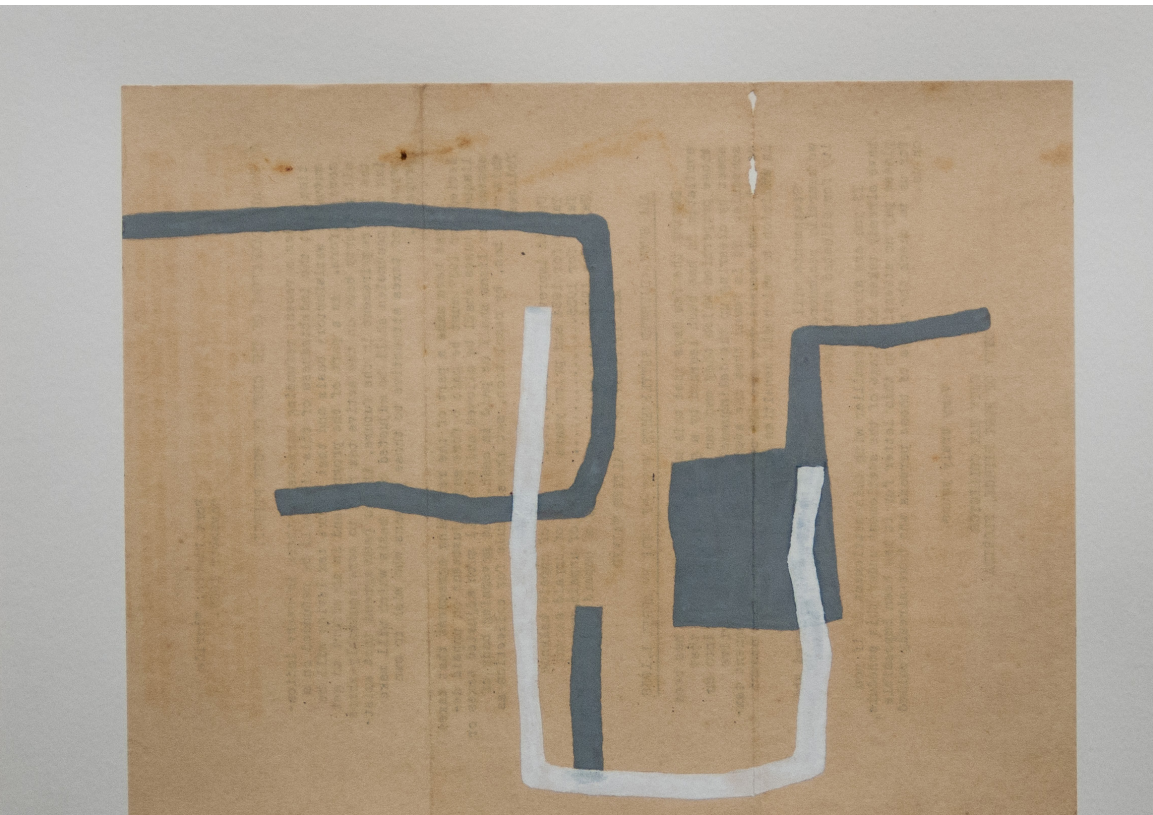
Onajide Shabaka



"Jaguar power self inflicted assaults"



"map (tricolour) coveted worlds"



"map (grey-white) coveted worlds"

Michael Elliott.



'Deportea'

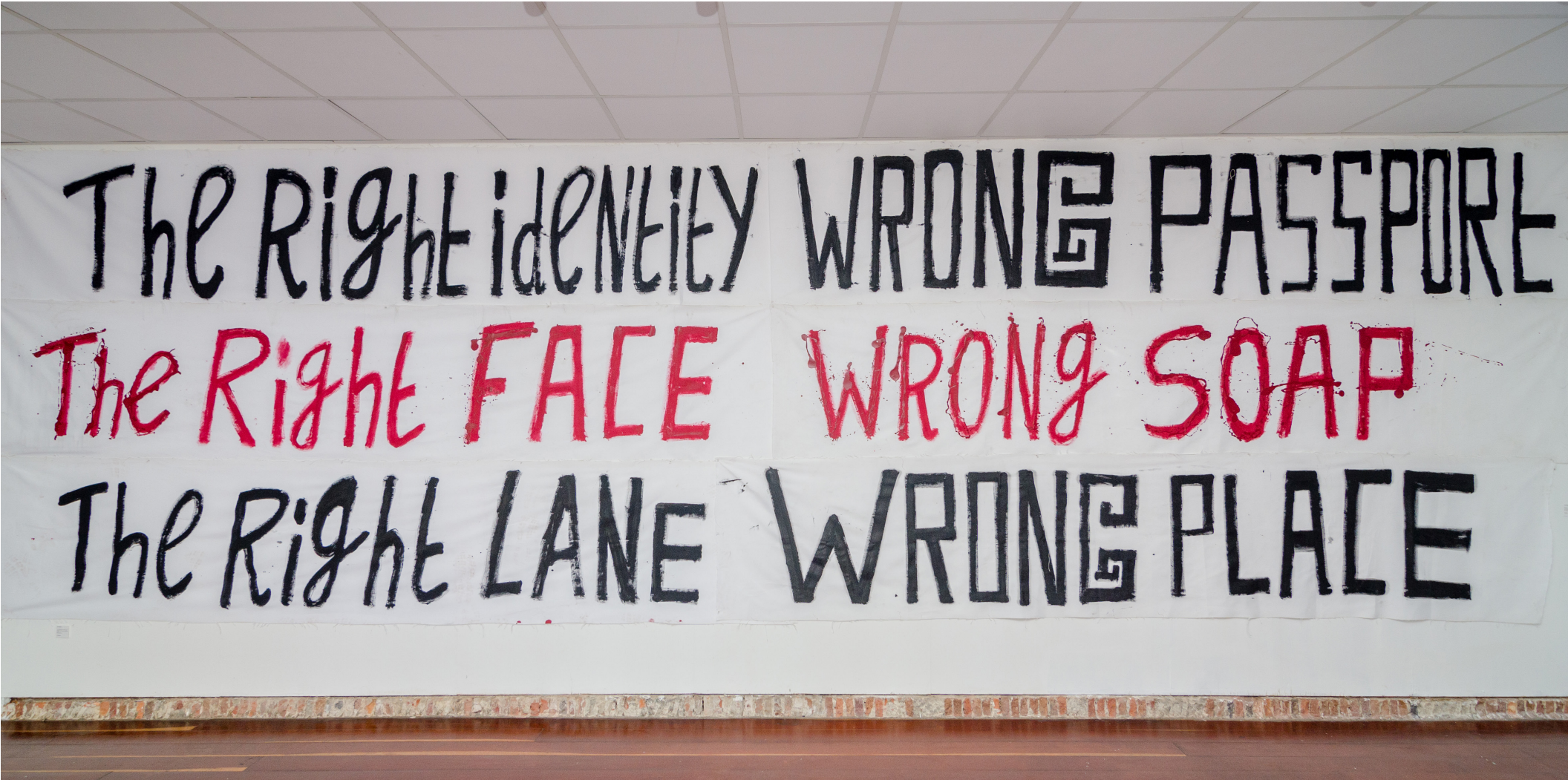


'May day and the man overboard'

Kurt Nahar

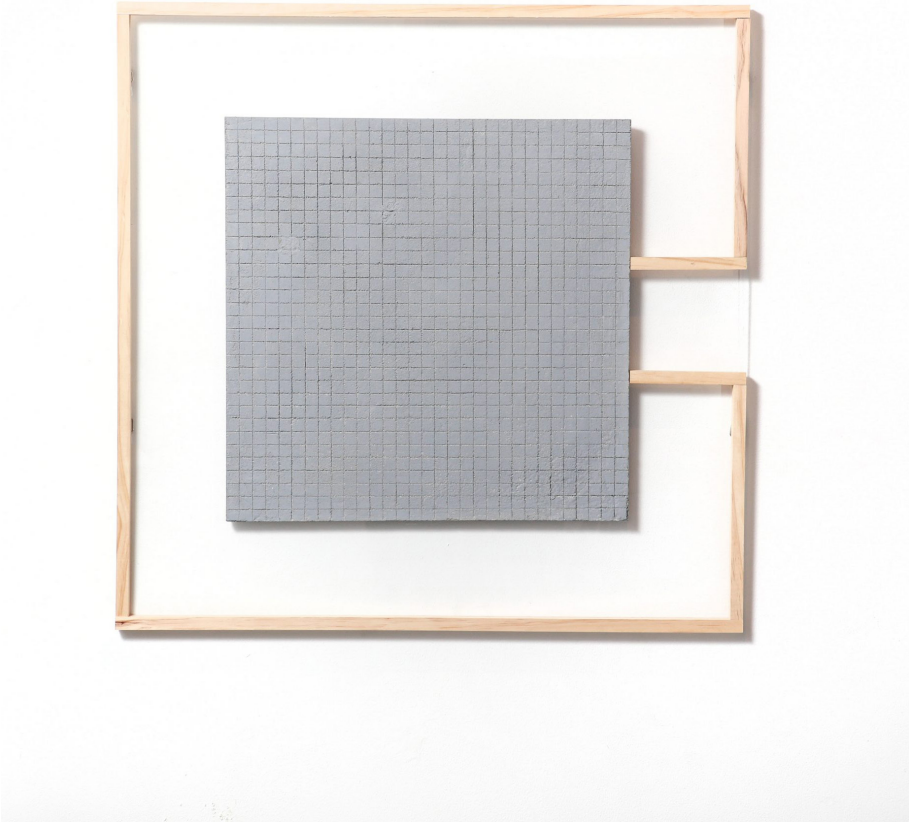


Bleach1



The right-face wrong soap

Devora Perez



Open



United

Pierre Obando

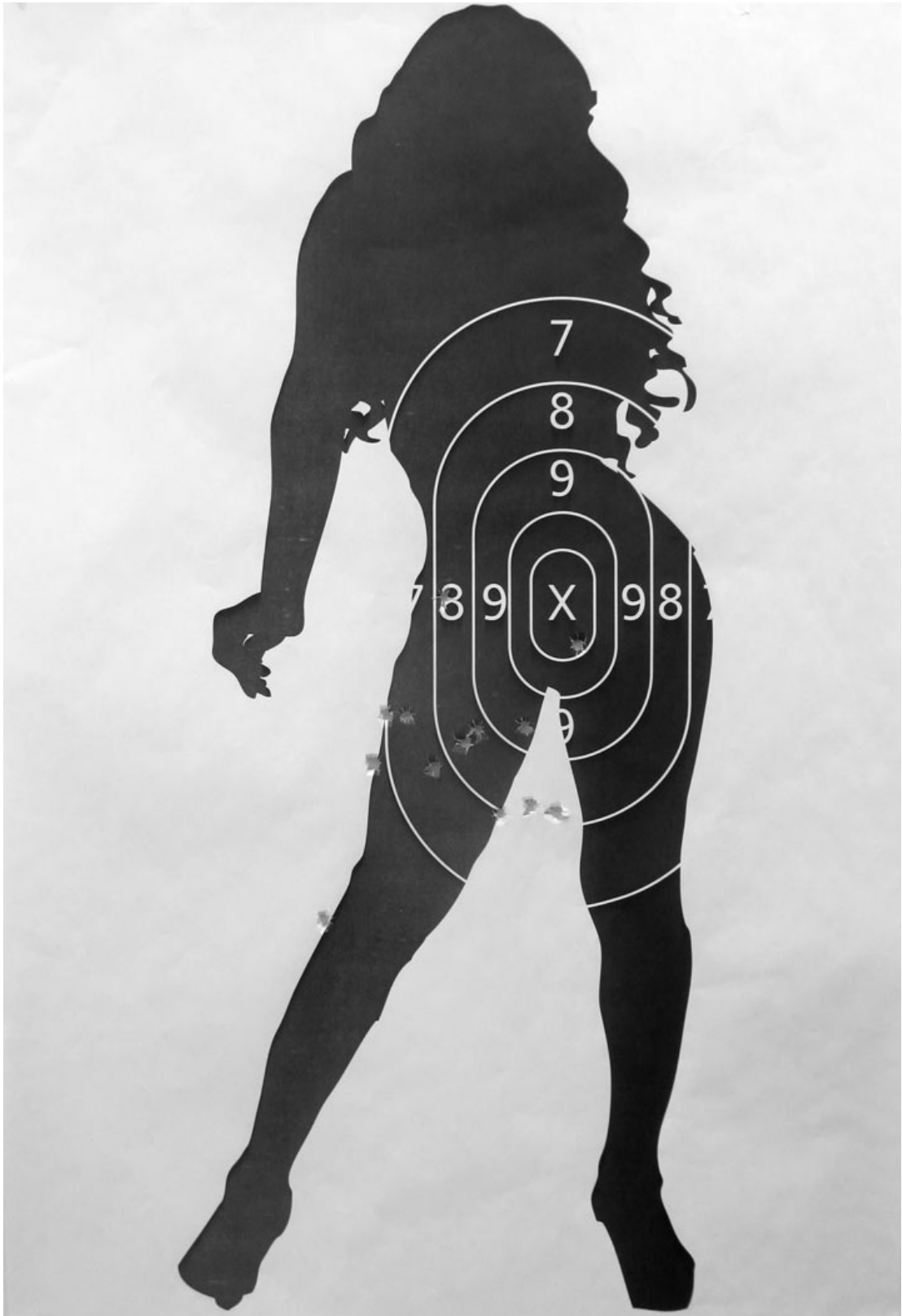


Looking with your eyes



Salvage

Carol-Ann McFarlane



Target #15

Asser Saint-Val



The Philosopher's Stone. Jamaica ICE 2018



Screenshot



The Philosopher's Stone. Cuba 2017

Rosa Naday-Garmendia



Lavall Hall, Rituals of Commemorations

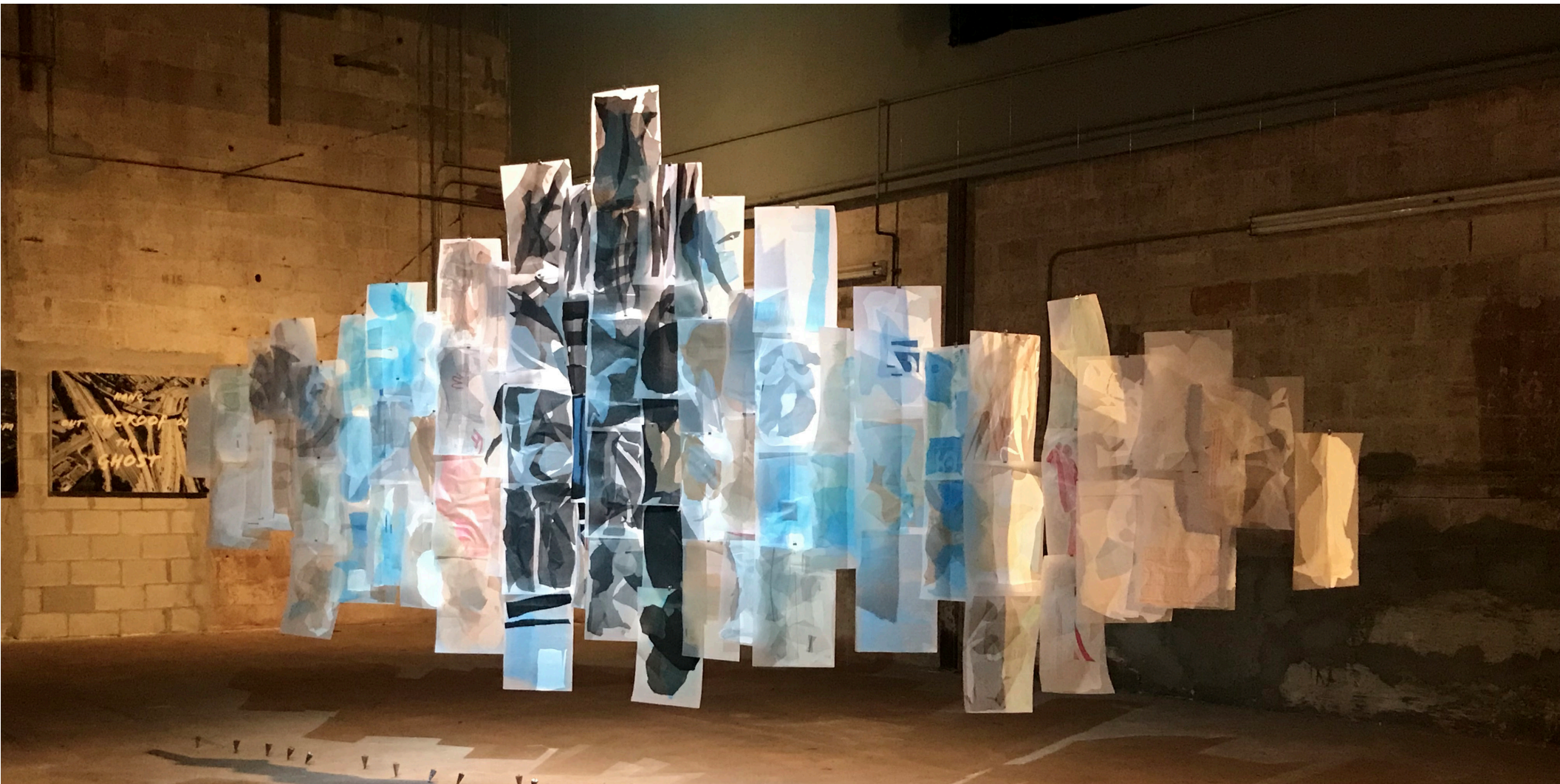


Rituals of commemorations

Adrienne Chadwick



Ebb and Flow. 2104

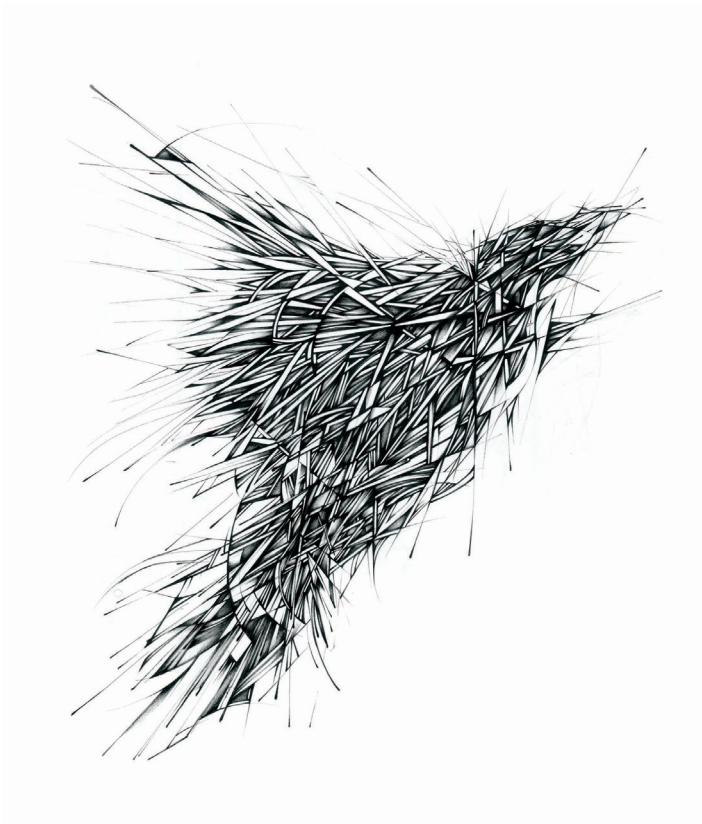


Ebb and Flow. 2019

Izia Lindsay



Foundation



Dances

Alix Pierre Ph.D



Alix Pierre Ph.D, teaches at Spellman College in The Department of African Diaspora and the world and World Language and Literature. His research interest is in the artistic response of people of African decent to the state of diglossia in a (neo) colonial context. He is on the editorial board of the Caribbean Vistas Journal: Critiques of Caribbean Arts and Culture and Negritude: Journal of Afro Caribbean Studies. His publications have appeared in several journals and he is the author of L'image der la femme résistance chez quatre romancières noires: vision diasporique de la femme en résistance chez Maryse Condé, Simone Schwarz-Bart, Toni Morrison et Alice Walker (PAF: 2014)

Rosie Gordon-Wallace



Rosie Gordon-Wallace’s professional background belies her current passion. Knowing her just a few years ago, one might never have guessed that this licensed medical microbiologist and former senior consultant for Searle Pharmaceuticals from 1981-1999 is now the founder and senior curator of Diaspora Vibe Gallery and Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator, one of the most talked about art incubator spaces in Miami.

Gordon-Wallace, always a passionate lover of art, made up her mind in 1996 to devote herself full time to the gallery she created and developed. Diaspora Vibe Gallery, which specializes in Caribbean and Latin American Art with an emphasis on exhibiting emerging artists, supports the development of new work by resident artists by offering workshops and other skill-building opportunities for young artists. The gallery also provides educational and outreach programs for the community.

In the past, Rosie Gordon-Wallace has been awarded The African Heritage Cultural Arts Center 3rd Annual Calabash Amadlozi Visual Arts Award, International Businesswoman of the Year, One of South Florida’s 50 Most Powerful Black Professionals of 2007, The Images and Voices of Hope: What works: From Inspiration to Action award; The Champion of the Arts Award; The Red Cross Spectrum Award for Culture; The Women in International Trade Businesswoman of the Year award, and the Miami Beach Black Advisory Board Award for Arts and Culture. Diaspora Vibe Gallery also partners with the Florida Center for Literary Arts’ “ One Community One Book” initiative, which sponsored a Conversation with Edwidge Danticat at Diaspora Vibe Gallery. The gallery featured artists Adrienne Chadwick Francesca Lalanne, and Hubert Neal, Jr, in “Juxtaposition”; Asser St Val and Rosa Naday Garmendia and Onajide Shabaka during Art Basel and installation artist Jacquettenette Arnette and Suriname artist, Kurt Nahar. <http://www.dvcai.org>

In addition, Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator, Inc. the not-for-profit arm of DVG was awarded an Andy Warhol Visual Arts Initiative award, Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation, The Dade Community Foundation, The Carl & Toni Randolph Charitable Fund at Dade Community Foundation, The Buddy Taub Foundation, The Ford Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts, and the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs. Funds support The Caribbean Crossroads Series from May through October, the International Cultural Exchanges, artists in residence programs and the << Off The Wall Experimental Series>> and Educational series.

A community activist, she is dedicated to women’s issues and causes, and of course, the artists she mentors, supports and nurtures. She is a frequent public speaker and has served as a grant panelist for The State of Florida, The National Performance and Visual Artists Network, The Knight Foundation and the Department of Cultural Affairs Miami and Los Angeles. She is married to artists’ advocate and photographer Roy Wallace. Rosie served on many non-profit boards, The Adrienne Arsht Center for Performing Arts, Miami Dade College Art and Design Museum, National Performance Network\ Visual Arts Network, Bayshore Lutheran Church and Design and Architecture High School.

Roy Wallace



Photographer and Logistic Manager, Roy travels with the DVCAI team and provides technical assistance across a broad spectrum of needs ranging from installations to exhibition space reconfigurations. As an integral part of the traveling team his skill set is a reliable resource that everyone has access to. Photographic documentation is an extremely important component of DVCAI’s operational requirement, and his attention to those details provides representative imagery when and where it’s needed. “I produce my images in response to the demand to be an image, and yet it is a decentering act: total subject; there is full awareness of self.” Photography is one of Roy’s passion and he’s committed to details and he’s constantly thriving to being better. Born in Jamaica, moved to Miami Florida in his early teenage years, he’s an avid tennis player and coach. Educated at the University of Florida and Florida International University, he’s a core member of the DVCAI team.

Acknowledgments

DVCAI *International Cultural Exchanges*

Antigua

Aruba

Bahamas

Barbados

Belize

Cuba

French Guyana

Grenada

Guadeloupe

Jamaica

Paris-France

Puerto Rico

Saint Martin

Santo Domingo

St. Kitts

Suriname

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Michael Elliott-Photographer
Adrienne Chadwick-Artist-Liaison.
Rosie Gordon-Wallace-Curator (Team Leader)
I would like to express special thanks to our Belizan counterparts for their warm welcome and guidance in navigating the artistic landscape of their homeland.*

Museum of Belize. Belize City, Belize.
*Alexis Salazar-Museum Director.
Illona Smiling-Curator*

Image Factory-Belize City, Belize.
*Yasser Musa-Founder/Curator/Professor.
Gilvano Swasey-Curator/Artist
Katie Usher-Artist.
Briheda Haylock-Artist.
Yoaling Lee-Artist.
Dwayne Murillo-Artist.
Kyo D’Assissin-Artist.
Leroy “The Grandmaster” Young-Artist.
Kyraan Gobourel-Artist.
Crystal jean Lopez-Artist.
Pancho Lopez-Artist.*

NICH (National Institute of Culture and History) Belize City, Belize.
House of Culture-San Ignacio, Belize.
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Belize Soul Project
Abdala Bedran and Daniel Velazquez, Cofounders.
San Antonio Women’s pottery Co-Op.*

Dangriga
Gulisi Garifuna Museum
*Aretha Ariola-Curator.
Isiah Nicolas-Artist.
Johann Giovanni Lopez-Artist.
Chadwick Usher-Artist.
Daniel Valazquez-Artist.
Tony Rath-Artist/Photographer.
Alicey Bowman-Artist.
Kelvin Byzer-Artist.*

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